

THE BUDDHA SPEAKS THE MAHAYANA,
INFINITE LIFE, ADORNMENT, PURITY,
IMPARTIALITY, AND ENLIGHTENMENT
SUTRA

A TRANSLATION OF KEY CHAPTERS WITH CASE STUDY

佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經英文版

DECEMBER 25 2014

AUTHOR: BRIAN CHUNG

作者：鍾佰晟



THIS TEXT IS IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN AND HAS NO COPYRIGHT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	3
Sutra Chapter 4: The Origins of Dharmakara.....	4
Sutra Chapter 6: The 48 vows.....	6
Sutra Chapter 24: The Three Grade of Aspirants.....	13
Sutra Chapter 32: The Unlimited Bliss of Pureland.....	15
Sutra Chapter 33: The Buddha's Exhortation to Sentient Beings.....	17
Sutra Chapter 34: A Heart of Wisdom.....	19
Sutra Chapter 35: The Five Evils.....	20
Sutra Chapter 36: The Pains Caused by the Kleshas.....	24
Sutra Chapter 37: A Golden Opportunity.....	25
Sutra Chapter 41: Obstacles to Meeting the Buddha (Partial).....	27
Sutra Chapter 48: A Final Word From the Buddha.....	28
Venerable Hai Xian's Pureland Rebirth (Case Study).....	29

Dedication

May the merits and virtues accrued from this work
 adorn the Buddha's Pureland,
 repay the Four Kinds of Kindness above,
 and relieve the sufferings of those
 in the Three Paths below.
 May those who see and hear of this,
 bring forth the heart
 of understanding and compassion and,
 at the end of this life,
 be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss



No Rights Reserved

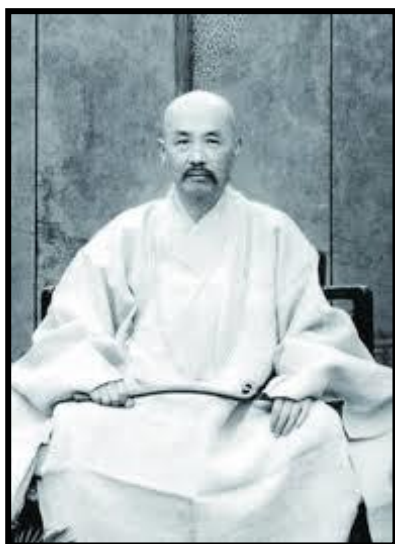
As the author of this text, it is my express intent that the entirety of this text be
 released into the Public Domain. I reserve no rights to this work. If the laws of a
 particular jurisdiction should make it impossible to reserve no rights, then I
 hereby grant permission to anyone who seeks to use and reproduce this work
 for any purpose.

Brian Chung

FOREWORD

The Buddha Speaks the Mahayana, Infinite Life, Adornment, Purity, Impartiality, and Enlightenment Sutra (佛說大乘無量壽莊嚴清淨平等覺經) is the central text of the Pureland school. This sutra represents the Buddha's highest wisdom and succinctly outlines the way to achieve enlightenment in one life.

The Buddha spoke the Infinite Life Sutra in five separate sermons over the course of his life, that is why there were originally five versions of this sutra. However, the eminent Upasaka Xia Lian Ju (夏蓮居居士) compiled all five versions into one version without changing a single character during the early 20th century. This compilation version is now the universally accepted version of the Infinite Life Sutra. Furthermore, The Venerable Master Chin Kung (淨空法師) has stated that this Sutra is the most important one of our time and the only one that he would recommend.



Upasaka Xia Lian Ju



Venerable Master Chin Kung

This translation with case study of Upasaka Xia's magnum opus covers the most important parts of the work. The purpose of this text is to make key chapters of this Sutra available to English speakers. Furthermore, included at the end of this text is the biography of Venerable Master Hai Xian. He achieved Pureland rebirth last year and his entire life serves as a perfect example of the Buddha's teachings in this Sutra.

Namo Amita Buddha!

CHAPTER 4: THE ORIGINS OF DHARMAKARA

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda: "Innumerable kalpas ago a Buddha named Lokeshvararaja appeared in the world. Having attained Unsurpassed Bodhi, he was worthy of offerings. Furthermore, countless sentient beings were brought to the shores of liberation through his perfect wisdom. For forty two kalpas, he spoke the true Dharma to both devas and men."

"At that time there was a valiant sovereign named King Universal Bountiful. Having heard the Dharma, he rejoiced and ignited his resolve for Bodhi. Seeking the way, he renounced his kingship and became a Bhikshu named Dharmakara (Treasury of the Dharma). Owing to his peerless wisdom and matchless strength of will, Dharmakara mastered the Bodhisattva way with effortless ease. Upon meeting the World Honored-One, he reverently prostrated himself before Lokeshvararaja Buddha. The Bhikshu then uttered verses praising the Buddha's glorious countenance and expressed his aspiration to create the Land of Ultimate Bliss. A paradise for the benefit of all beings throughout the ten quarters."

Commentary

Beginning in Chapter 4 of the Sutra, the Buddha first tells us about Amita Buddha's path to Buddhahood and the origins of Pureland. Innumerable kalpas (eons) ago Lokeshvararaja Buddha appeared in this world to teach the Dharma. He guided sentient beings for a total of forty two kalpas. According to Ven Master Chin Kung's Dharma talks, the total length of time a Buddha speaks the Dharma is usually about half of the average lifespan of contemporary humans. This means that the lifespan of humans during the time of Lokeshvararaja Buddha was no less than eighty kalpas! As the lifespan of any sentient being depends on their level of virtue, we should understand that the people who lived during Dharmakara's time possessed exceptional merit. Thus, we should realize that the fruits of virtue are boundless and everything we seek can be obtained by diligently amassing merits

Although the Chinese text of Dharmakara's praises and aspirations are much longer, the details basically reflects the last realization from the Sutra of the Eight Realizations of Great Beings:

The Eighth Realization:

**Birth and death are like a blazing fire
 Plagued with endless afflictions and suffering.
 Vow to cultivate the Mahayana mind,
 To bring relief to all;
 To take on infinite sufferings for sentient beings,
 And lead all to supreme joy.**

The Eight Realizations of Great Beings Sutra outlines the motivations of those who seek Sagehood. The first few realizations represent the wisdom of those seeking only personal liberation (i.e. Arhats) while the latter realizations represent the realizations of Bodhisattvas. The eighth realization is the highest realization where the Bodhisattva not only understands fully the pain and suffering of the Samsara, but also wishes to selflessly save all the innumerable beings still trapped within the wheel of death and rebirth.

Dharmakara's aspiration to create the Land of Ultimate Bliss mirrors this highest realization. Hence, Dharmakara's Great Compassion for sentient beings cannot be exceeded. This is why Shakyamuni Buddha stated in the Amitabha Sutra that all Buddhas praise Amitabha as the foremost among them. In Chapter 5 (not translated), Lokeshvararaja Buddha recognizes Dharmakara's noble aspirations and thus showed him the way to Unsurpassed Bodhi and explained to him the various aspects of all the innumerable world systems in existence. With this knowledge, Dharmakara was able to proclaim his 48 vows in the presence of the Buddha's august assembly.

Lastly, reciting this Sutra is very meritorious. It is standard practice for those practicing Pureland Buddhism to recite the 48 vows (chapter 6) during the morning recitation session and chapters 32-37 during the evening recitation session.

CHAPTER 6: THE FORTY EIGHT VOWS OF AMITABHA

Introduction:

The following 48 vows represent the cornerstone of Pureland Buddhism. They represent Amita Buddha's promise to all sentient beings. As the Buddha has confirmed that Dharmakara attained Buddhahood ten kalpas ago (he is now Amita Buddha), all of the following vows are now valid in perpetuity. Lastly, from now on, any reference to "the Way" or "Dharma" etc. generally refers to the Dharma Door of Amitabha Pureland Buddhism.

