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Zen Keys

Stepping into Freedom

AN INTRODUCTION TO
BUDDHIST MONASTIC TRAINING

Thich Nhat Hanh

with the Monks and Nuns
of Plum Village



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Introduction

Stepping into Freedom is a book of training guidelines for novice monks and nuns in the Buddhist tradition. The Sanskrit words for novice are *shramanera* (for a monk) and *shramanerika* (for a nun). *Shram* means “to practice tirelessly.” *Shramaner(ik)a* means “to end afflictions and develop loving kindness,” “to be diligent,” “to recollect,” “to seek,” or “to realize the fruit of nirvana and put an end to wrong perceptions, wrong actions, afflictions, and suffering.” A novice is someone deeply determined to end suffering and to love all beings without attachment or discrimination.

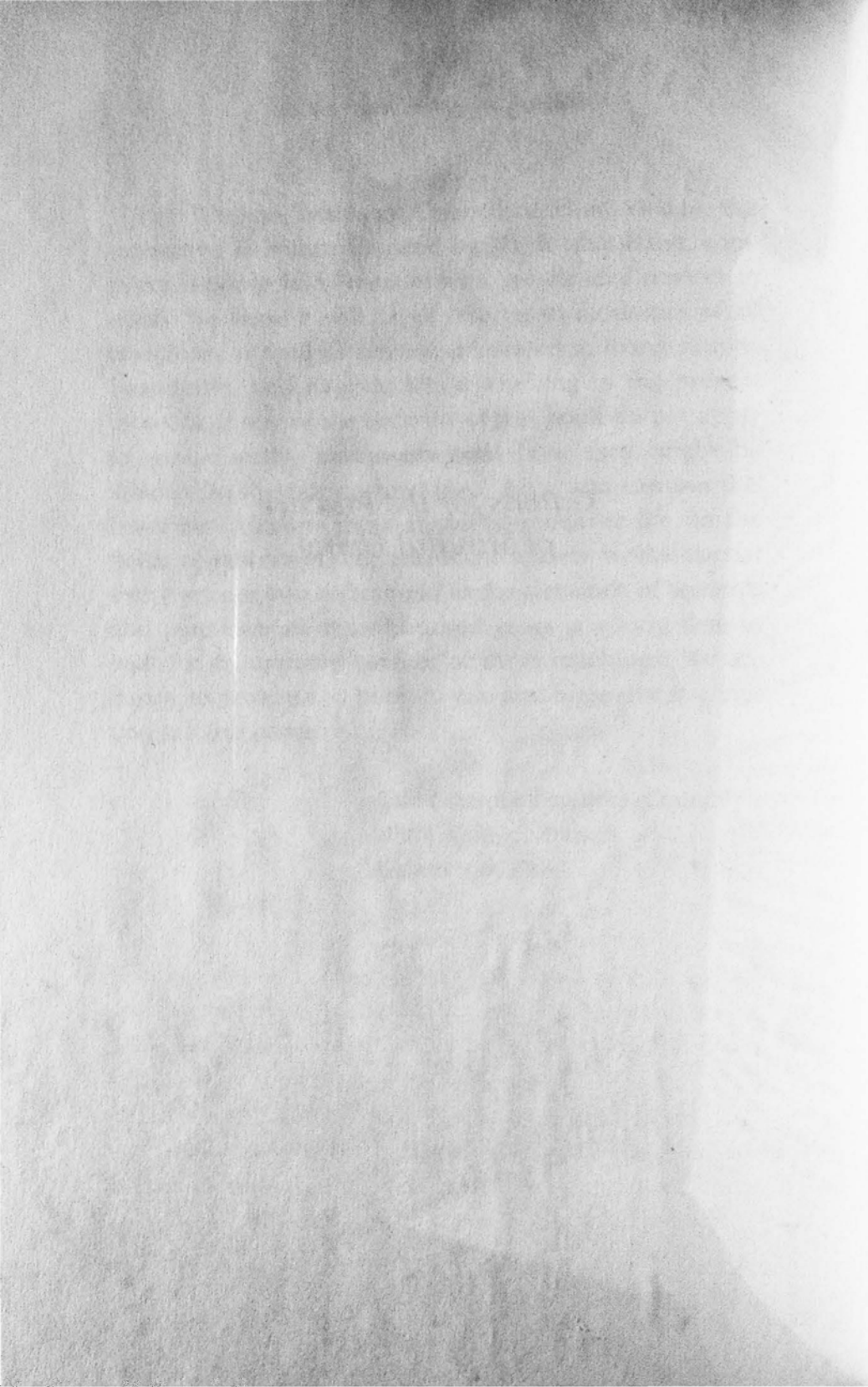
This book is divided into eight parts: (1) *Gathas* (mindfulness verses), (2) Precepts, (3) Mindful Manners, (4) Encouraging Words, (5) A Talk for Young Monks and Nuns, (6) Precept Recitation Ceremony, (7) Poem, and (8) Sources. The first three parts are adaptations of two Chinese texts—*The Essential Vinaya for Daily Use*, by Master Duti and *The Summary of the Novice Vinaya*, by Master Yunqi (also called Zhuhong). These two texts were written and compiled four centuries ago, and have been updated by Thich Nhat Hanh. The fourth part, “Encouraging Words,” was written by Master Guishan in the beginning of the ninth century.

The Dharma Teachers' Council of Plum Village, the monastery in France founded by Thich Nhat Hanh, compiled *Stepping into Freedom* with present-day novices in mind. We hope it will be of interest to monastics of all traditions, as well as anyone interested in living simply, beautifully, and happily while dwelling in the present moment. If any of the sections of this book do not apply to you directly, please envision how they might be adapted to fit your circumstance. Also, you can use this book just to learn about Buddhist monastic life. In the fields of education, art, and science, new works appear every year or two to respond to the demands of students and practitioners. Four hundred years is a long time to wait for an updated version of these teachings. We are happy to present this book to you and hope that it brings you joy and peace.

The Dharma Teachers' Council
Plum Village, France
Summer 1997

PART ONE

*Gathas for the Practice
of Mindful Living*



Gathas for the Practice of Mindful Living

When I entered Tu Hiêu Monastery as a novice in 1942, I received a copy of *Gathas for Daily Use*, compiled by Chinese meditation master Duti. Gathas are short verses to recite during daily activities to help us return to mindfulness. At Plum Village in France, we practice gathas all day long—when we wake up, when we enter the meditation hall, during meals, when we wash the dishes, and with each activity.

To meditate is to be aware of what is going on in our bodies, our feelings, our minds, and the world. Dwelling in the present moment, we can see so many beauties and wonders right before our eyes—a child's smile, the sun rising, the autumn leaves. We can be happy just by being aware of what is in front of us. Practicing with a gatha can help us return to ourselves and to what is going on in the present moment.

It is helpful to memorize these gathas, a few at first, and more as you go on with the practice. As you silently recite the first line, breathe in; and as you silently recite the second line, breathe out. When the gatha is finished, continue your activity, and you will find that your mindfulness has increased. When we drive, road signs help us find our way. We “see” the last sign until the next one ap-

pears. Practicing with gathas is the same. When we practice well, the gathas are with us continuously, and we live our whole day in awareness.

1

Waking Up

Waking up this morning, I smile.
Twenty-four brand new hours are before me.
I vow to live fully in each moment
and to look at beings with eyes of compassion.

2

Taking the First Steps of the Day

Walking on the Earth
is a miracle!
Each mindful step
reveals the wondrous *Dharmakaya*.*

3

Stepping out of Bed

If today I inadvertently step on a small insect,
may it not suffer too much.
May it be liberated.
Homage to the Bodhisattva of the Land of Great
Happiness.

* Dharmakaya—the body of the teaching. Also, the ground of being manifested as mountains, rivers, stars, moon, and all species.

4

Opening the Window

Opening the window, I look out onto the
Dharmakaya.

How wondrous is life!

Attentive to each moment,
my mind is clear like a calm river.

5

Turning on the Water

Water comes from high mountain sources.

Water runs deep in the Earth.

Miraculously, water comes to us and sustains all
life.

My gratitude is filled to the brim.

6

Washing Your Hands

Water flows over these hands.

May I use them skillfully
to preserve our precious planet.

7

Brushing Your Teeth

Brushing my teeth and rinsing my mouth,
I vow to speak purely and lovingly.

When my mouth is fragrant with right speech,
a flower blooms in the garden of my heart.

8

Rinsing Your Mouth

Rinsing my mouth, my heart is cleansed.
The universe is perfumed by flowers.
Actions of body, speech, and mind are calmed.
Hand in hand with the Buddha, I walk in the
Pure Land.

9

Using the Toilet

Defiled or immaculate,
increasing or decreasing—
these concepts exist only in our mind.
The reality of interbeing is unsurpassed.

10

Bathing

Unborn and indestructible,
beyond time and space—
both transmission and inheritance
lie in the wonderful nature of Dharmadhatu.*

11

Looking in the Mirror

Awareness is a mirror
reflecting the four elements.
Beauty is a heart that generates love
and a mind that is open.

* Dharmadhatu: the ultimate realm of being, the world of suchness, the wonderful world of Interbeing.

12

Washing Your Feet

The peace and joy
of one toe
is peace and joy
for my whole body.

13

Putting on the Monk's/Nun's Robe

Putting on this monk's/nun's robe,
my heart is at ease.
I live a life of freedom,
bringing joy to the world.

14

Putting on the Sanghati Robe*

How wonderful is the robe of a nun (monk),
a field of precious seeds.
I vow to receive it,
and wear it lifetime after lifetime.

15

Entering the Meditation Hall

Entering the meditation hall,
I see my true self.
As I sit down,
I vow to cut off all disturbances.

* Sanghati is the robe a monk or nun wears on formal occasions.

16

Sitting Down

Sitting here
is like sitting under a Bodhi tree.
My body is mindfulness itself,
free from all distraction.

17

Finding a Stable Posture

In the lotus posture,
the human flower blooms.
The udumbara flower is here,
offering its true fragrance.*

18

Calming the Breath

Breathing in, I calm my body.
Breathing out, I smile.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment!

19

Adjusting Posture

Feelings come and go
like clouds in a windy sky.
Conscious breathing
is my anchor.

* The udumbara flower blooms just once every three thousand years.
But it can bloom in us at any moment, when our practice is stable.

20

Greeting Someone

A lotus for you
a Buddha to be.

21

Holding the Alms' Bowl

The bowl of the Tathagata
is in my two hands.
Giver, receiver, and gift
held in perfect oneness.

22

Blessing the Offering to the Hungry

The ways of the Awakened One are wondrous.
His limitless compassion
transforms seven grains of rice
into food enough for everyone.

23

Offering to the Hungry

Great garuda bird,*
hungry spirits in immense wastelands,
mother and child starving in the desert,
the balm of compassion satisfies all their hunger.

* The garuda bird is like an eagle. One day the Buddha saw a garuda about to kill a snake and he advised it not to do so. The bird told the Buddha that it needed to eat the snake so it could live. The Buddha promised that the Sangha would offer food to the bird every day, and we continue to do this, reciting this gatha.

24

Before Eating

The Buddha advises us to be mindful
while we eat,
to be in touch with the Sangha and the food.
Brothers and sisters, when you hear the bell,
meditate on the Five Contemplations:
This food is the gift of the whole universe—
the earth, the sky, and much hard work.
May we be worthy to receive it.
May we transform unskillful states of mind,
especially the habit of eating without moderation.
May we take only foods that nourish us
and prevent illness.
We accept this food to realize
the path of understanding and love.

25

Holding the Empty Bowl

Looking at this bowl,
I see how fortunate I am
to have enough to eat to continue the practice.

26

Serving Food

In this food,
I see clearly
the entire universe
supporting my existence.

27

Before Eating

Beings all over the Earth
are struggling to live.
I aspire to practice deeply
so all may have enough to eat.

28

Beginning to Eat

With the first taste, I offer joy.
With the second, I help relieve
the suffering of others.
With the third, I see others' joy as my own.
With the fourth, I learn the way of letting go.

29

***Looking at Your Plate
or Bowl after Eating***

The meal is finished,
and I am satisfied.
The four gratitudes*
are deeply in my mind.

30

Bathing the Buddha

Today we bathe the Tathagata.
So much happiness comes from awakened
understanding.

* Four Gratitude—gratitude to parents, teachers, friends, and all beings.

We have drifted a long time in the three realms.*
Now we see that this world of dust is the
Dharmakaya itself.

31

Inviting the Bell to Sound (Version 1)

Body, speech, and mind held in perfect oneness,
I send my heart along with the sound of the bell.
May the hearers awaken from forgetfulness
and transcend all anxiety and sorrow.

32

Inviting the Bell (Version 2)

May the sound of this bell penetrate deeply
into the cosmos.
In even the darkest spots, may living beings
hear it clearly,
so their suffering will cease,
understanding arise in their hearts,
and they can transcend the path of anxiety
and sorrow.
Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya.

33

Inviting the Bell (Version 3)

May the sound of this bell penetrate deeply
into the cosmos

* The Three Realms—the desire realm (where we are attached to sensual desire) and the form and formless realms (where we are attached to the pleasures of meditative concentration).

so that beings, even those in dark places,
may hear it and be free from birth and death.
May all beings realize awakening and find
their way home.

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya.

34

Listening to the Bell (Version 1)

Listen, listen,
this wonderful sound
brings me back
to my true home.

35

Listening to the Bell (Version 2)

Listening to the bell, I feel my afflictions
begin to dissolve.
My mind is calm, my body relaxed,
a smile is born on my lips.
Following the bell's sound,
my breathing guides me back
to the safe island of mindfulness.
In the garden of my heart,
the flower of peace blooms beautifully.
Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya.

36

Listening to the Bell (Version 3)

Hearing the bell,
I am able to let go of all my afflictions.

My heart is calm, my sorrows ended.
I am no longer bound to anything.
I learn to listen to my suffering
and the suffering of the other person.
When understanding is born in me,
compassion is also born.

37

Morning Meditation

The Dharmakaya is bringing morning light.
Sitting still, my heart at peace, I smile.
This is a new day.
I vow to go through it with awareness.
The sun of wisdom will soon be shining
everywhere.
*Sisters and brothers, diligently bring your mind
into meditation.*
Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya (three times).

38

Evening Meditation

At the foot of the Bodhi tree,
I keep my back straight and my posture stable.
Body, speech, and mind are calmed.
There is no longer any thought of right
and wrong.
Mindfulness is shining on the five skandhas.
The original face will be found,
and the shore of illusion will be left behind.

*Sisters and brothers, diligently bring your mind
into meditation.*

Namo Shakyamunaye Buddhaya (three times).

39

Impermanence

The day is ending and our life is one day shorter.

Let us look carefully at what we have done.

Let us practice diligently, putting our whole heart
into the path of meditation.

Let us live deeply each moment and in freedom,
so the time doesn't slip away meaninglessly.

40

Praising the Buddha

The Buddha jewel shines infinitely.

He has realized perfect enlightenment for count-
less lifetimes.

The beauty and stability of a Buddha sitting
can be seen in the mountains and rivers.

How splendid is the Vulture Peak!

How beautiful the light that shines forth from
Buddha's third eye

illuminating the six dark paths.

The Nagapuspa assembly will be our next
appointment

for the continuation of the true teachings and
practices.

We take refuge in the Buddha ever-present.

41

Praising the Dharma

The Dharma jewel is infinitely lovely.
 It is the precious words spoken by the Buddha
 himself,
 like fragrant flowers floating down from the
 heavens.
 The wonderful Dharma is plain to see.
 It is recorded luminously in three transparent
 baskets,*
 handed down from generation to generation
 in the ten directions,
 so that today we can see our way.
 We vow to study it with all our heart,
 and take refuge in the Dharma ever-present.

42

Praising the Sangha

The Sangha jewel is infinitely precious,
 a field of merit where good seeds can be sown.
 The three robes and the bowl are symbols of
 freedom.
 Precepts, concentration, and insight support each
 other.
 The Sangha dwells in mindfulness day and night
 providing the foundation for us to realize the
 fruit of meditation.

* Tripitaka: the three collections of discourses, precepts, and commentaries.

With one heart, we come home to the Sangha,
and take refuge in the Sangha ever-present.

43

Breathing (Version 1)

Going back to the island of self,
I see Buddha is my mindfulness
shining near, shining far.
Dharma is my breathing
guarding body and mind.
Sangha is my five skandhas
working in harmony.
Breathing in, breathing out.
Flower, fresh.
Mountain, solid.
Water, reflecting.
Space, free.

44

Breathing (Version 2)

Breathing in, I know I am breathing in.
Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.
As my in-breath grows deep,
my out-breath grows slow.
Breathing in, I calm my body
Breathing out, I feel ease.
Breathing in, I smile
Breathing out, I release.
Dwelling in the present moment,
I know this is a wonderful moment.

45

Breathing (Version 3)

I have arrived
I am home
In the here
In the now
I am solid
I am free
In the ultimate
I dwell.
Arrived, arrived
At home, at home
Dwelling in the here
Dwelling in the now
Solid as a mountain
Free as the white clouds
The door to no-birth, no-death has opened
Free and unshakable I dwell.

46

Smiling at Your Anger

Breathing in, I know that anger makes me not
beautiful.
Breathing out, I smile.
I stay with my breathing
so I won't lose myself.

47

Turning on the Computer

Turning on the computer,
 my mind gets in touch with the store.*
 I vow to transform habit energies
 to help love and understanding grow.

48

Driving the Car

Before starting the car
 I know where I'm going.
 The car and I are one.
 If the car goes fast, I go fast.

49

Making a Short Journey Safely

Two-thirds of accidents
 take place near home.
 Knowing this, I am very careful
 Even on a short trip.

50

***Looking at the Buddha Image before
Touching the Earth***

In the realm of suchness,
 the one who bows and the one who is bowed to
 are equally empty of a separate self.

* The store refers to *alayavijñāna*, the consciousness where all our seeds-potentials-are stored.

With deep respect, I bow to Buddha in this spirit,
and the communication is perfect.
Buddhas manifest in all directions.
In the Interbeing Cosmos, as in every jewel of
Indra's net,*
There are countless me's bowing to countless
Buddhas.

51

Drinking Tea

This cup of tea in my two hands,
mindfulness held perfectly.
My mind and body dwell
in the very here and now.

52

Watering the Plants

Don't think you are cut off, dear plant.
This water comes to you from the Earth and sky.
You and I have been together
since beginningless time.

53

Looking at My Hand

Whose hand is this
that has never died?
Has anyone been born?
Will anyone die?

* The net of Indra has a reflecting jewel at every point where the warp crosses the weft, and each jewel reflects all the other jewels.

54

Using the Telephone

Words can travel thousands of miles.
May my words create mutual understanding and
love.
May they be as beautiful as gems,
as lovely as flowers.

55

Watering the Garden

The sunshine and the water
have brought about this luxurious vegetation.
The rain of compassion and understanding
can transform the dry desert into a vast fertile
plain.

56

Walking Meditation

The mind can go in a thousand directions,
but on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.
With each step, a cool wind blows.
With each step, a flower blooms.

57

Turning on the Light

Forgetfulness is the darkness,
mindfulness is the light.
I bring awareness
to shine upon all life.

58

Washing Vegetables

In these vegetables
I see a green sun.
All dharmas join together
to make life possible.

59

Gardening

Earth brings us to life and nourishes us.
Earth takes us back again.
We are born and we die with every breath.

60

Planting a Tree

I entrust myself to Earth;
Earth entrusts herself to me.
I entrust myself to Buddha;
Buddha entrusts herself to me.

