

# Gateway to the Dharma

The basic concepts  
that anyone  
studying Buddhism  
should understand

“The Buddha Dharma is a  
complete system of doctrines  
that are all inter-connected.

It differs from ordinary  
worldly knowledge, thoughts,  
religions, and doctrines. So  
today, I would like to point  
out the basic concepts that  
anyone studying Buddhism  
should understand.”

VENERABLE MASTER JEN-CHUN

# Foreword

Do not be misled by the size of this booklet. Masterpieces sometimes come in small packages, and it is indeed a little masterpiece that you're holding in your hand. Though it is only twenty-seven pages in length, those pages are dense, rich, and potent. One reading will never be enough for you to fully absorb its contents. To absorb them well, you'll have to study the booklet many times and put its teachings into practice. Its instructions are pithy enough, deep enough, opulent enough to bear up under many readings. They might well last you a lifetime.

The booklet consists of talks given by Ven. Master Jen-Chen as preparation for the study of Ven. Master Yin-Shun's *The Way to Buddhahood*, a monumental treatise by the foremost Chinese scholar-monk of modern times. Master Jen-Chun, Master Yin-Shun's most senior living pupil, gave lectures on this work for over two years and this booklet contains the opening lectures in that series. With words as sharp and clear as sapphires, Master Jen-Chun offers the reader invaluable instructions on the orientation needed to successfully enter the gateway of the Buddha Dharma. In classical Chinese style, he distills his ideas into compact verses, whose meanings are even more compressed in Chinese than in English. He then delivers each lecture as an elucidation of a particular set of verses.

The Master begins by revealing the boundless temporal and spatial dimensions against which the quest for enlightenment unfolds. He then swiftly narrows down the focus of his attention to the prospective student's own situation in the here and now. His concern is not with theory but with attitudes and actions. Repeatedly, he drives home the point that our purpose in studying the Dharma should not be the mere acquiring of information, however interesting, but the transformation and purification of our minds. Though he ultimately steers us towards the broad bodhisattva path aimed at benefiting all sentient beings, he does not let us escape the "narrow path" with its hard tasks of self-scrutiny, self-rectification, and self-cultivation. Alertness, heedfulness, conscientiousness, and integrity are the watchwords of this training. The path he guides us towards is never an easy one, but it is one that brings abundant rewards. It enables us to master the conditions of life instead of drifting along with them; it helps us ride over the high waves of good fortune without being dashed by the tidal waves of calamity. It teaches us how to dwell like a mountain, ever tall, strong, and steady, unswayed even by the roughest winds.

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## Explanatory Stanzas

Time connects past, present, and future.  
The Buddha illustrated cause-and-effect with three periods.  
Resolve to remove, build, create, and develop in daily life.  
Utilize time well, make progress, and completely open anew.

Space covers the ten directions without boundaries.  
The way of the world leads us to separation.  
There is no fixed form, nor is there a dominator that is decisive.  
Investigation of wisdom penetrates Sunyata leading to perfection.

Together with qualities of wisdom and characteristics of  
compassion, tolerance dissolves anger.  
Anger dissolved, the mind is unobstructed and emotional knots untie.  
Use virtue to embrace others, and develop strength  
of benevolence when alone.  
Thus, horizons are boundless, and mind unconcealed.

Maintaining the mind calm and at peace can restrain  
ignorance and idleness.  
Learning Buddhist wisdom will intensify interest in the Dharma.  
Wisdom distinguishes, the mind gathers and organizes,  
and trend of thought expands.  
Oppression lifted, three minds manifest.

Body shows integrity, speech is clear, and intention  
is kind and unwavering.  
Be humble, quiet, even, and certain; studiously learn  
in movement and in stillness.  
In safety and in danger, rise up to shoulder burdens;  
stand tall and erect.  
Permeated by Dharma, one changes in accordance with  
Dharma through investigation and determination.

## Establishing the Right Concept of Time

Use three 'acknowledgements' to examine inside;  
    alerted by what is found, change instantly.  
Work on three 'developments' to the fullest extent;  
    diligently accumulate until completion.  
Three 'uses' increase daily; keep away from  
    blockages and hindrances.  
Three 'at peaces' settle the mind, no regrets  
    and laments.



Time connects past, present, and future.  
The Buddha illustrated cause-and-effect  
    with three periods.  
Resolve to remove, build, create,  
    and develop in daily life.  
Utilize time well, make progress,  
    and completely open anew.

When talking about the Buddha Dharma, we first need to establish a concept of time. That is because most people neglect the concept of time. The Buddha, on the other hand, having known that the principle of cause-and-effect is based on time, was fully aware of its importance.

### **Time connects past, present, and future.**

The Buddha taught that time has the attribute of continuity. The past, the present, and the future are one and connected. There is even past beyond past, and the past can go so far back that you will not find a beginning. So, from a long, long time ago, sentient beings have been transmigrating in the cycle of life and death, all of which is very complex.

In contrast to the past there is the future, and even future beyond future. The future can go so far ahead that there is no end to be found. Thus if we compare the past and the future, we can say that the past is without a beginning, and the future without an end. It is the present that links the past and the future. This life of ours, to put it simply, is the present.

Ordinary people do not understand the nature of cause-and-effect and its relevance to the present. Why? Because they do not understand that the present is the result of past causes. Likewise, all our actions in this life in turn create new causes, which will produce future effects. Most people choose to ignore this fact. They prefer to avoid studying and discussing what happened in the past, and they are oblivious of the future – it is meaningless to them. They only care about the present.

Under these circumstances, most people only want to indulge in the pleasures of life, always looking for comfort and enjoyment. Such material indulgence only leads to entrapment, which brings extreme affliction. When you perceive life through distorted values, improvement will not be possible, because you are trapped by your false views.

### **The Buddha illustrated cause-and-effect with three periods.**

The reason that the Buddha Dharma emphasizes the interrelatedness of past, present, and future is to demonstrate that there is the time of the past, and the time of the future, so that you will not perceive your lives as being isolated, independent of everything else. Thus your views will gradually open up, and you will not be pessimistic, trapped in the current reality. You will be able to look backward and forward into time. Whenever things are going well, you will not be overjoyed since you understand that your fortune is due to the good causes of the past. On the contrary, whenever things are not going well, you will not be regretful since you understand that it is because you did not plant good causes in the past that you are facing problems now.

We must understand the principle of cause-and-effect. You must say to yourselves: "Now that I have learned the Buddha Dharma, I am responsible for taking what I have learned, and building on the concept of cause-and-effect, teaching it to others – teaching others not to over-indulge."