Sutra Vows 1-2 : The Vows of No Evil and Suffering

"If I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my Buddha land will be adorned with infinite and inconceivable merit. There shall be no hell beings, hungry ghosts, wild beasts, pests or pestilences in my land. Sentient beings arriving to dwell in my land, even from the hells or evil paths, shall all share my merit and become Bodhisattvas at once. They will never again fall back into the states of suffering. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 3-5 : The Vows of Equal and Majestic Appearances

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings from the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall all assume majestic appearances as fair as the finest gold. They will be regal in countenance and possess all of the Buddha's 32 fine features. Furthermore, their bodies will be upright, pure and without outflows. The splendor of their appearances shall all be equal. If some are beautiful while others ugly, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 6-8: The Vows of the Buddha-Eye and Divine-Ear

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall possess both the Divine-Ear and Buddha-Eye. They shall, without limit, be able to recall the circumstances of their innumerable past lives as well as see and hear any event occurring across the ten directions. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 9: The Vow of the All Knowing Heart

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be able to see through the hearts and minds of each and every being living across the incalculable and inconceivable world systems. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 10-11: The Vows of Divine Powers and Limitless offerings

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be complete with perfect ease and divine powers. Furthermore, they shall be able to instantly manifest anywhere they desire and make offerings simultaneously to innumerable Buddhas across the ten directions. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 12: The Vow of Samadhi and Perfect Wisdom

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be bestowed with Samadhi that will free them from outflows and attachments. They shall all become irreversibly established on the path towards perfect Enlightenment. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 13-14: The Vows of Infinite and Serene Light

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my light shall shine brightly across the ten directions. When I appear before sentient beings, as soon as my light touches them, they shall feel bliss as their afflictions dissolve. They will immediately be reborn in my land. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 15-16: The Vows of Infinite and Incalculable Lifespan

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall have infinite life. Even if an entire congregation of as many Paccakabuddhas as there are living beings in a great trichiliocosm should spend hundreds of thousands of kalpas trying to calculate the lifespan of a resident of my land, a figure would still be unreachable. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I

never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 17: The Vow of Universal Recognition

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all the Buddhas across the ten quarters shall uniformly praise the infinite merit of my name and recognize the unrivaled virtue of my Buddha-land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Commentary:

According to Venerable Master Chin Kung, the name of Amita Buddha represents the names, teachings and combined merits of all the Buddhas across the ten quarters. Hence, that is why all the Buddha's across the ten quarters uniformly praise Amita Buddha's name.

Sutra Vow 18: The Pureland Rebirth Upon Ten Recitations Vow

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who joyously and sincerely seek rebirth in my land after hearing my name, who then dedicates with each thought all their merits and good deeds towards this aspiration, shall be reborn in my land upon reciting my name for ten times. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Note: The Chinese text includes an exception for those who slandered the Dharma or committed the five grave offenses. However, Vow 21 contradicts this prohibition. Hence, what this means is that this exception was merely meant as a warning to prevent people from committing such heavy evil offenses. As long as they repent, Pureland will certainly accept them with open arms.

Sutra Vows 19-20: The Resolve For Bodhi Vow and the Vow of the Sagely Welcoming Party

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who resolve to attain Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, who subsequently dedicates all the merits from their lifelong practice of the Six Paramitas towards this aspiration, and who single-mindedly recites my name through day and night without cease, will meet me during their last moments. I shall welcome them into

my land while surrounded by an august retinue of Sages. They will instantly become Mahabodhisattvas. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 21: The Vow of Forgiveness

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, there would not be one virtuous and willing sentient being who could not easily attain rebirth in my land. However, if sentient beings who have long committed evil repent after hearing my name, and thereafter adhere to the sutras while yearning for rebirth in my land, then such beings will be saved from the evil paths and rise to my land upon their deaths. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 22-24: The Vow of No Womanhood and The Vow of Lotus Bud Transformation

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the retribution of womanhood will not exist in my land. If women who desire to be freed from their retribution should become sincerely resolved upon attaining Bodhi in my land after hearing my name, then they shall be transformed into Bodhisattvas upon such a rebirth. Sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land will all be transformed while dwelling in palatial lotus buds floating upon the glistening waters of the Seven Jeweled Lagoon. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Commentary:

Any sentient being who is reborn in Pureland will become Bodhisattvas by transformation. This means that if you achieve such a rebirth, you will instantly manifest as an enlightened Bodhisattva. There is no pain of birth or inconvenience of growing up in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Sutra Vows 25-27: The Vows of Merit and Virtue

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are inspired by my name to sincerely cultivate the Bodhisattva path shall be respected by both men and devas. Moreover, sentient beings who merely hear my name shall be reborn as virtuous patricians possessing wealth, knowledge and

power. Their bodies will be healthy and complete. Lastly, they will enjoy cultivating the highest dharma. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi.

Commentary:

This vow represents the most basic benefits of Amita Buddha's name. Simply hearing or perceiving this Buddha name can guarantee a good rebirth and future opportunities to learn Buddhism. Furthermore, in the Contemplation Sutra, it is stated that just one recitation of Amitabha's name can eradicate eight billion eons worth of heavy karmic offenses. Hence, those who fail to achieve Pureland rebirth despite having recited the name will still amass enormous stocks of merit.

Sutra Vows 28-31: The Vows of Virtue, Purity and No Outflows

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land will be free from even a hint of evil. All sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be united in proper virtue and purity. They will be forever free from afflictions and attachments. Moreover, they will enjoy the same bliss as a bhikshu without outflows. If residents of my land should retain false thoughts and attachments, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 32-34: The Vows of Incorruptibility, Eloquence and Expoundance

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, those who are reborn in my land will all possess infinite good roots. Hence, their bodies shall be as incorruptible as the Buddha's. They will also have radiant halos above their heads. A affirmation of their infinite wisdom and eloquence. Thus, they will naturally expound the Dharma like clockwork. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 35-36: The Vows of Swift Perfection

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings of the ten quarters who are reborn in my land shall swiftly attain Buddhahood. Excepted are Bodhisattvas who have made Mahayana vows to liberate beings across the ten quarters. Using various expedient devices, they will unfailingly inspire sentient beings to bring forth faith in the teachings of Samantabhadra. Until these vows are fulfilled, may

I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 37-38: The Vows of Abundance and the Receipt of Offerings

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, sentient beings who are reborn in my land shall be instantly furnished with whatever food, drink, attires and requisites that they wish for. No one will be left unsatisfied. If those dwelling in my land shall seek to make offerings to Buddhas across the ten quarters, rich offerings will instantly appear before all the Buddhas of the ten quarters as a response to that thought. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 39: The Vow of Infinite Adornment

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, all aspects of my land shall all be infinitely well adorned and be of indescribable beauty. Even though the residents of my land have the Divine eye, they shall still not be able to describe the infinite beauty of my land. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vows 40-41: The Vows of Jeweled and Mirrored Trees

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, the jeweled trees of my land shall be hundreds of thousands of yojanas in height. However, the Bodhi trees next to the Way places will be even taller. No Bodhisattva of my land would fail to perceive this. Those who wish to view the august lands of other Buddhas may do so by simply gazing at the jeweled trees, and what they seek will appear as clear as one's reflection in a mirror. Until these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 42: The Vow of Resplendence

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, my land shall be boundlessly expansive and as bright and unblemished as a gleaming mirror. It's light shall pervade warmly across the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can see this light will become irreversible upon the path towards Bodhi. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 43- The Vow of Widespread Treasures and Fragrances

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, everything in my land, from the ground to the skies above, such as the lagoons, arbors, rivulets, villas and pavilions, shall all be composed of untold treasures and aromatic timbers. The fragrances of my land will saturate the entirety of the ten quarters. Any sentient being who can sense it will become resolute in cultivating the Dharma. Until this vow is fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 44-45: The Vows of Samadhi and Buddha Offerings

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas of the ten quarters who hear my name will immediately gain the Samadhi of purity, release and equality. They shall dwell in the highest Samadhi until they become Buddhas. They will also make offerings to countless Buddhas while meditating. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

Sutra Vow 46-48: The Vows of Dharani, Patience and Non-Retrogression

"When I attain Unsurpassed Bodhi, Bodhisattvas from other worlds who hear my name shall immediately become Mahabodhisattvas. They shall abide in equality and dwell in purity, impartiality and perfect wisdom. Lastly, they will instantly reach the state of Non-Retrogression and attain the three stages of endurance. Unless these vows are fulfilled, may I never attain Unsurpassed Bodhi."