61

Cleaning the Bathroom

How wonderful
to scrub and clean.
Day by day,
my heart and mind grow clearer.

62

Sweeping

As I carefully sweep
the ground of enlightenment,
a tree of understanding
springs up from the Earth.

63

Cleaning the Meditation Hall

As I clean
this fresh, calm room,
boundless joy
and energy arise!

64

Throwing Out the Garbage

In the garbage, I see a rose.
In the rose, I see compost.
Everything is in transformation.
Impermanence is life.

65

Cutting a Flower

May I cut you, little flower,
gift of Earth and sky?
Thank you, dear bodhisattva,
for making life so beautiful.

66

Arranging Flowers

Arranging these flowers
in the *saba* world,*
the ground of my mind
is calm and pure.

67

Changing Water in a Vase

Water keeps the flower fresh.
The flower and I are one.
When the flower breathes, I breathe.
When the flower smiles, I smile.

68

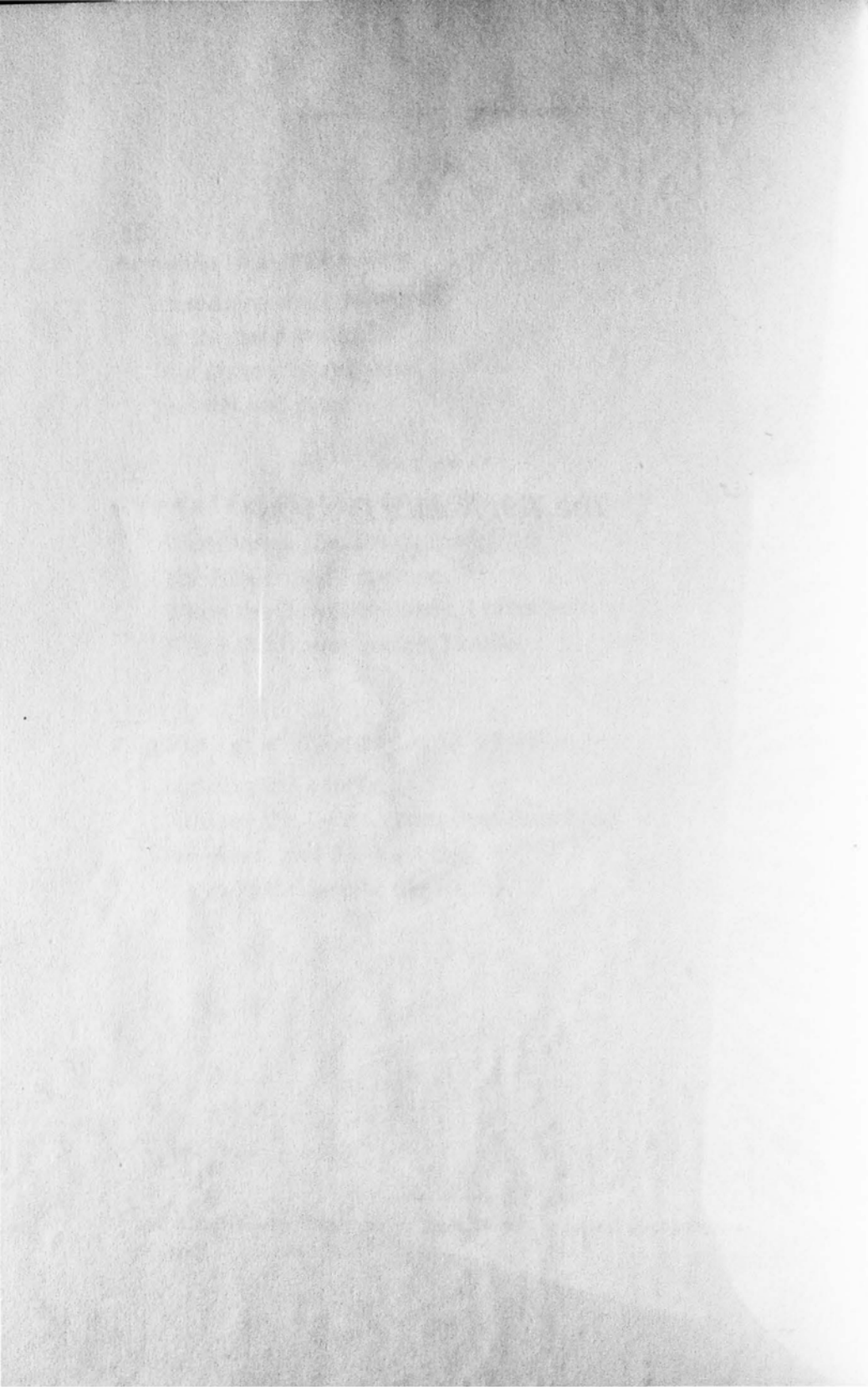
Lighting a Candle

Lighting this candle,
Offering the light to countless Buddhas,
the peace and the joy I feel
brighten the face of the Earth.

* The *saba* world is "the world of dust," where we need to practice patience.

PART TWO

The Ten Novice Precepts



The Ten Novice Precepts

The true basis for the life of a novice monk or nun is the practice of the Ten Precepts and, what are called in monastic Buddhism, "Mindful Manners." These are concrete manifestations of the practice of mindful living, of a life of liberation and love. They confirm that you have left behind the world of entanglement and are moving in the direction of peace, love, and freedom. In fact, they are mindfulness itself. Without mindful awareness in each act of everyday life, these precepts and manners are lifeless, without spirit.

The Ten Novice Precepts might appear as a limitation of a novice's freedom, but in reality they protect it and bring joy and harmony to you as an individual and to your community (Sangha). When you practice the precepts, you practice concentration and insight at the same time; and precepts, concentration, and insight always help you realize peace and liberation right away. Practicing the precepts and Mindful Manners nourish your *bodhicitta* (mind of love) and prevent you from losing sight of the deepest goals of the monastic life. The Buddha encouraged his disciples to practice the Ten Precepts and the Trainings in Mindful Manners diligently in order to prepare for full ordination as a monk (*bhikshu*) or a nun (*bhikshuni*).

THE FIRST PRECEPT

On Protecting Life

Aware of the suffering brought about by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of humans and all other species. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she learns to look at all beings with the eyes of compassion and thereby transforms the seeds of violence and hatred and nourishes the seeds of love. Violence and hatred cause boundless suffering. While a novice walks, sits, stands, lies down, works, speaks, eats, or drinks, she does not forget that all species are suffering. Protecting life is the first practice of someone cultivating her bodhichitta, mind of love.

THE SECOND PRECEPT

On Respecting What Belongs to Others

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness in order to bring joy and peace to humans and all other species. I am determined to share my time and energy with those who are in real need. I vow not to steal or take into possession anything that belongs to my community or anyone else. I will respect the

property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species.

When a novice practices this precept, he nourishes loving kindness by working to end injustice. The first step for a monk or nun is to live simply with only the possessions he needs. The beauty of a monk or a nun's life comes from this simple lifestyle, that allows them to have more time and energy to help others and bring them lasting joy.

THE THIRD PRECEPT

On Protecting Chastity

Aware that the aspiration of a monk or a nun can only be realized when I wholly leave behind the bonds of worldly love, I vow to protect myself and to help others to protect themselves by the practice of chastity. I know that any sexual engagement will destroy my life as a monk or a nun and damage the lives of others. I am aware that having a sexual relationship will prevent me from realizing my ideal to serve living beings.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she is protecting his or her freedom. Monks and nuns practice this precept not merely by repressing sexual desire, but by following their deepest aspiration to bring happiness to many people. Because we value our commitment to culti-

vate true love for ourselves and everyone, we are determined not to harm or become sexually involved with anyone. People can rely on us and be open with us, and we can, in turn, offer stability and counsel.

THE FOURTH PRECEPT

On Mindful Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech, I vow to cultivate right speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering.

Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to say only things that inspire self-confidence, peace, joy, and hope. I am determined to speak the truth in a way that brings about understanding and harmony. I vow not to say things that are untrue or that bring about division and hatred.

I vow not to spread news that I do not know to be certain, nor to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I am determined to listen deeply with love and compassion in order to understand the suffering and difficulties of others and to bring them comfort. I am determined not to say things that might bring about division or disharmony in my community of practice, or that can cause the community to break. I am determined not to speak to anyone about the faults of any monk or nun outside my

Sangha or of another practice center, even though I may think that these faults are real.

When a novice practices this precept, he realizes the harmony of speech, views, and thought, which are three of the Six Concords.* She nourishes compassion and loving kindness and is able to offer happiness to everyone who is around.

THE FIFTH PRECEPT

On Protecting and Nourishing Body and Mind—Not Consuming Alcohol, Drugs, or Other Items That Contain Toxins

Aware of the suffering caused by the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other intoxicants, I vow not to ingest any food or beverage that contains toxins and that deprives me of the control of my body and mind or brings about heaviness or ill-being in my body or my spirit. I am determined to practice mindful eating, drinking, and consuming, to consume only items that bring peace and joy to my body and mind. I vow not to drink liquor or wine, not to use drugs, and not to consume any other

* The Six Concords taught by the Buddha as guidelines for monastic community practice are sharing space, sharing the essentials of daily life, observing the same precepts, using only words that contribute to harmony, sharing insights and understanding, and respecting each other's viewpoints.

intoxicants, including books and films, that can poison me with violence, fear, craving, or hatred.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she lives wholesomely, keeping healthy and fresh in body and mind, so that favorable conditions for the practice and for serving others can arise. In accord with the spirit of this precept, novices also do not smoke cigarettes or drink beer.

THE SIXTH PRECEPT

***On Not Using Cosmetics
or Wearing Jewelry***

Aware that the true beauty of a monk or a nun is found in his or her stability and freedom, I vow to adorn myself and my Sangha with the practice of mindfulness made concrete by my training in the precepts and Mindful Manners at all moments. I realize that cosmetics and jewelry only bring about an outer show of attractiveness and foster attachment and infatuation. Therefore, I vow to live simply and dress neatly, wearing clean clothes. I resolve not to use perfume, powder, or other cosmetics or jewelry.

When a novice practices this precept, she knows that stability and freedom are produced by practicing mindful walking, standing, lying down, sitting, eating, drinking,

working, speaking, and being in touch every day. Stability and freedom make life beautiful, and a novice uses them to adorn his Buddha Land. Were a novice to wear makeup or jewelry, it would be difficult to see the beauty of freedom and stability shining in her face, and people might lose confidence in the practice. When a novice practices the gathas, the Ten Precepts, and Mindful Manners, dressing simply and neatly wearing clean robes, he or she manifests a purity and lightness that can be a source of enlightenment and inspiration for many.

THE SEVENTH PRECEPT

On Not Being Caught in Worldly Amusements

Aware that many songs, films, books, amusements, and games can damage body and mind and waste precious time that could be used for study and practice, I am determined not to be drowned in these distractions. I am determined not to read novels, look at worldly films or books, or seek distraction by singing or listening to love songs or other kinds of music that cause negative emotions to arise. I will not waste time playing electronic games or gambling.*

* There is so much to learn and practice in the life of a novice that no time can be spared for reading novels. Most novels (love, detective, etc.) are not good for the novice. Excellent novels—great works of literature—have to wait until the training is accomplished.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she knows that chanting and singing Dharma songs are ways of practicing mindfulness and sowing wholesome seeds. But artworks that water seeds of sorrow, attachment, despair, hatred, or craving can cause harm, and that is why she keeps away from them.

THE EIGHTH PRECEPT

***On Not Living a Life of Material
Luxury***

Aware that a monk or nun who lives with too much comfort or luxury becomes prone to sensual desire and pride, I vow to live my whole life simply, with few desires. I resolve not to sit on luxurious chairs or lie down on luxurious beds, not to wear silk or embroidered fabrics, not to live in luxurious quarters, and not to travel using luxurious means of transport.

When a novice practices this precept, the true beauty and freedom of his life as a monk or a nun are protected.

THE NINTH PRECEPT

***On Being Vegetarian and Not Eating
Apart from the Sangha***

Aware of the need to maintain good health, to live in harmony with the Sangha, and to nourish compassion in my heart, I vow to be vegetarian for the whole of my life and not to

eat apart from the Sangha except when I am sick.

By practicing this precept, a novice shows compassion in concrete ways. By determining to be vegetarian, a monk or nun contributes even a little to the lessening of the slaughter of animals. By eating at the appropriate time and not too often, too heavily, or too late in the day, a monk or nun is able to stay light in body and mind, and this is conducive to the practice of mindful living and to sleeping well at night.

THE TENTH PRECEPT

On Not Accumulating Money or Possessions for Personal Use

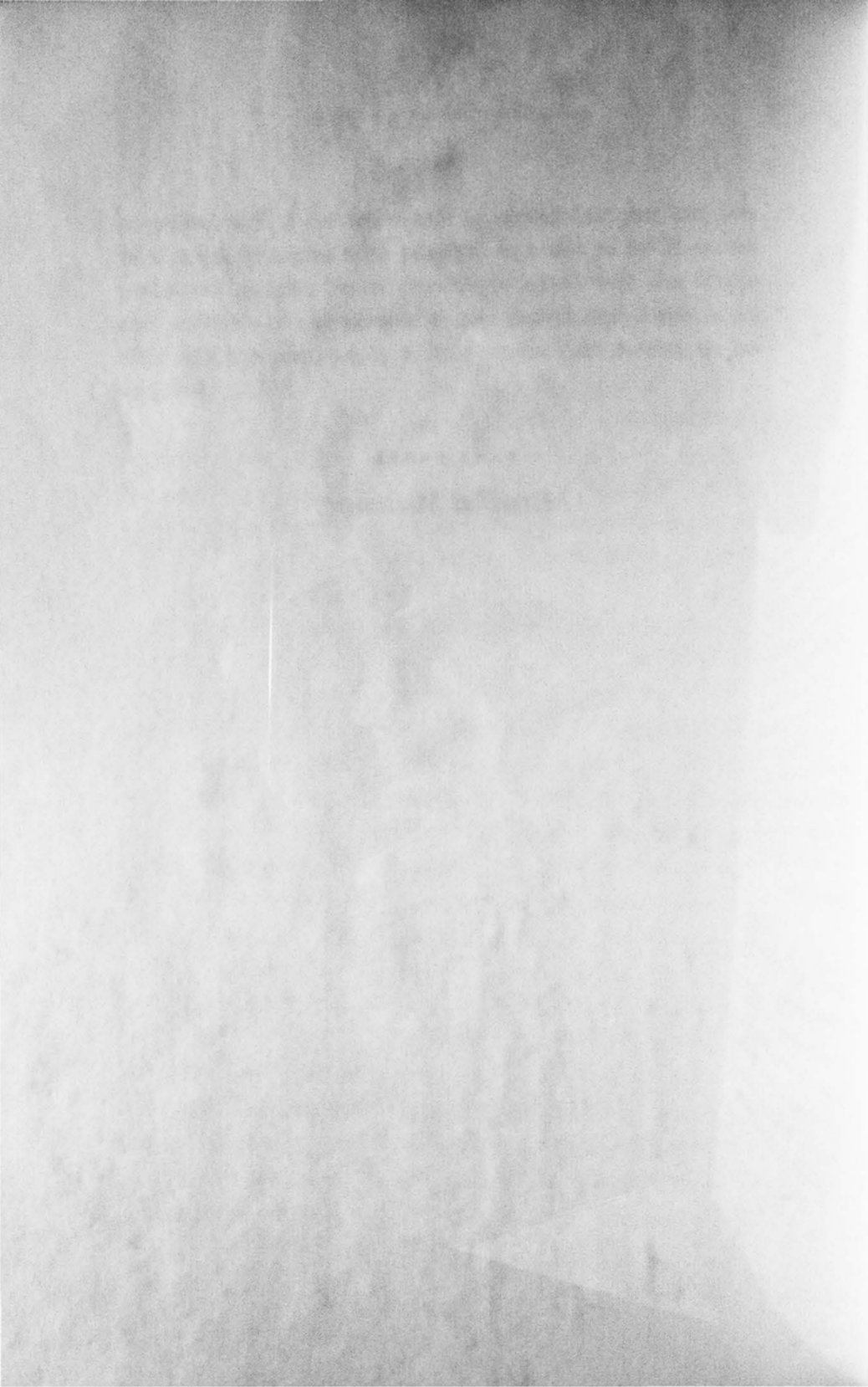
Aware that the happiness of a monk or a nun is found in solidity and freedom, I vow not to allow money or possessions to become a preoccupation in my life. I am determined not to accumulate money or possessions for my own use, not to look for happiness in the accumulation of these things, and not to think that money, precious objects, or possessions will increase my true security.

When a novice practices this precept, he or she should know that looking after the property and material goods of the Sangha is a way of respecting and serving the Three Jewels and not based on a wish to be wealthy as

an individual. A novice needs to remember that the aim of a monk or a nun is to practice in order to be liberated and serve people. To be overly occupied with the financial activities of the temple to the extent that there is no time left for practice is a misfortune that needs to be avoided.

PART THREE

Mindful Manners



Mindful Manners

The teachings on Mindful Manners began with the Buddha. In the Mahayana tradition, these teachings went on to China, where they were gathered into a book by Master Yunqi during the Ming Dynasty. In China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, and Vietnam, Mindful Manners are still practiced by novices in the form assembled by Yunqi.

The thirty-nine Mindful Manners that follow are a modern adaptation of Yunqi's book. If some of these Mindful Manners seem old-fashioned to you, please look deeply to see if there are ways these practices can inform your life and your practice of mindfulness. And observe how these guidelines might be of benefit to a novice monk or nun. Buddhist practice is doing simple, everyday things beautifully and with joy.

1

Respecting Your Teacher and Senior Monks and Nuns

To show respect for your teacher, do not say his or her name directly. It would sound too informal. If you need to say your teacher's name, say, "The first part of my teacher's Dharma name is... and the second part is...", or call him by the name of the monastery where he resides,

such as, "the teacher at Plum Village." Refrain from speaking ill about your teacher and discussing his faults. Try only to help him or her, individually or collectively. If someone criticizes your teacher, find a way to correct any misunderstandings, or say respectfully, "You are criticizing my teacher, and I would rather not hear my teacher criticized." Then excuse yourself from the conversation. If your teacher walks by while you are sitting down, stand up, unless you are reciting a sutra, shaving your head, eating a meal, working, or feeling unwell.

A novice should attend all recitations of the Ten Novice Precepts but should not listen to recitations of the bhikshu or bhikshuni precepts. Those who received bhikshu or bhikshuni ordination more than five years previously are considered to have the status of a *Dharmacharya* (Dharma teacher). Those who received this ordination ten years earlier can be considered as an *Upadhyaya*, a teacher who has presided over a precept transmission council, at least once. A novice needs to know this, so he or she can show proper respect to these monks and nuns. Monks and nuns who have been ordained for many years should be addressed in the same way as you would address your teacher. Express yourself respectfully to all of them, even those who were ordained by the same teacher as you.

Do not eavesdrop on others' conversations, listen to what older monks and nuns say during their meetings, or imitate their voices or gestures. When a senior monk or nun walks past, stand to one side, join your palms, and bow your head. If you overhear elder monks or nuns ar-

going, silently withdraw. When someone who has been ordained longer than you is being reprimanded by your teacher, silently withdraw.

If you will need to live far away from your teacher or if he or she is about to pass away, ask him whom you should study with and where you should stay.

2

Attending Your Teacher

Being your teacher's attendant is a precious opportunity to be close to your teacher and learn directly from him or her. As your teacher comes to understand you better, he will be able to offer instructions that are suitable to your needs. Studying with a teacher is not just to hear what he tells you, but to observe the way he walks, stands, lies down, sits, speaks, stays in touch with, and helps other people. By putting all your heart into your time as your teacher's attendant, you can learn just by your being together.

