



The Six Fold Sublimation of Limitless Oneness

By Dr. Yutang Lin



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Preface

In Mahayana Buddhism teachings on practice center around the Six Paramitas. They are labeled as Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom. There are already many works in English expounding this important topic; and the usual terminology used in translation for paramita is perfection.

In this work I am presenting, besides the traditional teachings, a new perspective on the Six Paramitas in the light of Enlightenment as Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness. Also I am using sublimation instead of the common perfection to spotlight an important function of Buddhist practice--it is not a completion at the original level but a transformation resulting in essential change.

The materials gathered here can be traced back to my books "A Golden Ring: An Introduction to Buddhist Meditation" and "The Buddhist Practice of Chanting "Amitabha." Nevertheless, the importance of this new perspective on the Six Paramitas calls for a special treatment.

May the readers gain insight into the unity underlying all Buddhist practices and apply the principles presented here to improve their particular practices!

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Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness

The fundamental principle of Buddhism is that the whole universe is in Limitless-Oneness, it is originally so, and pure, i.e., free from artificial limits of concepts, values and judgments.

This is an abstract idea and seems to be far from reality, even contradictory from a logical point of view. How could we accept it, and how could we adopt it in daily life?

The concept of Limitless-Oneness is contradictory from a logical point of view because when we talk about one, there is implied some defining limitation of it, otherwise we could not refer to it. Hence, if we say oneness and limitless, it is the same, from a logical point of view, as saying something unknowable or practically non-existent.

Nevertheless, from limitless and oneness respectively we can learn the fundamental aspects of Buddha's Enlightenment. Buddha's Enlightenment is essentially un-definable and inexpressible, therefore, when we resort to concepts in explaining that experience, either we are limited by the concepts used or we have to go beyond the concepts used. If we stay within logical limits we can hardly transmit the essential aspects of Buddha's Enlightenment. Hence I introduce the paradoxical notion of Limitless-Oneness.

How could we accept this notion of Limitless-Oneness? When Shakyamuni attained Enlightenment he had the experience of everything in Limitless-Oneness. Its truth has been witnessed by Buddhist practitioners over the ages. It is not stated here as a dogmatic doctrine to be blindly followed, rather it is a spiritual insight revealed to guide practitioners on the path toward Enlightenment. Its truth can be experienced by devoted practitioners as they continue on the path, thus it is not a dogma based on blind faith.

This notion of Limitless-Oneness serves a twofold function: on the one hand, it points out that Buddha's Enlightenment transcends all limits--is beyond languages, concepts, senses, and even the natural limits of space and time; on the other hand, it points out that this transcendence is not beyond or above, but one with all, and all are one.

From our ordinary point of view the two aspects of Limitless-Oneness may seem all too abstract, metaphysical and lacking in substance in the reality we know. Hence, I need to explain them in more detail.

First, let me explain the meaning of oneness when I say that all are one. For example, our bodies have many different parts--eyes, ears, hands, etc. All of them form one body because they are all connected. Similarly, although the world consists of so many things, they are all connected as one. This seems to contradict the fact that in the world, it is survival of the fittest. In the human world, we have wars against one another; how could we be one? Buddha's

experience of the oneness of all is beyond our ordinary experience, yet it is possible for any one of us to share this experience through the cultivation of Buddhist practice. Only when one has some taste of this oneness can one see clearly that hostility and selfishness are wrong.

The Buddhist Practice does not aim at establishing a new conceptual perspective, which would inevitably bring about the duality of right and wrong. If it were such, then it would be only trying to replace one set of artificial standards with another, and consequently cannot free people from prejudice. Rather, Buddhist practices aim at freeing us from the delusive limitation of concepts and senses, and help us regain our innate spiritual purity. In the light of our original purity, we will realize that selfishness and hostility are ill founded, but not simply because we are subscribing to certain ideals.

Furthermore, it is of utmost importance that we understand this oneness, because if we are limited by our conceptual selves, then our lives are certainly miserable. When all things are constantly subject to change, how could we keep our tiny selves above water all the time? It would seem that the whole world is running against our will most of the time if we are self-centered. Our lives are so fragile--what guarantee do we have for our safety and subsistence?

Second, as to limitlessness of Buddha's Enlightenment, I offer the following explanation: We know that concepts have limited applicability to reality and that the range of human senses is limited; how, then, could Buddha transcend such limits? Buddha transcends conceptual limits by returning to the original state of no concepts, which is freedom from concepts even in the subconscious. This does not mean that Buddha is incapable of using concepts; it simply means that Buddha's mind is not confined or directed by concepts. The possibility of transcending normal human senses is shown by reports of people with supernatural abilities. From the Buddhist point of view, such supernatural abilities are within the reach of all human beings, provided that they free themselves from cultural barriers that prevent the development of innate subtle abilities. Since Buddha is one who has attained freedom from all artificial barriers, no matter how subtle they are, his innate abilities are fully developed. Hence, he naturally transcends the limitation of normal sensation.