CHAPTER 24: THE THREE GRADES OF ASPIRANTS

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda: "Devas and humans of the ten quarters who sincerely seek to be born in Pureland can be classified into three grades. The highest grade of aspirants are those who leave their homes and abandon temporal desires to join the Sangha as monks. Having ignited their resolve for Unsurpassed Bodhi, they single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha's name. They dedicate the vast merits of their practice towards rebirth in Pureland. When their lives draw to a close, Amita Buddha will appear before them while accompanied by an august retinue of Sages. At once they will be born in Pureland by transforming spontaneously from within lotus-flowers composed of the seven-jewels. They will dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression, attain steadfast wisdom and be capable of freely exercising the five transcendental powers. For this reason, Ananda, sentient beings who wish to see Amita Buddha during their lifetime should awaken aspiration for Unsurpassed Bodhi, single-mindedly recite his name, and dedicate the merit towards Pureland rebirth."

"The middle grade of aspirants consists of those who have resolved to attain Unsurpassed Bodhi but could not leave the home life to become monks. Nevertheless, they diligently recite the name of Amita Buddha with concentration. They also do various good deeds and amass merits. For instance, they create Buddha images, give alms to monks and build Stupas. They also observe the eight precepts and make offerings of light, incense, flowers and the like. They dedicate this merit towards the fulfillment of their vows to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. At the time of their death, Amita Buddha will appear before them in his transformation body, which is fully possessed of the same radiance, physical characteristics and features as those of the real Buddha. He will also be accompanied by a host of Sages. Once reborn in the Pureland, they will dwell in the Stage of Non-retrogression. Their virtue and wisdom will be next to those of the higher grade of aspirants."

"The lower grade of aspirants consists of those who cannot do many meritorious deeds. Nevertheless, they seek Unsurpassed Bodhi and recite the name of Amita Buddha with great concentration. When they hear the profound Dharma, they joyfully accept it and do not harbor any reservations. They sincerely aim to be

reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When they are about to die, they will see Amita Buddha in a dream and be welcomed into Pureland. Their merit and wisdom will be second to those of the middle grade of aspirants."

"If those who have slandered the Dharma and committed the five grave offenses can repent at the moment of death and recite the name of Amita Buddha for one to ten times, They too can be reborn in Pureland and attain irreversible Unsurpassed Bodhi."

CHAPTER 32: THE UNLIMITED BLISS OF PURELAND

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "The Bodhisattvas in the Land of Infinite Life (Pureland) have immeasurable merit and wisdom. The wonders and bliss of this land are unimaginable. All are virtuous and cultivation of the Way occurs naturally. Whether making offerings to Buddhas or listening to Dharma talks, the Bodhisattvas of this land do so with matchless aptitude, unwavering diligence and great joy. Thus, their wisdom and resolve can only increase with each passing moment. Even if they appear to be leisurely, eager diligence unmistakably influences them from within. They are all of the same compassionate mind and spirit. Dwelling in Non-abidance, their appearances are naturally august. As they are always self-reflective, their hearts are forever clean and pure. Because they are free from greed and defilement, they unwaveringly cultivate mindfulness of Amitabha. Their vows cause them to be steady in their faith. Like calm waters, there are no ripples in their poise and confidence. Never influenced by wrong views, they strictly adhere to the sutras and never stray. Constantly admiring the ultimate goal of Unsurpassed Bodhi, they have no other thoughts. Being free from afflictions and defilements, they are unburdened and naturally act in accordance with the Buddha-nature. Their minds are as devoid of false thoughts as a vacuum is of matter. Contented and without attachments, they diligently fulfill their Mahayana vows. With Great Compassion, they empathize with the sufferings of the unenlightened. Hence, they teach this Dharma door of Amitabha in accordance with the customs and inclinations of the various audiences. This facilitates easy acceptance and understanding."

"These Bodhisattvas swiftly obtain Unsurpassed Bodhi and then help others do the same. Once Bodhi has been achieved, they realize everything and fully comprehend the original purity of the self nature. They also realize that all dharmas are rooted in the self nature. Thus, they recover a natural and unsurpassed brightness which shines across the entire Dharma realm. They are now Buddhas."

"All forms in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are naturally composed of treasures and jewels that far surpass the seven types of jewels found in the continent of Uttarakuru. As the merit of Amita Buddha is unlimited, the august brightness of Pureland and the splendor of its manifestations are simply incomparable. The

Bodhisattvas of Pureland realize the Tathagata's perfect wisdom."

"Thus, all of you should diligently seek rebirth in Amita Buddha's Land of Infinite Life and Ultimate Bliss. Blessed by the vows of Amita Buddha, you can effortlessly leave the Samsara. The evil realms will collapse behind you as you immediately attain Bodhisattvahood. Pureland rejects no one and is very easy to reach, but few actually go there. By letting go of worldly affairs and attachments, you can reach Pureland and enjoy limitless bliss and infinite life. Thus, is there any reason to remain greedily attached to this miserable and impermanent world?"

**CHAPTER 33 : THE BUDDHA'S EXHORTATION TO SENTIENT
BEINGS**

Sutra:

"People of this world all hanker after matters of little importance. Thus, they must toil and slog under an oppressive atmosphere of evil and suffering. Whether rich or poor, patrician or plebeian, young or old, male or female, they are all worried about the future and tormented by the past. Shackled by desire, they cannot rest. For instance, those without dwellings yearn for them while those without land wish for it. All seek to gain or retain wealth, family and servants. If they have one they feel they lack the other. These people of feeble merit are forever afflicted. If they should by some chance amass all that they wish for, impermanence will visit them in the form of disasters, bandits, creditors, extortionary governments and karmic enemies. Overwhelmed by sorrow over their losses, they become consumed by obstinate loathing. Unable to let go, all that they care for are torn from them upon their deaths anyway. This causes them to suffer ceaseless pain and anxiety. Such misery does not discriminate between rich and poor."

"People of this world, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, husband and wives, kinsmen and relatives, should all love and respect each other. They should refrain from hatred and jealousy. Moreover, they must mutually assist each other without thoughts of stinginess. They ought to treat each other with tact and politeness."

"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of enmity in the lives to come. Thus, we must be careful. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims, to suffer their vengeance."

"Moreover, amidst temporal desires and attachments people are born alone and die alone. The departed transmigrate to either a painful or to a pleasant state of existence. Each receives individual karmic retributions that no one else can bear in their place. People are reborn in different realms due to their different karmas. Once reborn, they do not remember anyone they once knew. Since their paths of rebirth are different, it is impossible to tell the time of their reunion. Can they ever see each other again?"

"Knowing this, is there any reason not to diligently cultivate virtue while you are still youthful and strong? Why wait?"

"People of this world are confused about good and evil. Their faith in the laws of karma are weak. Hence, they tenaciously cling to their own delusions. Being foolish, they reject the Dharma and embrace wrong and deviant views. Their upside-down ways trap them within the Samsara. As they seek only instant gratification, they are addicted to hatred and gripped by lust and avarice. Isn't that pitiable?!"

"Because their forefathers were evil and rejected the Dharma, there is no one to teach it to them now. Thus, their lack of understanding of the Buddha's perfect wisdom is forgivable. However, as they even reject the basic laws of karma and rebirth, they are completely consumed by absurd and incorrect views."

