



# Right View

**Buddhism in Every Step**

(英文版)

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# Right View

Different people have different ways of looking at life and the universe. As our vantage points are different, our perspectives also vary. Unfortunately, not all of our perspectives are true and correct. As our true nature is obscured by worldly sense objects, we cannot perceive the world with clarity. This inevitably results in biased understanding. So how do we foster right view, so that we can see life as it is?

Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Buddha attained enlightenment under a bodhi tree. He was awakened to the truth of the universe and human existence. After his enlightenment, the Buddha wished to share the truth with all beings, though it differed greatly from the erroneous beliefs of the common people. While most people regard the five desires (wealth, beauty, fame, food, and sleep) as pleasures, the Buddha considers them the root of suffering.

Whereas the Buddha sees the Buddha Nature as the true reality of existence, most of us consider the concept illusive and unreal. Though we sentient beings flounder aimlessly in the sea of suffering, trapped in the wheel of rebirth, we continue to refuse the compassionate liberation the Buddha offers to us. When the Buddha considered how difficult it would be for sentient beings to accept the truth, he contemplated withholding this knowledge and entering the peaceful state of nirvana on his own. He reasoned that if he taught the Dharma to people, they would likely reject the truth and slander his teachings, thereby inducing unwholesome karma on themselves. This unwholesome karma would tie them to the circle of birth and death, bringing even more suffering. But the Buddha's compassion for the virtuous few and the pleas of heavenly beings drove the Buddha to remain in this world and spread the Dharma. We, however, have such a stubborn attachment to erroneous views that even the Buddha found it difficult to change our minds.

There are times when we have different perspectives from our friends and engage in senseless arguments with them. For example, some people say to monastics, "Oh! How regrettable that you chose to

renounce your worldly life!” But renunciation is the path to the truth of life and the universe. It is an act worthy of celebration. Why would we have regrets? Thus, when we look at the world, we should not be limited to our own point of view; we should try to walk in another’s shoes. This way, we can maintain objectivity.

Too many people approach religion with little faith and reverence. To them, religion is a means of attaining fame and fortune. Little do they realize that the true purpose of religion is in giving. Once, some devotees declared, “Venerable Master, we don’t want to recite the name of the Buddha anymore.”

“Why not?” I asked. “You have been faithfully chanting the name of the Buddha for over twenty years. Why stop now?”

One devotee indignantly replied “I thought that chanting the name of the Buddha would bring me good luck in business. Recently, I invested in a business with my friends, but they embezzled my money. The Buddha and bodhisattvas have not protected me one bit. Why should I continue to chant the Buddha’s name?”

Hearing his reply, I suddenly realized that he viewed the Buddha as a deity of wealth. Paying

respect to the Buddha was his insurance policy for his finances. This greedy attitude conflicted with the great compassion of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Other devotees complained to me, “Venerable Master! We don’t want to be vegetarians any longer. Although we have been vegetarians for decades, we still have poor health and are in constant need of medical attention.”

If one becomes vegetarian for good health and longevity rather than out of compassion, then their attitude is flawed and the practice may not last. Good health comes from disciplined living, good diet, and regular exercise. Practicing vegetarianism to avoid consuming the flesh and meat of other sentient beings is beneficial to our mental health, which, over time, can improve our physical health. This is how vegetarianism leads to good health. Health has its associated causes. Religious practices also have their own set of causes and effects too. We should not confuse them. Likewise, when we look at the world, the right view helps us avoid such misconceptions. So what do the Buddhist teachings tell us about right view?



## I. Erroneous Views

A person who lacks the right view is like a ship without a rudder, drifting helplessly in the grips of the merciless ocean. It is of utmost importance that we maintain the right view. Erroneous views can trap us in delusions, leaving us with little chance of pulling ourselves out of the quagmire. What constitutes erroneous views? According to Buddhist sutras, there are five types of erroneous views.

### A. *Views of the Body*

The body is a combination of the four great elements (earth, water, fire, and wind) and five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness). Many people consider it real and permanent. They become attached to it and refuse to let go of it. They do not see that the physical body is like a house. Even the best-built house will eventually fall apart. Someday, its tenant will have to move out. Those who hold erroneous views regarding the body consider the body to be real and are relentless in their pursuit of sensory pleasures that stimulate it. Little do they know of the dimensions that lay beyond the physical body.