When your teacher offers you guidance, join your palms and listen respectfully, expressing only your gratitude. When your teacher corrects you, do not contradict him or try to defend yourself. When you want to ask a question, join your palms respectfully. If you do not understand what he has said, after he finishes speaking, join your palms and ask him to repeat what he has said. Do not interrupt your teacher.

Whether or not your teacher is present, before entering his room, breathe mindfully, knock three times, and join your palms. When you've entered the room and closed

the door, join your palms and bow to your teacher's seat, whether or not he is there. Whenever you walk past your teacher's cushion, respectfully bow your head. Do not sit on your teacher's seat, lie on his bed, or wear his robes or hat. When you carry his spittoon* or chamber pot, smile and reveal no sign of displeasure. Before prostrating to your teacher, ask his permission to do so. Do not prostrate while your teacher is practicing sitting or walking meditation, eating, giving a Dharma talk, brushing his teeth, washing, or resting.

When you offer food to your teacher, use both hands. When he has finished eating, clear away his dishes slowly and carefully. If your teacher invites you to eat with him, wait until he has lifted his chopsticks (or fork or spoon) before picking up your own. Eat in a way that you finish eating at the same time, so you can clear his food and dishes and bring him tea. If while eating, your teacher addresses you, stop chewing and listen.

While attending your teacher, do not stand directly in front of him, sit higher than he, nor stand too far away. Try to stand or sit close enough so that you can hear your teacher, especially if he speaks softly. When your teacher is unwell, look after him with great care, preparing his bed as well as medicine, a hot water bottle, and a thermos. Keep the temperature in the room comfortable, neither too hot nor too cold. If your teacher is old, learn to offer massage. Join your palms and bow before you offer him massage.

* Note to the reader: Spittoons are still used in many countries.

Try to be present whenever your teacher needs you. Even if you are not his attendant, if you see that your teacher needs something, try to help. If the attendant is elsewhere doing something for the teacher, finish that work for him. If you aren't able to help, find someone who can. Do whatever is needed without waiting for your teacher to ask. If your teacher is putting on his robes, you can help him by straightening his robes. You can empty the wastebasket in your teacher's room every day, even if it is not yet full. Whenever your teacher suggests that you leave, do so promptly without lingering.

Do not read your teacher's mail or allow others to read it. When your teacher asks you to go on an errand, do not stop along the way. As soon as you have completed the errand, return to your teacher so you do not keep him waiting. If there is a delay, send word or telephone to let him know.

When your teacher is receiving guests, be attentive so you will know if he or his guests need anything. When your teacher is explaining the Dharma to guests, listen carefully in order to learn. Do not allow guests to visit your teacher when he needs to rest. If your teacher becomes tired, find a skillful way to encourage his guests to complete their visit.

If your teacher asks you about the members of the Sangha, tell the truth about what you have seen and heard. Do not be afraid of others thinking that you have said negative things, if you know that you speak only out of love and respect. When your teacher asks you how your studies and practice are going, do not intentionally hide anything. Share your successes as well as your diffi-

culties, and ask your teacher to shine light on your practice. If you write a letter that conveys feelings of affection to someone who is not in your immediate family or if you receive such a letter, show it to your teacher or mentor. If, because of forgetfulness or foolishness, you break a precept, do not hide it from your teacher. Tell him or her what you have done or said and state that you will do your best not to make the same mistake again.

3

Traveling with Your Teacher

Before leaving, try to prepare everything your teacher might need, such as robes, medicine, a hot water bottle, sitting cushion, books, notebooks, or Dharma instruments. Carry heavy items for your teacher, but if he wants to, let him carry his own small shoulder bag. Walk a little behind your teacher with mindfulness and ease, without looking around. When you are out with your teacher, do not stop along the way to converse with others. If you are driving him somewhere, be sure that the sun does not shine directly in his face or that open windows do not create a draft where he is sitting.

When you arrive at your destination and go inside, stand behind his chair until he is seated and invites you to sit down. When you are visiting another temple and your teacher prostrates to the Buddha or the spiritual ancestors, do not invite the bells to sound by yourself. When crossing a stream together, determine the depth of the water first. Always stay close to your teacher so you can help him if the path becomes difficult. If your teacher

tells you to meet him at a particular time, arrive before that time. If other novices join you when you go out with your teacher, you should all cooperate to create a harmonious, loving, and happy Sangha, so that those you come into contact with will have faith in the practice.

4

Listening to Your Teacher's Advice

When your teacher instructs you, listen carefully. Don't be too quick to conclude that he is wrong, even if what he tells you is not in accord with the way you see things. If you react critically the moment you hear something, it may prevent you from understanding what is being said. Listen openly, and then, after reflecting on the matter for two or three days, if there is still something you want to tell your teacher, do so humbly and calmly, using respectful and harmonious language. Wait until you feel calm before speaking with your teacher about this.

Act in the same way with all who have received higher precepts or been ordained longer than you. With regard to those whose experience in the practice and years as a monastic are less than your own, learn to relate in a way so that both sides can benefit. Listening calmly and carefully without prejudice is an important part of the practice. Our teachers and elders do not expect us to obey them unconditionally, only to be respectful. That is why we always have the chance to ask about what has been taught and to contribute our own viewpoint. If your teacher offers you instructions that you do not understand, ask him at an appropriate time to clarify what he

has said. Then join your palms to show that you understand, bow your head, and withdraw.

5

Having Tea with Your Teacher

Sitting with your teacher for a cup of tea can be a very happy time for a monk or a nun. As circumstances allow, you can ask your teacher if a few of your brothers or sisters can join you. When you receive a cup of tea or a biscuit or wish to say something, join your palms respectfully. This can be an opportunity for you to share your joy and progress in the practice. You can also tell your teacher about fellow practitioners' successes, as that will nourish him. Avoid talking about difficulties in the community unless it is a propitious moment. Wait for the best time to ask your teacher about these things.

6

Activities with the Sangha

When you hear the community bell, stop what you are doing, put away your tools, and walk mindfully to the Sangha gathering. Be on time for all community activities, unless you are ill or have been given a special assignment by the Sangha. Refrain from reserving a seat for yourself unless your responsibilities require you to sit in a particular place. Once seated, give all your attention to sitting up straight and following your breathing. Do not speak loudly or across the room to another person. When there are Sangha meetings, be humble and speak only loudly enough for others to hear you clearly. If you have

something to share about another brother or sister, wait until they are present. Talk about their positive rather than their negative qualities, expressing your viewpoint in a spirit of harmony and kindness. Try to retain equanimity even when things do not go as you would like. Do not take sides or, together with others, oppose someone else. Find ways to bring opposing sides together. Do not gather in small groups to make meaningless conversation or gossip about other brothers, sisters, or laypersons.

All disciples of your teacher are your brothers and sisters. Make every effort to establish a sincere relationship with each of them. Even if an elder brother or sister has weak points, he or she is still your elder brother or sister. Do not think, "That person is no better than I, so why should she be my elder?" If you are fortunate enough to be more successful on the path of practice than your brother or sister in the Dharma, find skillful and humble ways to help that person.

You can spend time with a particular person in the practice, but develop friendships with other Sangha members as well. It is okay to begin with someone easy to relate to, but later you should also spend time with those who are more difficult for you, until you have the capacity to live harmoniously with everyone in the Sangha. The work of creating happiness is an essential part of the path of practice. When you spend time with a fellow practitioner, do not develop an unhealthy attachment. True love in Buddhism is made of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.* Equanimity means you have equal

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1997).

affection for all. You do not discriminate and are not attached.

Do not spit or make too much noise sneezing, sniffing, blowing your nose, coughing, or clearing your throat, especially in the meditation hall or other places where loud noises could disturb others. If you cannot avoid sneezing, use a handkerchief and turn your head away from others to avoid spreading illness. While brushing your teeth, do not walk around or talk. Stand still and practice mindfulness according to the gatha for brushing your teeth.

Do everything in this spirit. Mindfulness means dwelling deeply in the present moment. When you drink water, hold the glass with both hands. Do not use one hand to greet someone while holding the glass in the other. When you are given water, refreshments, or anything else, join your palms as a gesture of thanks before receiving what is being offered. Do not laugh so loudly that it disturbs the Sangha. Allow time to get from one place to another, so you do not have to hurry. Always walk in the style of walking meditation, even if you are only going a few yards. Doing this demonstrates stability and freedom.

When you sweep the meditation hall, do it carefully so the dust does not fly all around. At the end of each stroke, hold the broom a little above the floor and shake it, so dust will fall off. When you prepare the altar, use only flowers that have already bloomed or are about to open. Do not cut buds. When you remove old flowers from the altar, put them in a place specifically for flowers that have been removed from the altar. Retain only one stick of incense in the incense holder, right in the middle.

When holding incense, use both hands. This demonstrates that you are fully present in body, speech, and mind. When you open the door of the meditation hall or any other door, do it the same way, with all your attention and presence.

Use water and electricity sparingly. When you leave your room, turn off the light and heat. Do not take things that belong to the Sangha for your personal use. Unless you are ill, participate in all working meditation periods with the Sangha, accepting work that is in accord with your strength and ability. If you are given a responsibility such as transportation coordinator, gardener, or supply manager, do not use your position to wield power over others, but as an opportunity to serve the Sangha. When you find something that has been lost, give it to the work coordinator. When someone calls your name, say, "I am here, Sister (or Brother)," or "Yes, Sister (or Brother)."

7

Practicing during a Formal Meal

Although these instructions are for a formal meal, much of it can be adapted to any meal: When you hear the bell announcing a mealtime, stop whatever you are doing and bring your bowl to the dining hall. Do not think, "The line is long, so I do not need to go right away." Your presence in the Sangha at the beginning of the meal will help establish the energy of mindfulness for everyone in the community. By breathing, smiling, and being in touch, you nourish the seed of mindfulness in everyone. Do not speak, even to ask about someone's health. While

you are being served, continue to practice mindfulness as though you were on almsround. If you serve yourself, take only as much as you need, or even a little less. Be aware of how many people there are and do not take more than your share. Then practice walking meditation to your seat, carrying your bowl carefully and taking each step solidly, with freedom.

After you sit down, place your bowl in front of you and practice mindful breathing, keeping your back straight. When the whole community is seated, look deeply as the Five Contemplations are read. Do not talk at all or think about the past or the future while you eat. Bring your attention to the present moment to touch the food and the community deeply. Eating in mindfulness nourishes your happiness, and you feel as though you are sharing a meal with the Buddha and his disciples in the Jeta Grove. Value every grain and every vegetable. Do not let your mind be disturbed, whether the taste is pleasant or unpleasant. Do not smack your lips. Chew each mouthful quietly and carefully, thirty or fifty times. Do not put too much food in your mouth or make noise as your spoon touches the bowl. When you finish eating, continue holding your bowl with two hands until the monks and nuns who were ordained before you finish. Do not stand up until the whole community stands up. Eat only with the Sangha unless you are ill. In the evening, eat only a small quantity of easily digestible food.*

* Theravadin monks and nuns eat only one meal a day, before noon, in accord with the tradition.

Touching the Earth

When you prostrate, do not stand directly in front of the altar. That place is reserved for the abbot or abbess. Do not walk in front of anyone who is prostrating. When you join your palms, your fingers should point upwards, touching one another directly and not alternating. You may leave a small space between your palms so that your hands form a lotus bud. Do not prop your chin up with your fingers or place your fingers under your nose. Breathe smoothly and deeply three times, and meditate on the object of your reverence before touching the Earth. Bring your joined palms to your forehead and then down to your chest before separating your two hands as you bend down to touch the Earth with your forehead, your forearms, your knees, and your toes. Touch the Earth with your whole body and mind.

While you are touching the Earth, turn the palms of your hands upwards to express your openness to the Buddha. Let go of all ideas you have about yourself. Remember that your body, health, skills, intelligence, and knowledge have been transmitted to you by your spiritual and blood ancestors, so allow yourself to enter the stream of life and be with all of them. When you do, you will see that you are not a separate self, that your suffering or happiness is not yours alone. Breathe in and out three or more times before standing up, and you will feel light and free. If the meditation hall is crowded, you can come back later when fewer people are around. Practic-

ing the Five Earth-Touchings or the Three Prostrations* every day can heal feelings of isolation.

9

Listening to the Teachings

Listening to a Dharma talk is an important part of the practice. When you hear the bell announcing the talk, go directly to the Dharma Hall so you can take your seat before the teacher arrives. If you need to use the toilet, do so before coming to the Dharma Hall so you do not have to leave during the talk. When you arrive in the Dharma Hall, sit up in a straight but relaxed way, as in sitting meditation. Do not talk to or write messages to anyone, unless it is urgent.

While listening to the teachings, do not try to accumulate knowledge. If you listen to a talk with only your intellect, comparing what you hear to what you already know, the Dharma rain will not penetrate the earth of your mind. Allow the teacher's words to enter deeply into your store consciousness, where they can touch the seeds of wisdom and compassion that are already there. Many people experience a breakthrough in understanding while listening to a Dharma talk. If you put your energy into writing down the teacher's words, you may miss the chance to receive directly what is being said. If you are afraid you might miss something, listen to the tape later. If you need to take notes, write down only what is most important.

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1997), Chapters 13 and 14.

Studying Sutras and Other Books

If you want to study a sutra that is not being studied by the Sangha, ask your teacher. Awakening is not a matter of how many sutras you study, but of practicing precepts, concentration, and wisdom in daily life. A few sutras like *The Full Awareness of Breathing*,* *The Four Establishments of Mindfulness*,† *Knowing the Better Way to Live Alone*,‡ and *Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake*,§ if studied carefully, can provide a firm basis for your practice. Mahayana sutras like the *Vajracchedika* (Diamond Cutter),|| *Ratnakuta*, *Avatamsaka*, *Saddharmapundarika* (Lotus), and *Vimalakirti** have a close connection with these sutras. When studying a sutra, always ask yourself, "What connection is there between these wonderful teachings and my daily practice? How can I apply these teachings to my

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive: Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1996).

† See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Transformation and Healing: Sutra on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

‡ See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Our Appointment with Life: The Buddha's Teaching on Living in the Present* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

§ See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Thundering Silence: Sutra on Knowing the Better Way to Catch a Snake* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1993).

|| See Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Diamond That Cuts through Illusion: Commentaries on the Prajñāparamitā Diamond Sutra* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1992).

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Cultivating the Mind of Love: The Practice of Looking Deeply in the Mahayana Buddhist Tradition* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1996).

daily life in order to transform my suffering and liberate myself?" To study a sutra is not just to enjoy its mysteriousness or repeat it to others, but to shine its penetrating light on your own practice. As far as commentaries or other books on Buddhism, ask your teacher or an elder brother or sister in the Dharma whether it is advisable to read them. Do not accumulate too many books. Do not make yourself into a book.

Maintain an attitude of respect toward sutra and commentarial books and tapes. Always hold sutra books with both hands and put them only in places that are clean and respected. If you see dust on a sutra book, do not blow it off but use a clean cloth to wipe it. Do not put anything else on the table where you leave a sutra. When you see a sutra book that is damaged, repair it. Do not lie down or sit in a slouched posture while you listen to a tape of a Dharma talk. Sit mindfully and respectfully, as you would while listening in the Dharma Hall. Do not listen to tapes of Dharma talks while working or driving.

Refrain from reading fiction, including adventures, detective stories, horror, romance, or sexually suggestive novels or stories. Ask your teacher or elder brothers and sisters which books would be beneficial to read. If, after studying the sutras and commentaries, you still have time, read books on the history of civilization, general history, natural history, comparative religion, applied psychology, or recent scientific discoveries, as they can help you understand the sutras and later they can help you explain the teachings in a relevant way.

11***Entering a Temple
or the Grounds of a Stupa***

When you enter a temple, walk through the small gate on the left or the right, not through the central portal. Follow your breathing and walk mindfully and silently. Before entering a meditation hall or the grounds of a stupa, take off your shoes and put them neatly in the appropriate place. Inside, walk clockwise around the perimeter if you are looking at the artwork or practicing walking meditation. Avoid sneezing, sniffing, blowing your nose, coughing, clearing your throat too loudly, or spitting, even into your handkerchief, while you are in a meditation hall or near a stupa. Examine the statues, calligraphy, and parallel verses in silence. Do not carry on loud conversations, brag, or show off your knowledge about the history of the monastery, the statues, the ancestral teachers, or the Dharma instruments, such as the bell, drum, begging bowl, or robes.

12***Entering the Meditation Hall***

Leave your hat, scarf, coat, and shoes in the places designated for them. When you enter the hall, recite the appropriate gathas. Then join your palms, face the Buddha altar, and bow. Then bow to the altar of the patriarchs, and take slow, mindful steps toward your sitting place. When you arrive at your seat, stand behind the cushion, join your palms, and bow before sitting down. When you are seated, adjust your posture until you are comfortable

and in a correct sitting position, and practice conscious breathing. Do not wait for others to enter the hall or for the sound of the bell to begin your sitting practice. If you arrive after the bell has been invited to sound, signaling the beginning of the meditation period, do not enter the hall.

Sit in a relaxed posture with your back straight. Relax all your muscles, from your forehead downward, including your shoulders, back, arms, abdomen, and feet. Whether you can sit stably in the lotus position, the half-lotus, on a meditation bench, or in a chair, you should always feel relaxed and at ease. If closing your eyes will make you feel sleepy, leave your eyes open or half-open, directing them downwards about two or three feet in front of you. Your head and spine should be in a straight line. Before you begin to look deeply into the exercise you have selected for this period of sitting, practice some exercises that will nourish your body and mind with peace and joy.* If you feel some pain, you can change the position of your legs quietly and mindfully, without disturbing those near you and without losing your mindfulness. When it is your turn to be bell master, arrive early enough to have time to prepare. When you are leading a guided meditation, read the exercises clearly and do not invite the bell too sharply or too softly. The happiness and success of a meditation period depends very much on the person guiding it.

* See, for example, Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Blooming of a Lotus: Guided Meditation Exercises for Healing and Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), pp. 15-28.

When the bell sounds to indicate the end of the period, continue to follow your breathing, and then slowly stretch your torso a little to the right and left. After gently uncrossing your feet and legs, massage them to help bring back normal circulation. Refrain from cracking your knuckles or making other sounds that can disturb others. Massage your hands until they are warm, and also your face and scalp. After you stand up, if you want to move your cushion to its proper place, bend down and use your hands. Do not move your cushion with your feet.

When you practice *kinh hanh* (slow walking meditation), be aware of the contact of your feet with the floor. Walk with as much peace, happiness, and freedom as you would in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha. Every step should increase your mindfulness, stability, and freedom.

While reciting a sutra or chanting the names of the Buddha, put your heart into the meaning of what you are doing, not just into the sound. Chant audibly, but not too loudly, touching deeply the great compassion, love, understanding, and aspiration of the Buddha. When you chant the Ten Names of Buddha,* bring these qualities into your own heart.

* The One Who Embodies and Makes Visible Ultimate Reality, The One Who Is Worthy of Respect and Offerings, The One Endowed with Perfect Wisdom, The One Endowed with Right Understanding and Compassionate Action, The One Who Has Skillfully Gone over to the Shore of Liberation, The One Who Knows the World, The One Who Trains Humans, Teacher of Gods and Humans, Enlightened One, World-Honored One.