"The workings of karma are like gravity, invisible but all pervasive. Fathers shed tears for their deceased offspring while children weep over their late parents. Siblings and couples all become grief stricken when the one they love is lost. They do not know that their attachments are false. Consumed by love and emotion, they are shackled to the Samsara. Consequently, they squander their years and neglect to diligently and properly cultivate the Dharma. Few become Sages while many drown in their own delusions."

"Because they harbor malicious intent, they tumble from darkness to deeper darkness. They indulge their caprice and defy the will of Heaven and Earth. Injustice and vice inevitably follow and will run unchecked until evil karma accumulates to the maximum. As their original lifespans have been shortened due to their evil, they will soon meet death and fall into the hells for eons without end."

"Contemplate what I have just said and refrain from all evil. The virtuous understand that love and glory cannot be kept and bring only suffering. Thus, they strive diligently to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Once there, their happiness is unlimited and everlasting. Those who choose their passions over the precepts inevitably fall behind everyone else."

CHAPTER 34 : A HEART OF WISDOM

Sutra:

The Bodhisattva Maitreya exclaimed: "World Honored-One, your words teach the precepts and illuminates the path towards virtue. You kindly help all to rise to Unsurpassed Bodhi. You are the Lord of Dharma and the foremost of all Sages. Your light shines warmly and your perception is unlimited. You are the teacher of both devas and men. Today, we rejoice in the wonderful teachings of Infinite Life. Our hearts have been opened by your wisdom. "

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: "Those who respect the Buddha gather vast stocks of merit. They repay the Buddha's kindness by single-mindedly reciting Namó Amita Buddha. By doing so, they remove all doubt and deracinate the six kinds of dusts. Thus, attachments and afflictions leave them forever. Having become Sages, they are no longer bound by death and rebirth. These Bodhisattvas respond to the pain and suffering of the unenlightened. Hence, they freely manifest wherever they are needed to teach the Dharma to those who have not yet been liberated."

"All of you should know that the people of the ten quarters have been turning in the wheel of suffering since time immemorial. Their afflictions are never-ending. Being born and growing old are both painful ; sickness and death are equally agonizing. No one can obtain true happiness while trapped in bodies tainted by all kinds of odors and impurities. Only by cleansing the heart of the three poisons will such suffering dissipate. Thus, be not slothful. Make sure that you are sincere in thought and action. Refrain from putting up hypocritical facades. Strive to be quickly reborn in Pureland so you can liberate others. Sincerely make such vows and accumulate the virtues to fulfill them. However hard a life of diligent cultivation may be, it can only be for a short while. Afterwards, you will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and enjoy perpetual joy there. Birth and death can never trouble you again as you are permanently free from the afflictions of the three poisons. With infinite life, you can effortlessly attain Unsurpassed Bodhi. So I bid you all to single-mindedly seek such emancipation. Do not entertain any doubts while practicing lest you be reborn in the bejeweled borderlands of Pureland where you will be made to wait in the lap of luxury for five hundred years."

The Bodhisattva Maitreya said: "World-Honored One, all of us accept your

teachings and we will all cultivate in accordance to it with single-minded diligence. Do not worry as we will not doubt!"

CHAPTER 35 : THE FIVE EVILS

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: " A person who remains virtuous at heart and upright in thought while residing in this world is the foremost of all people. Why? Because virtue is actually widespread across the ten quarters. Thus, sentient beings of the ten quarters are very easy to convert. This, however, is not the case for this world. Amidst countless afflictions, all of you live among the five evils. Having become a Buddha in this world, I endeavor to teach everyone to forfeit the five types of evil conduct. If you do so, you will be free from the burning pains that are the result of such evil. Forsaking evil, the five precepts can be held and merits will accumulate."

"I will now explain the five types of evil conduct in detail."

First Evil: The Root Offense of Killing

"People of this world are driven to kill by their desires. The strong abuse the weak and the victorious massacre the defeated. They hunt, slaughter and devour. Thus, karmic retributions naturally follow. That is why some are orphaned, poor, lonely, wicked, blind, disfigured, deaf, mute, deranged, weak, deformed or crude. They had rejected virtue in their past lives and refused to be charitable. The fundamental truth is that nobility, wealth, courage, grace, wisdom and eloquence are the result of kindness and filial piety. Only merits and good deeds can yield such results."

"Moreover, the retributions of karma continue after death. The souls of the malicious inevitably fall into the evil realms of suffering. Perhaps some will be reborn as hell beings, wild beasts, pests, maggots or emaciated ghosts. Those who commit evil will suffer misfortune in this life and the hells in the next. Once you fall into the evil realms, you will cycle there for endless kalpas. You cannot hope to leave until your evil karmas are rectified. Such pain and misery are indescribable. Between Heaven and Earth, there is naturally justice. Even though consequences may not be immediate, rewards inescapably shadow the virtuous while retributions naturally pursue the wicked."

The Second Evil: The Root Offense of Thievery

"People of this world defy the rules of propriety. They are proud, shameless and rapacious. Furthermore, they revel in decadence and cause outrage. They abuse their authority and engage in corruption. Likewise, they punish the innocent and scheme against the virtuous. Hypocritical and manipulative, they seek to defraud others. Regardless of their station in life, they are all united by a deceitful heart."

"Being contemptuous and foolish, they are naturally self centered and full of avarice. Thus, they viciously vie for personal benefit and act dishonorably. Widely hated, their greed and disregard for the laws of karma eventually drives them and their families to ruin. Even If they are wealthy, a miserly and uncharitable heart still grips them. Greedily attached to their wealth, they toil in mind and body to retain it. However, they must part with all that they have accumulated upon their deaths. Only our merits or offenses are truly ours."

"Because they are selfish, they slander virtue instead of praising it. Being full of envy and always desiring to steal, they seek for themselves the benefits that justly belong to others. Demigods record each of their offenses as they repeatedly plunder and exploit. Thus, it is expected that they should fall into the evil realms where unspeakable pain and suffering will torment them for eons without end."

The Third Evil: The Root Offense of Lust

"People of this world have short lifespans and must rely on reciprocity to live. However, wicked people pay no heed to this impermanence and are always full of immoral intentions. They are dissolute and full of lust. Their appearances reflect their perversions, which also consumes them. Furthermore, they squander their patrimonies on vice and transgress the bounds of decency with their depravity. They willfully neglect to fulfill their duties and to do good."

"Moreover, their lust often drives them to engage in wanton violence or to form mobs and armies. They plunder and loot to satisfy the needs of their wives or concubines. Lastly, their debauchery causes their victims to hate them and the public to despise them."

"Demigods and Spirits keep records of their evils. Once their lives end, they are

cast into the three evil paths where unlimited afflictions and unspeakable sufferings await them. With such heavy evil karma, can they ever hope to gain release?"

Fourth Evil: The Root Offense of Capricious Speech

"People of this world rarely think of doing good. Instead, they utter abusive and sarcastic words. They lie, mock, cajole and spread rumors. Using evil or untrue words, they turn people against each other and cause contention. They hate good people and ruin Sages. Being conceited, they treat their teachers with arrogance and fail to be filial towards their parents. Their friends cannot trust them due to their lack of sincerity."

"Arrogant and self absorbed, they consider themselves to be virtuous heroes. Using force to prop up their authority, they abuse others and demand obedience. Such persons are hard to convert as they never self reflect. Luckily for them, they may have done some act of goodness in lives past and can now count on that small amount of merit to protect them. However, their unceasing capricious behavior soon eradicates whatever stock of merit they have. As their lives end, all their evil suddenly manifest and recoils upon them. Demigods have kept detailed records of their many crimes and the workings of karma naturally forces them into the evil realms. They have no chance of escape as their bodies are cast into boiling tar and crushed into pieces. Suffering extreme torment, they finally regret their evils. However, it is already too late."