## *B. Extreme Views*

Extreme views are one-sided and only look at one aspect of a phenomenon. Some people have an “eternalistic view” and believe that the world is forever here and unchanging. Others have a “nihilistic view” and believe that nothing matters after life ends. Some people believe that the world has boundaries, while others believe that the world has no boundaries. There are those who believe that the body and mind are one, others believe that the body and mind are different. Those who have an “existent view” believe that the Buddha still exists after nirvana, while those who have the “non-existent view” believe that the Buddha ceases to exist after nirvana. These views are one-sided, partial, and incomplete; they are called “extreme views.”

Nihilists believe that death is final and that a person’s deeds, whether good or bad, carry no consequence. From the nihilistic viewpoint, morality and ethics have little value and are put behind the pursuit of enjoyment. Eternalists, on the other hand, believe that human life is permanent, that humans will always be reborn as humans. They do not know that the circumstances of our rebirth are based on our karma.

These extreme views, whether they are eternalistic, nihilistic, bounded, boundless, identical or different, are erroneous and deviate from the Middle Way.

### *C. Evil Views*

Evil views refer to views that are unethical and unwholesome. This includes disregarding one's parents, denying cause and effect, and being disrespectful of the Triple Gem. Evil views can dull our wisdom. They may have a twisted understanding of the Law of Cause and Effect. The Law of Cause and Effect tells us that "the planting of melons yields melons, and the sowing of peas yields peas." Some people extend the argument, claiming that if we swat a mosquito or a fly, then one will be reborn as a mosquito or fly. Worse yet, they believe that if they were to take the life of a man, they would be reborn as a man. This warped logic totally misrepresents the truth of cause and effect. The act of killing leads to being killed. The truth that "you reap what you sow" will never change. Misinterpreting this truth is like taking pictures without focusing first; the pictures will come out blurred and fuzzy.

Too many people view religion as a stepping-stone to fortune and fame. They think that by

worshipping their gods, they will gain success, wealth, and power. They do not understand wealth and religious cultivation have their respective cause and effect. If we do not have a clear understanding of which causes will yield which effects, we will no doubt make fools of ourselves.

There once was an ambitious young man who sought success and wealth. He heard that a nearby temple honored a very powerful deity who could grant him his wish. One day, early in the morning, he rode his motorcycle to the temple to make an offering at the temple. After he was finished, he returned to his motorcycle and sped down the highway. He was enjoying himself when, unfortunately, he smashed into a guard railing and died. When his father heard, he was very upset. The father rushed to the temple, and began to curse at the statue of the temple god, “My son faithfully made offerings to you. Not only have you not brought him great fortune, you failed to protect him. You are an irresponsible god. I am going to tear down your temple brick by brick!”

The father rolled up his sleeves and was about to strike. The caretaker of the temple saw this and rushed up to reason with the father, “Sir! Please don’t get upset. Yes, your son often came to pay his respects

to the temple god. The temple god was moved, and he sought to save your son. Unfortunately, the motorcycle on which your son zoomed off was just too fast for the god's white horse to follow. It is most tragic that your son was killed in the collision.”

Because of his speeding, the young man reaped the effect of a traffic accident. We cannot shirk our responsibilities and blame the consequences on the gods. But it is common to find such unreasonable people in society. They do not understand the meaning of cause and effect and blame others for their mistakes. This is ignorance, an example of a corrupt view.

#### *D. Taking the Wrong Views as Truths*

When one takes the wrong views as truths, one is self-centered. They consider their own thoughts the ultimate truth. What everyone else says is wrong. Those who take the wrong views as truths are stubborn and cannot tolerate anyone who disagrees with them.

Even when they know they are in the wrong, these people try to cover up their mistakes and insist that they are right. This tendency to pass off falsehood as truth, corruption as righteousness, and depravity as virtue is deviant and extremely dangerous.