How could Buddha transcend the basic framework of the Universe--the space-time continuum? We are accustomed to the limits of space and time; omnipresence, omniscience and eternity seem unreal to us mortals. Did not Buddha die at the age of eighty even though in Buddhist terminology it is labeled as "entering Nirvana"? Yes, from our ordinary point of view, no matter what you call it, Buddha died at eighty, and so it seems that he is at least subject to death, if not rebirth. Nevertheless, when he attained Full Enlightenment, he lost his identification with the mortal body and life, he was at once in eternal union with the whole universe--the universe not limited by our concepts of space and time, and it is precisely in this way that he achieved his transcendence of space and time. Furthermore, his transcendence is not

just a psychological event; it has been witnessed by Buddhists over the ages that as long as a Buddhist is sincere in taking refuge in Buddha and devotes himself to Buddhist practice, he will receive numerous inspirations from Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and protectors. The only reasonable explanation for all those miraculous inspirational events is that Buddha and holy beings have achieved omnipresence, eternity and omniscience.

There is no way that I can advocate the above to people simply because it is my belief. Any one who adopts the Buddhist practice will sooner or later experience the truth of the above statements. It is only because it is based on such a general fact that I dare to advocate Buddha's transcendence to the world.

When one, through the cultivation of Buddhist practices, experiences the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness, his life is no longer limited by his mortal existence. Even the concepts of space and time become meaningless in the sense that they are no longer operative in the usual way. If we study the basis of science, we will realize that the basic measurement and hence operational significance of space and time are indeed defined by man. When Buddha was able to free himself from all concepts that were consciously or subconsciously present to him, spatial and temporal distinctions faded away, and all became one. This is not just theoretical projection of what Buddhahood should be like, be it realizable or not. Buddhists through the ages can testify that, as a result of their practice, many extraordinary phenomena have occurred which baffle scientific explanations, but can be reasonably accounted for according to the Buddhist teaching of Limitless-Oneness. The working of prayers that affect people thousands of miles away is one such miraculous phenomenon. Even if someday science may be able to explain supernatural phenomena, it will still be unlikely that science can have the power to reproduce such extraordinary events.

Science is built on theoretical systems, which in turn are built on concepts, and concepts by their nature divide and define limits. Even the concept of infinity hinges on the concept of finiteness and can be understood only as being non-finite. Buddha's Enlightenment, on the contrary, is completely beyond conceptual confinement. Here lies the fundamental reason why science can never achieve Buddhist Enlightenment and its accompanying supernatural powers.

Science can provide us with instruments and technology that help us hear and see things thousands of miles away, but it cannot do so without those instruments and energy sources; whereas telepathy and clairvoyance come to practitioners naturally.

Human knowledge today is based on the fundamental duality of subject and object, the observer and the observed. Nevertheless, in quantum mechanics we have come to recognize the Uncertainty Principle, which illuminates the limit of a dualistic approach. In using the concept of a field to establish General

Relativity Theory, Einstein is approaching the Buddhist teaching of all are one. In Limitless-Oneness the fundamental characteristic of human cognitive activities, the subject/object distinction, has been transcended.

The Buddhist practice will help us realize our original state of Limitless-Oneness. As we gradually approach Enlightenment, the broadening of our horizons and the openness of our lives will enable us to face the difficulties of life with a proper perspective. Consequently we will be able to handle things more satisfactorily and even enjoy a spontaneous feeling of peace and happiness. As we turn the center of our attention from selfish interests to the well-being of all sentient beings, we will naturally live a life of service and find such a life meaningful and spiritually rewarding. Besides, as we gain experience of Limitless-Oneness, we will be able to use such experience to help others in many extraordinary ways.

The future seems to lie beyond the scope of human knowledge. However, a Buddhist practitioner may sometimes know future events in advance. It is revealed to him in dreams or through heavenly voices. Ordinarily we lack the ability to see the causal consequences of events; hence the future is full of surprises. Nevertheless, phenomena occur according to the Law of Causation and Consequence, hence the future is, to some extent, predictable. This does not imply fatalism because events that are bound to happen due to past events may still be changed by additional efforts before they actually happen. This and the fact that all are connected as one are the reasons why prayers can help people who are suffering the consequence of past negative activities. Theoretically we can explain as above the fact that practitioners do sometimes know things in advance; practically, we have no mechanical way to achieve such results. It remains a mystical spiritual reality known to devoted practitioners through the ages.

To say that this Limitless-Oneness is originally pure, we mean that it is not the result of practice or cultivation; rather, it is naturally free from artificial limitations. Usually we are not aware of this fact because we are accustomed to being limited by concepts and the senses. To people who are able to free themselves from the limiting effect of concepts and senses, the truth of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness will become self-evident simply because it is so. What Buddhist practice does is simply help remove our prejudice and habits so that we may return to the original state of purity, which is beyond value systems and judgments. It is a process of unlearning our cultural differences--we are born American, French... or Chinese, which is an accidental event but it affects our upbringing and outlook on life. Only when we are free from cultural prejudice can we see that essentially we are all the same. Whatever we do to others based on cultural prejudice is simply due to ignorance of the fundamental unity and equality among all beings; when we hurt others we are indeed hurting ourselves. These are not abstract religious ideals--the modern awareness of ecology and of the need for environmental preservation testifies to the truth of these wise teachings.