Working with the Sangha

Do your best to accept whatever assignment the work coordinator gives you. Practice mindfulness as you work, giving the task your full attention and the best of your ability. If you do not understand how to do something, ask someone who does. Working together with the community is an opportunity to learn harmony and to engender good feelings between yourself and other Sangha members. Take care of whatever you use, and put each tool back where it belongs when you are through with it. Work is a joyful opportunity to practice service. Maintain peace, joy, and serenity while working. Do not be in too great a hurry, trying just to get the job done.

Everyone has his or her own way of working. It is fine to suggest other ways, but avoid making your brothers and sisters do things exactly the way you want them to. Let them learn for themselves. Do not judge someone by his capacity to work. The quality of a person's practice is more important than the amount of work she does. The most important contributions we can make to the Sangha are to train in mindfulness, to help others, to cultivate peace and joy, and to realize transformation.

If your teacher or Sangha assigns you a special task, do not think it is more important than the work of others. All efforts to serve the Sangha are equal. It is because other Sangha members are taking care of their responsibilities that you can complete yours. Do not use your special assignment as an excuse not to join other Sangha activities. If the task is urgent, tell the Sangha so they will under-

stand if you miss some activities. In any case, do not be absent from Sangha activities for more than three days. If the work is not urgent, work on it only a couple of hours a day, and continue to participate in sitting and walking meditation, formal meals, Dharma discussions, Dharma talks, and other Sangha activities. If you are given an assignment that is more than you can handle, respectfully request the help of others. Avoid being so carried away by your work that you lose your mindfulness. Do not sacrifice good relationships with others in the Sangha because of work.

14

Bathing

When you bathe or shower, do not waste water. Be sure the water does not run outside the shower onto the floor. Maintain your mindfulness and lightness of spirit. Avoid talking to others while bathing. While bathing or showering, look deeply at your body and see that you are a continuation of the stream of life. Nourish the body and spirit of your ancestors and descendants in yourself. Do not stay in the tub or shower for such a long time that others have to wait for you. Do not urinate in the shower. Use only as much soap as you need, and return it to its proper place when you are done. If you use all the soap, get new soap for others. Carefully rinse any basins you have used and turn them upside down to dry when you are finished.

Going to the Bathroom

When you need to relieve yourself, go promptly so it does not become a matter of urgency. Before opening the door of a toilet stall, knock three times. If all the toilets are occupied, wait patiently. When using the toilet, remember to practice mindfulness. Your time here is no less important than your time in the meditation hall. Maintain your peace, joy, and freedom. Try not to moan or make other sounds while using the toilet. Refrain from talking or laughing with others. When you finish, flush using only as much water as is needed. In places where the sewage systems require, put all paper in the container provided and not into the toilet. Wash your hands with soap after using the toilet. If you use up the toilet paper, get a new roll.

When it is your turn to clean the toilets, work with peace and joy. Give all your attention to making the toilet clean and fragrant. You can put a small vase of flowers in the lavatory to remind people that this is also a place to practice mindfulness and meditation.

Washing and Drying Your Clothes

When you wash clothes, use the basins reserved for this purpose and not those used for preparing food. Do not throw soapy water where it will not drain. When you use a washing machine, choose detergents that are low in phosphates, as they are less toxic to the environment. Do not waste water or electricity. If you only have a few

items, wash them by hand. Do not use the machine when the community needs quiet. If someone else's clothes are already in the machine, treat them as you would your own. When it is sunny, hang your clothes on the line instead of using the dryer. Use clothespins so your clothes won't blow off the line. Hang your clothes in a way that does not take up too much space. The clothesline should be located in a place not frequented by monastery guests. Do not hang pants higher than a person's head.

17

Going to Sleep

Lie on your right side when you go to sleep. Unless you have a back problem, this is the most peaceful position and the healthiest for digestion. The Buddha always lay down like that. Do not sleep naked. Do not sleep in the same bed as anyone else. Under special circumstances, when there are not enough beds, you can temporarily sleep in the same bed as another, but do not use the same blanket. If you have to sleep under the same blanket, make sure you are wearing all your clothes.

After the evening sitting meditation period, maintain noble silence and refrain from doing anything that will disturb your mind. Keeping your light on late into the night may make it difficult for your roommates to go to sleep. Every time you want to turn the light in your room on or off, ask permission, or at least let others know what you are about to do. It is not safe to light a candle on your bedside table. If you accidentally fall asleep, it can cause a fire.

When you lie down, practice total relaxation or such gathas as "In/out, deep/slow" or "Breathing in, I go back to the island of self." Try not to think about the next day's projects. If you have a bad dream, sit up and massage yourself to improve your circulation, or go quietly outside for five or ten minutes of walking meditation before going back to bed. If you have a seminal emission during sleep, wake up early in order to bathe and change your clothes before morning meditation.

When the wake-up bell is invited to sound in the morning, recite the gatha for waking up: "Waking up this morning, I smile." It can be helpful to stretch your body quietly to help it awaken. If your roommates are still asleep, wake them so they will have enough time to wash before morning meditation. A cup of tea together at this quiet time can be very enjoyable.

18

Heating Your Room

Do not use an electric heater unless there is no other source of energy. Only use as much gas, electricity, or wood as you need. Do not make your room too hot. A suitable temperature is 65°-68° Fahrenheit (19°-20° Celsius). When you leave your room, lower the heat. If you are going to be absent for more than half a day, turn off the gas or electric heat.

In a wood stove, use logs that are the correct size for the stove. When you light the stove, be careful not to fill the room with smoke. To avoid chimney fires, make sure the chimney is cleaned of soot regularly. Avoid using rot-

ten wood, as small insects can be killed. Do not dry your socks, gloves, towels, or clothes on the stove, because they may catch fire. Remove the ash regularly and put it in a proper place.

19

Sharing a Room

It is best to share a room with at least one other practitioner. When you talk to each other, always use loving speech. Share the work of keeping the room neat. Let your roommate know when you are going to be absent for some time. When changing your clothes or hanging them up to dry, do this where you cannot be seen, and with careful attention. Go to sleep at the scheduled time unless you really need to study or work more, in which case you should go somewhere else, like the library. If you want to play a musical instrument or listen to a tape without using headphones, be sure no one in or near the room will be disturbed. If you wish to light incense, be sure the scent will not offend others. Before opening the window, ask if it will create an unpleasant draft for anyone.

After sharing a room with someone for six months, it is best to change roommates. This will help you avoid getting too close or attached to one person, which could cut you off from others in the Sangha. Sharing a room with someone more experienced in the practice is an opportunity to learn from that person. If you are sharing a room with someone less experienced in the practice, help him or her learn more about mindfulness, Mindful Manners,

and relating to others. If you see that he is not practicing Mindful Manners, find skillful ways to remind him. Even if he has strong habit energies and is not yet capable of accepting your suggestions, do not give up. Practice patience. When someone points out your own weaknesses in the practice of Mindful Manners, join your palms in gratitude. Do not make excuses, change the subject, or compare your behavior with someone else's.

20

Visiting a Temple of the Other Sex

If a novice monk goes to a nunnery or a novice nun goes to a monastery, at least one fellow practitioner of the same sex must go with you. Walk alongside each other to help maintain your mindfulness and Mindful Manners. When you arrive, refrain from talking or laughing excessively. Keep the exchanges between yourself and the monks or nuns you are visiting within the field of practice, study, and the ideals of a monk or a nun. Do not water the seeds of attachment in monks, nuns, or laypeople. Do not stay longer than you need to, and once you have finished your business, return promptly to your own temple. When you return to your temple, avoid discussing what you liked or did not like about the monastery or nunnery you have visited.

If you exchange letters with someone of the opposite sex, correspond only about the subjects of practice and the monastic ideal. Exchanging letters of affection is not appropriate for a monk or nun. Avoid giving presents on an individual basis. Do not complain about what you do

not have in order to encourage someone to give you a gift.

21

Visiting a Donor or Your Family

When visiting a supporter's home, always go with a fellow practitioner of the same sex. When you arrive, sit only in the place reserved for you. If you are asked to give a Dharma talk, speak only at a suitable time in a way that is relevant. Do not say too much. Do not display your knowledge just to receive others' admiration. Offer the Dharma only when people are sitting up respectfully and are properly dressed. Any teachings you give should be practical, offering people tools that can help them overcome difficulties.

If you are invited to a meal, practice Mindful Manners in the same way you do when you are eating with your Sangha. Do not laugh loudly together. Do not whisper, speak in a low voice, or sit alone with someone of the opposite sex. Always look straight ahead. Do not shift your gaze from side to side. Do not sit at a table where there is wine or meat. Refrain from praising what you see in the house in a way that makes people feel they should offer these things to you. Do not arrive at the donor's house after dark, seeking to stay overnight.

When visiting your family, it is also advisable to have Dharma friends with you. When you enter the house (if your family is Buddhist), bow to the Buddha and then to the ancestral altar. Then ask about your parents', brothers' and sisters', and other relatives' health. Do not talk

about difficulties you are experiencing as a monk or a nun, as this will cause your family to worry. Express your freedom, freshness, solidity, peace, and joy, so your family can benefit and have greater faith in the life of practice. Monks and nuns have to do what they can to help their family members taste the joys of practice and have more faith in the path of liberation.

During your visit, always practice Mindful Manners, which is to be mindful in all you say and do. You can share your insights concerning the affairs of the family and give suggestions on the practices and teachings that can help resolve particular difficulties. Organize your time so the whole family can enjoy different aspects of the practice, such as eating in mindfulness, sitting and walking meditation, reciting the precepts, and Dharma discussion. Maintain your own program of practice while you are there. Do not ask your family to give you presents. If they do, bring them back and share them with the Sangha. Write letters to your family often in order to share your happiness and the fruits of your practice, so that your family will have faith in what you are doing.

22

Going to Town

Do not to go to town without a good reason. Whether you walk or travel by bicycle, bus, or car, maintain your practice of Mindful Manners and always establish yourself in mindfulness. Do not swing your arms as you walk. Do not glance sideways, laugh, giggle, or walk near those who are drunk or mentally unstable. If you encounter

people fighting, arguing, dancing, or giving performances, do not stop to look. If you meet a respected elder, however, stop, join your palms, and inquire about his or her health. If you meet monks and nuns, including those of a different practice, join your palms respectfully and ask about their health. Do not get carried away by the excitement of the city. A monk or a nun who is mindful in the middle of a crowd is giving a silent Dharma talk for all to see. Going to town should remind you of your own good fortune in living in the monastery, where it is so peaceful and you are supported by a community of co-practitioners. As soon as you finish your errand, return to the temple.

23

Going to the Market

Before you go to the market, know what you need to buy—the quantity and where it is sold. Dress neatly in your monk's robe. Always guard the six senses. Be careful how you carry money. If possible, try to pay by check to avoid carrying large amounts of cash. Never buy things and promise to pay later. Don't make a face when you disapprove of the quality or the price of something. You can, however, politely ask the shopkeeper if it is possible to offer a special price for the monastery. Pick things up carefully, without dropping anything. If you have already promised a shopkeeper you will buy something from him, do not refuse to buy it even if you have discovered that it is being sold more cheaply elsewhere. You may ask the shopkeeper to match the lower price. Do not buy

things you don't need just because they are heavily advertised. Refrain from making idle conversation with shopkeepers. Try to buy products that can be recycled. Avoid using plastic bottles, containers, or bags. Try to patronize stores that sell organically grown vegetables and other organic products. Doing so can help us have a less negative impact on the Earth and protect the Earth from the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

24

Working in the Kitchen

Before you begin to prepare food, wash your hands. If you want to, light a stick of incense and offer it on the small altar in the kitchen. This can help establish a meditative atmosphere while you cook. The kitchen can be a place of enlightenment. Refrain from speaking unnecessarily while you are cooking. If you need to ask or say something, be sure it pertains to the work. Peeling potatoes, grinding beans, frying cabbage, cooking soup, all should be done in a light and leisurely way. Follow your breathing and smile while you are working. Give yourself enough time so you do not feel rushed. Walk and stand without making rushed movements, maintaining your mindful manners and mindfulness.

Working with fellow practitioners in the kitchen is an opportunity to understand and appreciate each other better. Remember to ask others for their input so the work can be coordinated in a harmonious way. Any utensils you use should be cleaned and put away after you are through. Wash vegetables three times, using basins that

are reserved for food preparation. Don't be wasteful with water. Try not to scratch your head, sneeze, cough, or clear your throat in the kitchen. If you go to the toilet, wash your hands before returning to your work in the kitchen. If food is offered to animals, be sure it is given in dishes that are just for animals.

25

Talking on the Telephone

When the phone rings, use it as a bell of mindfulness, smiling and following your breath. Smile as you pick up the receiver. Say the name of the monastery, some words of greeting, and ask if you can help. If it will take more than five minutes to find someone, ask the caller to call again in fifteen minutes. Always speak mindfully, only saying what is necessary, not using too many words. Do not make unnecessary telephone calls.

Before making a telephone call, recite the gatha for using the telephone. When you hear the other person's phone ring, breathe in and out mindfully, using the gatha for listening to the bell. While speaking, stand or sit in an upright position. Use gentle words and listen deeply, aware that the caller may be suffering and need your help. If the other person is making meaningless conversation, however, find a way to politely excuse yourself.

26

Dealing with Anger

Monks and nuns should know how to deal with their anger. Anger is a fire that can burn up the good actions you

have accomplished, an ax that can destroy a friendship. When you see anger arising in yourself, refrain from doing or saying anything and return to your breathing:

Breathing in,
I know I am angry.
Breathing out,
I know I must take care of my anger.

Or you can use this gatha, following your breathing as you recite each line:

Knowing that anger makes me ugly,
I smile.
Returning to myself and guarding my mind,
I give full attention to the meditation on
compassion.

Withdraw your attention from the person who is causing your anger. If possible, practice walking meditation outdoors to calm your mind. After that, you can look deeply to see that the person making you angry is suffering and needs your help. Reflect on the strength of the seed of anger in you, which is the real cause of your suffering, and not the other person. Practice every day to transform the roots of your anger, so you can experience true peace and joy.

If a precious stone is not polished,
it is of no use to anyone.

If a practitioner does not know how to practice,
his ignorance and anger will destroy him.

Using love and understanding to respond to
events

and refraining from blaming others,
the practitioner is already a manifested
bodhisattva living in the community.

If someone else is angry, support him or her by coming
back to your breathing and establishing yourself in the
present moment. You will know what to do or say, or
what not to do or say to be of help.

27

Beginning Anew

The health and happiness of your teacher and Sangha depend on the harmony, peace, and joy that exist between you and others in your Sangha. Learn to practice kind speech and deep listening in order to succeed in the work of beginning anew. Allow others to share their suffering with you while you listen compassionately with an open heart and mind. Never interrupt while others are speaking. Practice beginning anew every day by expressing appreciation for the brothers and sisters in your community and apologizing right away when you do or say something that hurts them. Also, politely let others know when you have been hurt.

Every week or two, the whole community should sit together to practice beginning anew. This is an opportunity to express appreciation for others as well apologize

for things you have not yet found time to express. Mindfulness provides a beautiful context for resolving conflicts and healing wounds. When you have problems with a fellow practitioner, do your best to reach a resolution within three days, or seven days at the most. Find a suitable occasion to meet and reconcile with that person. If seven days pass and you have not yet been able to reconcile and begin anew, try to find an elder brother or sister you both trust and ask for help. If you cannot find such a brother or sister, go together and ask for your teacher's help. Refrain from hiding difficulties from your teacher or the Sangha.

28

Taking Refuge in the Sangha

Besides your physical body, you have a Buddha body, a Dharma body, and a Sangha body. Your sincere practice enables these three bodies to manifest. The Sangha body is your community of practice, and it is also our own body, present in all directions. To take refuge in the Sangha means to take refuge in your community of practice, which includes your teachers, your elder and younger brothers and sisters, and yourself.

Taking refuge in the Sangha comes from a deep aspiration to help other living beings. The understanding and insight of a Sangha body is greater than that of the individuals that compose the community. You need the wisdom of your Sangha, and your Sangha needs your wisdom. A good teacher relies on the insight of his or her Sangha to make decisions. Taking refuge in the Sangha

includes a willingness to accept the Sangha's decisions concerning when you will receive full ordination as a monk or a nun, or receive the Dharma lamp and begin to teach. Accepting the wisdom of the community is very important. You have the right and responsibility to express to your teacher and your Sangha your own understanding about yourself and others, but you need to let go of any feelings or ideas that stand in the way of your accepting the Sangha's decisions with equanimity.

29

Inviting and Listening to the Bell

The bell is the voice of the Buddha calling us back to mindfulness in the here and the now. Every time you hear the sound of the bell, stop speaking and all other activities, come back to your breathing, and practice the gatha for listening to the bell: "Listen, listen. This wonderful sound brings me back to my true self." Breathe lightly and deeply and smile as you return to the present moment, body and mind united. If you are listening to the sound of a large outdoor bell being invited over a long period of time, you can continue to move after the first three rings, but follow your breathing and continue to practice mindfulness. Unless you are sick, when you hear the sound of the bell, stand or sit up.

When you are bell master, bow to the bell, practice mindful breathing, and recite the gatha for inviting the bell before waking the bell up. The bell is a bodhisattva who has come to wake us up. Only when our body and mind are in perfect oneness and we have established

concentration should we invite the bell. When we feel unstable in body or mind, we should ask someone else to invite the bell for us. If we are inviting the large bell in the early morning or in the evening, we can chant the bell-inviting gatha out loud. After each sound of the bell, breathe mindfully and wait for the sound of the bell to fade away before reciting the next part of the gatha.

30

***Walking, Standing, Sitting,
and Lying Down***

When walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, practice mindfulness. Take every step in mindfulness, coordinating your breathing with your steps. Unless there is an emergency, do not rush. Walking mindfully is like walking in the Pure Land. Each step will bring you solidity, peace, joy, and freedom. The Pure Land is right here when you are present, with a calm mind, and not being pulled by your projects into the future. Walk in freedom, with every step light and free. Lift your feet as you walk; do not drag your heels or shuffle noisily. Do not swing your arms or join your palms behind your back.

When standing, stand up tall and relaxed. Do not lean against a wall or post, even if you are waiting in line. Avoid sitting or standing in a noisy place. If people around are behaving rudely, unmindfully, or improperly, such as shouting, swearing, slandering, drinking alcohol, eating meat, or gambling, move away.

When sitting, even during moments of relaxation, keep your back straight. Wherever you are—on the grass, a

rock, or a tree stump—sit as though you were at the foot of the Bodhi tree. When you sit on a chair or a cushion in the lotus position, be sure your robes are neatly placed around you. Do not squat.

When you need to rest, lie down in your own room. Do not lie down in a place where others come and go, especially laypeople. Lie on your right side, if you can. Unless you are seriously ill and have the permission of the Sangha, do not sleep in the room of a layperson, especially of the opposite sex.

31

Attending Dharma Discussions

When you hear the bell announcing Dharma discussion, finish what you are doing right away so you can arrive to the discussion on time. During Dharma discussions, practice deep listening in order to understand and learn from others' viewpoints or insights. If you have something to contribute to the discussion that will help others in their practice, share it, but do not speak just to show off your knowledge or challenge someone else's point of view. Do not browbeat others to show that you are more intelligent than they are. The aim of a Dharma discussion is to learn collectively from everyone's insights and experience. If you are having difficulty with some aspect of practice, ask for help. If someone offers a helpful comment, join your palms in gratitude.

When you are facilitator, if the group is small and includes some newcomers, allow time for everyone to introduce himself or herself. Then make some brief intro-

ductory remarks. If the discussion becomes theoretical, bring everyone back to the discussion topic. When necessary, gently remind people to base their comments on their experience of the practice. Invite those who have not shared to do so if they wish. From time to time, the group's bell master should invite the bell of mindfulness. This will raise the quality of the Dharma discussion. Before concluding, thank all the participants.