### *E. Views Attached to Immorality*

When people have views attached to immorality, they cling to interpretations of the precepts that are inconsistent with the Dharma in the hope of gaining worldly favor. Such people are usually arrogant and self-righteous. They see themselves as superior, often acting differently from others. They attempt to mislead others, who fall victim to their arguments and blindly worship them. There are some who claim to be holy men because they can survive on fruit and water alone. But if we think about it, what is holy about surviving on water and fruit? Fish drink water the whole day. Should we also worship them? Monkeys live in trees and survive on fruit. Are they sages as well? Whether a person is cultivated or not does not relate to such superficial and contrived actions, but on the real reflection of the heart.

Some time ago, a newspaper reported that a woman went for one hundred days without food or water. The fact that she came out of seclusion strong and robust caught the attention of the media. Some people began to worship her as a living goddess. But this story was very suspicious. Even plants need sun and water. How can a person survive without food

and water? It runs against the laws of nature. Holding onto such illogical principles for the sake of publicity is an example of a view attached to immorality.

Not only do views attached to immorality cloud our wisdom, they can also cost us our lives and trap us in the sea of suffering. We cannot stress the importance of this enough. How can views attached to immorality be avoided and the right views be cultivated? This is a very important first step in Buddhist practice. Before this question can be answered, worldly perspectives must be discussed.

## **II. Worldly Views**

There are as many ways of looking at the world as there are living beings under the sun. These myriad ways of looking at the world can be grouped into the following major categories.

### *A. The World Finds Pleasure in the Five Desires and the Six Sense Objects*

Most people find happiness in materialistic pleasures. They constantly pursue the various pleasures of the senses. These pleasures, however, are not the pinnacle of happiness. Achieving inner peace of mind is true happiness. There are many millionaires who have

beautiful wives, luxurious mansions, and fancy cars. But within their minds, they have not experienced the real meaning of life. They may possess everything they desire, but they are impoverished individuals. There are many such poor, rich men in the world.

According to the teachings in the sutras, the pleasure derived from the five sensual desires (wealth, beauty, fame, food, and sleep) and the six sense objects (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharma) are unfulfilling and impure. These pleasures are unfulfilling because they are incomplete and flawed. They are impure because they are selfish and can give rise to distress and pain. Those who indulge in food and sexual satisfaction without restraint are not unlike moths to a flame. They unwittingly flock to their own demise. Worldly pleasure is like a honey-dipped sword: it may taste sweet, but it can also cause considerable pain. We should use wisdom to see through the illusive nature of material pleasures. We should pursue the ultimate and pure happiness of the Dharma.

### *B. The World Finds Fulfillment in Individual Accomplishments and Merits*

Some people are not drawn to material pleasures. They instead desire fame and glory. Their goal in



life is to leave their mark on history. It is true that we should all strive for success and accomplishment, but we should not limit ourselves to worldly achievements. Keep in mind that maintaining a healthy mind and body, improving one's character, and understanding the ultimate reality are much more worthwhile goals.

Many times I have heard people say that, since the purpose of religion is to teach us to do good, there is no need for religion as long as one's values are sound. This is a foolish notion. Being ethical is the most basic requirement. More than morality is necessary to achieve completeness of life. Religion does not only promote us to seek individual liberation through doing good and abstaining from evil. It also instructs us on how to help others, as well as ourselves, embark on the path to happiness and bliss. This is the meaning of religion. Once we have fulfilled the basic requirement of being an ethical individual, we should dedicate ourselves to freeing all sentient beings from suffering. Why should we limit ourselves to individual accomplishments? If our accomplishments are driven by the desire for individual satisfaction, they will amount to little, even if they leave a mark in history. We should develop our bodhi

mind and dedicate ourselves to the welfare of all beings. Then, life will attain its fullest value.

### *C. The World Finds Longevity in a One-Hundred-Year Lifespan*

Most of us want a long life. We may wish to live to be a hundred. Medical advances have made it possible to extend the human lifespan. We have offspring to carry on the family name, another means of prolonging our existence. But exactly how many years is considered long? When someone lives to be a hundred, we throw a vast celebration. But is the span of one hundred years really that long? For someone whose desires are insatiable, one hundred years is too short.

A devotee once asked a Chan master to pray for the devotee's longevity. The master asked, "How many more years do you wish to live?"

The devotee replied, "I am now sixty. I will have no regrets if I can live for another twenty years. It is a blessing to live to eighty."

"You only want twenty more years! It will go by in no time. You can ask for more years."