Another aspect of original purity is that when we achieve Full Enlightenment we are simply returning to a natural state; it will not be something foreign to our nature and thus needs some effort to keep. Were Full Enlightenment an object to pursue and preserve with effort, it could not bring complete liberation because then we would need always to be on the watch for it and never able to relax. Just the opposite; we need to learn to let go. We have been holding on to the notion of a self for too long. Our minds are constantly running with thoughts: I am like this, you are like that, and our relationship is such and such... without end. When our minds are so conditioned and complicated, we simply cannot relax. We need to unlearn all this and return to the state of simplicity and childlike innocence. Only then will we find freedom and happiness in life.

Returning to our innocent state does not mean that we need to abolish our culture and social structures. It is an obvious fact that social structures have their limits--the peace of a society is basically maintained by its people's goodness and mutual trust, rather than by police and lawyers. It is important to cultivate the spiritual innocence of people so that laws and law enforcement agencies will not be misused but can serve properly as tools to help the innocent.

Original purity is beyond our judgments and preferences. All our values and propensities relate to our cultural backgrounds; what is considered good in one culture may be considered bad in another. For example, in America, people name their children after someone they love; hence a child may be given the name of a grandparent. In the Chinese culture, it is disrespectful to use the name of a parent in naming a child. Original purity is beyond these cultural differences and relative judgments.

No Attachment and Opening Up

How can we apply Limitless-Oneness in real-life situations? It does not mean that we could intrude into others' rights and properties and act simply as we please. Rather, we should give up our prejudices and attachments, open our mind to the world, and be tolerant and considerate to one another. In this way, we will gradually approach Limitless-Oneness even in our daily lives.

As a Buddhist practitioner, I used to ask myself the question: how do I apply Buddha's teachings in my daily life? There are so many theories and rules of conduct in Buddhism, and it would be very difficult to know how to apply them to our daily lives. Furthermore, new elements of the modern world and the complications of each individual's situation cannot be given full treatment in any religious treatise. Real-life situations often require immediate attention and responses; we may not have the chance to consult a spiritual teacher in advance. Hence, in order to apply Buddha's teachings to our daily lives, it is necessary that we use very simple and fundamental principles to guide our considerations and activities.

How do I obtain such workable guidelines? I look directly at Buddhahood, which is in Limitless-Oneness, and our situation, which is limited in all practical aspects then it becomes obvious that our approach to Buddhahood is a process of transcendence from finiteness to limitlessness. Thus, the main principles to guide our activities and practices are, on the active side, to open up, and, on the reductive side, to let go of attachments. What I have learned for my own use are the two basic principles of Opening Up and No Attachment. I offer them to all Buddhist friends who also want to apply Buddha's teaching to their daily lives.

These two principles are complementary to each other and interconnected. Without letting go of attachments, there is no real opening up. Without opening up, one can hardly let go of attachments. Opening up means to see things from all angles, to love all equally, and to consider things in long term instead of the immediate result. No attachment means to give up one's prejudices, preferences and partialities. We need to let go of our limited views, desires, emotions, and habits, and open up to the openness, impartiality and tranquility of Limitless-Oneness.

Let us consider, for example, opening up in space. Please imagine you are in the center of a big balloon, and try to expand this balloon as much as possible. Could you please tell me how large your balloon is?

The answers that I have received are as follows: Some says that he feels some curvature, a boundary, but he cannot specify where it is. Another says that as his balloon enlarges he gradually loses feeling of it. A woman says that she feels that the balloon is limited by the room, so she closes her eyes and has a mental image of a big balloon in the sky, with herself in the center.

In all three answers, we find a sense of boundary, and the woman points out that the walls are limiting her imaginary space. Once I had an answer from a man that the sphere was not only limited by the walls, but stayed in front of him, although he was told to think of himself as being in the center of the sphere. These responses show that our sense of space is unconsciously limited by the room we are in or by the habit of looking forward.

Thus to open up in space means to adopt Buddhist practices so that our minds will not be limited as in the above examples and will have the freedom to transcend sensual and habitual limits. It also means that we should transcend the views and customs of a locality.

Opening up in time means not to be confined by the present situation, but to have a perspective that sees the continuity of past, present and future, an overall view of life, a sense of history and even beyond history.

Opening up in emotions means to be kind and considerate to people you meet and adopt an attitude of service in your work. If we confine our love, goodwill and generosity to a certain few, then we may never achieve peace of mind

because life is impermanent and all those we care for are not free from life's ups and downs. However, if we enlarge our caring and loving to all beings, then we will live in peace that comes from a commitment to serve all equally with love. Of course, we can actually help only those we happen to encounter, nevertheless, to each one we equally offer what is appropriate with the awareness that the underlying love transcends worldly considerations and is in the light of Limitless-Oneness.

Opening up in perspectives means to see things from all angles, with an overall view, and free from personal and cultural prejudices.