### **Resolve to remove, build, create, and develop in daily life.**

Acknowledging the fact that all your wandering thoughts and misconduct in the present life are due to your defilements in the past, you should make a firm resolve to "remove" all the defilements from your body and mind by controlling them and reversing your misconduct. Therefore, you should resolve to "build" a brand new person. Furthermore, it is a great blessing to be born as a human; now that we have this opportunity, we must use it to "create" in ourselves a better human being.

But how do we do that? We must start with the basics of Buddhism, which are: To keep the precepts, to perform good deeds, and to practice concentration. In other words, we should further "develop" and enhance our life force.

Part of our daily routine is to eat and sleep. But for most people, sleeping correlates with ignorance. The minute they fall asleep they lose their awareness. This unawareness results in wandering thoughts and nightmares, which are mental activities tied to ignorance.

Now, let's talk about eating. Most people crave delicious food. Just as we must not consider sleeping an easy task, we must not think that eating is easy. Why? Because you don't understand how to sleep or how to eat, you are giving rise to more ignorance and more greed. Though you practice, if you are unable to control your ignorance and greed, then what good is your practice? Therefore, if we are to reap any benefit from such activities, we must pay attention to the way we eat and sleep.

### **Utilize time well, make progress and completely open anew.**

The reason we humans are more advanced than animals is because we have a sense of time. Knowing that we have a sense of time, we should manage it accurately and use it well. We must always ask ourselves: "Have I made progress as a human being, as a Buddhist practitioner, today? Am I improving as my day goes by?"

A child in school learns new lessons every day. As long as the child puts forth the effort, he or she makes progress. Learning and practicing Buddhism requires the same spirit. You need to manage time efficiently, use it as a spur, and urge yourself not to stop seeking the wealth of Buddha Dharma. Then you will march forth and make real progress.

"Completely open anew." If you continue to march forth, as time goes by, you will obtain inspiration from the Buddha Dharma. All of your mental and physical behavior will gradually undergo complete reform. What kind of reform? As we all know, most people are trapped by their usual pattern of thinking and behaving. Once you use time properly to learn the Buddha Dharma, it will clarify your mind so that you can see more clearly. You will no longer see things or think in the same way as an ordinary person. You will have a new understanding that is different from the customary ways of thinking and behaving in the world. They will no longer trap you. Ultimately you will progress to a new path. Being Buddhist is to pioneer a new path, and to walk steadily and unobstructed for a long period of time. Your mind will become clearer, and your eyes will see the bright light. This is called "completely open anew."

## Establishing the Right Concept of Space

Space covers the ten directions without boundaries.  
The way of the world leads us to separation.  
There is no fixed form, nor is there a  
dominator that is decisive.  
Investigation of wisdom penetrates  
Sunyata leading to perfection.

### **Space covers the ten directions without boundaries.**

Learning the Buddha Dharma requires the right concept of space. Time and space are to be understood in relation to each other. Where there is time, there is space. In terms of space, human beings are different from animals. Even though animals live in the same space as humans, animals have no concept of space, whereas humans do.

Let's first talk about humans. Some people may think that they have a concept of space. Unfortunately, the spaces they know and refer to are their homes, or their temples, or their family. Surely, a family unit does occupy a tiny space. However, the space that Buddhism refers to is very large – East, West, South, North, front, rear, right, left, up, and down (known as the Ten Directions). Today many people take shelter in small spaces and become trapped in them. They can survive only by staying within the confines of these spaces; therefore, they become attached to them. This is true for most people; as they become trapped in their own little boxes of confinement, they lose their freedom. The space that Buddhism refers to has a very special meaning. It is great and vast. You may say that all the worlds in the Ten Directions are just in one big space.

“Without boundaries.” When people are very narrow-minded, they tend to mark their own territories and attempt to keep others at a distance. This distance hinders communication between them and does not allow them to establish honest and sincere relationships. The Buddhist concept of space teaches us to

avoid mental or physical confrontations with others. It teaches us not to confine ourselves to these little mundane boxes and to remove confinements, be they mental or physical.

### **The way of the world leads us to separation.**

This world separates space into tiny little boxes, and we all live in these confined boxes. This separation is due to our worldly, discriminating mind.

### **There is no fixed form, nor is there a dominator that is decisive.**

From the Buddhist perspective, “There is no fixed form, nor is there a dominator that is decisive.” The vast space has no fixed form, and there is no one being that can dominate. Chinese people often say, “We take history very seriously.” What is history? History depicts the phenomena of the past. You can find no permanent nature in phenomena, nor can you find a real solid object – be it a point, a surface, or a cubic inch of space.

Now let's take a look at an historical example: In China, after the Wei and Jin dynasties (5th - 6th century), many foreign tribes began moving into Northern China. Eventually these tribes came to occupy the northern part of Chinese territory; some tribal chiefs even made themselves kings. At the time, many rich Chinese families in the north began migrating to the south as they could not tolerate the low culture of the barbarian invaders. A lot of people from those northern families served in the government as high-ranking officials, and they were highly respected in society. In particular, were two famous families, the Wang family and the Hsieh family. Their stories are mentioned in a poem written during the Tang Dynasty (7th - 10th century). The poet wrote: “The swallows that flew in the villas of the Wangs' and the Hsiehs', return now to find commoners' homes.”

A few centuries before, the Wang and Hsieh families had lived in a prosperous city in luxurious villas. A few centuries later, not even a trace could be found. The swallows that once returned to the homes of the Wangs' and Hsiehs', could no longer find the villas. On the spot where the villas once stood, now stand civilian houses.

This story demonstrates that there is no one master that can always dominate. Similarly, all those luxurious and solid imperial tombs erected by ancient emperors were destroyed and leveled, not to mention that the emperor's bones

were crushed. This shows that there is no dominator. That's why we say, "There is no fixed form, nor is there a dominator that is decisive."

**Investigation of wisdom penetrates Sunyata  
leading to perfection.**

As Buddhists, we must contemplate with wisdom when facing vast space. All the phenomena from the past and present seem so complicated. Yet, no matter how luxurious or prosperous they appear, they disappear in a blink of an eye. Therefore, one must use wisdom to observe that there is nothing that is decisive, be it good or bad. In the end, all return to Sunyata. Sunyata does not mean that nothing exists. A person who truly understands Sunyata would practice Buddhism dwelling in Sunyata. He or she will develop the mind to be as vast as it is void, and will help others as much as he or she could, in the end, transferring all the merits towards Buddhahood, towards all sentient beings, without a bit of attachment or grasping. Once you have this concept of openness, you gradually can march toward Buddhahood.