The Fifth Evil: The Root Offense of Intoxication

"People of this world are often slothful. They cannot be bothered to do good or cultivate virtue. Their parents try to change them but they respond with scathing words and rebellion. Weeping in sorrow, their parents regret begetting them. Such persons feel no gratitude for their parents kindness and are never filial. They are wastrels who squander their days on idle pursuits. Being lazy, they drink themselves to drunkenness and feast on sumptuous food. As they are quarrelsome and loutish, they conduct themselves boorishly and without decorum."

"Their callousness causes them to show no concern for the welfare of their family and relatives. Furthermore, they are indifferent to the sacrifices their parents

have made for them and feel no sincerity towards their friends and teachers. Throughout their lives, they are evil in action and evil in speech. They even fail to entertain one single upright thought. Rejecting the Dharma and refusing to believe in the laws of karma and rebirth, they seek to harm Sages and cause schisms and chaos within the Sangha. They consider themselves to be wise despite being extremely deluded. Never do they wonder about where they are going to after death. Even though they are neither humane nor respectful, they expect long and happy lives. When kind people try to teach them the laws of karma, they respond with mockery and abuse. Their hearts and minds are as obstinate as rocks. On the eve of death they find that they have no stock of merit to count on. Filled with fear as the fires of hell surround them, they painfully regret having not done a single good deed."

"Between Heaven and Earth, the good and evil paths of rebirth are clearly distinguishable. The rewards for virtue and punishments for vice are as unavoidable as one's shadow in the sun. However, woe and weal are interlinked. For example, those flush with fortune often become complacent while those who are afflicted often become faithful towards the Dharma. Hence, we must be vigilant."

"Those who perform good deeds enjoy pleasure after pleasure and become wiser with each passing day. On the other hand, those who commit evil suffer endless misfortunes and fall further and further into the darkness."

"If you can realize this truth, you have truly heard my teachings. The delusions that cause the Samsara are only fully known by the Buddhas. Even though I tirelessly teach people these truths few take heed of my words. Thus, the existence of the evil realms and the cycle of birth and death continue without cease. As the people of this world refuse to stop committing evil, the workings of karma naturally forces them into the evil realms where immeasurable anguish awaits them. They must bear indescribable pains for life after life and kalpa after kalpa, with no end in sight. Only with great difficulty can they gain release. These are the burning pains that consume those who commit the five evils."

"If in the midst of all this, you are virtuous, upright in deed and thought, honest in speech and sincere in doing good and shunning evil, then with the merit and virtue acquired you will naturally attain bliss. You will also be able to cultivate the Way to Unsurpassed Bodhi. Just rewards for holding the five precepts."

CHAPTER 36 : THE PAINS CAUSED BY THE KLESHAS

Sutra:

"The Buddha said to Bodhisattva Maitreya: I again urge you all to avoid the five evils and the burning pains that accompany them. The sufferings of the evil realms awaits those who refuse to do so. In this world, some who have committed evil may become bedridden with incurable illnesses. Ensnared in a limbo between life and death, their efforts to gain relief are all in vain. Thus, they are a living example of the immediate consequences of evil karma. After dying in pain, they fall into the three evil realms."

"Karmic feuds are perpetuated by acts of violence. The seeds for future carnage are often planted over minor things. As people are greedy for love and wealth, they are possessive and uncharitable. Gripped by passion, they feel no concern for moral principles. Motivated by delusions and avarice, they become selfish and hanker for personal benefit. When they are rich and powerful, they become complacent and enjoy themselves at will. As they are impatient and apathetic towards the task of accumulating merits, their pomp and power are short lived. Good and evil both have distinct consequences that always unfold. Once they do, those who have for so long done as they please will be filled with unspeakable fear as their souls descend into the evil realms. Do not doubt what I have said."

"Now that I have elaborated in detail the true nature of the Samsara, you should all ponder deeply. There is nothing to enjoy in this world and certainly nothing you can truly keep. Hence, each of you must strive hard to practice virtue for the rest of your lives. Honor the Sages and respect the virtuous. Let mercy, humaneness and tolerance be your guide. You must seek Bodhi and forever uproot the three poisons which drive the Samsara. By doing so, you will be forever free from the pains of the three evil realms."

"Of all good deeds, which is the foremost? The answer is that rectifying one's heart and mind is the greatest good. Your body can commit no evil if your heart is pure. Do this and you will be in accordance with all that is good and virtuous. Those who still their desires cannot transgress the rules of morality. What they see and speak of are always harmonious. Furthermore, they are careful and proper in demeanor. Those who conduct themselves in accordance with their own passions will meet only failure and regret. A steady hand on the tiller can

only come from patience."

CHAPTER 37 : A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Sutra:

"You should all widely amass supreme causes pertaining to Sagehood. Do not break the precepts and always be patient and diligent. Be compassionate and single-minded in cultivation. If you can hold the eight precepts for a day and night, the resulting merit surpasses the merit derived from cultivating in the Land of Ultimate Bliss for one hundred years. Why? Because the residents of the Buddha-land are naturally virtuous. There is not even a hair's-breadth worth of evil there."

"In fact, if you practice virtue in this world for ten full days, the merit derived will surpass that of cultivating elsewhere in the Samsara for a millennium. The reason is that the other worlds are naturally pleasurable and luxurious due to the merits of the inhabitants. Thus, there are no grounds for committing evil. Conversely, the world we reside in has little good but plenty of evil. People must toil for a living. The food here is toxic and the drink is bitter. The evil habits of this world increases with each passing day."

"Ever since my enlightenment, I have indefatigably expounded the Dharma to all who would listen. I exhort all of you to accept, study and cultivate in accordance with my instructions. I urge you all to follow and accept the entirety of my teachings. Furthermore, you should all spread what I have said to the public. Teach it to the young and old, to men and women, and to your friends and family. Let the Wheel of Dharma turn."

"In your own practice, you must always be strict with yourself. Always self-reflect and act in accordance to reason. Be optimistic, filial, humane, just and dutiful. Speedily correct your faults and always strive to eliminate evil habits while increasing virtuous ones. You should never tolerate your own offenses. By cultivating the precepts and the Dharma, you are like a pauper who has finally obtained limitless wealth. Moreover, neither regret nor lament because the future is all that matters. Sweep away the six kinds of dust and the wisdom of Bodhi will naturally show."

"Anywhere a Buddha goes, whether to a state, a city, or a hamlet, people will be

converted and brought towards the Way. All the lands under heaven will be serene and peaceful. The Sun will shine bright and the Moon will be clear. Pleasant breezes and timely rains will be the norm. Plagues and calamities will not occur. Society will be prosperous and peaceful. Soldiers and weapons will be of no use. Virtue will be revered and humaneness cherished. All will feel compelled to cultivate etiquette and deference. Society will be free from thieves and bandits. There will be neither grievances nor miscarriages of justice. The powerful will not exploit the weak. Everyone will naturally be satisfied and content."

"The compassion I feel towards sentient beings far exceeds a mother's love for her children. Having become a Buddha in this world, I use virtue to overcome vice. I also uproot the pains of birth and death. As I have become one with the five virtues, I now ascend towards my parinirvana. However, after I am gone, my teachings will be slowly twisted and misunderstood. Eventually, the ever increasing karmic obstacles of this world will cause my teachings to become lost. With nothing to guide them, future generations will drown in their own evil habits. Society will be plagued by chaos while the evil realms will overflow with evildoers. As you have now heard the Dharma, you must do your best to spread these teachings. You must strictly observe the precepts and uphold the sutras."

Bodhisattva Maitreya joined his palms and said: "The evil habits of the people of this world match your descriptions perfectly. World-Honored One, we will never forget your kindness. We fully accept your words of wisdom and will wholeheartedly strive for rebirth in Pureland. We will never stop until Bodhi has been obtained!"