Opening up in perceptions means to go beyond the normal sensory limits and develop our potential for supernatural powers. This is not something sought after by Buddhists, but it may develop naturally as one advances on the path toward Enlightenment. When one's worldly worries and attachments fade away, one's innate subtle abilities will automatically exhibit their functions.

The teachings of Confucius were respected and followed in China because they teach a broader view--how to live a life so that society is harmonious, instead of a primitive, self-centered view of life. The teachings of Taoism, Hinduism, Christianity and many other religions all aim at harmony between man and nature, or man and heaven; they offer a even broader view than the social order of Confucianism. Nevertheless, it is only Shakyamuni who became aware of the subtle attachment to an illusive notion of self in the realizations of heavenly religions, and became free from such illusions thereby attaining Limitless-Oneness. Thus, Buddhism is most thorough in teaching one how to open up and let go. Consequently, it is only Buddhism that teaches that even its teachings are simply means to help one become liberated, and that in the final liberation one should not be confined by these teachings.

The Six-Fold Sublimation--One by One

In English works on Mahayana Buddhism one frequently encounters mentioning of the Six [Kinds of] Perfection. Perfection in such cases is a translation of Paramita, which in Sanskrit means to reach the other shore. When you are in transmigration you are on the shore of endless recycling of life and death. In order to be safe, you have to sail across the ocean of sorrows to reach the other shore, which is the Enlightenment of Buddha. There, you are eternally free from transmigration and it's suffering. Through engaging in the six-fold practices, you will be able to reach the other shore; therefore, they are called paramita. However, once you become a Buddha, you will not remain idle on the shore. You will be working as a lifeguard, trying to help other beings out of the ocean of suffering. This is the profound meaning of paramita--to reach the other shore in order to save all beings from suffering.

Traditionally the Bodhi-mind, the dedication to help all sentient beings reach Enlightenment, is distinguished into three types:

(A) Resembling a shepherd--wishing to reach Enlightenment only after all sentient beings have done so.

(B) Resembling a ferryman--wishing to reach Enlightenment simultaneously with all sentient beings.

(C) Resembling a prince--wishing to become enlightened first, like assuming the throne with full authority, in order to save all sentient beings from transmigration.

A shepherd is capable of goading the flock of sheep; a ferryman is capable of maneuvering the ferryboat; and a prince will assume the throne in time. In all three cases the underlying assumption is that one should first become capable of helping others before conducting the salvation activities. Therefore, the first priority of a sincere practitioner should be to reach the other shore by devoting himself to Buddhist practice and service.

The usual translation of Paramita as Perfection, I think, means that by adopting these practices you will become perfect. Following the precedence of my late Guru, Yogi Chen, I choose instead to use Sublimation for the following reasons: Whenever there is a change from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection, there may still be lacking a change in essence. For example, polluted water after distillation is still water. However, the final result that Buddhist practice may bring about is not just a "perfect" person, but an indescribable state labeled "Enlightenment." There is a fundamental change in essence from manhood to Buddhahood. In order to bring out this essential distinction sublimation is used to indicate that the purification process of Buddhist practice may vaporize our attachment to a physical existence into the thin air of Limitless-Oneness, and thereby enabling us to fully utilize our temporary existence to participate in the endless salvation activities of Compassion.

What is this Six-fold Sublimation? It consists of Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom. All of them are central practices of the Bodhisattva path. Is there some significance in the sequential order they are mentioned? Yes, it is as follows.

At the first stage, they want to free you from self-centeredness through the practice of giving. If you have attachment to material or non-material things, then it would be difficult for you to observe the Buddhist rules of conduct. These rules are designed in such a way that, on the one hand, they keep you from getting into trouble, and on the other hand, they nourish you by guiding you to do service for others. For people with strong attachments to personal well-being or belongings, it is very difficult to do more for others because their self-interests always come first. That is why the first stage is to practice giving.

Practice giving will free you from attachments, on the one hand, and broaden your horizons, on the other hand. You will gradually realize the spiritual truth

that we are all one. Your attachment to self-interests forms a big blockade between you and the rest of the world. Through giving, such a wall will gradually crumble, and only after its removal will you see that we are all one. Originally the wall did not exist; it was built by your self-centeredness. That is why the first stage is giving. Only those who can give freely can observe the rules of conduct; whenever there is conflict, one becomes accustomed to giving up self-centered considerations. Then it is easier to follow the rules of conduct, even when it is against one's selfishness.

Why does tolerance come next? The "tolerance" here is not the kind of tolerance that an adult has when he endures receiving an injection of medicine. The whole thing is directed toward Buddhahood; the tolerance here is rather difficult. If you want to live a life of renunciation of worldly pursuits so as to concentrate your efforts on Buddhist practice and service, you have to give up all worldly, social activities. Your relatives and friends may not agree with you and you will have to face the consequences of their possibly disliking you. In order to practice Buddhism, you have to tolerate many things; for example, if you are the only Buddhist in a Christian family, others may laugh at, criticize or try to convert you. You need to practice tolerance in order to continue your quest. The tolerance you developed during the stage of practicing law-abiding will enable you to face many difficulties that you may encounter later in life. One who has this kind of tolerance can use its strength to practice diligence. It is not easy to remain constantly diligent. Ordinarily one may be able to remain diligent for a period of a few months, however, traversing the path toward Enlightenment requires constant effort for the duration of one or more lifetime. Therefore, a practitioner needs a very strong foundation of tolerance to maintain such diligence.