32

Robe, Bowl, and Sitting Mat

The monk's robe and eating bowl are as close to a monk or a nun as wings are to a bird. Take them wherever you go. In former times, monks had three yellow robes: (1) the *sanghati*, made of nine or twenty-five scraps of cloth, for wearing to the king's palace, to important ceremonies, or when giving a Dharma talk; (2) the *uttarasanga*, made of seven scraps of cloth, for sutra chanting, sutra recitation, precepts recitation, Beginning Anew, or listening to a Dharma talk; (3) the *antaravasa*, made of five scraps of cloth, for daily activities like work or shopping. Monks and nuns today have robes that correspond to the *uttarasanga* and *antaravasa* robes. The yellow novice robe is generally made from only one piece of cloth. Before putting on his yellow robe, the novice holds it at forehead level and recites the gatha for putting on the robe.

The monk's eating bowl is often called "the vessel of appropriate measure." This means that its color, material, and size should be in accord with the teachings. It can be brown or gray, never a bright color. It can be made of

clay, earthenware, aluminum, or resin, never of gold or jade. It should be big enough to hold a suitable amount of food, but not too big as to encourage greed. When carrying your bowl, place your left hand beneath it, the four fingers of your right hand in front of the bowl, and your right thumb holding the lid. When you walk in procession holding the bowl, keep your eyes cast in front of you, leaving about a yard between you and the person in front of you. Be mindful of every step you take. Do not glance from side to side.

The sitting mat is called *nisadana* in Sanskrit. Traditionally, monks and nuns used this mat to avoid sitting on thorns, insects, or whatever else might disturb their body or mind. The color of this mat should match the color of the robe. It can be dark blue, brown, or smoky gray, not a bright color. The sitting mat should not be more than one square yard in size.

33

Practicing at Other Temples

When your present circumstance is not conducive to progress in study or practice, you may ask your teacher and Sangha for permission to study at another temple. But leave only to learn methods of practice, not to accumulate knowledge or acquire a diploma.

If you do leave, choose an institute where you can be with a Sangha and where the monks and nuns are happy and in harmony. Do not stay in a layperson's house while you attend a program of study. Your chief subject is Buddhism, and your knowledge of Buddhism should en-

lighten the way you practice. Your aim is not to become a Buddhist scholar unless it supports your practice. Besides Buddhism you can learn one of the ancient languages connected with Buddhist studies, such as Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese, or Tibetan. You can also study the fundamentals of applied psychology, general history, natural history, world civilization, or the history of religions. These subjects can help you understand more about Buddhism and later on help you teach Buddhism in a relevant way. Courses like engineering, dentistry, medicine, and other worldly subjects can be beneficial for laypeople but only detract from the aim of a monk or nun.

34

Taking Part in Tea Meditation

A tea meditation is an opportunity to be with the Sangha in a serene and informal atmosphere. The first part of the ceremony includes welcoming the guests, offering incense, prostrating, pouring the tea, serving tea and cookies, and then drinking the tea. This is all performed with the mindfulness of a formal ceremony. If you are the tea master, a tea server, or an assistant, be sure to rehearse before the ceremony with others first, so you know exactly what to do. Everything should unfold in a relaxing, beautiful, and mindful way. During this part of the ceremony, while everyone is drinking tea and enjoying the cookie in silence, we follow our breathing mindfully, enjoying our tea and the company of others.

Then the tea master invites everyone to share a poem, a story, or a song. These exchanges take place in a re-

spectful, affectionate, and mindful atmosphere. Each sharing should encourage mutual understanding, happiness, and peace. When it is your turn, speak briefly so that others will have a chance to share also. Tell stories that are of benefit to the community or share things that nourish the seed of mindfulness in everyone. Toward the end of the tea meditation, the tea master offers a few words of gratitude.

Traditionally, the largest number of people at a tea meditation is sixteen. This provides an intimate atmosphere and the maximum opportunity for everyone to share. On special occasions, tea meditations can be held for larger numbers of people. The tea servers should know how many people are coming so they can have the right number of sitting cushions and cups and the right amount of tea available. Once the ceremony has begun, try to avoid standing up. If possible, use cloth napkins or leaves to put the cookies on. This avoids having to use paper napkins and thereby helps protect the environment. The tea master, tea servers, and assistants should all stand with joined palms at the door both to greet guests as they arrive and to say good-bye as they leave.

35

Driving

Whenever you drive, bring your driver's license and the car's registration papers with you. Whether it is a community car or someone else's, check to see that there is enough gas, water, and oil, and that the car is in safe operating condition. Adjust the rearview mirrors and recite

the gatha for driving the car before turning on the engine. Familiarize yourself with the traffic signs and laws in the state where you will be driving.

Keep within the speed limit, but do not drive too slowly, as this can cause frustration to other drivers, who, in their impatience, may try to pass you before conditions are safe. Only pass when it is absolutely necessary to do so, and know that this is always dangerous. Keep both hands on the upper half of the steering wheel, as this gives you more control. When using a stick shift, change gears smoothly, without grinding them or causing the car to lunge forward. When driving in town or anywhere there is a lot of activity, do not converse with others except to receive directions. If you are unsure of the route, pull safely to the side of the road and look at a map. Never look at a map while driving.

When it is raining or icy, drive slowly enough to be safe. If you feel unsure of driving in icy conditions, let someone more experienced drive. If you are driving a long distance, you can make conversation to help you stay awake, but if you feel you might fall asleep, let someone else drive. If you are alone, pull over and rest until you no longer feel sleepy. Your life and the lives of your passengers depend on your careful driving. Do not get irritated or annoyed when other cars drive slowly, and do not use the horn out of impatience. Maintain your mindfulness, freshness, peace, and joy all the time you are driving. Park the car correctly and legally. When you are through with the car, be sure to leave it tidy and with enough gas for the next driver. Replace the amount of gasoline you have used in another person's car.

When you ride a bicycle or a motorcycle, wear your long robe and a helmet and practice Mindful Manners to the best of your ability. Go slowly and do not accelerate suddenly. Do not ride next to another bicycle when it takes up too much room on the road. Avoid taking a passenger on your bicycle.

36

Using the Computer

Do not use the computer until you are certain you know how to use and maintain it. Do not lose yourself by becoming absorbed in your work with the computer. Program the computer to tell you to stop every fifteen minutes, so that you have an opportunity to breathe and smile. Your back should be straight when you sit at the computer, and both feet should be placed firmly on the floor. The keyboard should be on a level with your abdomen. If, while using the computer, you feel a little tired, stop and practice walking meditation or mindful movements in the fresh air for at least ten minutes. Make sure you know how to turn the computer off. When you are through, leave your work space neat. Do not think that computer work is more important than other community tasks.

37

Leading Retreats

One should practice in a monastery for at least three years before accepting an invitation to lead a retreat. While in the monastery, take the opportunity to learn the

technique of organizing retreats—from a Day of Mindfulness to a seven-day retreat. The practices of sitting meditation, walking meditation, total relaxation, tea meditation, Touching the Earth, Dharma discussion, eating meditation, and conscious breathing can be offered. Share as many of these methods as is reasonable in the time allowed, so people can experience and grasp them firmly and have a solid foundation to build their practice on. Teach only from your own experience. Stay away from concepts and metaphysical speculation.

When leading a retreat, make every effort to go with at least three or more fellow practitioners. Meet with the retreat organizers at least once a day to exchange observations and make decisions about the organization and the practice. Even if you are a Dharmacharya or have been ordained longer than anyone else, refrain from making decisions on your own. The spirit of harmony and happiness of the Sangha is the best Dharma talk. Arrange things so that everyone helping lead the retreat has an opportunity to share his or her experience of the practice.

Listen carefully and try to understand the difficulties, suffering, and deep desires of those who come to the retreat in order to be able to offer Dharma talks and practices that are relevant. In Dharma discussions and in question-and-answer sessions, encourage practitioners to raise only questions that concern the practice. Do not let discussions wander into topics of doctrine or theory. If you have time for personal interviews, give priority to those in the greatest need.

Relating to Laypeople

When laymen and women come to the monastery, it is not only for them to offer respect to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, but also to be able to enjoy the peaceful, joyful atmosphere of the monastery. Laypeople also want to learn the teachings so they can take them home and practice mindfulness with their families. Therefore, make a concerted effort to provide an opportunity for lay visitors to enjoy the most precious gifts the monastery can offer. Do not become involved in useless talk about what is going on outside the monastery or in discussing subjects of an abstract or philosophical nature, even Buddhist ones. Talk only about practices and teachings that can be applied in daily life. Offer laypeople an opportunity to listen to Dharma talks, practice sitting and walking meditation, conscious breathing, eating meals in silence, and doing all their tasks in mindfulness when they visit, even for a day. As soon as they arrive, give them a good orientation to the practice. If someone who is unfamiliar with the rules of the monastery speaks or acts inappropriately, kindly and gently help them understand. Do not become ill-tempered or reproachful. The aim of a monk or nun is to bring about happiness in the world.

A young monk or nun needs to learn to sit and listen deeply to the suffering of laypeople in order to understand better the roots of their suffering. Then, based on your own experience, you can offer practices that can help them transform their suffering and reconcile with

themselves, their families, and their society. This experience will be useful for you when you go out to teach and lead retreats for laypeople.

If someone is talking about the faults of other monks, nuns, or practice centers, skillfully encourage them to practice Right Speech. Do not get carried away by their negative attitude. Do not give one or two people too much attention, seeming to be indifferent to others. Relate with everyone equally, not discriminating between rich, poor, educated, or uneducated. Do not even treat someone who gives you an offering differently from others. Encourage them to make their offerings to the whole Sangha, rather than just to you. Make a special effort to be close to the young people. Help them feel less isolated, and teach them how to take part in the walking and sitting meditation periods, tea meditation, prostrations, and also how to eat in mindfulness.

Purifying Your Body

It can be very helpful for your health to fast once or twice a year, to purify your body and your digestive tract. Ten days is a good length for a fast. The practice of fasting will help cleanse your body of toxins that are in your intestines and in other parts of your body as well. Remember that if your heart, liver, or kidneys are weak, see a doctor before fasting, because the heart, liver, and kidneys have to work very hard as they eliminate toxins. Ask your doctor or other health professionals about herbal

remedies that can help the heart, the liver, and the kidneys while you purify your body.

During the fast, drink at least three quarts of purified water every day, preferably warm. It is very important that you not become dehydrated. On the first day, you can use laxative salts or other natural laxatives, and you can also continue to use them throughout the fast. If you use Epsom salts, the dose should be very small, about one teaspoon left overnight in a glass of water, to be drunk as soon as you wake up. There are other ways of fasting to fit different constitutions, and you can inquire among those who have experience to discover the way that suits you best.

On the third day of the fast, the toxins leaving your intestines may enter your bloodstream, making you feel worn out. You might think the reason you feel so weak is that you haven't eaten anything, but this is not necessarily correct. The body is generally able to fast for this amount of time without you having to stop your daily activities. When you feel exhausted, drink a great deal of water so the toxins can be expelled in the urine. If you have any unusual or disturbing symptoms while engaged in this fast, contact your doctor right away.

While fasting, bathe every day, because toxins leave the body through the pores in the skin. They also leave via the breath, so you need to breathe deeply to help your lungs expel more toxins.

During ten days of fasting, many pounds of impurities that have been stored in your intestines can be expelled. There is sludge that can lie in your large intestines for

STEPPING INTO FREEDOM

six months or even a year. After you have cleaned your intestines, your skin should be clearer, your appearance should be fresher, you should sleep better, and you should be in much better spirits. During ten days of fasting, you should be able to participate in all activities of the Sangha, because a short period of fasting like this should not make you weak. If possible, fast at the same time as other monks and nuns so you can support each other.

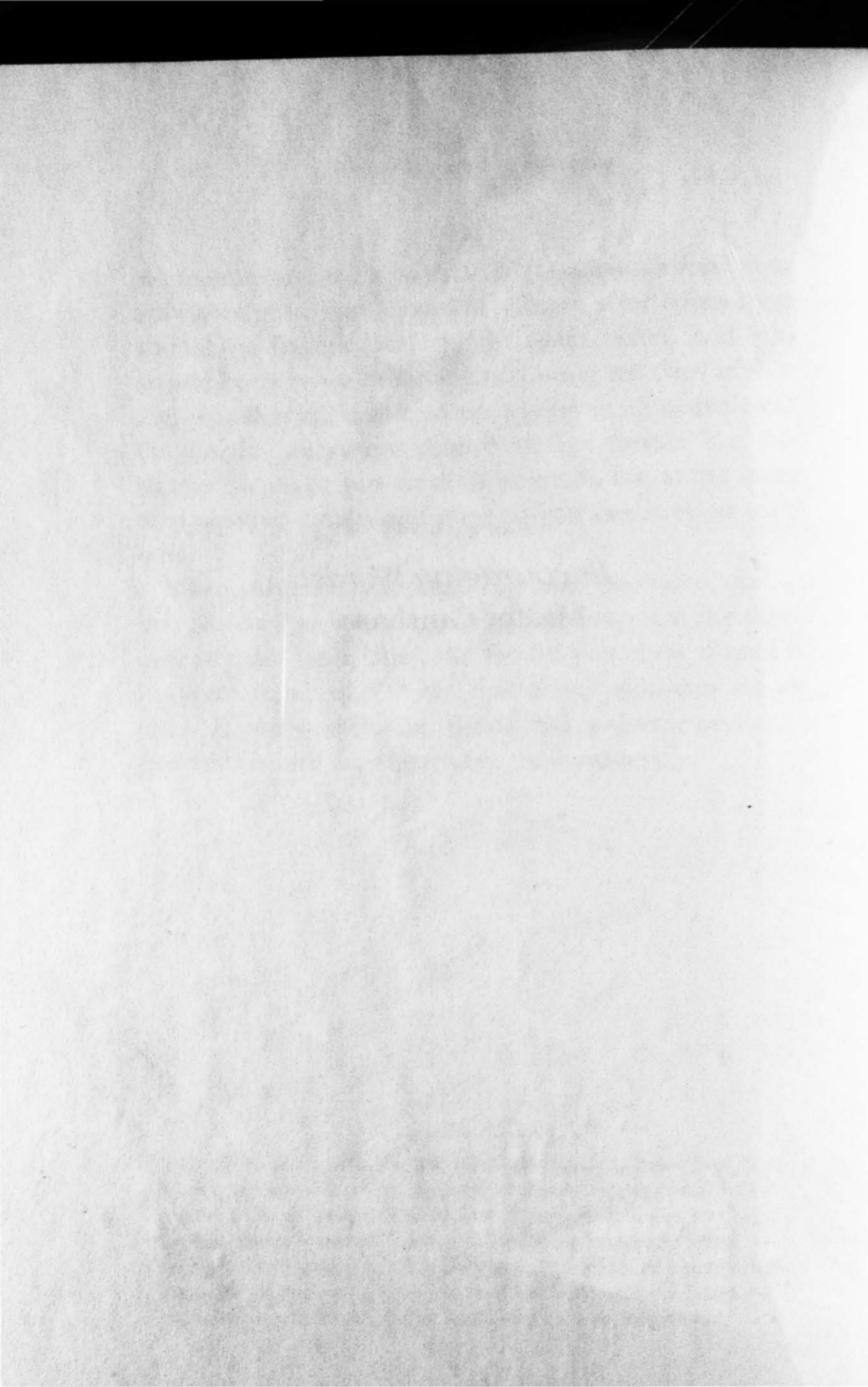
When you resume eating, drink only rice water on the first day and on the second day rice soup. On the third day, you can eat a little solid food if you chew it until it becomes liquefied. On the fourth day, you can eat as usual. If you want further details, ask a doctor or someone who is very experienced in these matters.*

* If you have any special medical conditions (such as heart, liver, or kidney problems, diabetes, pregnancy, or an eating disorder) make sure your doctor or health professional knows this before you begin the fast. If you have any unusual or disturbing symptoms while engaged in this fast, contact your doctor right away. Remember that you need to make your own educated decision, with your doctor's guidance, as to whether to fast at all, and for how long to fast.

PART FOUR

Encouraging Words

Master Guishan



Encouraging Words
Master Guishan

Our bodies were not born by themselves. Countless causes and conditions, including the genes of our ancestors and our own former actions, came together to bring them into existence. The four elements that support our bodies—earth, water, fire, and air—are not always in perfect harmony. Our bodies will not last forever. Our existence is as impermanent as the morning dew, the tree at the edge of the river, the vine climbing alongside the well. Beings who are alive in the morning have to die by evening. Days and months pass quickly, and old age and death are inevitable. How can you sit around and let your life trickle away meaninglessly?

When we decide to become a monk or a nun, we leave behind the opportunity to support our parents and serve our country. We do this because we are determined to practice wholeheartedly and realize complete liberation, to put aside old habits and learn the way to transcend birth and death. Why then would someone who has just received full ordination already proclaim himself a Venerable Bhikshu?

When you receive food offered by donors, wouldn't it be better to meditate on the food than to think that as a monk you deserve to receive it? When you finish eating,

if you sit around talking idly, it will increase everyone's suffering later on. How many lifetimes do you plan to chase after worldly matters without looking deeply at where your life is going? Time flies like an arrow, yet you are still attached to the pleasure of the offerings you receive, and you still think that money and possessions will provide you security. The Buddha taught his monks to be satisfied with just enough food, clothing, and shelter. Why would a monk or a nun spend so much time craving these things? By the time you wake up, your hair will be white. Listen to the wise ones. They did not become monks and nuns just to have some food to eat and a robe to wear.

The Buddha gave us precepts and Mindful Manners to help us dissipate darkness and realize enlightenment. These practices are as pure as snow. Stop doing what causes harm and overcome your confusion. Develop your beginner's mind, and practice deeply the precepts and Mindful Manners. Otherwise, how do you expect to understand the teachings of the highest vehicle? If you don't change your ways, how will your mind settle on itself? Ask your elders for guidance, or you may think your dreadful practice is excellent. Stop missing the chance to be with brothers and sisters more experienced in the practice. Stop wasting your time hanging out, eating, and speaking idly. How are you at all better than those lost in ordinary life? When you eat, you bang your spoon against your bowl, and when you finish, you leave the hall before others have finished. Every time you stand up or sit down unmindfully, you disturb the whole Sangha. You

don't keep up with the most elementary studies, not to mention Mindful Manners. When someone gives you feedback, you don't listen. You only say, "I am a forest monk." What does that mean? Who will be there to guide and teach the next generation of monks and nuns? Certainly not you.

You rarely put the teachings into practice. You act holy, but you are less developed than you were the day you entered the monastery. You have let your beginner's mind erode. Your habit energies still pull you toward the ways of the world. When a brother comes to you seeking guidance, he has the impression he is standing in front of a brick wall. You don't know how to help him at all. Yet when monks younger than you in the practice disobey you, you say they lack respect, and you even reprimand them.

Some day you will die. Lying on your sickbed about to breathe your last, you will be assailed by every kind of pain. Your mind will be filled with fears and anxieties and you will not know what to do or where to go. Only then will you realize that you have not practiced well. When someone is about to die of thirst, it is too late to think of digging a well. The five skandhas and the four elements in you will quickly disintegrate, and your consciousness will be pulled wherever your ancient, twisted karma leads it. Impermanence does not hesitate. Death will not wait. You will not be able to extend your life by even a second. How many thousands more times will you have to pass through the gates of birth and death?