CHAPTER 41: OBSTACLES TO MEETING THE BUDDHA (PARTIAL)

Sutra:

..... The Bodhisattva Maitreya asked: "Why is it that some people of this world who cultivate good cannot seek rebirth in Pureland?"

The Buddha said to Maitreya: "Such people are of little wisdom. They foolishly prefer the bland pleasures of the impermanent heavens over the supreme bliss found in Pureland. Thus, they do not vow for rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."

Bodhisattva Maitreya asked further: "How can persons with such delusions and aversions expect to be saved from the Samsara?"

The Buddha replied: " These people are unable to amass merit without becoming attached. As they cultivate virtue only to obtain worldly happiness, they have no interest in the Buddha's wisdom. On account of their good deeds, they will be reborn as patricians or devas. However, they cannot leave the Samsara. Even though their parents, spouse, children and relatives strive to bring them towards the Way, their wrong views and attachments make such efforts futile."

"Furthermore, there exists another class of people who are even more deluded. These people may do some good and are interested in my teachings. However, they are deceived by their own worldly intellect or eloquence. Thus, they entertain wrong views and slander the Dharma. They edit, reinterpret and twist it in accordance with their own false views. Hence, they are unable to achieve liberation from the Samsara."

"Lastly, there are people of excellent roots of virtue who diligently amass vast stocks of merit. However, they are attached to the skandhas and very sentimental. Thus, even though they seek liberation, they still fail to do so. Such persons can only liberate themselves by cultivating with the wisdom of Non-Abidance. By leaving behind attachments and aversions, they become calm and can be reborn in Pureland."

CHAPTER 48: A FINAL WORD FROM THE BUDDHA

As soon as the Buddha finished speaking this Sutra, innumerable devas, humans and sentient beings became free of the six kinds of dust and opened their Dharma-Eye. Moreover, two thousand million sentient beings realized the third fruit of Arhatship on the spot. Sixty eight hundred Bhiksus also became free from all outflows and achieved liberation. In addition, four thousand million Bodhisattvas now dwell in the state of Non-abiding cessation. The august merits of the Dharma were fully visible. What's more, twenty five hundred million sentient beings achieved the state of Irreversible Fortitude. Countless beings attained Unsurpassed Bodhi.

Furthermore, The multitudes of beings who had never before desired liberation all awakened the aspiration for Unsurpassed Bodhi. They all vowed to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Once they do so, they will all be referred to as the Tathagatas of Wonderful Sound. Anyone who wishes to cultivate this Dharma Door, whether now or future generations, will be able to see Amitabha and be reborn in Pureland. His vows are always valid and will stand for all time.

At that time, the great trichiliocosm gently shook in the six auspicious ways. Various divine transformations manifested. A immense light soon enveloped the ten quarters. Devas could be seen gracefully performing wonderful celestial music while gliding among the stars. The Brahma devas of the Form heavens also celebrated after hearing the Buddha's sermon. Bouquets of divine flowers soon rained down from the skies like confetti. The Venerable Ananda, Bodhisattva Maitreya, attending Bodhisattvas, celestial dragons and everyone else all rejoiced in what they just heard and proceeded to cultivate in accordance to it.

VEN. MASTER HAI XIAN: A MODERN CASE OF
PURELAND REBIRTH



Venerable Master Hai Xian

Every drop of detail in the Infinite Life Sutra can be found displayed in his daily conduct. He is the Infinite Life Sutra and the Sutra is him. His life of cultivation will serve as a beacon of light for thousands of years to come.

-Ven. Master Chin Kung on Venerable Master Hai Xian

信 願 行

FAITH WILLINGNESS ACTION

If one wishes to summarize the Buddha's advice in the Infinite Life Sutra, the above three words would suffice. Anyone who wishes to take advantage of Amita Buddha's Forty Eight Vows must have faith in Pureland and be willing to recite Amita Buddha's name to the level of single-mindedness. Furthermore, in the chapter where the Buddha outlined the three grades of successful aspirants, all three demonstrated these three tenets. However, in Chapter 41, all three types of persons who failed to leave the Samsara had either insufficient faith or a lack of willingness to act. Hence, doubt, inconsistent effort or lack of action will all handicap your potential and must be eliminated. Thus, We are now going to study the life story of someone who has succeeded by practicing this Sutra.

Venerable Master Hai Xian (海賢老和尚) attained Pureland rebirth last year at the venerable age of 112. In fact, he was still plowing to the temple fields on the eve of his Pureland rebirth despite his advanced age. He had successfully practiced mindfulness of Amitabha for his whole life, even in the face of the chaos of the Chinese Civil War, WWII, Cultural Revolution and various other hardships such as illiteracy, misfortune and poverty. More importantly, he achieved all this because he was single-minded in his practice. His faith, willingness and action were so strong that he had already met Amita Buddha for the first time during his 20s. Thus, he is a living example of this Sutra. His conduct mirrors every virtue and instruction described by the Buddha in this Sutra. He is a Bodhisattva of Pureland and belongs to the highest grade of aspirants.

Venerable Hai Xian attained Pureland rebirth during the wee hours of January 17th 2013. He was already informed beforehand by Amita Buddha on the date he would achieve Pureland rebirth. This is because those who have recited the name of Amitabha to the level of single-mindedness will be able to meet Amita Buddha (who will welcome them into Pureland and give them predictions). Since Venerable Hai Xian's mindfulness had far surpassed this level, he had by now met Amita Buddha numerous times. However, he was requested to remain in this world in each of those earlier encounters because his exemplary conduct meant that his presence was needed to inspire confidence and serve as a beacon of light for cultivators to emulate.

Furthermore, he has also been nominated to succeed the Great Master Yin Guang as the 14th Patriarch of the Pureland School by Venerable Master Chin Kung.

Therefore, all cultivators of Pureland Buddhism should watch this documentary and strive to emulate the late Master's exemplary faith and diligence in reciting Amitabha's name.

Link to Documentary: <http://edu.hwadzan.com/play/65/34/0/87285>

Version with English subtitles: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JoritpHKxm4>

BIOGRAPHY:

Childhood and Early Life:

Venerable Master Hai Xian (1901-2013) was born in Henan province on August 19th 1901 to a devout Buddhist family. His birth name was Wen Chuan Xian (文川賢) and he had five siblings. The family was poor and young Chuan Xian's father often had to travel to neighboring villages to ask for alms. When Chuan Xian was 10 years old, his father was beaten to death by bandits while trying to put out a raging fire set by his murderers (they had torched an entire village while plundering it). The returning villagers sent his body home to be buried with honors.

When Chuan Xian reached adolescence, he experienced and observed several events which strengthened his faith in Buddhism. For instance, in one case, a relative of his who delighted in verbally and physically abusing others eventually gave birth successively to four children who all died young. Furthermore, she became mentally unstable and bit her own tongue out. Finally, she died in agony shortly after giving birth to a daughter. She was only thirty two years old at the time of death.

It was eventually understood that her short life and misfortunes were due to the evil karma created by her malicious speech and violent behavior.

When Chuan Xian reached the age of 18, he developed carbuncles (large boils) on his leg. It was so severe that the leg became gangrenous and his life was threatened. His mother consulted numerous doctors and tried all kinds of treatments, but all to no avail. Finally, Chuan Xian realized that this illness was the result of past evil karma and refused further treatment. He then sincerely recited the name of Guanyin Bodhisattva. Miraculously, the leg healed completely by the end of the month.

These experiences and events prompted him to seriously consider the pain and suffering of the wheel of rebirth. Just like Dharmakara in Chapter 4, Chuan Xian now understood the following:

The Eighth Realization:

Birth and death are like a blazing fire

Plagued with endless afflictions and suffering.

Vow to cultivate the Mahayana mind,

To bring relief to all;

**To take on infinite sufferings for sentient beings,
And lead all to supreme joy.**

Furthermore, his faith in the Buddhadharma and the laws of karma were now strong and resolute.