We shall examine the practices involved in meditation. At first you must learn to concentrate on one point; this is called Samatha. After you have developed this kind of ability, you practice Vipassana by using the power of Samatha. Vipassana is doing contemplation or visualizations with single-mindedness. You may visualize certain images, seed-words, or Buddha, or use the power of Samatha to contemplate the meaning of Buddha's teachings. When Samatha and Vipassana are functioning in balance, it is called Samapatti.

Sometimes the practice of visualization or contemplation may weaken your ability to concentrate because now you are thinking of something far more complex. With continued practice you will gradually reach the stage where you can do it in a balanced way, i.e., do a visualization simultaneously with good concentration. From this stage of Samapatti, you gradually achieve Dhyana, which refers to the stages of attainment of meditation practices. In order to reach the various Dhyanas, you have to go through a long sequence of practices. For some people it means decades or even a lifetime of meditation. It is not only a matter of a long period of time, but also a matter of diligence. Without practicing diligently on a daily basis, you will never achieve Dhyana.

Finally, why does Wisdom come after Dhyana? This is a subtle point. When you read the Sutras and understand the philosophy you might think that you have acquired this wisdom. But do you have the wisdom? The wisdom here is not just book knowledge; it is not just a certain system of concepts; nor does the wisdom here mean the wisdom of Buddha at the final stage. When one reaches the final stage of Buddhahood, the wisdom of Buddha at that time is knowing and understanding everything. We are now talking about sublimation, namely, the practices that will lead us to Buddhahood; hence we should bear in mind that this is not the ultimate Enlightenment. Of course, it was born from Buddha's teachings. Buddha gave us the teachings in words so that we would have the ideas to work on, but understanding those words alone is not enough. You have to absorb those ideas through meditation; only through the penetrating force of meditation can Buddha's teachings become the central guidance, the heart essence of your life. This is the kind of wisdom you need to reach Buddhahood. One uses this wisdom to guide oneself and others on the path toward Buddhahood.

From the above we see why the Six-fold Sublimation is traditionally presented in that particular order. This order had been well sorted out and carefully arranged to guide practitioners.

The Six-fold Sublimation--All in One

When we examine closely the Six-fold Sublimation it becomes apparent that in each practice all the others are also involved. I will illustrate this perspective by considering the practice of Giving and that of Law-abiding.

A. The Practice of Giving--All in One

In the practice of giving you may be giving material things, fearlessness or Dharma. When you see an animal that is harmed or a child who is crying, you comfort them. These are examples of giving fearlessness, i.e., freeing sentient beings from fear or difficulties. As to the giving of Dharma, you offer Buddhist teachings freely to people.

By practicing giving, you are following the rules of conduct of Buddha because Buddha encourages us to benefit others and to stay away from bad deeds. Besides, purity of intention is essential to the practice of giving. Guarding this key factor is a practice of law-abiding at the most crucial juncture.

When you give someone something, be it of a material or spiritual nature, the recipient may say that this is not good enough or desirable; then you need to practice tolerance. When you try to give Buddha's teachings to others. They may reject it based on worldly considerations or the teachings of other religions. Again you need to be tolerant. It is not in the Buddha's teachings to become enemies of others. You need to wait until the appropriate time comes when they want to listen to you, and then you can explain the teachings to them again. In order to give fearlessness to the weak and needy you might

incur hardship on yourself; such sacrifice calls for one's tolerance to fulfill the compassionate commitment and achieve spiritual transcendence. That is how tolerance is involved in giving.

In order to practice giving perfectly, you need to be diligent; you try to do it with great effort. Constantly ask yourself, "What and how to do under the circumstances to help more and serve better?" Giving without prudent consideration and genuine effort may yield the opposite result of hindering and meddling others' business. Thus diligence is involved in giving.

When you practice giving, it's also a chance to practice meditation. When you are giving something to others, you understand that its significance is to carry out the philosophy of caring for others, of realizing oneness with others. So you remain mindful on this during the giving. The reason for giving is not because the recipient is liked by you or useful to you, but simply because he is a fellow sentient being. Although you are doing only one act of giving, it should be done in the spirit that you are giving everything to whomever in need. That is how meditation is involved in giving.

What is the wisdom involved in giving? It is the realization, not just a conceptual understanding, gradually gained through practice that there is no spiritual boundary between the giver and the receiver. All things are in oneness; that is the fundamental wisdom involved.

B. The Practice of Law-abiding--All in One

Through observing Buddhist rules of conduct that avoid harmful activities we are passively giving fearlessness to the world; through following the rules that promote the well-being of others we will actively give material, fearlessness or Dharma to people in need.