So far, I have explained that a Buddhist must have the right concept of time and space. Next I will explain the qualities that a human being must develop, and the proper temperament that a human being must have.

## **The Qualities We Should Develop as Human Beings**

Together with qualities of wisdom and characteristics  
of compassion, tolerance dissolves anger.  
Anger dissolved, the mind is unobstructed  
and emotional knots untie.  
Use virtue to embrace others, and develop  
strength of benevolence when alone.  
Thus, horizons are boundless,  
and mind unconcealed.

**Together with qualities of wisdom and characteristics  
of compassion, tolerance dissolves anger.**

As a Buddhist, whether you are monastic or laity, when dealing with others, you need to pay attention to your mental state and your temperament. You will benefit from maintaining a proper temperament, as well as a calm and steady mind. You need to make wisdom a part of your character. So we ask, what are the "qualities of wisdom" that we are seeking? In fact, what is wisdom?

*1. Wisdom is the ability not to be influenced by others.*

By others, we refer to non-Buddhist thoughts, theories, and knowledge, including great philosophers, great achievers, and religions of the world. Do not be persuaded by them. Granted, they may have a certain level of wisdom that is applicable in the world. However, they are not as thorough as the Buddhist teachings. Once you have a basic understanding of the wisdom of Buddhism, you can make use of these non-Buddhist ideas yet still be aware of their shortcomings.

*2. It is the ability not to be manipulated by the self or the ego.*

Most people are self-centered. Your ego manipulates you when you are interacting with others or when thinking, planning, or examining. This self tells you what you are to do. It is like a man who trains his dog. The trainer, the self, throws a stone and the dog chases after the stone. When people have

a self inside their mind, they will be forced to do what the self tells them to do. When you fully understand the wisdom of Buddhist teachings, you will not be controlled. Why? Because you can now use the Buddhist teachings to manage the self instead of being manipulated by it.

*3. It is the ability to abide by the truth.*

The wisdom of the Buddhist teachings has a unique connotation. This wisdom is the understanding of all phenomena, mundane and transcendent. These phenomena are indeed complex. Nevertheless, there is an all-abiding principle. By following this principle, you can see things rationally rather than emotionally. You will not be like most who use their emotions to see the world. Abiding by the truth you will not become trapped.

*4. It is the ability not to be confused by phenomena.*

Here, “phenomena” cover many things. They include various environmental factors, appearances, people, and their activities. When you understand the wisdom of Buddhist teachings, you will not be confused by these phenomena.

As a human you should know the following: Not to be influenced by others, not to be manipulated by self, to abide by the truth, and not to be confused by phenomena. In this way, you will have fewer afflictions. This is how you develop the qualities of wisdom.

Next, the “characteristics of compassion” are: Kindness, amiability, gentleness, and softness. Do not be petulant or violent. Buddhist compassion and wisdom are interrelated. You will need to really understand this wisdom in order to develop the true characteristics of compassion.

The link between wisdom and compassion is “tolerance.” This tolerance is not tolerance as we normally understand it. Buddhist tolerance will dissolve all anger. Once you truly understand wisdom and compassion, then you will naturally be kind, amiable, gentle, and soft. Most people do not fully understand Buddhist wisdom and their compassion has limits. They do not fully understand tolerance. Most people normally have little tolerance towards each other; that is why they eventually explode.

A Buddhist should develop wisdom and compassion, as well as tolerance, in order to become a good-natured human being. At the same time, you should not be attached to these qualities, so that you can communicate universally with others. In this way, all kinds of anger will be dissolved. Life will be better without anger.

**Anger dissolved, the mind is unobstructed  
and emotional knots untie.**

When anger is dissolved, you will feel uplifted. If you allow your anger to build up, your mind will be in turmoil and will be burdened by afflictions. Once you dissolve your anger, your spirit will be elevated; both your body and mind will be set free.

“Emotional knots untie.” This means that many emotional knots will be untied. Most people do not live their lives to the fullest due to the mass of emotional knots. Now that you can dissolve your anger, you will be set free, and your emotional knots gradually will untie.

**Use virtue to embrace others, and develop  
strength of benevolence when alone.**

As a human being, no matter what, one can’t live alone. Humans are social creatures. Being in the community, we must live in harmony and communicate with one another. Therefore, we must learn to function well within the community. This requires virtue and integrity. You should apply a virtuous mindset to embrace other people. What is virtue? Virtue includes a wholesome mind, a humble attitude, and consideration for others. By applying this virtuous attitude to live in harmony with others, even if they do not treat you well, you will still embrace them. In time, others will be influenced by your virtuous attitude, and good relations will prevail. This is what it means to live in a community.

“When alone.” This means that even when you are alone you should still put forth an effort. You must not say to yourself, “Since I am alone, I can do whatever I please.” You must not think this way! Again, when you are alone you must exert an effort. What is effort? It is “to arouse” and “to dissolve.”

“To arouse.” When you get used to being alone, you tend to eat and sleep whenever you feel like it. Thereby, your life will become lax, lame, and dispirited, unable to be uplifted. When you live alone, you should keep up your personal appearance, and stand by your principles. You should not let yourself go, and sleep when you should not, nor should you be lax. You must arouse your spirit!

“To dissolve.” Buddhist practitioners, before having dispelled all their defilements, might wish to control them, but in reality, emotional knots are still surging up. As you recognize them, you must apply Buddhist wisdom well to



dissolve those emotional knots. Even if you live alone, you can elevate your mind and let your horizons expand. When you are among people and communicating with others, you can manifest community virtue.

**Thus horizons are boundless, and mind unconcealed.**

Once you know how to live in community, as well as how to live alone, your horizons can expand infinitely. Without such knowledge, your capacity may seem great, but when it reaches a certain level, you may still feel your responsibilities to be unbearable; thus one gets stuck at that stage, and your horizons cease to expand. Once you have wisdom and compassion, your vision will be unobstructed, your horizons boundless.

“Mind unconcealed.” This means that in the external expression your horizons are boundless, whereas internally, there is nothing concealed in your subconscious mind – in the deep stratum of your consciousness. What could be concealed there? The constant counting and measuring of others’ merits and faults! Or, in other words, it is concealing your own defilements inside yourself, allowing them to fester and grow uncontrolled. By not fostering disputes and defilements in your mind, your horizons will expand. On the other hand, if you become attached to them, your horizons will be restricted.

## The Mind One Will Manifest

Maintaining the mind calm and at peace  
can restrain ignorance and idleness.