Life as a Monk

When Chuan Xian turned twenty years of age, he decided to leave the home life and become a monk. Thus, he bid his mother farewell and was ordained in 1920 by the eminent Dharma Master Chwan Jie (傳戒法師). Henceforth, he was known as Venerable Hai Xian. Master Chwan Jie did not teach him to practice Zen or to study and speak the dharma. He simply taught Venerable Hai Xian to single-mindedly recite the name of Amitabha. Venerable Hai Xian, being as faithful as Patriarch Huineng, diligently cultivated as instructed. What many people do not know is that the name of Amitabha represents one's Buddha-nature. When Patriarch Huineng said that the Buddha-nature is self sufficient, he is referring to that when a man's heart is the same as Amitabha, he has attained the mind seal of the Buddha. Hence, such a person no longer has outflows and is pure.

In fact, all the great sutras such as the Lotus Sutra and Shurangama Sutra are simply an expansion of the name of Amita Buddha. They were spoken to serve as an indirect way for people who still have doubt to gradually believe in the unsurpassed perfection of Amitabha name recitation. This is why the Shurangama Sutra ends by mentioning that anyone who merely thinks about teaching the Shurangama Sutra to someone can have all their heavy offenses eradicated and be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The name of Amitabha represents the infinite merit and wisdom of all the Buddhas.

Hence, Master Chwan Jie recognized Venerable Hai Xian's faith and determination and thus passed to him the highest dharma. Since Hai Xian's heart was always mindful of Amitabha, his conduct naturally conforms with that of a Buddha.

For instance, he cultivated each the Six Paramitas perfectly without exception. As his heart reflected Amitabha, he was naturally not subject to the urges and defilements that cause regular people to turn their backs on the five precepts and ten virtues. His heart was pure and free from the six kinds of dust.

In Upasaka Huang Nien Tsu's commentary on this Sutra, it is mentioned that there are

four fields of merit. They are the field of gratitude (i.e. one's parents and teachers) ; the triple jewel field ; the field of the poor, sick and needy and the field of animals.

Thus, in terms of generosity, he diligently planted in all four fields of merit. For instance, when the Red Guards came to vandalize the Stupa of his mentor, Master Hai Xian managed to retrieve beforehand the ashes of his mentor and hid it in a secret compartment. When the Communist government forbade him from reciting and forced him to serve as a superintendent for a local farming team, he continued to be mindful of Amitabha in his heart and prostrated to the Buddha at night. If there was meat in the communal pot, he would eat only the vegetables around it. As soon as the Cultural Revolution ended, he immediately returned to the temple and built a new Stupa for his mentor. What's more, he also invited his aged mother into the small temple where he resided and cared for her until she attained Pureland rebirth.

Furthermore, throughout his life, he never ceased to be assiduous with his duties. Being a farmer by former profession, he diligently cultivated many wildlands into tillable farmland. With the crops he grew by himself, he fed his aged fellow cultivators and the poor, old and needy. In fact, he once donated about half a ton of crops that he personally grew to relieve those affected by the 1989 floods.

Moreover, he regularly released life and helped repair bridges. He also led the building of new temples. Even when he spotted someone stealing some of the corn he grew, he did not become hostile but generously gifted the thief the cream of the crop. Such conduct reflects the compassionate behavior of Bodhisattvas as described in the Sutra of the Eight Realizations of Great Beings:

"The Sixth Realization:

Poverty and hardship breed resentment,

Creating harm and discord.

Bodhisattvas practice dana,

Beholding the friendly and hostile equally;

They neither harbor grudges

Nor despise malicious people."

As the name of Amittuofo is self sufficient, one whose heart is in accordance with it will naturally display virtue, wisdom and equanimity at all times. This is why Venerable Hai Xian did not react with anger even when an arrogant man slapped him in the face. Also, in Chapter 33, the Buddha mentions that:

"When interacting with others, we must know that even a small disagreement now may escalate into a mass of hostility in the lives to come. Thus, we must be careful. Those who antagonize and humiliate others will eventually be reborn together with their victims, to suffer their vengeance."

The Venerable Master Chin Kung often stresses that competition leads to quarrels which later develops into wars. This is why forbearance is so important in Buddhism. However, it is very hard to exercise patience when one is still afflicted by passions. Hence, the only solution is to recite the name of Amita Buddha single-mindedly. Only with this samadhi can you avoid piling up karmic enemies. Furthermore, the merit created would be so great that all karmic enemies will instantly become friends as they too benefit from the blessings you create.

In all of his 112 years of life, Venerable Hai Xian lived simply. He sewed his own clothes and grew his own food. If he received offerings, he would use it to print sutras and perform other acts of charity. On his birthday the year before his Pureland rebirth, a group of householders prepared a sumptuous meal as a birthday gift. For the first time in his life, Venerable Hai Xian did not smile and declined to eat any of it except for a few sprouts. The householders soon realized that he was teaching them by example. As the Buddha's last advice to the Sangha before his parinirvana was that one should regard the precepts as one's teacher and hardship as nourishment, this display of austerity reflects this key advice.

In Chapter 34 of the this Sutra, it is mentioned that birth, death, sickness and old age are all agonizing pains. Furthermore, the Buddha also stressed that only Pureland rebirth can free us from them. Venerable Hai Xian's life proves this to us. Ever since he was able to single-mindedly recite Amita Buddha's name, he became free of those agonizing pains forever. He will never be born again as all who are reborn in Pureland manifest by transformation. Moreover, sickness and old age cannot bother him as his mindfulness in Amitabha allows him to dwell in the bliss of samadhi.

Rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss



Prior to his Pureland rebirth, Amitabha appeared before him and informed him that he will be reborn in Pureland when he receives a dharma book titled "If Buddhism is to Prosper ; Practitioners Must Praise Each other" (若要佛法興唯有僧贊僧).

On January 13th 2013, a visiting guest gifted the book to Venerable Hai Xian. He immediately donned his best robes and requested that a picture be taken of him with the book (see picture). It is clear that this gesture (he had never before done such a thing) was to serve as an endorsement for the book, which has decisively neutralized recent libelous slander against Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra. Hence, we too should take the book's main advice and refrain from criticizing others. We should praise all practitioners of all branches of Buddhism and promote interfaith harmony.

In the three following days, Venerable Hai Xian visited a number of his old friends and acquaintances. Even on the afternoon of the third day, he was still working in the temple fields. When one concerned junior monk asked him to retire, he simply responded that "after I'm done, I'll stop". That night, Venerable Hai Xian loudly recited the name of Amitabha continuously and by morning, he was discovered to have already entered the Land of Ultimate Bliss. Just like the recorded signs of Pureland rebirth in the sutras, rigor mortis did not set in and his body remained soft, flexible and fresh. Incidentally, like Bodhidharma, Venerable Hai Xian's mother's coffin was empty except for a shoe when it was exhumed for a more proper reburial.

Hence, knowing this, we should have absolute faith in our ability to attain Pureland

rebirth. Everything that Venerable Master Hai Xian achieved, he did it for us. He has unequivocally shown us the Buddha's words are true. He could have left for Pureland when he was in his 20s, but he stayed to show us the way. Therefore, we must repay such kindness by heeding the important lessons he has taught us by example.

Lastly, during Venerable Hai Xian's funeral ceremony, one attending Dharma Master mentioned Venerable Hai Xian's encounter with a wolf in his eulogy. One day when Venerable Hai Xian was journeying, a wolf came up to him and pulled at his robes. He initially thought that this was his moment of death and thus diligently recited the Buddha's name. However, it soon became apparent that the wolf simply wished to request his help. The wolf led Venerable Hai Xian back to his den where a female wolf was on the verge of death due to complications from giving birth. Venerable Hai Xian speedily recited the name of Amitabha to the female wolf and the merit from this mindfulness instantly saved the life of the female wolf, allowing it to safely give birth to a litter of cubs. The next day, the wolf appeared again and offered honeycombs in gratitude to Venerable Hai Xian.