When I think of all this, I am overwhelmed by compassion. That is why I offer you these words. You and I have been born long after the time of the Buddha and our understanding of the Buddhadharma may be shallow, but that is no excuse for you being so lazy. If you cannot give up false pride, how will you transform body and mind? The aim of a monk or a nun is to cross over to the shore of liberation, illuminate and continue the lineage of the Holy Sangha, master every variation of Mara, repay your debt of gratitude toward your parents, teachers, friends, and numerous beings, and help bring all beings in the Triple World* to the other shore. If you cannot live according to this aspiration, you are just a party crasher. Your words and actions are empty, and you disappoint all the donors who have fed you. Have you progressed at all since the day you began to practice the Buddha's Way? Your life flows by, and you still have nothing you can take refuge in.

Look deeply. Can you see the beautiful monk or nun you once aspired to be? If you hadn't sown at least some wholesome seeds in the past, you wouldn't be so lucky to be a monk or a nun today. Why do you sit there with your arms folded, letting the months and years go by without practicing? If you don't start making a sincere effort today, when will you? You allow this precious life to pass by meaninglessly. When will you cultivate the Way?

You left behind your loved ones and decided to wear the Buddha's robe, determined to attain a vast horizon. Keep that aspiration in mind, moment after moment, and

* Triple World: worlds of desire, form, and formlessness.

don't let the time pass by frivolously. Even if you sincerely aspire to be a pillar of Buddhadharma for generations to come, unless you practice you will not realize even the smallest part of your dream. Everything you say and do should be in accord with the teachings of the Buddha. Your intention must be deep, your behavior solid. Take refuge in good spiritual friends, so you can know the wholesome from the unwholesome and learn more every day. Your parents gave you birth, but your spiritual friends help you grow. Living with wise friends is like walking in the mist; your clothes will be permeated with moisture. If you spend all your time with foolish people, your judgment will keep going astray, and you will continue creating trouble for yourself and others. The fruits of our actions are easy to see.

If these words are challenging, even insulting, let them be an encouragement for you to change. At times when you are lucky enough to have someone shine light on your practice, use the suggestions to cleanse your mind and get back on track. Train diligently and stop boasting. Devote yourself to meditation. Go beyond the surface and bring your mind into harmony with the deep, wondrous reality. Study and practice extensively under the guidance of an experienced master who has walked the path before you. Stay in close contact with wise elders. Discuss the Dharma with your teacher. Find what is difficult to see, and express your awakening in your daily life. The depth and wondrousness of the Dhyana School* is difficult to grasp. If you want to realize it, you must apply

* *Zen* (Japanese), *Chan* (Chinese), *Son* (Korean), and *Thien* (Vietnamese).

your mind uncompromisingly. Only then can you hope for sudden or gradual awakening and arrive at the core of the matter.

The path of meditation puts an end to the Twenty-Five Realms of Existence* that are contained in the Triple World, and leads to the insight that all phenomena within us and around us are without a separate self. When you realize this, your mind will stop being imprisoned by external objects. You will allow phenomena to come and go quite naturally, without being caught in the ideas of permanence or annihilation. You will still hear with your ears and see with your eyes, sounds and forms will still arise, but you will be at peace. Whether you are sitting or acting, you will be free, worthy of the robes you wear. At last, you will be able to repay the debt of gratitude to your parents, teachers, friends, and all beings. If you can continue without falling back, the fruit of awakening will ripen in you, and you will be an honored guest, coming and going from the Triple World as you please, always a model for everyone. The practice of Realization through Deep Looking is wonderful! If you firmly resolve to take the path, I am sure you will succeed.

But if you think you are not ready, devote your time to studying the sutras, helping others understand the Dharma, practicing mindful walking and standing, and acting in accord with Mindful Manners. This will help you realize your life's ideal and become a vehicle for transmit-

* The Twenty-Five Realms of Existence: fourteen are in the world of desire, seven in the world of form, and four in the world of formlessness.

ting the Dharma to future generations. Manioc and bindweed wind themselves around pine trees and climb, sometimes one hundred yards up. With your beautiful and deep aspiration, you can climb just as vigorously. Always ask for support from great teachers and friends, and you will surely benefit the world. Practice the precepts with all your heart, and a wholesome result is certain.

Time is precious. Do not misuse the offerings given to you. Don't miss the opportunity to show your gratitude. Do not accumulate unnecessary possessions. If you don't practice correctly, your life will be filled with obstacles. But do not underestimate yourself. Practice heroically. Don't give up. Touch your bodhichitta. Embrace and cherish the loftiest goals. Imitate those worth admiring, and don't entrust your destiny to anyone else. Still your mind, end wrong perceptions, concentrate, and do not run after the objects of your senses. The only true object of your mind should be the ultimate suchness, or nirvana.

Read these words over and over again. Remind yourself of them every day. Don't be pulled along by habit energies, or you will not be able to avoid adversity. When musicians are in harmony, the music is beautiful. When forms are upright, the shadows are clear. Everything comes into existence due to causes and conditions. Stand in awe of this teaching, and look at all situations globally, both in time and in space. Once an action has been performed, the result is already there, even if it takes a hundred thousand lifetimes to manifest. If you cannot transform your karma (action), when it ripens you will receive the consequence. The suffering of the Triple World

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is the result of our own actions. Practice diligently. Be determined not to let your days and months pass by wastefully.

Dear younger brother, dear younger sister, it is because I have seen too clearly the misfortunes that result from misbehavior that I offer you these words of encouragement. I pray that for thousands of years to come, wherever we are, we may continue as companions along the Buddha's path.

This body is like a dream.

The Triple World is like a magic show.

The past is no longer here.

The future is quite uncertain.

If we don't see the truth in the present moment,
we'll return to samsara* again and again.

As long as we dwell in the Triple World,
suffering will never end.

As long as we are caught by lust and desire,
our suffering will continue.

There is nothing to hold on to.

Because of ignorance our mind is troubled.

Cherish every moment.

If this life is wasted,
the next will be filled with obstacles.

Ignorance breeds ignorance.

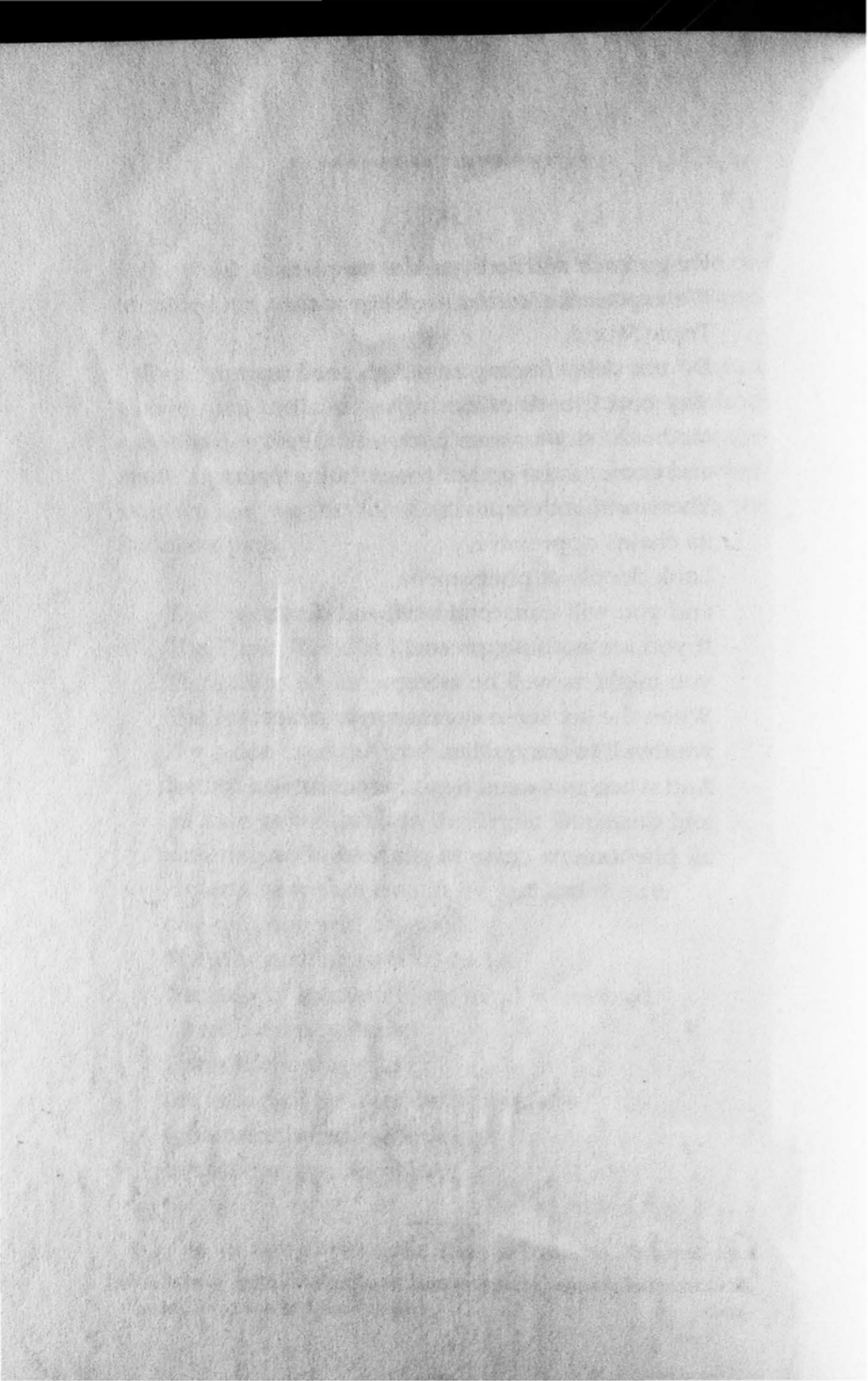
Because of the six pirates,[†]

* Samsara: the vicious circle of suffering and confusion, birth and death.

† Six Pirates: the six objects of sensual pleasure, namely forms, sounds, odors, flavors, touch, and desire.

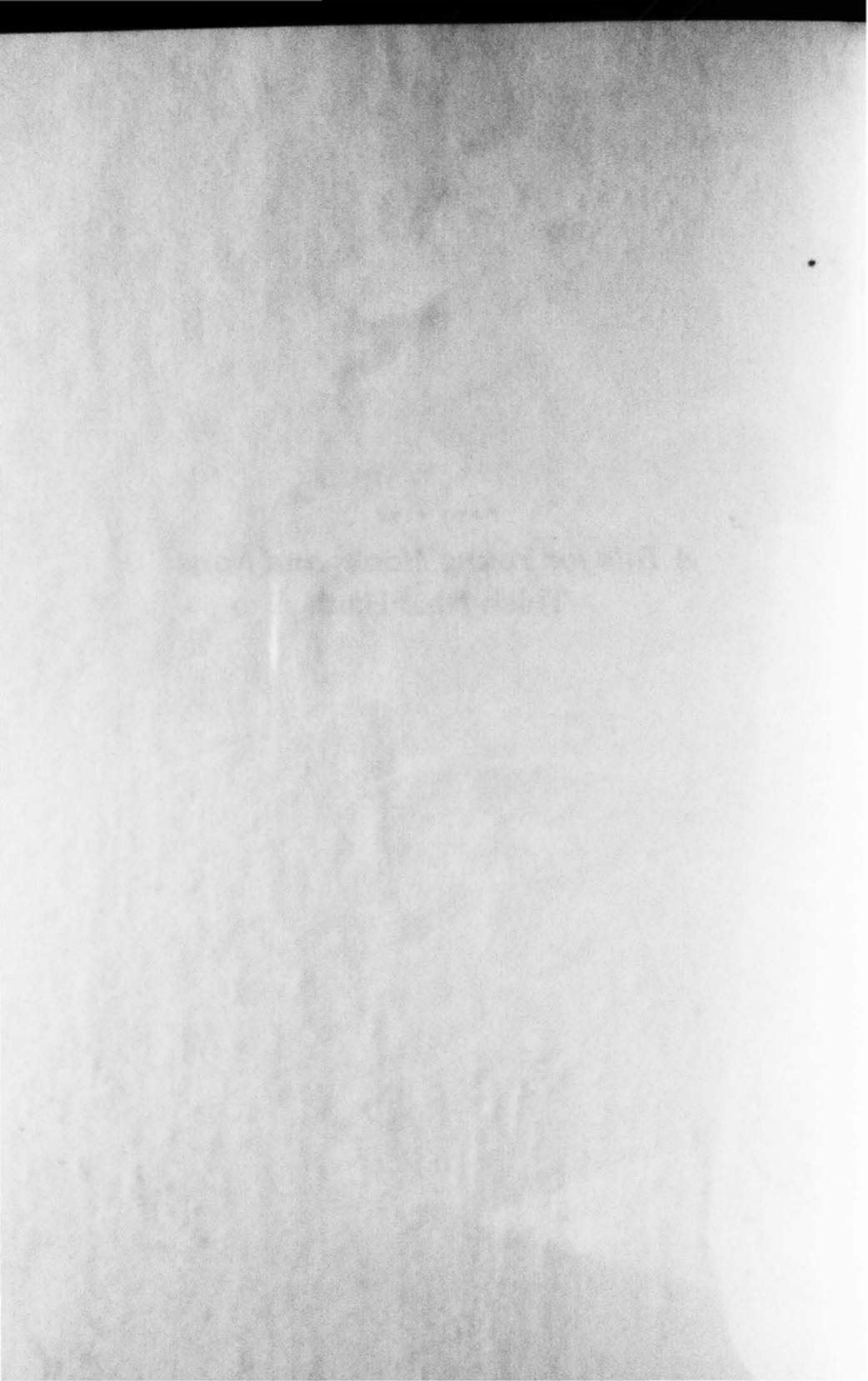
we go back and forth on the six paths.*
We experience untold hardship in the
Triple World.
Do not delay finding an enlightened master.
Stay near friends of the highest quality.
Meditate on your own body and mind
and come to the end of these thorny paths.
The world is deceptive,
its chains oppressive.
Look deeply at phenomena,
and you will transcend birth and death.
If you are not fully present,
you might as well be asleep.
When the six sense organs are at peace,
we dwell in tranquillity.
And when our mind is no longer subject to birth
and death,
all phenomena cease to get hold of us.

* Six Paths: hell, hungry ghosts, animals, malevolent spirits, humans, and gods.



PART FIVE

A Talk for Young Monks and Nuns
Thich Nhat Hanh



*A Talk for Young Monks and Nuns**
Thich Nhat Hanh

The Mind of Love

Y
oung monks and nuns, please listen...

When I use the word “young,” I mean all of you whose eyes are bright, whose capacity to listen and learn is deep, whose dress is simple and neat, and whose smile is always there. I have met monks in their twenties who have the air of old men. Their eyes are half-closed and they act as though they are highly respected masters of perfect virtue. I have also seen monks and nuns who received full ordination many years before—some are now in their seventies and eighties—who are so open to learning and changing that I would consider them to be “young.”

You ordained as a monk or a nun because of a deep calling you could not resist. That force is *bodhichitta*, the mind of awakening, the mind of love. Throughout your life, this is the energy that will motivate your practice and give you strength to overcome difficulties and maintain happiness. If your *bodhichitta* is eroded, it will be difficult to continue as a monk or a nun. That is why nourish-

* A Dharma Talk given to young monks and nuns in Plum Village on May 2, 1996.

ing your bodhichitta is the most important practice of a monk or a nun.

You entered monastic life because you touched suffering and felt deep love and compassion. If you have a good teacher, if you live in a Sangha that practices well, if you get along well with your brothers and sisters, if every day you rejoice in gratitude for the practice, your bodhichitta will thrive. But without these conditions, you might give up.

I am a happy monk. There have been difficult moments, times when I could have lost heart or wavered in my faith, but because I have known how to nourish the bodhichitta in me, those hardships were never enough to shake me from my path. When your bodhichitta is not nourished, you may be tempted to go off to college or work. Some young monks and nuns want to get diplomas so people will have confidence in what they say. But without a Sangha to give them the advice and encouragement they need in difficult moments, they will fall away from the practice.

When you are thinking about becoming a monk or a nun, select your environment carefully. Your environment may determine the success or failure of your practice. Don't be too quick to choose a community. Visit several monasteries, and when you find an environment that seems suitable for you, stay there for a few months and practice exactly as the monks and nuns do. Use your wisdom and your heart to decide whether this community is the most favorable for your practice. Notice whether your solidity, peace, and joy increase every day and whether your bodhichitta is nourished. If it isn't, don't harbor illu-

sory hopes. If it is, this is probably the place you should ordain.

After ordaining, expect to stay in the monastery for some time. Don't think you will be able to move to a hermitage or practice on your own after a short time. The Sangha is your practice. Without a Sangha, it is too difficult to nourish your mind of love. Practice is not an individual matter. You need the support, encouragement, and insight of a community.

Awakening as a Career

There are monks and nuns who think their career is their monastery or their position. There are others who are satisfied to publish scholarly books or have a Ph.D. Others feel that success is having a large temple where many people come. But these are not the aim of a true monk or nun. Bodhichitta has nothing to do with being a scholar, a famous teacher, or the abbot of a large monastery. The career of a monk or a nun is to transform suffering and arrive at deep understanding, great freedom, and true love. These qualities bring happiness to ourselves and others, and they can only be realized by the practice. When you have understanding, love, and freedom, people will come to you, not because you are abbot of a large temple or have three or four degrees, but because you have freedom, virtue, and the experience of ways of practice that lead to transformation. The highest aim of a monk or a nun is to be a teacher who can lead people out of their suffering through practice, understanding, and liberation.

The *Sutra on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings* says "Bodhisattvas...consider the realization of perfect understanding as their only career."* Perfect understanding is awakened mind. It is not knowledge you can get from a university or even an institute of Buddhist studies. At some institutes of Buddhist studies, the monks and nuns squeeze so much knowledge into their heads. The teachers say a lot, the students take many notes, but the teaching has little to do with their everyday sufferings and difficulties. When I see a novice working hard at university studies, I know that he or she will have regrets and difficulties in the future.

An institute of Buddhist studies should be a Sangha in which students practice well together. In a good institute of Buddhist studies, monastic students take part in Dharma discussions and receive practices that can help them transform their suffering and bring true happiness. If, within three to six months, you do not experience any transformation in your body or mind, any increase in your happiness, you know that method of practice is not working, and you need to ask your teacher and your spiritual friends for help.

Happiness Now

With bodhichitta in us, we already feel true happiness. The situation may be difficult, there may be suffering, but we have the strength and determination to face all adversities. The Buddha taught a way that can give us peace

* Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Sutra on the Eight Realizations of the Great Beings* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1987).

and happiness “in this very moment,” *sanditthiko*. As soon as we put the teachings into practice, we feel peace and happiness right away. The Buddha’s teachings are *akaliko*, “not bound by time.” The moment you follow your breathing, your body and mind feel calm and happy. If you have been practicing for many years but are still unhappy, you may not be practicing correctly. Without a Sangha, without a teacher who can guide you in the practice, your bodhichitta will not blossom. This is the greatest sadness in the life of a monk or a nun.

***Knowledge Is Not Awakened
Understanding***

Awakened understanding (insight) cannot be obtained from books, even *sutras* (words of the Buddha). Awakened understanding is the fruit of practice. The Sixth Zen Ancestor in China, Huineng, had no formal education, but people flocked to him. His understanding did not come from a university or an institute of Buddhist studies. It was the result of his own practice and insight. True Ocean of Vows, a monk in Plum Village, does not have a degree, but when he walks, sits, lies down, sits, or listens, he shines the light of mindfulness onto the object of his attention, and he sees things others do not.