Learning Buddhist wisdom will  
intensify interest in the Dharma.

Wisdom distinguishes, the mind gathers and  
organizes, and trend of thought expands.

Oppression lifted, three minds manifest.

**Maintaining the mind calm and at peace  
can restrain ignorance and idleness.**

How should we maintain our mind? “Maintaining the mind calm and at peace.” Ordinary people’s minds are restless or distracted. Often they do not even know where their minds dwell, or of what they are thinking. Why? Because they are too restless, too distracted. As Buddhist practitioners, we should control our mind at all times, watch our mind and not let it slip away or wander astray. Whenever you realize that your mind is about to slip away or become blurred, you should immediately regain awareness and uplift the mind.

Now, how do we keep our minds “calm” at all times? How do we develop this “calmness?” We control all the senseless, wandering thoughts and delusions. In this way, gradually, the mind becomes calm.

How do we keep our minds “at peace”? What is this “peacefulness”? Whether you are studying Buddhism or attending to worldly affairs, peacefulness is exemplified when you can take care of both well and efficiently. In other words, your mind is always peaceful and composed. As a result of this peacefulness, you will see things clearly in all aspects. Consequently, you become capable of preventing your mind from falling into ignorance or idleness. After you have maintained a calm and peaceful mind for a long time, your ability for clear realization will increase. While most people make mistakes due to confusion and mental laxity, you, on the contrary, will have taken full charge of your mind. Consequently you’ll be able to control all ambiguous and obscure activities.

### **Learning Buddhist wisdom will intensify interest in the Dharma.**

If you only observe your mind but do not put any effort into learning the wisdom of Buddhism, then you will be missing the pure guiding light of the Buddha's teachings. Although your mind is calm and at peace, it will not serve great functions. Therefore, we must further put our efforts into learning Buddhism, to enable us to realize the truth of all matters around us. Then, we will be able to clearly understand the principles of all phenomena and to coordinate the principles with all phenomena. In other words, we can face all matters around us rationally; hence, not only can we manage all kinds of tasks, but we can further develop our ability to reason. If we develop our reasoning ability and carry out all tasks in accordance with Buddhist teachings, then we can share our wisdom with others. Therefore, if you have learned the wisdom of Buddhism over a long period of time, your interest in learning Buddhism will increase immensely.

Generally, when people are financially secure or in desirable circumstances, they are happy and content, but when things turn around, they immediately feel depressed. Once we have learned Buddhism, then no matter what situations we find ourselves in, we will be able to use our mind to manage circumstances in a controlled and proper manner without being overcome by any senseless emotions.

### **Wisdom distinguishes, the mind gathers and organizes, and trend of thought expands.**

As a result of learning wisdom over a long period of time, your interest in Buddhism increases daily, and wisdom finally becomes a part of you. In other words, you use wisdom as the only criterion to judge all matters in your daily life. You will then be able to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and after a long period of time you will perceive everything in accordance with true wisdom.

You should accumulate and memorize all the wisdom that you have been studying. Suppose there are lots of flowers here. Now, use all kinds of thread to connect them together and make them into a wreath or a great offering. Likewise, when we are learning Buddhism, we collect wisdom and enforce our memory. Then we can classify the wisdom systematically in our mind. For instance, there is much data systematically stored in a computer. Whenever we want to use the data we can instantaneously download it. Most people, when

they have completed their learning, are capable of applying their knowledge to solve many problems in their daily affairs. There are differences, however, between worldly knowledge and Buddhist wisdom. Generally speaking, the logic of Buddhism corresponds with wisdom.

Buddhist wisdom helps people see the prospects of life clearly. Therefore, when we walk the path of life that we are supposed to take, we will walk steadily and solidly. We may encounter many unexpected twists and turns in the process, but we know which to avoid and which to take. We have adopted the right path because of our manner of thinking. In turn, we do not withdraw and become obstructed. Then, our way of thinking can expand.

### **Oppression lifted, three minds manifest.**

If you practice for a long time, various oppressed emotions will disappear and the mind will open up. As humans, we ought to work diligently toward self-improvement and walk on a greater path. This is not easy. However, once you embark on the greater path – honestly – your mental state will be very bright, clear, and open. Even when you are in an unfavorable environment, or when pressures are coming at you from all directions, you will be calm, gentle, peaceful, and equanimous. Why? The greater the pressure, the stronger your vitality becomes. For example, consider when a person dribbles a ball. The harder the ball hits the ground, the higher the ball bounces. Similarly, when pressure grows stronger, a person's vitality grows higher. A person with genuine strength is like this. Regardless of how much the external pressure might be, he or she can eliminate the pressure with vitality. Thus, the human spirit can be brought into full play. When encountering even very minor matters ordinary people immediately panic and complain. Let me be honest, these people will not have great achievement in the future. So now we should know: no matter how strong the pressure is, use vitality to overcome it. Oppression can then be lifted.

"Three minds manifest." Thus, three kinds of mind appear. Learning Buddha Dharma, you should understand this principle: whatever you have learned, you must reflect. The reason is obvious. A child who has learned how to draw may feel drawing is interesting. In his mind the image of drawing frequently appears. Naturally he wants to draw. So it is with our learning of Buddhism. How should we refine our mind? If we can attentively and persistently learn, what we've learned will then manifest. Otherwise, the mind will still stay as an ordinary one. You will still have an ordinary mind, the mind of an ordinary person.

Now, what are the three minds that manifest?

*First, is the “straight mind”:*

What is the straight mind? The straight mind is the mind that goes forward wholeheartedly, even though in the process there may be many obstacles and hindrances or even all kinds of unexpected circumstances. Because this mind is very straight, this person will persistently say: “This is the path I am supposed to take. I must walk on.” This means that by doing so, it will only lead to the right path.

Let’s take a practical example. You must pass through a specific road to reach a meaningful place. However, there are many snakes and beasts on this road. Nonetheless, if you can skillfully apply different methods of protection you will be able to avoid the snakes and beasts. Then you will gradually reach that bright destination.

Another way of putting it is that the place where you are going has unlimited treasure – the treasure of wisdom. Only if you pass through can you obtain the treasure. When your mind is straight, regardless of the obstacles, you are always calm and even-tempered. Therefore, you will be able to pass through. This “straight” means nothing is stuck on and nothing is hung on. Ordinary people’s minds have a lot of turns that become obstacles. Straighten the mind and it will be unobstructed.