Thus, if even a wolf can recognize virtue and repay kindness, how can we (as humans) neglect to repay the kindness of Venerable Master Hai Xian and heed his example?

Buddhism is about turning the great Dharma Wheel. Hence, we must strive to cultivate in accordance with Venerable Hai Xian's teachings. We should first recite to single-mindedness ourselves and then turn to helping others. We repay the kindness of Master Hai Xian by becoming Sages ourselves. We turn the great Dharma Wheel by becoming an example for other people to emulate.

IMPORTANT LESSONS

The most important lesson that Venerable Hai Xian's life teaches us is the importance of faithfully and single-mindedly reciting Amitabha's name. As mentioned before, the Buddha-nature is self sufficient and Amitabha is our Buddha-nature. This means that this Buddha name represents the Six Paramitas, Four Immeasurables and Threefold Training all in one. Thus, by reciting Amitabha's name to the level of single-mindedness, you are recovering the infinite stock of merit, utmost virtue and the unsurpassed wisdom that our Buddha-nature contains. This is why you can meet Amita Buddha. Because your heart finally matches the Buddha's and yearns for Pureland rebirth. The Buddha is absolutely compassionate and will certainly respond if you truly seek him.

"Of all good deeds, which is the foremost? The answer is that rectifying one's heart and mind is the greatest good. Your body can commit no evil if your heart is pure. Do this and you will be in accordance with all that is good and virtuous."

- Chapter 36, Infinite Life Sutra

The meaning of this quote is that the greatest good is to recite Namu Amitabha to the level of single mindedness.

The biggest mistakes cultivators make nowadays is to seek the external instead of from within. We do this and do that. We feel that we need to read that sutra, donate to this cause or receive those precepts. We do this for a little while and that for a little while. We then complain that the Buddha does not respond. The truth is that the fault lies with ourselves. We are not sincere and our senses still connect with the six kinds of dust. Hence, we think we are seeking the Buddha and Pureland, but our scattered efforts and thoughts are simply asking for the six kinds of dust.

However, once you are mindful of Amitabha to the level of single-mindedness, you are self sufficient and no longer bothered by attachments and aversions. With such Non-abidance, you will effortlessly display all of the Six Paramitas and Four Immeasurables without fail. This is because all virtues and good works naturally spring from one who has accessed the Buddha nature.

This is the point that Venerable Hai Xian is trying to teach us. He did the humanly impossible and bore unbearable burdens during his 112 years of life. However, he did

not suffer even a hair's breadth worth of stress. This is because he found the inner bliss of the Buddha-nature while we seek false bliss and distraction from the outside. He did not wake up everyday making plans and checklists. He simply exercised enough faith and forbearance from the get go to recite Amitabha single-mindedly. He resisted all scattered thoughts, doubts and the temptation of the six kinds of dust. Thus, everything he achieved afterwards simply flowed from his Buddha-nature.

Hence, the main lesson here is that we need to focus. As mentioned before, sincerely reciting the name of Amitabha represents cultivating Sila, Samadhi and Prajna all at once. Thus, we should strive to recite it always. Do not be distracted by mundane urges and doubts. Do not feel the need to pair your Buddha recitation with other good deeds or practices. Just diligently recite towards single-mindedness. Unwavering faith and concentration is the key to doing so. Fortitude is the shield that maintains your efforts.

"the key to success is to cultivate one dharma door unceasingly"

- Venerable Master Chin Kung

Venerable Hai Xian Epitaph (Written by Venerable Master Chin Kung)

賢公和尚，佛門榜樣。不事經懺，遠離利養。嚴持戒律，四眾欽仰。老實念佛，道在平常。淨土大經，諸佛祕藏。一句彌陀，甚深妙禪。百一十二，老當益壯。唯僧讚僧，法門興旺。弘普賢願，表法離障。續佛慧命，功德無量。自在往生，倒駕慈航。

Venerable Sage and model of virtue, you are a beacon of light in the darkness. Despite hardships, you were never even once tempted by pomp and profit. Strictly adhering to the precepts, you are a model for both monks and layman. With faith and sincerity, you recited the Buddha's name. Principles of the Way were reflected in your every move. The Dharma door of Pureland is the Buddha's highest wisdom. With the name of Amitabha, you found your Buddha-nature and dwelled in the highest Samadhi. Even as your age rose above one hundred, your strength only increased. With mutual praise, Buddhism will prosper. You have cultivated the vows of Samantabhadra and showed us the way pass karmic obstacles. You turned the great Dharma Wheel, reaped boundless merits and serenely achieved rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. You have fulfilled your Mahayana vows.

Namo Amitufo!

A FINAL WORD

It is said that human rebirth is rare and the proper dharma is hard to meet. Hence, we must treasure our time here and diligently recite Namu Amittuofo to the level of single-mindedness. At that level, the only thing on our minds should be one recitation after another. Such samadhi will allow you to meet Amitabha and be welcomed into Pureland, thereby ending all pain and suffering.

Even if we cannot recite this Buddha name to single mindedness, we can still be reborn in Pureland if we let it all go and become mindful of Amitabha during our last moments, wishing for him to appear and take us to Pureland.

According to the Shurangama Sutra, we will suddenly see all the good and evil that we have done in this life during our moment of death. Moreover, the Earth Store Sutra also mentions that when people of this world are about to die, they are often in a haze and unable to concentrate. This is similar to how we involuntarily recollect our day in our dreams. Hence, this is why it is so important to regularly recite the name of Amita Buddha. Doing so will help us recollect Amitabha's name at our moment of death, thereby allowing us to attain Pureland rebirth by being mindful of the Buddha at the last moment. Furthermore, the merits acquired will allow us to stay clear minded at the moment of death. This will ensure that our mindfulness will not be distracted by evil ghosts or manifestations of evil karma at that critical juncture.

Also, this is the reason why we need to recite the name of Amitabha to the dead and dying. Even if a person has died, it is likely that the consciousness has not yet left the body (it usually leaves 8-12 hours later). Hence, it is important to not disturb the body and to recite Amita Buddha's name to them during this time. This will allow their consciousness to remain calm and become mindful of the Buddha. Furthermore, the 26th Vow of Amitabha also states that those who merely perceive his name will have a splendid rebirth even if they do not leave the Samsara. As a person's hearing is the last faculty to fail, their consciousness can still hear for the full 8-12 hour period after their breathing stops.

In conclusion, we must recite the name of Amita Buddha continuously and through thick and thin. We may meet stress, anxieties and obstacles tomorrow, but we must never stop sincerely reciting his name. It is the solution to all our problems. This Mantra will cut through all of our afflictions and troubles like a knife through warm

butter.

Also, we can recite the name of Amita Buddha in any language and variation we prefer. Thus, Amitabha, Amitufo, Namo Amitufo, Amita Buddha etc. are all acceptable variations. Lastly, it is our duty to turn the great Dharma Wheel. Thus, we should all strive to make the Buddha's words known to others whenever the opportunity presents itself. The merits from doing so will be without compare.

Namo Amitufo!

Namo Amitufo!

Namo Amitufo!

Acknowledgments:

This translation would not have been possible without Venerable Master Chin Kung's extensive published Dharma lectures on Upasaka Xia's Infinite Life Sutra.

Furthermore, it was only through Master Chin Kung's extensive efforts to promote this Sutra over the last five decades that this Sutra has become well known around the world. In fact, he is currently speaking a new series of lectures on this Sutra as I write this. Hence, no words could describe my immense gratitude towards his teachings and the opportunities he has given the world. Furthermore, I will also like to thank Hisao Inagaki for his excellent complete translation of the Ts'ao-Wei Dynasty version of the Infinite Life Sutra. The text served as a important inspiration and reference for this translation.