The bewildered devotee asked, "Oh, I can ask for more? In that case, make it forty more years. I will live to the incredible age of one hundred!"

“Forty years, or even one hundred years, will disappear like a flash of lightning. It is all over in the blink of the eye. You should ask for many, many more.”

The devotee was stupefied. Slowly, he asked, “In your opinion, should I ask for a few thousand, or maybe ten thousand years?”

“No, you should ask for an immeasurable lifespan.”

Even a lifespan as long as the legendary Pengzi, who lived to be eight hundred years old, is short compared to that of the universe. We should seek for a boundless and immeasurable life—the birthless and deathless state of true life—and not limit ourselves to a fleeting lifespan of a few decades or a century. In reality, would it truly be wonderful if we were to live to be one hundred? Picture it for yourselves. The children and grandchildren of a centenarian are probably aged seniors in their eighties and sixties. They may have to bear the sorrow of seeing their children and grandchildren buried. What happiness is there in that? Longevity can result in other forms of pain and sadness. When our vision begins failing and our health deteriorates, days can turn into torturous years. The value of life is not in how long we

live, but how we live our lives. If we can manifest our full potential, then even a moment of life lasts for an eternity.

#### *D. The World Finds Truth in Superstitious Practices*

Some people consider religion a form of superstition. What they do not understand is that it is not religion, but our daily life that is full of superstitious practices. We often celebrate weddings or birthdays with a feast, slaughtering many animals to eat. In the course of this celebration of life, we are killing many animals. As we mark the union of two people, we end up tearing these animal families apart. Such acts conflict with the theme of the celebration and run contrary to the spirit of compassion. Some people practice the Chinese custom of settling their arguments by going to the temple to make an oath and sacrifice a chicken. The commitment of an oath should come from within us and be reflected in our actions. How can the decapitation of a chicken bind us to our promises? Moreover, life is precious. What right do we have to take the life of another being for our convenience? If one has to demonstrate their conviction with a chicken head, I truly wonder about his or her integrity.

Some people conduct their lives according to the will of the gods. When they face a difficult decision, they ask their gods for guidance. When they become sick, they try to heal themselves with incense ashes. When they fall on hard times, they burn paper money to ward away their troubles. Their commitment to religious practice is to be applauded, but their way of going about it blindly and indiscriminately is problematic. Faith in a religion should start from reverence, the willingness to give, and readiness to sacrifice. The act of giving is not limited to material giving. If our circumstances enable us to give, we should do so to further our religious cultivation and for the benefit of the community, not personal gain. It is only by doing good and accumulating merits that we can ensure a bountiful cultivation.

The worldly views and perceptions mentioned above seem logical at a superficial glance, but they do not hold up under closer examination. But the pervasiveness of these practices lends it false credibility. Our herd mentality often drives us to follow the crowd, whether it is right or wrong. We all buy into these worldly views because of our unclear minds—a direct result of our ignorance clouding our pure nature. If we refine our minds diligently, one day,

our minds will shine with enlightenment. Everything will become perfectly clear. In this state, we walk in the company of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and live in the ultimate bliss of true freedom.

### **III. Levels of View**

There are a great variety of phenomena in our world. Hence, there are also many levels of view. For example, elementary school students view the world with innocence. High school students have youthful and idealistic outlooks. The perspectives of university students are broad and deep. Levels of view vary with age, experience, and character.

What then are the different levels of view? Let us first use Buddhists as an example. I begin every speech addressing everyone in the audience as “Dharma friends.” What does the term “Dharma friends” mean? Do we Buddhists meet the criteria for this term? The term Dharma friends means friends and guardians of the Dharma and Buddhism. If we do not have a correct understanding of the term Dharma friends, we will inevitably make many mistakes as we try to live up to the term.