*Second, is the “deep mind”:*

Once the mind becomes straight, it can deepen. It is like water converging into one stream. If it flows for a long time, even though it was shallow in the beginning, after awhile it will gradually run deeper. The mind is also like this. You work on the straight mind first. Even though it does not look very powerful, if you persist for a long time and wholeheartedly walk in this direction, your mental power will naturally grow in depth. What is depth? The mind is deep because the strength and the virtues accumulated are abundant. It also means that the strength of the mind and the strength of wisdom are profound. The internal energy of the mind and the energy of wisdom are very deep. Eventually you might aspire to the great mind.

*Third, is the “great mind”:*

If you can enter and follow the path of the expanded way of thinking in every single moment and you are aware, “I use the straight mind, I use the deep mind, and I use the great mind,” you have the three kinds of mind. They will manifest frequently. Yours will not be the same as the ordinary frame of mind.

## The Essence One Should Possess

Body shows integrity, speech is clear,  
and intention is kind and unwavering.

Be humble, quiet, even, and certain;  
studiously learn in movement and in stillness.

In safety and in danger, rise up to  
shoulder burdens; stand tall and erect.

Permeated by Dharma, one changes in  
accordance with Dharma through  
investigation and determination.

These stanzas explain the quality or essence a person should possess. Body, speech, and mind are commonly known as the three doors of karma. How do we make use of our body, speech, and mind to make them each right?

**Body shows integrity, speech is clear  
and intention is kind and unwavering.**

Now that you are a student and practitioner of the Buddha Dharma, you must act normally and honorably with the body when associating with people, whether they be many or few. One must not act in a certain way when you are with people and act otherwise when no one is there to see you. Otherwise, the body will not have integrity. What is true integrity? Whether seen by others or not, you behave the same. That is integrity.

“Speech is clear.” There are times when ordinary people can speak with logic and order. However, true speech is to speak meaningful, inspiring words. It is not easy to speak clearly. Why? Because if one has limited wisdom or limited understanding of the principles, when it comes to giving a special talk, one won’t be able to speak clearly. When speaking of exceptional matters, one may not explain them clearly. Nor will one’s words inspire others.

What is the value of speech? Whether you are a layperson or a monastic, if you have a profound and right comprehension of the wisdom of the Buddha Dharma, then your words will be very clear and have an exceptional power to move people. Uttered at the right moment, one word from you may save

someone from the brink of death and give them new life. Such is the value of human speech. Thus, the content of speech is clear and powerful. This is called “speech is clear.” This speech is like a brilliant light. Ordinarily people’s minds can be hazy and concealed. If you use speech accurately to shine through the haze and brighten their mind, then this is the value of speech.

“Intention is kind and unwavering.” No one can see another person’s hidden intentions. Only that person can know. How do you cultivate, practice, and maintain your intention? That pertains to being “kind and unwavering.” What is kindness? To be kind is to be pure, unselfish, decent, and tenderhearted. This means that in all matters you always consider others first. At times you would rather suffer to let others live better than yourself. This is the meaning of kindness. If you have this kind of intent then you will have a profound sense of morality. When necessary, you will naturally bring your sense of moral obligation and sense of mission to full fruition.

“Kind and unwavering” also means your frame of mind is consistent and healthy. If your mind does not have an exceptional stabilizing power, then when bad circumstances arise you will become unsettled. You will be spun around by circumstances and will lose your calm. If you have truly achieved a level of comprehension and practice of the Buddha Dharma, your mind will naturally be relaxed. In dealing with people or when others are facing difficult circumstances, your behavior will be pure, honest, simple, and kind. You will not be sarcastic, heartless, or concerned with loss or gain. You will not even think in such terms.

**Be humble, quiet, even, and certain;  
studiously learn in movement and in stillness.**

This pertains to training and practice. We must train our bodies and minds so that they become humble and quiet. What does it mean to be humble? We do not have a lot of “stuff” occupying or hiding in our mind – our mind is humble and unclouded. Because the mind is humble and unclouded, externally it presents a very modest and amiable attitude. Internally it is quiet. What is “quiet”? Even with the mouth closed, an ordinary person’s mind is like the dashing waves that won’t calm down. Ordinary people are constantly concerned with trifles and run in circles after them. They become head-over-heels and upside-down. To be quiet is to dispel all this “stuff,” pay no attention at all, and let the mind truly be calm.

The capacity to become silent and tranquil is called being quiet. This is the

most pleasant mental state. We ordinary people regularly consume our mental power and energy. This is because we calculate petty gains as trivial as “chicken feathers and garlic skins.” The more we mull them over, the greater they become. Eventually, we worry ourselves into many knots and waste our energy. A true student and practitioner of the Buddha Dharma has no such habit. He chases away all trifling thoughts.

“Be even and certain.” If you can be humble and quiet, your mood can truly be even, your mind certain. What is “certain?” It means you have not even a hint of untruthfulness and hypocrisy. Under all circumstances you are what you are.

“Studiously learn in movement and in stillness.” To “studiously learn” is to make a strong effort. It is not easy to truly achieve humility and quietude and evenness and certainty. This requires much effort. Whether “in movement or in stillness,” you must make an effort. What is a real “movement?” When facing all the activities in your reality, you can penetrate them and not become entangled. This is called “movement.” What is “stillness?” It is when your mind is very quiet and silent. It is not only calm on the surface, but it is calm inside. You do not gossip or create idle trifles.

**In safety and in danger, rise up to  
shoulder burdens; stand tall and erect.**

If you can be as described in this phrase, then when your integrity is tested and revealed you will stand erect. What does it mean to “stand tall and erect”? It means that you can withstand what others cannot. To go one step further, you can rise up and shoulder burdens.

“Rise up and shoulder burdens.” Many may say that under certain circumstances, men are stronger than women in their ability to bear and carry, or that women are weak-hearted and cannot withstand a load. That reflects an ordinary person’s analysis. There is not much difference between men and women. Where does the real difference come from? Although there are biological distinctions, differences mainly stem from the capacity of mind. A woman with a strong capacity of mind can also have extraordinary bearing. For example, consider Madame Golda Meir, the late Prime Minister of Israel. Israel is a small country. When it faced attack from all directions, Mrs. Meir managed the country well. Today, there are many female world leaders. They also govern well and lead their countries to prosperity. That is why there are also many special women in the Mahayana sutras. Their actions sometimes

surpassed those of men. Therefore, as long as a woman has an extraordinary will and self-respect, she can also stand tall and shoulder burdens.