In observing Buddhist rules of conduct one needs tolerance to transcend worldly loss and gains, to remain tranquil and free from hatred in adverse circumstances, to pray for all beings including those who prosecute Buddhists out of ignorance or misunderstanding, to continue on the spiritual quest even when there is few support and lots of mistrust, etc. In short, observing the rules involves activities and their consequences, and one needs tolerance to abide by Buddha's laws.

Buddha's commandments are very comprehensive, regulating one's activities of body, speech and mind. To live up to these commandments one needs constant reflection on one's intentions, thoughts, emotional responses, and verbal or physical acts. One also needs to maintain practices and activities that are in the altruistic spirit of Buddhism for the rest of one's life. In short, it is a complete program of transformation that cannot yield proper results without diligent working out in full compliance.

Mindfulness is essential to Law-abiding. Without concentration one may inadvertently infringe some rule or commit serious mistakes out of carelessness. Law-abiding as a spiritual practice must be accompanied by both an understanding of the underlying philosophy and a sincere willingness to undertake it. These two factors are maintained by the meditative aspect of Law-abiding. Law-abiding as a life-long practice amounts to a continuous meditation in itself. Law-abiding will become a natural habit only when the practitioner lives in a well-established meditative state.

Law-abiding should not be superficial and tied down by formality. It should not involve a sense of pride, superiority, or righteousness; or a feeling of hostility, contempt, or anger toward the Lawbreakers. In brief, Law-abiding as a practice should not be limited by appearance, the distinction of self and others, or the judgment of good or bad. The goal is to attain Limitless-Oneness transcending such limitations and therefore it should be practiced under the guidance of such transcendental wisdom.

C. The Rest of the Sublimation Practices--All in One

It is a very important part of learning Buddha's teachings to figure out, on one's own, their application in areas not mentioned in the teachings. In the light of the above discussions, the reader is encouraged to think about the details of the all-in-one perspective in the remaining cases of Tolerance, Diligence, Meditation and Wisdom.

The Six-fold Sublimation in Limitless-Oneness

From the goal it is easier to understand the function of the means and their interconnection. Thus in the light of the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness we can appreciate the Six-fold Sublimation better. Furthermore, the principle of No Attachment and Opening Up will indicate clearly the directions in which to apply them.

A. Sublimation through the Practice of Giving

In practicing giving of material things or fearlessness we are enlarging the sphere of our care and transcending our self-centered attachments. Since the goal is Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness, our giving should not stem from selfish or prejudiced motives and should not be discriminating to the recipients. The ideal act of giving should be sincere, spontaneous, and responsive to the need of whomever one encounters. It should also be free from expectation of any return, reward, fame, admiration, affection, etc.

Helping others obtain material comfort or physical well-being is important but temporary because what one can do is little and there is no end to needs and suffering. Besides, one's well-being is also determined by his inner life, and when he lacks peace of mind or falls into deep depression, all the external comforts in the world mean nothing. The giving of Dharma aims at this fundamental salvation--to show everyone the path to inner peace and freedom

and help them advance on it. In addition to the ideal qualities mentioned in the last paragraph, the giving of Dharma should base on both knowledge of Buddhist teachings and insight gained through practice.

All practices of giving should be brought into connection with the giving of Dharma because only in this way can the help become ultimate and thorough. In this way the giving of material or fearlessness becomes truly a sublimation toward Limitless-Oneness. The connection with Dharma can be indirect and remote such as maintaining an intention to introduce the teachings of Buddha in the future when the circumstance becomes appropriate. The connection with Dharma can be direct and immediate such as repeating silently a Buddha's name or a mantra during the act of giving.

In Limitless-Oneness each act of giving is an expression of boundless compassion to all beings. On the surface an act of giving benefits only a certain number of beings at a particular juncture of space and time; nevertheless, through continuous practice with the awareness of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness the artificial boundary of self-centeredness will diminish and disappear, and consequently each act of giving becomes a wave in the ocean of compassionate salvation activities of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas transcending limits of recipient, space and time. In Limitless-Oneness the fundamental discrimination of giver and recipient has vaporized into thin air; each act of giving is as natural and free from an awareness of self-and-others as one taking food when hungry.

B. Sublimation through the Practice of Law-abiding

The Buddhist rules of conduct teach us either to benefit others by selfless service or to stay away from troubles by avoiding harmful activities. The former type aims at opening us up and the latter type works at reducing our attachments. Engaging in Buddhist practice is a selfless service because the goal is to become able to help realize the Enlightenment of all beings, and it is also a positive way to avoid harmful activities by reducing the source of suffering' selfishness.

From a self-centered point of view many Buddhist rules of conduct would be too demanding--how could we help others beyond considerations of our self-interests when we ourselves are just as vulnerable to the ups and downs of life? Besides, are we not too strict on ourselves when we aim at no attachment? A little holding on to personal aesthetic tastes seems to liven up our dull and routine lives. However, in Limitless-Oneness others' suffering is just as dear as one's own, and one will become free from suffering only when others are also free. It is exactly because that all of us are equally vulnerable that we need to cultivate selfless service to help one another. No attachment is not a desert without oasis; rather it is a weeded field ready to yield fruits of compassionate service. No attachment will broaden our aesthetic tastes without strangling it because it aims at reducing attachment but not the goodness and beauty of life.