What does the term Dharma friends entail? Let me illustrate this with the many levels of religious

practice. There are some people who, while religious, fail to discern a religion from a cult. They idolize and blindly worship supernatural phenomena, solely due to the fact that these phenomena are unusual. Then there are people who, though they follow an orthodox religion, practice solely for worldly gains and blessings. They pray to their deity for wealth and longevity. They do not understand that the true meaning of religious faith is in giving and helping others. Next are people who, while able to take the first steps into the Dharma, remain attached to a single master that they admire. What they do not realize is what the sutras have instructed us, “Rely on the Dharma, not on an individual teacher.” To rely on the Dharma is to practice the Dharma that was followed by the Buddha and preached by the sangha. The Dharma is an unchanging truth of the universe. These teachings are timeless and as relevant today as when they were first taught by the Buddha. Only when we let the Dharma guide us can our minds be sanctified and our life sublime. In contrast, people may change. They are subject to the limitations imposed on the human body such as old age, sickness, and death. Putting our faith on a single person is like counting on the morning dew that vanishes before

the sun; it is unreliable, and will not withstand the test of time. It is just not enough for Buddhists to follow Dharma teachers. They should also support and protect the Dharma.

Though we may admire and respect a Dharma teacher, we should go further and support all temples and monastics who follow and preach the Buddhist teachings. We should extend our love to all beings. In the sutras, it states that Buddhism is practiced within the community. The Buddha also told his disciples, “I, too, am a member of the community.” A person who serves the community carries the Buddha in his mind. He extends the life of wisdom of the Buddha. One who supports the community and earnestly works to deliver all beings is a true Dharma friend, a true guardian of Buddhism.

Some Buddhists limit their admiration to one master. Others commit themselves to a single temple. But rather than committing ourselves to a certain teacher and temple, we should also revere other accomplished teachers, lend our support to temples that preach the Dharma and serve the public, and help monasteries of both Theravada and Mahayana tradition. This is the level of religious faith to which all Buddhists should aspire.



There are many different levels of guardians and Dharma friends. As there are many reasons a person wants to learn about Buddhism, there are also many corresponding levels of Buddhist practice. Some beginner practitioners merely wish for fortune or a harmonious family, so they work to be generous and charitable. Accordingly, their rewards are limited to worldly blessings. Their religious foundation is shaky and many worldly things have a hold on them. Their progress is slow and difficult. This is the first level of Buddhist practice. Some people realize the superficial and illusive nature of worldly pleasures.

They choose to renounce the household life, seek the joy of the ultimate truth, and fulfill the full meaning of life. This is the second level of Buddhist practice. Renunciation uplifts one's own life and character, but one should also seek to relieve the suffering of all beings. Thus, in addition to renouncing the household life, one should also pledge to adopt the Mahayana bodhi spirit of propagating the Buddhist teachings and liberating all sentient beings. This is the highest form of Buddhist practice.

In Buddhism, there are five stages of cultivation, commonly referred to as "The Ways of the Five Vehicles." According to "The Ways of the Five

Vehicles,” we should first learn to uphold the five precepts of the “human vehicle,” and then move on to the ten wholesome acts of the “heavenly vehicle.” When we have adopted these practices, we then learn and practice the Four Noble Truths of the “sravaka vehicle” and the twelve links of dependent origination of the “pratyekabuddha vehicle.” Finally, we should cultivate the six perfections of the “bodhisattva vehicle,” fulfilling ourselves by fulfilling the lives of others. Although sravakas and pratyekabuddhas are enlightened beings of extraordinary cultivation, they are more keen on liberating themselves than universal liberation. Only when we have such compassion that, “we wish for the liberation of all beings from pain and will not seek comfort just for ourselves,” can we work for the benefit of all beings in the bodhisattva spirit. When we can help others in a transcendental yet worldly manner, then we have reached the highest form of Buddhist realization.

The above five stages of cultivation are the vehicles of human, heavenly beings, sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva. The bodhisattva vehicle can be further divided into forty-one or, according to another classification, fifty-two stages. Just as there are differing viewpoints on the stages of cultivation, each

of these five vehicles also possess different perceptions and understandings of the ultimate reality. The *Diamond Sutra*, *Heart Sutra*, and *Great Perfection of Wisdom Treatise* also tell us that, due to differing levels of spiritual maturation and merit, the realization of prajna wisdom and emptiness is different at each of these stages. In the case of humans and heavenly beings, wisdom is the cultivation of right view. To become a sravaka or a pratyekabuddha, one must attain the wisdom of the truth of dependent origination. When one's horizon is expanded and has the welfare of all sentient beings in one's mind, one ventures into the realm of the Mahayana bodhisattva. One will see the fundamental law of the universe—the truth of emptiness. This is the wisdom of the bodhisattva, which bodhisattvas apply in innumerable ways to help others. When the stage of Buddha is reached, we can clearly understand our pure intrinsic nature. This is suchness and the Buddha nature that each of us has, and the utmost unsurpassed wondrous truth of wisdom.