“In safety and in danger.” We ordinary people often live well in a pleasant, congenial environment. However, when we encounter danger or great change, we have a difficult time surviving. If you are a true student of the Buddha, you form and refine your body, speech, and mind at all times. You keep them strong, enduring, and unwavering. During secure times you are like this. During dangerous times you are also like this. That’s what is meant by “throughout safety and danger.” With this spirit you can bear what others cannot.

**Permeated by Dharma, one changes in  
accordance with Dharma through  
investigation and determination.**

Foremost is “Permeated by Dharma, one changes in accordance with Dharma.” What is meant by “in accordance with Dharma”? It means where you shouldn’t have greed you do not; where you shouldn’t have aversion you do not; where you shouldn’t have ignorance you do not. Usually, no one can answer when we ask the question, “What is ‘in accordance with Dharma?’” Simply put, when you shouldn’t be greedy, refrain from desiring; when you shouldn’t have aversion, don’t lose your temper; when you shouldn’t be ignorant, examine issues with clarity.

What is “permeated by Dharma”? It is gradually to alter your habits over a long time. If something is not the way you want it to be and you desire to change it, you need to use a method that will gradually alter its behavioral pattern or “habits.” Just as when thick ice won’t melt, we use a small flame to burn and melt it. People are the same. We have many deeply-seated habits. We use a new method to gradually but effectively influence our habits and change them. After a long period of time, they will be thoroughly transformed. We ordinary people simply don’t know how to “permeate” ourselves. Usually if our family condition is more or less okay, then our major activities are not much more than eating and drinking. Although we may also practice, recite sutras, or prostrate before a statue of the Buddha, we generally waste time. If we want to gradually redirect our habits, then we find our weaknesses and use the matching cure to “smoke” them, to change them. (This is also called “smoke the habits.”) Let’s say that a place originally smelled bad. If you put something with a strong perfume in it or use another method gradually to replace its bad smell, the smell will change.

It won’t work if you always stay in the original state. An ordinary person will sometimes display the characteristics of darkness and ignorance or of deeply-rooted bad habits. Use the bright and enlightening Buddha Dharma to permeate them, or a firm will to “smoke” them. After a while, not only will total change occur, you may well be completely transformed.

“Through investigation and determination.” This means you must observe and discover your main faults. Perhaps your defilements due to greed or ignorance are strong, or you have jealousy and arrogance. First you must recognize the weaknesses, then you can “investigate and have determination.” This means you must be able to detect that these are your problems and begin “nurturing” yourself, thereby changing yourself.

The main point of the Buddha Dharma is that you must treat your own illness. Others cannot treat you. A medical doctor would say, “You are ill. I can treat you.” However, if you are ill from defilements, you must know where your own defilements lie and understand their origin. Then, you use the wisdom of the Dharma to cure yourself. This requires self-effort. Not even the Buddha can help. Why? The Buddha can only show the method. You must apply his method. If you choose not to apply his method, the Buddha cannot help you. He is unable to help you get rid of vexations, nor is he able to prevent you from committing misdeeds. You must use the Buddha’s method; then you will end vexations and stop committing misdeeds.

## Refining Our Human Conduct

Use three 'acknowledgements' to examine inside;  
alerted by what is found, change instantly.  
Work on three 'developments' to the fullest extent;  
diligently accumulate until completion.  
Three 'uses' increase daily;  
keep away from blockages and hindrances.  
Three 'at peaces' settle the mind,  
no regrets and laments.

There are twelve aspects concerning human conduct to which you must pay attention. These twelve aspects can be categorized into four sets of three.

### **Use three 'acknowledgements' to examine inside; alerted by what is found, change instantly.**

In order to truly rectify your own problems, you must acknowledge them from three angles.

#### *1) Knowing your inferior characteristics.*

Regardless if you are average-natured, or better-natured, as long as you are an ordinary person, you are bound to have a hidden inferior nature. Even if you are good-natured, when you live with people who have deep-rooted bad habits, unknowingly, your own inferior characteristics will be gradually induced. Needless to say, someone with inferior characteristics will be more easily influenced. You should first resolve that you cannot continue being bad and spare no effort to overcome your inferior characteristics. This means using your own strength to conquer your inferior characteristics. For example, someone might say, "I want to learn Buddhism. I want to be diligent." Before long he may begin saying, "My body is tired; I want to sleep!" This is due to his inferior characteristics. Instead, he should say, "Well, not now! I must wait until such-and-such time to rest and I will not sleep before then." He should tough it out. This is using strength to overcome inferior characteristics.

#### *2) Knowing moral dread.*

In the past as well as present, there are always people who are better than ourselves in many ways. You should use those who are superior as a mirror so that you will be able to see your own shortcomings. Others may have lustrous qualities while we have many shortcomings. Thus, we can use others to stimulate ourselves. A true understanding of moral dread will arise within. If you truly know moral dread and resolve to improve, then you gradually eliminate your defects. You will not continue to be deficient. Deficiency means lack. A person with a heart that knows no shame and humility, the so-called "great moral dread," cannot learn what needs to be learned. He will always be lacking a lot of good qualities. When you know you are deficient and say to yourself, "I have the ability, the spirit, and the will to learn," then you will be able to overcome the weaknesses that stem from your deficiency. That's why the second acknowledgement is knowing moral dread.

#### *3) Knowing exertion.*

What is exertion? It is to voluntarily improve and work hard. People are like cows who stop moving when the rancher stops cracking the whip. You should know that, "I am human; I do not need to be whipped. I will work hard on my own." Therefore, the third acknowledgement is self-exertion. Only people who exert effort can truly bear responsibilities, learn what ordinary people are unable to learn, and excel.

Although there are three "acknowledgements," first and foremost you must know that you have deep-rooted bad habits. You must first control your "inferior characteristics" before you can comprehend "moral dread," and then use "exertion."

Identify inferior characteristics, know moral dread, and know exertion. You must frequently reflect within and examine yourself thus: "Are my inferior characteristics rising again? Does my mind still know no shame and humility? Or is the part of my mind that refuses to exert effort still active?" You need to understand and examine yourself.

"Alerted by what is found, change instantly." "Instantly" means no delay, not even allowing one thought to slip by. Instantly alert yourself: "I cannot go on being inferior. I cannot go on being unashamed. I cannot go on slacking and exerting no effort." You must be instantly alerted and capable of changing.

**Work on three 'developments' to the fullest extent;  
diligently accumulate until completion.**

The second category consists of three types of “developments.” These three “developments” continue from the previous three “acknowledgements.” You must acknowledge that you are deficient, arouse moral dread for your own shortcomings, and thereby exert yourself. Only then can you truly strive, become motivated, and be compelled to achieve meaningful deeds. These actions are the three “developments.” What are they?