It is difficult to follow Buddhist rules of conduct against personal habits, preferences, convenience and apparent worldly interests. It is even more difficult when it incurs disapproval or animosity from family members, friends, society or other religious groups. Even among Buddhists there may be disagreement on interpretation of the teachings, the correct way to practice, or the proper fashion to spread the Dharma. In some cases it can become quite complicated and formidable to sincere practitioners. However, looking up to Limitless-Oneness will illuminate what is essential in life and render it easier to abide by the Buddhist rules of conduct. Personal attachments fade in the great openness of Limitless-Oneness. Even when we disagree with others or are treated with hostility by others on account of our faith, we shall bear no grudge against them because we are simply acting in the ultimate interest of all-Limitless-Oneness.

C. Sublimation through the Practice of Tolerance

For many of us who are submerged in the self-centered worldly life the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness is a truth very difficult to appreciate. Even for people who can appreciate to some extent the value of such teachings it is still rather difficult to live up to the ideal. Nevertheless, if we give up striving toward this ideal, we will lose the chance to attain eternal liberation from suffering. Furthermore, our endeavors in this sublimation process will improve the quality of our lives and mature us spiritually. Therefore, we should continue to learn, practice and propagate the teachings of Buddha.

Since the truth of Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness can be realized only through practicing and living the selfless way, there has never been a forcing of Buddhist teaching on people, and Buddhists are always tolerant to people of other faiths. Truth needs no follower; people need to humble themselves to learn and benefit from truth. It takes time for people to learn to be humble which is an aspect of selflessness and a sign of wisdom. In tolerance there is both the wisdom of understanding the variance of people and the compassion of embracing even the ignorant and the hostile.

Tolerance in the light of Limitless-Oneness is not an exhibition of cowardice, but a wise choice of how best to invest our very limited and precious time and energy. Instead of inconsequential disputes and fights, we had better devote ourselves to constructive contributions and service. Rather than fighting over worldly interests that nail our minds down to trifles, let us open up to the serenity, warmth and joy of Limitless-Oneness--all beings are one. Tolerance dissolves disputes, brings harmony, and free us from hatred and violence. In the openness of Limitless-Oneness tolerance naturally arises; most of the time intolerance is simply the offspring of narrow-mindedness.

Tolerance does not imply inability to distinguish between right or wrong. Nor does it mean mixing of good and evil. It is born from the awareness that truth cannot be forced on people and ideas that need to be upheld by force are not

true. Consequently, the reasonable approach is to live one's life in the light of Limitless-Oneness and to spread the message to all who are interested.

D. Sublimation through the Practice of Diligence

In the light of Limitless-Oneness there is not a fraction of time when the truth is inoperative. The practice of diligence is essentially to remain in this natural rhythm of Oneness. It is not striving toward austerity, physical self-mortification, or extraordinary endeavors displaying endurance of hardship. Of course, it is also possible to train one in understanding Oneness through undertaking artificially imposed hardships; nevertheless, it should not deteriorate into a show to attract fame or followers.

When a practitioner is sound asleep he may be in a meditative state or entering a dream inspired by Buddhist holy beings, then he is diligent because he is progressing on the path toward Enlightenment. When a practitioner is taking a rest after hours of practice or Dharma service he is diligent because he needs the refreshment to resume thrusting on the path. When a practitioner is enjoying a meal he is diligent because he needs the nutrition to continue his quest for Buddhahood. When one engages in Dharma service out of worldly motives or conduct Dharma activity mixed with worldly considerations, no matter how hard one works one is not practicing Diligence. In brief, diligence should not be measured by appearance.

Diligence in Limitless-Oneness has no time limit. It is a life devoted to continuous practice and Dharma service. The main concern of a diligent practitioner is Dharma, its practice and its propagation, in other words, the ultimate Enlightenment of all beings. On the scale of diligence the moment of actual renunciation of worldly engagements for practicing Dharma weighs more than a lifetime spent only talking about it because it is the beginning of an actual identifying process with the Limitless-Oneness. Diligence in daily life prompts a constant association of others' suffering with the compassion and salvation practice of Dharma. When one learns of unfortunate incidents one prays for and dedicates the merits accumulated through Buddhist practice to those involved.

Diligence in Limitless-Oneness has no space limit. Wherever a practitioner goes he remains constant in his way of life, his devotion and practice. Whatever he does is with the compassion that transcends all spatial boundaries and the wholesome spirit of all are equal and united as one.

Diligence in Limitless-Oneness transcends worldly distinctions of race, sex, nationality, religious affiliation, social status, personal merits or disability. A Buddhist practitioner should pray for all, serve all equally with compassion, and spread the teachings to all.