There are many stages of realization, ranging from the right view, the law of dependent origination, the truth of emptiness, to the ultimate realization of wisdom. These stages are sometimes referred to as the wisdom of action, the wisdom of insight, the

wisdom of equality, and the wisdom of the wondrous mirror. Regardless of classification, what truly matters is that we remember that these stages are indicative of how we practice in our minds. We should not dwell upon the artificial classification we impose on them. How can we increase the value of existence? How can we emulate the Buddha's great kindness and compassion? How can we venture into the bodhisattva's sea of wisdom? We cannot afford to delay consideration of these urgent questions.

#### **IV. Buddhist Right View**

What does Buddhism have to say regarding right views? The Buddha passed down right view to us. These are the keys to the ultimate truth. Some Buddhists, when faced with problems, obstacles, or misfortunes, give up their practice and lose their faith. They even criticize the religion and complain that the Buddhas and bodhisattvas fail to bless them. Such an attitude stems from incorrect views. To have right view is to have faith in our beliefs. When tested, the right view will help us remain strong, stand our ground, stand up for the benefit of the community, and fearlessly spread the truth. The right view is to understand that in the world, there is wholesome

and unwholesome, causes and effects, past and future lives, and worldly and transcendental beings. When we understand these truths, we will know the importance of being mindful of our deeds, words, and thoughts. We know that to avoid the three lower realms of existence, we have to do good and refrain from evil.

Additionally, the Buddha also taught us the Four Bases of Mindfulness, the Four Reliances, the Three Dharma Seals, and the Noble Eightfold Path. These practices all constitute the right view, and are all well presented in Buddhist sutras.

#### *A. The Four Bases of Mindfulness*

The concept of “The four bases of mindfulness” is also called “The four abidings of mindfulness,” areas where we should always anchor our mind. We should be mindful that “the body is impure,” “sensations will always result in suffering,” “the mind is impermanent,” and “all phenomena are without a nature of their own.” By helping us understand suffering, emptiness, and non-self, the four bases of mindfulness shows us the truth.

Many people perceive the body to be real. Therefore, they spend a lot of time and energy to

nurture and decorate the body. The mindfulness that “the body is impure” helps us to remove our attachment to the body, the source of our desires. If we could see the illusiveness of our physical bodies, we could turn to the true and unchanging Dharma body, the body of teachings and wisdom. Though suffering is more common in life than happiness, we still ignorantly pursue sensory pleasure. In so doing, we create more bad karma. We fail to realize that happiness is found in helping others. Our mind is like a waterfall. It never stops flowing. Notions surface and disappear constantly. When we forget that “the mind is impermanent,” we let our minds become adrift in the sea of rebirth, causing notions to form and cease. All phenomena of the world are impermanent. Nothing is immune to change. If we do not know how to let go, if we remain attached to the self, suffering will follow. If we can perceive and understand the world according to the Four Bases of Mindfulness, our mind and body will be forever pure and free.

### *B. The Four Reliances*

The four reliances that we should know are: “Rely on the Dharma, not on an individual teacher,” “Rely on the meaning, not on the words,” “Rely on wisdom,

not on knowledge,” and “Rely on the ultimate truth, not apparent truths.” Earlier, we discussed the meaning of “Rely on the Dharma, not on an individual teacher.” We should follow the truth of the Buddha’s teachings, which is eternal and unchanging, rather than the teacher, who is impermanent and changing. “Rely on the meaning, not on the words” means that we should understand the true purpose of the teachings, not engage in frivolous arguments or semantics. “Rely on wisdom, not on knowledge” means that we should live under the guidance of prajna wisdom rather than worldly views and perceptions. “Rely on the ultimate truth, not apparent truths” means that we should follow the ultimate truth of the universe, not blindly follow convenient falsehoods. These four reliances are our compass to the truth of life and the universe. They are gates to the treasures of truth.

### *C. The Three Dharma Seals*

The “Three Dharma Seals” is an important doctrine of Buddhism; it embodies the truth of life and the universe. The Three Dharma Seals are as follows: “All conditioned phenomena are impermanent,” “All phenomena are without an independent self,” and

“Nirvana is perfect tranquility.”