*1) Developing merits.*

You have very few meritorious virtues. You need to work sincerely to accrue merits. What is the meaning of “merits”? It is to think of cultivating merits in all mental activities. Apply a wholesome mind to cultivate and perform good deeds. Everything you do should be to benefit others. This is called “merits.” The term “merits” should not be associated with “welfare,” “comfort,” or “fortune,” as does our current society. Now, let us make a resolve to accomplish merits.

*2) Developing wholesomeness.*

Whatever you do, you should do it perfectly. The motivation to accomplish wholesomeness does not stem from greed, hatred, and ignorance. If you develop wholesomeness this way, then it is good in the beginning, good during the process, and good at the end. It is consistently good throughout. The goodness continuously increases and grows in strength.

*3) Developing new connections.*

Upon fulfilling the first two accomplishments, you can further create new causes and conditions for the future. The causes and conditions thus created are plentiful, unbounded, fine, and vast. They are either personal connections or Dharma connections.

What are personal connections? If you always try to help others as much as you can in everyday life, then when you are in need people will come to help you. They will do it even without being asked and they will be as earnest as if they were helping themselves. These are called personal connections.

Dharma connections are formed when you are able to pursue merits and accumulate goodness at all times, as discussed above. If you have a relatively good understanding of Buddhism, apply Dharma correctly, and interpret Dharma clearly, then you can establish connections with others through Buddhism. If you do not accrue merits and goodness, even if you establish

connections with others, you will have very limited personal connections, not to mention Dharma connections.

You develop merits without any reservation and transfer them to others completely. To develop wholesomeness, you eliminate shortcomings thoroughly. To establish connections you would rather eat and sleep less in order to allow others to eat and sleep well. Then, you will be able to connect with others. This is called “diligently accumulate until completion.” What does “until completion” mean? It means to exhaust your energy to the limit or even to go beyond the limit.

We accumulate from our diligent practices. What does it mean to accumulate? It means to store and to build up. Sentient beings create karma, whereas bodhisattvas accumulate and build up the capacity for goodness (i.e. good karmic roots). Creating karma for themselves, sentient beings often say: “I want to enjoy a happy fruition in my next life! I want to have all kinds of benefits now!” They work completely for themselves. When you work only for yourself, even if you receive benefits, they are limited. At the end, what you have accrued will have been used up. In fact, you are still trapped. Why? Because your mind still focuses on greedy pursuits. Bodhisattvas, in contrast, accumulate. Accumulate what? Everything a bodhisattva accumulates is not for herself or himself, but for the sake of Buddhism and sentient beings. Under these circumstances he does not have even one thought of craving or clinging in his mind – completely opposite to an ordinary person’s frame of mind. After a long period of time, his meritorious virtues, capacity for goodness (or, good karmic roots), and causes and conditions for future connections will reach completion. Otherwise, if one only has some merits, goodness, or conditions – they are just pieces which cannot be assembled for good use.

**Three 'uses' increase daily;  
stay away from blockages and hindrances.**

There are three kinds of “use.” By learning Buddhism, you derive the aforesaid three “acknowledgements” and three “developments.” That would lead to the three “uses.” The three acknowledgements, three developments, and three uses are sequentially connected. If you do not acknowledge, then you cannot develop. Once you acknowledge, then you can develop and create. The Dharma can then be of use and have real function.

In a previous section we learned how to create and how to examine ourselves.

We learned to reflect on how to work to our fullest extent. Now we can truly develop the “uses.”

*1) Enjoyable use.*

You have the meritorious virtues, good karmic roots, and good causes and conditions. Even though you do not consider them your own, since they were developed out of your body and mind, you are still the first to enjoy them. For example, consider the electric lights here. Since I live here, I enjoy their bright light even though I have no attachment to this enjoyment. Therefore, if you have true merits, true goodness, and true conditions, you are still the first to enjoy them even if you do not want them.

*2) Functional use.*

Someone who can acknowledge and develop can have real function. What is meant by function? In special circumstances, when ordinary people will not or cannot speak up, you will speak up; when they cannot act, you will act. This is being functional.

*3) Effective use.*

An effective use can be either material or non-corporeal. With meritorious virtues, good karmic roots, and good causes and conditions, your material performance is one type of effective use. Your latent incorporeal influence is another effective use. It's just like a person with a sound body and mind: regardless of whether there are any mental or physical activities, as long as he has a good essence, he still has practical usefulness.

“Three uses increase daily.” Once the enjoyable, functional, and effective uses start to increase, day by day, you will “stay away from blockages and hindrances.” Your mind will not be blocked. You will know no hindrances. Why? Because you are using your mind. It is like fresh water continuously flowing forward. There are no blockages and therefore no obstructions. Similarly, if you can use Dharma diligently, naturally, and decisively, then there will not be many psychological knots blocking your mind. Many personal obstacles will gradually be reduced; the many internal hindrances at the bottom of your heart will gradually melt away. Therefore one can say, “Three ‘uses’ increase daily; stay away from blockages and hindrances.”

With the three “acknowledgements,” three “developments,” and three “uses,” you can relax and be at peace. If you learn Buddhism and yet cannot relax and be at peace, then the usefulness of Dharma will be smaller than a sesame seed.

This applies not only to those who have learned just a little Dharma; even if you have learned much about Buddhism, if what you have learned is merely terminology and language, it does not help you. If you know how to examine yourself and restrain yourself (when inaction is required); give your best (when action is needed); increase your “acknowledgements,” “developments,” and “uses” day by day, then you can relax and be at peace.

**Three ‘at peaces’ settle the mind,  
no regrets and laments.**

Three “at peaces” means three situations under which you can still relax and be at peace.

*1) At peace facing change.*

Change means no adherence or attachment. A person who has learned Dharma can suddenly become sick. According to the principle of “all things are impermanent,” a change due to physical illness is a very common thing. No one says that there will be no disease once you have learned the Buddha Dharma. Not only ordinary people who have learned the Buddha Dharma still get sick, even arahats liberated from samsara, the cycle of birth and death, still become sick and may even need surgery. Viewed from the perspective of duality, we know that the Buddha also used medicine in old age and needed help from others. Of course in terms of the Buddha’s supreme and vast virtues, the Buddha does not get sick. Why? Because the essence of Buddhahood is diamond-hard. Nonetheless, since the Buddha demonstrated his attainment of Buddhahood among human beings, everything he possessed was the same as ordinary people. The important difference is that he had no defilements or afflictions, in other words, he was pure. From the viewpoint of Mahayana Buddhism the Buddha’s virtues are so vast that he does not get sick.