Limitless-Oneness is originally pure. Hence diligence is not strenuous maintenance of artificial formality but rather sincere renunciation of self-

centered attachments. Limitless-Oneness is not an empty stage but the drama of life in its entirety--variegated and colorful. Hence diligence is not escaping from life but opening up to the facts of life. Renunciation of worldly activities in order to devote oneself to Dharma practice and service is not escaping from life but active engagement to improve life from its root.

E. Sublimation through the Practice of Meditation

We are all within Limitless-Oneness and yet still attaching to self-centered ideas, habits and activities. We have never stepped outside Limitless-Oneness and yet still failed to appreciate its unfathomable openness. We will never separate from Limitless-Oneness and yet still acting contrary to original purity. To become awakened to the subtle truth of Limitless-Oneness one needs the force of meditation to eradicate the blindfold of selfishness. To engage continuously in activities that are in accordance with Limitless-Oneness and hence in conflict with the self-centered worldly life, one needs the spiritual strength and maturity attained through meditation practice. To achieve the profound transformation and abide in the ego-less state, supreme achievement in meditation is a necessary tool for removing the self-imposed hindrances.

The usual practices of Buddhist meditation are merely preparation for attainment of Limitless-Oneness. Limitless-Oneness is originally so and beyond the reach of artificial maneuvers. The realization of Limitless-Oneness is an awakening to truth while the meditation practices are the wake-up calls. More wake-up calls might help but there is no telling when the awakening will take place. What will touch off the awakening to the truth of Limitless-Oneness, not just a conceptual appreciation but a total experience, is a mystery. In the history of Buddhism there are many, many examples such as a love song, a sound of stone hitting bamboo, seeing one's image in the reflection of water, seeing the sticking up of a finger, etc. Just as anything may bring up one's memory of something, any object may lead to the totality of all experiences and thereby absorb one into Limitless-Oneness. When one's life is devoted to Dharma, the whole life is a continuous meditation, which warms one up for the great explosion into infinity. Sooner or later, under Buddha's blessings, a devoted practitioner will reach the threshold of Enlightenment and at that instant anything will ignite the wisdom fire of Enlightenment.

F. Sublimation through the Practice of Wisdom

In Limitless-Oneness we embrace all things as they are, and work on the liberation for all sentient beings through practicing and advocating no attachment to self-centered interests. The wisdom to live in accordance with Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness will grow only when one lives a life observing Buddhist rules of conduct, devotedly adopts daily practice and sincerely engages in Dharma service. The wisdom should be pure and innate; hence it should be free from the self-awareness of "being wise" and arise spontaneously without striving. Although our lives are very limited in time and

space, abiding in Limitless-Oneness will free our minds from such a trap and realizing Original Purity will spark joy in the lives of all beings.

The wisdom to practice in accordance with Limitless-Oneness is beyond concepts. It can be cultivated through engaging in Buddhist practices such as Giving, Law-abiding, Tolerance, Diligence and Meditation. The principles of Opening Up and No Attachment may guide our daily lives in the spirit of such wisdom. Praying to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas with sincerity, compassion and altruism will also benefit the growth of such wisdom.

Wisdom is intangible and seems impossible to be transmitted from one to another. Nevertheless, according to Buddhist practitioners' experiences, it is known that devotion in Buddhist practice and compassionate service will yield transcendental wisdom.

Concluding Remarks

In this work we are presenting the Six-fold Sublimation in view of the Original Purity in Limitless-Oneness; in other words, we are reviewing the path from the summit of achievement in order to obtain a correct and direct orientation. Since it is a perspective from achievement, its directives may seem harder to follow for the beginning practitioners. Furthermore, the ideal state may seem too abstract to make sense of and become connected with the events and relationships of daily life. Nevertheless, such a presentation will be of more and more help to practitioners as they advance further and further on the path to Enlightenment because it contains insights born from experiences on the path.

The practices covered in this work should be based on the basic teachings of Buddhism such as Impermanence and Renunciation. These basic teachings emphasize the limits of our temporal existence and thereby prompt us to devote our lives to Dharma practice and service. They bring the high ideal of Limitless-Oneness down to the hard reality of Earth and thereby bridging the apparent gap between ideal and fact. Although we enjoy the aerial perspective of Limitless-Oneness, to realize it we need to climb up from the foothill of Impermanence and Renunciation. May the readers not be satisfied with talking about Limitless-Oneness but wisely choose to start with practicing Impermanence and Renunciation.

It is beyond the scope of this work to explode Impermanence and Renunciation in the light of Limitless-Oneness. Perhaps the readers will be interested to contemplate this topic on their own?

My Bodhicitta Vows

{Used for Dedication of Merits}

BY Dr. Yutang Lin

1. May virtuous gurus remain with us and those departed return soon!
2. May perverse views and violence soon become extinct and Dharma spread without hindrance!
3. May all beings proceed diligently on the path and achieve Buddhahood before death!
4. May all beings develop Great Compassion and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!
5. May all beings develop Great Wisdom and never regress until they reach perfect Buddhahood!



The Dharma Protector Bodhisattva



Transference of Merit

*May the Merits and Virtues accrued from
this work,
Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,
Repaying the Four Kinds of Kindness
above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths
below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve of Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in Ultimate Bliss.*