If you practice “dwelling happily in the present moment,” *drishtadbarmasukhavibarin*, you will enjoy every moment of your life. As you walk to the kitchen or to the meditation hall, each step can make you happy. If you remain mindful while you clean the toilet, you will see that cleaning the toilet is just as pleasant as practicing sitting meditation. Every act, every word, every look, and every

step of a monk or a nun should be in mindfulness. Don't struggle. Just be aware of each step and each breath, and you will have peace. Don't wait until you become a Dharma teacher. As a novice, you can be very happy.

Practicing for Others

When you live in a Sangha, your practice of solidity and happiness already has a big effect on your family and society. Wearing the robe of a monk or a nun, taking each step in freedom, sitting solidly, you help your family become more stable. The most precious gift you can offer your family is your own peace and insight. When you have spiritual maturity and the capacity to resolve difficulties, you naturally become a spiritual guide for your family. If you can offer methods for them to practice, that is positive, but just seeing you as a monk or a nun who is solid and free, who walks with ease, will give them faith and some stability. You become a monk or a nun not for your sake alone, but for all your ancestors, your family, your descendants, and the whole of society. When a society has one person in it who is happy because of the practice, the quality of life in that society increases.

Many monasteries use the talents of their monks and nuns to help the monastery run smoothly. Of course, monasteries need skilled guest masters, administrators, accountants, and so on, but when you are given a position of responsibility like that, it can be difficult to practice well. Establish your solidity, peace, freedom, and happiness on your very first day as a monk or a nun, and focus your energy on the practices of mindful walking,

standing, speaking, smiling, eating, breathing and dwelling happily in the present moment. Your work assignment is only an aspect of the practice. Put all your strength into the practice of mindfulness. Take every step and every action in the light of mindfulness, and never allow your work to drag you into forgetfulness.

Precepts and Mindfulness

The Five Mindfulness Trainings, the Ten Novice Precepts, the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing, and the Pratimoksha Precepts of a fully ordained monk or nun are all born from mindfulness. Precepts are not to force us to conform. They are to help us know what is happening in the present moment. Mindfulness is the energy that can shine light on our whole life and nourish our bodhichitta. We practice the precepts because we know that if we break the precepts, everything will be destroyed. We keep the precept on chastity because we know that if we break it, our life as a monk or a nun will be destroyed, and we will harm the person we sleep with, our family, and our Sangha.

Many people today do not know how to practice true love. When you practice true love, you naturally honor the precepts. True love is based on mindfulness, and the precepts are based on mindfulness. The four volumes on the precepts called the *Minor Vinaya of Monk and Nun Novices* are all ways to practice mindfulness. Practice Mindful Manners in all the activities of daily life. Learn to walk, stand, sit, lie down, put on your robes, and do everything in a way that is solid, free, and joyful. The sub-

stance of Mindful Manners and the substance of all precepts is mindfulness. Do not allow your pure intention, your bodhichitta, to be worn out through forgetfulness.

If you are in an environment favorable for practice, leading a daily life that is happy, you will nourish your bodhichitta every day. If your practice brings you peace and freedom, "worldly" pleasures will not distract you from the joys of a simple everyday life. But if you have problems with your teacher, if you are upset with your brothers and sisters in the Sangha, the situation is volatile. You will be tempted to run after personal dreams, such as to study at a prestigious Buddhist institute or become the abbot of a small temple. A monk or a nun in a happy Sangha is always more solid.

You shave off your hair. You give up cosmetics and jewelry. You set aside all attempts to achieve worldly fame, and you focus your energy on bringing real happiness to many people. If you are caught in the net of attachments, you will not have time or energy to practice or to serve others. Shaving your head means cutting the strings of the net of attachments.

Monks and nuns are revolutionaries. They cherish a great aspiration in their hearts, and that is how they have the strength to cut the net of worldly attachments. They go forth from family life to enter the path of the Buddha, and they aspire to love and help everyone, not just one person. Monks and nuns cherish their freedom so they can be a source of happiness for many people. Seeing how much entanglement and suffering there is in the world, they feel compassion and want to help people who are suffering.

Suffering engulfs people everywhere. Bodhichitta is the aspiration to find a path of light, to find a way to untie the bonds of attachment, and to help others. Bodhichitta does not mean to abandon those we love, but to love them in a way that is not possessive, entangling, or sorrowful. It is the kind of love that offers joy, and transforms suffering. The love that offers joy is called *maitri* and *mudita*. The love that transforms suffering is called *karuna*. The love that is not attached and preserves freedom is called *upeksha*. We aspire to become a monk or a nun because we want these Four Immeasurable Kinds of Love.*

Putting aside worldly beauty,
 cutting the net of attached love,
 putting on the Dharma robe,
 I say good-bye to my loved ones.
 Going on the path of the Buddha
 I vow to help all beings, near and far.

With the energy of bodhichitta, even if you are caught in a hurricane, you'll stand solidly. This beautiful source of energy is also called beginner's mind. Please do everything in your power to protect and preserve this mind for your parents and for all beings. Live and practice in a healthy environment, and maintain your beautiful beginner's mind for a long, long time.

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Teachings on Love* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1997).

Further Sharing*

Young monks and nuns, please listen a little more. Some of you have the chance to live in a good environment for practice. You are loved by your teacher, encouraged and supported by your fellow practitioners, and have an opportunity to learn and practice the way of mindful living every day. But many of you still face serious difficulties. Several of you don't even have enough to wear or eat. Many of you do not live in an environment that encourages your bodhichitta to flourish. Hearing this, you may want to cry. I myself have been through many of these difficulties, and I know what it is like. You feel your teacher does not understand you, and your teacher feels that you do not have a proper sense of responsibility or obedience. The communication between you is tense, and neither of you is happy. You find life in the monastery too busy. There is so much work to do and not enough time for study or practice. You want your teacher to send you to an institute of Buddhist studies so you can spend more time studying and practicing, but the monastery needs people and your teacher will not grant you permission.

Your parents did not want you to enter the order. They said they need you to help support the family, and they even feel (a little bit) that you deserted them when you became a monk. You see others who receive spiritual support from their families, and you cannot understand

* As I read the transcript of the talk I gave on May 2, 1996, I saw there was more I still wanted to say. So I wrote the following on May 22 in the New Hamlet in Plum Village.

why you don't. Your brothers and sisters in the Sangha speak roughly to you, discriminate against you, and tell your teacher about your shortcomings. These are similar to the problems you had in your family, and now here, again. What a disappointment! How will you continue?

In moments of despair, you think of leaving your community, perhaps to stay in the house of one of your supporters. You think, I will practice with a Sangha later. Now I must complete my academic studies and develop myself culturally. When I graduate from the university, people will have confidence in me. And then I will resume my studies and practice of the Dharma. There will be plenty of time for me to do so. Ideas like this rob you of your peace and pull you from the path of practice.

The Path of Liberation

Even if your situation is as difficult as this, don't be in too big a hurry to go elsewhere. Don't stand on one mountain and wish you were on another. Even as you dream of going to an institute of Buddhist studies, someone enrolled in an institute of Buddhist studies is dreaming of leaving the institute to go to a temple like yours. If you cannot resolve your difficulties on your own, please talk with someone more experienced in the practice. Open your heart to him or her and share what you feel. Your brother or sister can offer you guidance and support.

If you were to speak to me, I would advise you to reestablish communication with your teacher and fellow practitioners, to sit and listen attentively, without prejudice, without losing your temper, without judging or reacting. Practice deep mindful breathing to establish your equa-

nimity, and you will be able to hear what is being said, even if it is not in accord with your own ideas. Speak only harmoniously, using loving words. Do not blame. Just share your difficulties and ask for help. Deep listening and loving speech alone improve the situation. You might even be able to convince your teacher, brothers, and sisters to make changes in the environment so it will be more suitable for practice, study, and the realization of beginner's mind.

If you are a student or a young teacher in an institute of Buddhist studies, please also practice like this, and slowly you might be able to transform the institute into an environment favorable for the realization of the monastic ideal. I know these words will also be read by elders in monasteries and Dharma teachers in institutes of Buddhist studies, and I have faith that they, too, are as eager as I am to transform the environment into one that brings happiness to abbots, faculty members, monks, and nuns in your daily life of study and practice.

Dear young ones, do not continue to suffer. Suffering is a holy truth, but if you drown in your suffering, you will not be able to see its nature or the way out. Look deeply into the nature of your suffering, so you will discover its causes and the path to liberation.

A Practitioner Needs a Sangha

Arnold Toynbee predicted that the encounter between Buddhism and the western civilization will be one of the most important events of our century. As a result of this encounter, a new foundation of culture is being inaugu-

rated. Please prepare yourself to be a part of this historic event. Apply the teachings of the Buddha in your daily life in order to transform your own suffering and the suffering of your Sangha.

Everyone has a Buddha body (*Buddhakaya*), a Dharma body (*Dharmakaya*), and a Sangha body (*Sangha-aya*). Practice with all your heart, following your breathing and taking each step in mindfulness. Live every moment of your life deeply. Touch the wonders of life in and around you, moment after moment. Wake up and see the blue spruce, the yellow chrysanthemums, the full moon, and the pure white clouds as manifestations of the wondrous Dharmakaya.

Live the teaching of dwelling happily in the present moment, as did the young monk Samiddhi, who was dearly loved by the Buddha and the Sangha. Rahula, the first young monk to be accepted into the monastic Sangha, received the Novice Precepts from the Venerable Shariputra when he was eight years old. Ananda was also young when he joined the Order, and thanks to his extraordinary memory, the sutras of the Buddha have been handed down to us. Rewata, the youngest brother of Shariputra, asked to become a monk before he was eighteen, because he was able to see the teaching of impermanence and the fading of all dharmas. He lived happily and at ease as a monk in the forest. Subhuti, the younger brother of the businessman Anathapindika, was also ordained before his eighteenth birthday and was praised by the Buddha for thoroughly penetrating the meditations on love and compassion. Both these monks were inspired by their older brothers. Sonaka gave rise to bodhi-

chitta after hearing a Dharma talk in the Bamboo Forest Monastery. To convince his parents to allow him to enter the monastic order, Sonaka fasted for many weeks. Bhaddiya and Aniruddha were sons of noble families who gave up their wealth in order to enter the monastic order and live a life of liberation. The nuns Uppalavana and Subha, well-known for their beauty, cut the bonds of romantic love to enter the order of nuns and live a life of practice. Sundarinanda, the Buddha's stepsister, became a nun before she was twenty. She was praised by the Buddha for her realization of meditative concentration. These monks and nuns are excellent exemplars for us.

We do not practice alone. Taking refuge in the Sangha is not a matter of belief. It is a daily practice. Unless you take refuge in the Sangha, you will lose your deep aspiration to be a monk or a nun very soon. In Vietnamese, we say that just as a meal needs soup, the practice needs a Sangha.

The Heritage of the Buddha

As monks and nuns, you are children of the Buddha. Enjoy your heritage by practicing sitting meditation, walking meditation, conscious breathing, mindful eating, building a Sangha, and bringing happiness into the world. When you study the Buddha's words, always ask yourself, "Do the ideas in this sutra have anything to do with my daily life? Do they help me transform my suffering and bring about peace and joy?" Sutras like the *Vajracchedika*, *Lotus*, *Avatamsaka*, and *Ratnakuta* contain many deep and wonderful ideas, but the aim of studying them is not

philosophical. The Buddhadharma is a raft to ferry us to the shore of transformation and happiness. The aim of a monk or a nun is not to become a Buddhist scholar, but to obtain happiness and liberation and become a true teacher who can help others. Avoid the mere accumulation of knowledge and live according to the principles of true study, true practice, and true realization.

Impermanence, non-self, loving kindness, and compassion are not philosophical doctrines. They are tools for looking deeply in order to transform suffering. If you look deeply at impermanence, non-self, loving kindness, and compassion, you will put an end to your wrong perceptions and become a source of understanding, protection, and love. Only when you have love are you truly happy. If you have only blame and hatred in your heart, you will suffer. When you see the substance of loving kindness and compassion growing in you, when you realize that you are beginning to look at others with the eyes of compassion, without blaming, you know that your practice is beginning to bear fruit. I have seen practitioners begin to have a transformation after only four or five days. They rediscover forgiveness, love, and harmony in their hearts and in their families.

Monks and nuns should not forget how lucky they are to live in a practice environment and to have the chance for full-time practice. If you allow the days and months to pass without immersing yourself fully in the practice, it is a waste of your life. When a farmer tries a new kind of seed, fertilizer, or method of cultivation and it does not yield good results, he will change the seed, fertilizer, or method. If you practice for three or six months without

any transformation, something is wrong in your method of practice. Go to your teacher or your friends and talk to them. Find ways to practice that are more suitable for you. I have seen people practice for more than thirty years without changing their way of living or their habit energies. What a waste for them, and for us also!

***Bodhisattvas as Companions
along the Path***

If you practice love and compassion correctly, sooner or later you will apply them to social action. Love and compassion are not principles. They are energies in us waiting to manifest. You may be a monk or a nun who manifests your compassion by bringing relief to the poor, looking after orphans, or serving in hospitals or prisons. Your work is an authentic Dharma talk, animated by your love. Every gesture you make while looking after the sick, the disabled, or the poor can be a powerful teaching. If a Dharma teacher gives a good talk but if his words do not come from the energy of compassion, it is not an authentic Dharma talk. Do not be taken up with social work while forgetting that the real aim of a monk or a nun is to put an end to afflictions and transform suffering.

If you work two or three days a week in a hospital, a prison, or an orphanage, remember to work in mindfulness, practicing equanimity and Mindful Manners, never allowing yourself to be lost in forgetfulness. If you know how to follow your breathing and practice dwelling in the present moment as you help people, you will be

practicing as beautifully as you do in the meditation hall. Many hospitals have chapels for patients and relatives to pray or meditate when they need to calm their minds. Monks and nuns who serve in hospitals should learn ways to help patients and their relatives obtain peace of mind.

Some monks and nuns serve prisoners. They know ways to comfort prisoners and help them release their psychological tensions. They teach meditation and the way of mindful living. When you go to such places, the Bodhisattva Kshitigarbha is alongside you, helping you bring peace into the hearts of the people. Work with all your heart, and do not forget that you yourself are training to be awake in each moment. Do not be carried away by the work or you will fall into forgetfulness.

I receive many letters of thanks from prisoners who have read my books and benefited from the teachings. Many say that they can practice diligently in prison and have faith in the practice, because these methods put their hearts at peace. We should work to set up meditation halls in every hospital and prison, and we should train monks, nuns, and lay practitioners to serve in places like these.

Generosity in Giving

Generosity is the deepest and most beautiful action of a monk or a nun. There are three kinds of giving: material, Dharma, and non-fear. The most precious are methods of practice that you yourself have benefited from. If you do social work, it is not your social work but your role as a

monk or a nun that is most important. When you bring relief to those who are suffering, transmit methods of practice to them. Do not think they are suffering only because they do not have enough to eat or to wear, a place to live, or medicine. They also suffer because of their anger, despair, low self-esteem, jealousy, and conflicts. Do not be afraid if people accuse you of taking advantage of doing social work in order to transmit the Dharma. Use nonsectarian language to help people who are suffering undo the knots in their hearts. The methods of breathing, relaxation, deep listening, and loving speech can be taught outside of religion. They are, in fact, studied and practiced in all religions. Generosity is an important practice. You give, and the source of your giving is never used up.

Fearlessness is the third gift. You are free, not pushed around or bound by unwholesome desires. You understand no-birth and have no fear of death. Sitting alongside someone who is about to die, your presence helps him or her feel peace. One of my students, Joan Halifax, has trained many people in being with those close to death. She has the capacity to offer fearlessness, because she has non-fear, solidity, and freedom in her. We should offer this to people at the most difficult time of their life, when they are about to breathe their last breath.

I wrote a poem on the subject of comforting someone who is about to die. These lines are inspired by the *Anguttara Nikaya*:

These eyes are not me.
I am not limited by these eyes.

I am life without boundaries.
I have never been born
and I have never died.
Look at the ocean and the sky filled with stars,
manifestations from my wondrous true mind.
Since before time, I have been free.
Birth and death are only doors through which we
pass,
sacred thresholds on our journey.
Birth and death are a game of hide-and-seek.
So smile to me,
laugh with me,
hold my hand.
Let us say good-bye,
say good-bye, to meet again soon.

We meet today.
We will meet again tomorrow.
We will meet at the source. Every moment.
We meet each other in all forms of life.

These ears are not me...
These eyes are not me...
This nose is not me...
This tongue is not me...
This body is not me...
This mind is not me...

This poem can be read, chanted, or sung for the person who is at death's door, whether she is conscious or has already lost consciousness. Freedom and relaxation

are the most precious gifts a monk or a nun can offer. Never lose them. Practice mindfulness and carefully observe the precepts, and you will protect your freedom. Fame, position, sensual pleasure, and wealth are like plastic bait. The fish thinks it is a worm and lunges at it, but the hook inside catches him. If you get caught in fame, position, sensual pleasure, or wealth, you will lose your freedom. True happiness lies in solidity, freedom, fearlessness, and love. Develop these qualities in yourself every day.

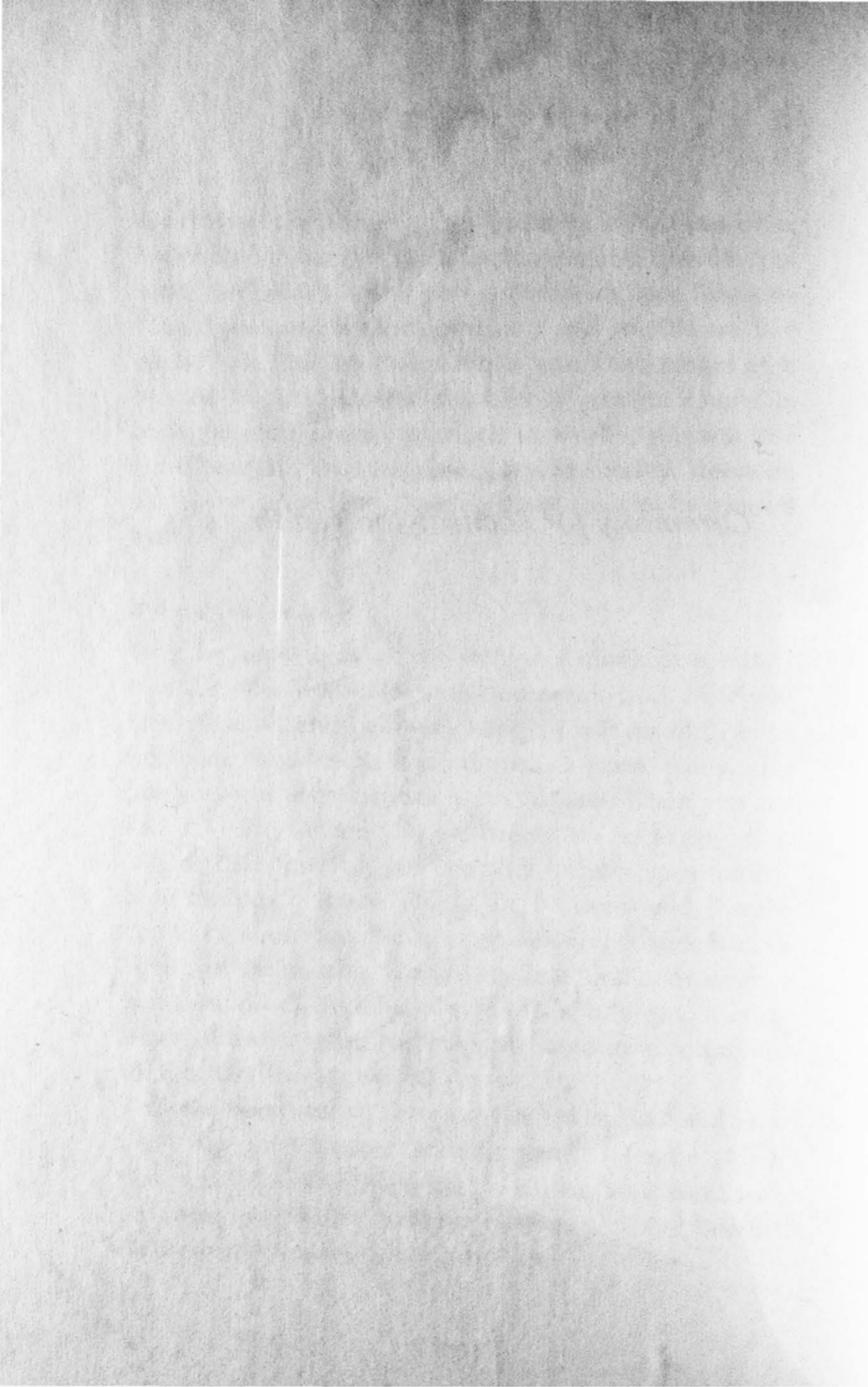
Hand in Hand

Even before you asked to become a monk or a nun, I could see the seed of a monk or a nun in you. Now you have done so, and I am very happy. I will do all I can to help you have the right conditions to learn, study, and practice your deep aspiration, bodhichitta. When you are sad, I'll suffer. When you are happy, I'll be happy, too. When you show that you are able to help your family, your teacher, or your Sangha, I'll be overjoyed. I want you to be nourished. You are my faith and confidence. As a child of the Buddha, you are my little brother or sister, a continuation of Buddha, a gem of the Dharma, the essence of the Sangha. You have the capacity to bring the ideal of the bodhisattva into the world.