***All conditioned phenomena are impermanent:*** Phenomena, words, deeds, and even the world itself are impermanent. All worldly phenomena are impermanent. They are forever changing. Only when we rid ourselves of worldly views can we live in the transcendental world of true permanence.

***All phenomena are without an independent self:*** There is nothing in this world that is unchanging and free from decay. The same holds true for our physical bodies. Similarly, a house is nothing but a temporary place for us to live in, sleep in, and use for our convenience. With time, even the best-built house will collapse. When the time comes, this old house of ours, our bodies, will also waste away. Like our bodies, wealth, fame, and relationships will not last forever. Sooner or later, these things will leave us. If we understand that all things arise only when the right conditions exist and that all things cease when these conditions no longer exist, then we will no longer be attached to worldly phenomena, for they are impermanent and without an independent self. We will then reside in the realm of beginninglessness and endlessness and obtain the ultimate joy of living.

***Nirvana is perfect tranquility:*** Nirvana is a pure



and ultimate state of bliss. Within nirvana, there is no pain and distress, only peace. Although the Buddha wished to enter beginningless and endless nirvana immediately after his enlightenment, he decided to stay in this world and teach us. Those who consider liberation from rebirth as the sole purpose of Buddhism have passive, detached views. They do not fully understand the Buddha's teachings. Nirvana does not mean to distance ourselves from other beings and live in isolation from others. The Buddha rebukes such people as "rotten seeds." Nirvana is the peace of non-attachment and is described as follows: "With great wisdom, one does not abide in birth and death. With great compassion, one does not abide in nirvana." Nirvana is the perfect balance between wisdom and compassion. Those who attain nirvana can continuously liberate sentient beings without rest.

#### *D. The Noble Eightfold Path*

The Noble Eightfold Path consists of right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Right view is the basis of the Noble Eightfold Path. With it, we can understand the truth described

in the Four Noble Truths—the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of the cessation of suffering, and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. From right view, we proceed to right thought, which helps our wisdom to grow. Right speech teaches us to be watchful of our speech and to abstain from lying. Right action is to refrain from all unwholesome acts and to perform wholesome deeds. Right livelihood means to live our lives in accordance with the Buddha’s teachings. Right effort is to have the dedication to practice the path of nirvana. Right mindfulness is to use wisdom to be mindful of the Noble Path. Finally, right meditative concentration is to concentrate our volition and thoughts through meditative concentration.

In summary, the Noble Eightfold Path is a tool that can help us to refrain from unwholesomeness. Thus, it is described as “noble.” This practice can help us attain nirvana. Hence, it is called a “path.” If we can faithfully follow the Noble Eightfold Path, we can eventually attain right view in its truest form.

In addition to the above, I would like to touch on another correct view of Buddhist practices—the Pure Land practice of being mindful of Amitabha Buddha. Some people may remain skeptical and say, “Only

old ladies chant the name of Amitabha Buddha. What can it accomplish?” Some people would even ask incredulously, “How can one be liberated from rebirth merely by being mindful of Amitabha Buddha and chanting his name? How can the words “Amitabha Buddha” help us reach the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss and attain a boundless life?” The purpose of the Pure Land practice is more than liberation from rebirth. It goes a step further and teaches us the reality of existence.

Once, someone asked a master, “Can the name of ‘Amitabha Buddha’ yield such amazing results?” This was a difficult question to answer, but the master had a skillful reply. He looked at the person and reprimanded him. “What an idiot!”

The person was shocked, but then quickly turned angry. He rolled up his sleeves and clinched his fists. He asked the master angrily, “How dare you call me names!”

The master replied with a smile, “The word ‘idiot’ has changed your state of mind. Why can’t the words ‘Amitabha Buddha’ be just as powerful?”

Though our lives may be busy, we Buddhists should practice chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha regularly. Chan Master Yongming Yanshou

espoused this about the Pure Land practice, “The myriad who cultivate this practice, that myriad will reach the Pure Land.” Let us all beseech Amitabha Buddha to help us attain the right view regarding this practice, and in so doing help us find the strength to reach the Pure Land.

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