As a human being, even though you learn Buddhism, you will still experience birth, old age, sickness, and death. You may continue to experience all kinds of hardship and adversity. Nevertheless, because you have studied Buddhism, when facing great change, you settle down and are at peace with the change; you are settled no matter what happens. This is called no adherence or attachment. Why? Because you are not attached to this life. Why? Because life is just like that; it will not always give you peace and allow you to be constantly settled in. It changes frequently. When you expect change and do not attach or adhere to the current state, then you will be able to settle down and be at peace.



2) *At peace facing suffering.*

Even if you have been practicing well, when suffering comes, it is still painful. Under special circumstances, such as when there are severe storms, great earthquakes, or long droughts and no chance of harvest, you will still face great suffering. There are people who are hungry or even starving. Facing such kinds of suffering, if you understand, you can be at peace.

What kind of person truly understands suffering? Where does your suffering come from? Because you have created all sorts of karma through your defilements and afflictions in the past, you have induced the present sufferings. Stop the defiled karma! Now, when you see others suffer, or when you are suffering like others, you should know that these are signs to be on the alert. Moreover, when you deeply recognize this fact, you must end the defiled karma, and you must not create any more such karma. If you were to go on creating defiled karma, not only will you suffer now, you will suffer even more in the future. Thus, by recognizing suffering, you can be at peace when you face suffering. You can then control the influence of the various defiled karma; you can stop; you can be at peace.

3) *At peace because of understanding.*

No matter how things change and how you suffer, you can settle down and be at peace – soberly and knowingly. Why? You use the right Dharma to check and prove what you have been learning (and practicing). You are thus able to be certain of Dharma; you can know for sure that impermanence is impermanence. It is not as though you can enjoy the benefit of your merits forever, simply because you have done some good deeds today. That's plain impossible! Unavoidably, if you are due to become ill, you will get ill. If you are suffering, you will feel pain. Dharma is just like that. That is the natural law.

“Understanding”: No matter how things change, when you understand this, you will verify it with Dharma. Be it to understand change or suffering, when you understand well, you will not complain or blame the whole universe as ordinary people do. If you are still thinking, “My practice is good yet I am still suffering,” then, frankly, even though you consider yourself a good practitioner, in fact you are not. If you can settle down in the three aspects of change, suffering, and understanding, your mind will stay at peace.

“No regrets and laments”: Under no circumstances will you feel regretful, dispirited, or depressed. You will be even more positive and make more

progress. This is the genuine learning of Buddhism. Everyone, earnestly remember these four threes, which are the twelve aspects of human conduct:

- Use three ‘acknowledgements’ to examine inside; alerted by what is found, change instantly.
  - 1) *Knowing your inferior characteristics.*
  - 2) *Knowing moral dread.*
  - 3) *Knowing exertion.*
- Work on three ‘developments’ to the fullest extent; diligently accumulate until completion.
  - 4) *Developing merits.*
  - 5) *Developing wholesomeness.*
  - 6) *Developing new connections.*
- Three ‘uses’ increase daily; keep away from blockages and hindrances.
  - 7) *Enjoyable use.*
  - 8) *Functional use.*
  - 9) *Effective use.*
- Three ‘at peace’s’ settle the mind, no regrets and laments.
  - 10) *At peace facing change.*
  - 11) *At peace facing suffering.*
  - 12) *At peace because of understanding.*

You must frequently urge yourself with the above “twelve.” Otherwise, although you wish to benefit from learning Buddhism, you will not get any benefit, but will become only more troubled and dejected. To be honest, such a person is not a Buddhist. Learning Buddhism is not about making bargains. There is no bargain to be gained! This is what ordinary people cannot see. If you can see the truth clearly, then you will be fine. Where ordinary people cannot break through, you will be able to do so easily, and thereby obtain happiness.



## About the Author



Venerable Master Jen-Chun, has written extensively on the Buddha Dharma, and lectured throughout the United States and many other countries. He was born in China (Jiangsu Province) in 1919 and entered monastic life at the age of 7 under the guidance of Ven. Master Chuan-dao. In 1949, he moved to Hong Kong, where he became a disciple of Master Yin-Shun. He then moved with Master Yin-Shun to Taiwan and taught at Fuyan Buddhist Academy.

In 1973, Master Jen-Chun was invited by the Buddhist Association of the United States (BAUS) to be the abbot of the Great Enlightenment Temple in The Bronx, New York City. He also became Chairman of BAUS. For the past 20 years, he has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching numerous followers.

Through his influence, the Yin-Shun Foundation was created to translate Master Yin-Shun's works into English. In response to his followers' urging to pass on his great learning, he founded Bodhi Monastery in 2000 with Yin-Shun Foundation help. His purpose in founding Bodhi Monastery is to present Buddhism in its original essence, aiming to promote the practice of Buddhism as an integral whole rather than to focus on the teachings of a particular Buddhist sect or branch.

## Afterword

Those involved in the translation of these talks by Ven. Master Jen-Chun are delighted to have them finally in print, available for an ever-widening readership. This translation project was begun not long after Bodhi Monastery was launched in January 2000, as ways were sought to communicate the teachings of Ven. Master Jen-Chun to the English-speaking community. Master Jen-Chun had prepared a series of recorded talks on *The Way to Buddhahood*, a treatise by his teacher, Ven. Master Yin-Shun. These were to be played every Saturday. Because *The Way to Buddhahood* had been translated and published in English, it seemed fitting that Master Jen-Chun's talks be translated as well. A coordinator for the project was appointed and volunteers then transcribed the tapes into written Chinese and typed them into computer files. These were then verified for accuracy and a first draft translation was begun. After the first draft was edited, a second team of translators would review the draft and refine it. Finally, native English speakers would review the draft, polish the language, and raise questions about ambiguous points. Master Jen-Chun himself would regularly attend translation meetings to clarify ambiguities. Once a final version was settled on, it was read aloud on Saturday, the English text alternating with Master Jen-Chun's spoken Chinese.

Many people from the English-speaking community who came to listen to these initial talks found they were extremely helpful to them in gaining an understanding of Buddhism, about which they knew little beforehand. At their urging, we are pleased to have these talks published in the hope that others will find them helpful as well.

We gratefully acknowledge the work of all the many people who participated in this project, unfortunately too numerous to mention individually. May they all be blessed for their contribution to the transmission of the Dharma in America.

## Gateway to the Dharma