I have been able to share my heart with you, and now I feel very good about it. I am not worried. I have faith in you, and I am right there alongside you. Your hand is in my hand, and we are walking together with the Buddha on the path of understanding and love.

PART SIX

Ceremony for Reciting the Ten Precepts



Ceremony for Reciting the Ten Precepts

1

Incense Offering

In gratitude, we offer this incense to all buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout space and time.

May it be fragrant as Earth herself, reflecting our careful efforts, our wholehearted awareness, and the fruit of understanding, slowly ripening in us.

May we and all beings be companions of buddhas and bodhisattvas. May we awaken from forgetfulness and realize our true home.

2

Praising the Buddha

The Buddha jewel shines infinitely.

He has realized perfect enlightenment for countless lifetimes.

The beauty and stability of a Buddha sitting
can be seen in the mountains and rivers.

How splendid is the Vulture Peak!

How beautiful the light that shines forth from Buddha's
third eye

illuminating the six dark paths.

The Nagapuspa assembly will be our next appointment
for the continuation of the true teachings and practices.

We take refuge in the Buddha ever-present.

Touching the Earth

Teaching and living the way of awareness in the very midst of suffering and confusion, Shakyamuni Buddha, the Enlightened One, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(BELL)

Cutting through ignorance, awakening our hearts and minds, Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of Great Understanding, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(BELL)

Working mindfully and joyfully for the sake of all beings, Samantabhadra, the Bodhisattva of Great Action, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(BELL)

Responding to suffering, serving beings in countless ways, Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(BELL)

Seed of awakening and loving kindness in children and all beings, Maitreya, the Buddha to Be Born, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(BELL)

Showing the way fearlessly and compassionately, the stream of ancestral teachers, to whom we bow in gratitude.

(TWO SOUNDS OF THE BELL)

4

*Opening the Sutra and Chanting the
Heart of the Prajñāparamita*

The Dharma is deep and lovely.
We now have a chance to see it,
study it, and practice it.
We vow to realize its true meaning.

The Bodhisattva Avalokita,
While moving in the deep course of perfect understanding,
Shed light on the Five Skandhas and found them equally empty.
After this penetration, he overcame ill-being.

(BELL)

Listen, Shariputra,
Form is emptiness, emptiness is form.
Form is not other than emptiness.
Emptiness is not other than form.
The same is true with feelings,
Perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.

(BELL)

Hear, Shariputra,
All dharmas are marked with emptiness.
They are neither produced nor destroyed,
Neither defiled nor immaculate,

Neither increasing nor decreasing.
Therefore in emptiness there is neither form,
Nor feelings, nor perceptions,
Nor mental formations, nor consciousness;
No eye, or ear, or nose, or tongue, or body, or mind;
No form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no ob-
ject of mind;
No realms of elements (from eyes to mind conscious-
ness);
No interdependent origins and no extinction of them
(From ignorance to death and decay);
No ill-being, no cause of ill-being,
No end of ill-being, and no path;
No understanding, no attainment.

(B E L L)

Because there is no attainment,
The bodhisattvas, grounded in perfect understanding,
Find no obstacles for their minds.
Having no obstacles, they overcome fear,
Liberating themselves forever from illusion
And realizing perfect nirvana.
All buddhas in the past, present, and future,
Thanks to this perfect understanding,
Arrive at full, right, and universal enlightenment.

(B E L L)

Therefore one should know that perfect understanding
Is the highest mantra, the unequaled mantra,
The destroyer of ill-being, the incorruptible truth.

A mantra of prajñāparamita should therefore be proclaimed.

This is the mantra:

*Gate gate paragate
Parasamgate
Bodhi Svaha.*

(THREE SOUNDS OF THE BELL)

5

Sanghakarman Procedure

Sanghakarman Master: Has the community assembled in sufficient numbers?

Sangha Convener: The community has assembled in sufficient numbers.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there harmony in the community?

Sangha Convener: There is harmony.

Sanghakarman Master: Is there anyone who is not able to be present who has asked to be represented and says that they are satisfied they have kept the precepts?

Sangha Convener: There is not. (*If there is someone, you say, "Shramanera _____ is not able to be present to recite the precepts because of ill health and has asked Shramanera _____ to represent him. He is satisfied that he has observed the precepts."*)

Sanghakarman Master: Why has the community gathered today?

Sangha Convener: The community has gathered to realize the sanghakarman of reciting the Ten Novice Precepts.

Sanghakarman Master: Noble community of Shramanera, please listen. Today (date) has been chosen to recite the Vinaya. We have gathered at the appointed time and we agree that we are ready to listen to the recitation in a spirit of harmony. Thus the recitation is in accord with the Vinaya. Do you agree that the proposal is correct?
Everyone: Correct.

6

Introductory Words

Now is the time for the recitation of the ten Shramanera precepts. Please will all Shramanera present themselves with joined palms before the Three Jewels.

When you hear the sound of the bell, touch the Earth three times to express your respect and gratitude to Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. (BELL)

Shramanera, please listen. The Ten Novice Precepts are a wide gateway through which we enter the ordained community. They are the foundation of the Pratimoksha that you will receive and practice in the future. Listen to each precept with a heart that is pure and calm. Take the precepts to be a clear mirror in which to look at yourself, and every time you see that in the past two weeks you have done your best to study and observe the precept read, you can answer silently, "Yes."

Shramanera, are you ready?

Then I shall read the ten precepts.

THE FIRST PRECEPT

On Protecting Life

Aware of the suffering brought about by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect the lives of humans and all other species. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any act of killing in the world, in my thinking, or in my way of life.

This is the first of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE SECOND PRECEPT

On Respecting What Belongs to Others

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, social injustice, stealing, and oppression, I vow to cultivate loving kindness in order to bring joy and peace to humans and all other species. I am determined to share my time and energy with those who are in real need. I vow not to steal or take into possession anything that belongs to my community or anyone else. I will respect the property of others, but I will prevent others from profiting from human suffering or the suffering of other species.

This is the second of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE THIRD PRECEPT

On Protecting Chastity

Aware that the aspiration of a monk or a nun can only be realized when I wholly leave behind the bonds of worldly love, I vow to protect myself and to help others to protect themselves by the practice of chastity. I know that any sexual engagement will destroy my life as a monk or a nun and damage the lives of others. I am aware that having a sexual relationship will prevent me from realizing my ideal to serve living beings.

This is the third of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE FOURTH PRECEPT

On Mindful Speech and Deep Listening

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech, I vow to cultivate right speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. Knowing that words can create happiness or suffering, I am determined to say only things that inspire self-confidence, peace, joy, and

hope. I am determined to speak the truth in a way that brings about understanding and harmony. I vow not to say things that are untrue, or that bring about division and hatred. I vow not to spread news that I do not know to be certain, nor to criticize or condemn things of which I am not sure. I am determined to listen deeply with love and compassion in order to understand the suffering and the difficulties of others and to bring them comfort. I am determined not to say things that might bring about division or disharmony in my community of practice, or that can cause the community to break. I am determined not to speak to anyone about the faults of any monk or nun outside my Sangha or of another practice center, even though I may think that these faults are real.

This is the fourth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE FIFTH PRECEPT

On Protecting and Nourishing Body and Mind—Not Consuming Alcohol, Drugs, or Other Items that Contain Toxins

Aware of the suffering caused by the consumption of alcohol, drugs, and other intoxicants, I vow not to ingest any food or beverage that

contains toxins and that deprives me of the control of my body and mind or brings about heaviness and ill-being in my body or my spirit. I am determined to practice mindful eating, drinking, and consuming, to consume only things that bring peace and joy to my body and mind. I vow not to drink liquor or wine, not to use drugs, and not to consume any other intoxicants, including books and films, that can poison me with violence, fear, craving, or hatred.

This is the fifth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE SIXTH PRECEPT

***On Not Using Cosmetics
or Wearing Jewelry***

Aware that the true beauty of a monk or a nun is found in his or her stability and freedom, I vow to adorn myself and my Sangha with the practice of mindfulness made concrete by my training in the precepts and Mindful Manners at all moments. I realize that cosmetics and jewelry only bring about an outer show of attractiveness and foster attachment and infatuation. Therefore, I vow to live simply and dress neatly, wearing clean clothes. I resolve not

to use perfume, powder, or other cosmetics or jewelry.

This is the sixth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE SEVENTH PRECEPT

On Not Being Caught in Worldly Amusements

Aware that many songs, films, books, amusements, and games can damage body and mind and waste precious time that could be used for study and practice, I am determined not to be drowned in these distractions. I am determined not to read novels, look at worldly films or books, or seek distraction by singing or listening to love songs or other kinds of music that cause negative emotions to arise. I will not waste time playing electronic games or gambling.

This is the seventh of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE EIGHTH PRECEPT

On Not Living A Life of Material Luxury

Aware that a monk or nun who lives with too much comfort or luxury becomes prone to

sensual desire and pride, I vow to live my whole life simply, with few desires. I resolve not to sit on luxurious chairs or lie down on luxurious beds, not to wear silk or embroidered fabrics, not to live in luxurious quarters, and not to travel using luxurious means of transport.

This is the eighth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE NINTH PRECEPT

On Being Vegetarian and Not Eating Apart from the Sangha

Aware of the need to maintain good health, to live in harmony with the Sangha, and to nourish compassion in my heart, I vow to be vegetarian for the whole of my life and not to eat apart from the Sangha except when I am sick.

This is the ninth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

THE TENTH PRECEPT

On Not Accumulating Money or Possessions for Personal Use

Aware that the happiness of a monk or a nun is found in solidity and freedom, I vow not to

allow money or possessions to become a preoccupation in my life. I am determined not to accumulate money or possessions for my own use, not to look for happiness in the accumulation of these things, and not to think that money, precious objects, or possessions will increase my true security.

This is the tenth of the Ten Novice Precepts. Have you done your best to learn about it and practice it in the past two weeks? (THREE BREATHS, BELL)

Shramanera, to have been born a human being, to have met the Three Precious Jewels and to be able to be an element of the noble Sangha is a great fortune for yourself, your family, your ancestors, and your descendants. Time goes by as fast as an arrow. Be diligent in the practice, not wasting your time and your youth. Hearing the bell, touch the Earth three times to express gratitude and respect to the Three Jewels and then return to your seat.

7

***Reciting the Buddhas' and
Bodhisattvas' Names.***

We invoke your name, Avalokiteshvara. We aspire to learn your way of listening in order to help relieve the suffering in the world. You know how to listen in order to understand. We invoke your name in order to practice listening with all our attention and open-heartedness. We

will sit and listen without any prejudice. We will sit and listen without judging or reacting. We will sit and listen in order to understand. We will sit and listen so attentively that we will be able to hear what the other person is saying and also what has been left unsaid. We know that just by listening deeply we already alleviate a great deal of pain and suffering in the other person.

(B E L L)

We invoke your name, Manjushri. We aspire to learn your way, which is to be still and to look deeply into the heart of things and into the hearts of people. We will look with all our attention and open-heartedness. We will look with unprejudiced eyes. We will look without judging or reacting. We will look deeply so that we will be able to see and understand the roots of suffering, the impermanent and selfless nature of all that is. We will practice your way of using the sword of understanding to cut through the bonds of suffering, thus freeing ourselves and other species.

(B E L L)

We invoke your name, Samantabhadra. We aspire to practice your aspiration to act with the eyes and heart of compassion; to bring joy to one person in the morning and to ease the pain of one person in the afternoon. We know that the happiness of others is our own happiness, and we aspire to practice joy on the path of service. We know that every word, every look, every action, and every smile can bring happiness to others. We know that if we

practice wholeheartedly, we ourselves may become an inexhaustible source of peace and joy for our loved ones and for all species.

(BELL)

We invoke your name, Kshitigarbha. We aspire to learn your way so as to be present where there is darkness, suffering, oppression and despair, so that we may bring light, hope, relief and liberation to those places. We are determined not to forget about or abandon those who are in desperate situations. We shall do our best to establish contact with them when they cannot find a way out of their suffering and when their cries for help, justice, equality and human rights are not heard. We know that hell can be found in many places on Earth and we do not want to contribute to making more hells on Earth. Rather we want to help dismantle the hells which already exist. We shall practice to realize the qualities of perseverance and stability which belong to the Earth, so that like the Earth we can always be supportive and faithful to those who need us.

(THREE SOUNDS OF THE BELL)

8

Refuge Chant

At the foot of the Bodhi tree,
beautifully seated, peaceful and smiling,
the living source of understanding and compassion,
to the Buddha I go for refuge.

STEPPING INTO FREEDOM

(BELL)

The path of mindful living,
leading to healing, joy, and enlightenment,
the way of peace,
to the Dharma I go for refuge.

(BELL)

The loving and supportive community of practice,
realizing harmony, awareness, and liberation,
to the Sangha I go for refuge.

(BELL)

I am aware that the three gems are within my heart.
I vow to realize them.
I vow to practice mindful breathing and smiling,
looking deeply into things.
I vow to understand living beings and their suffering,
to cultivate compassion and loving kindness,
and to practice joy and equanimity.

(BELL)

I vow to offer joy to one person in the morning
and help relieve the grief of one person in the afternoon.
I vow to live simply and sanely, content with just a few
possessions,
and keep my body healthy.
I vow to let go of all worries and anxiety
in order to be light and free.

(BELL)

I am aware that I owe so much to my parents,
teachers, friends, and all beings.
I vow to be worthy of their trust,
to practice wholeheartedly,
so that understanding and compassion will flower,
and I can help living beings be free from their suffering.
May the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha
support my efforts.

(THREE SOUNDS OF THE BELL)

9

The Three Jewels

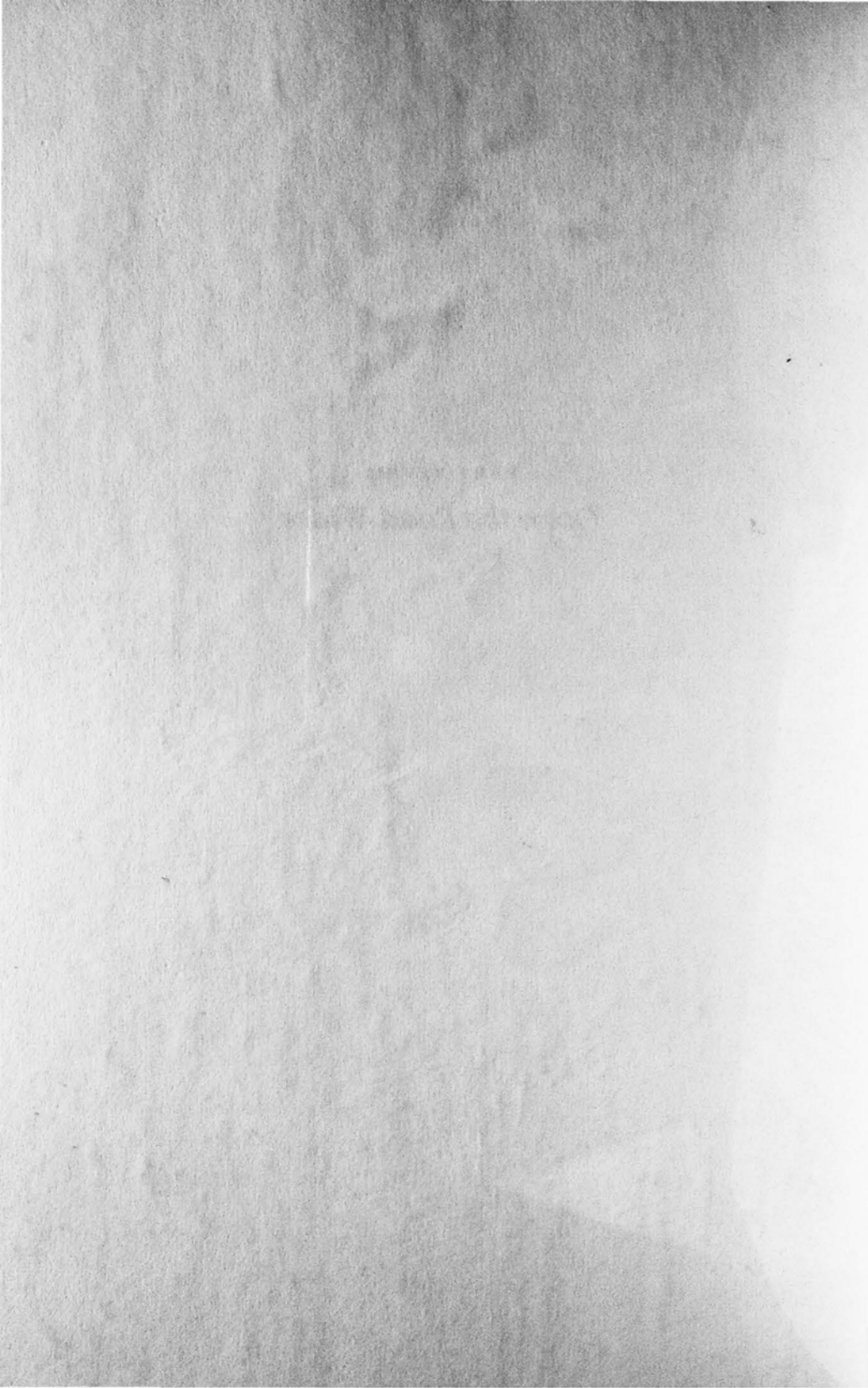
I take refuge in the Buddha, the one who shows me the
way in this life. Namo Buddhaya.
I take refuge in the Dharma, the way of understanding
and love. Namo Dharmaya.
I take refuge in the Sangha, the community that lives in
harmony and awareness. Namo Sanghaya.

Buddham saranam gacchami.
Dharmam saranam gacchami.
Sangham saranam gacchami.

10

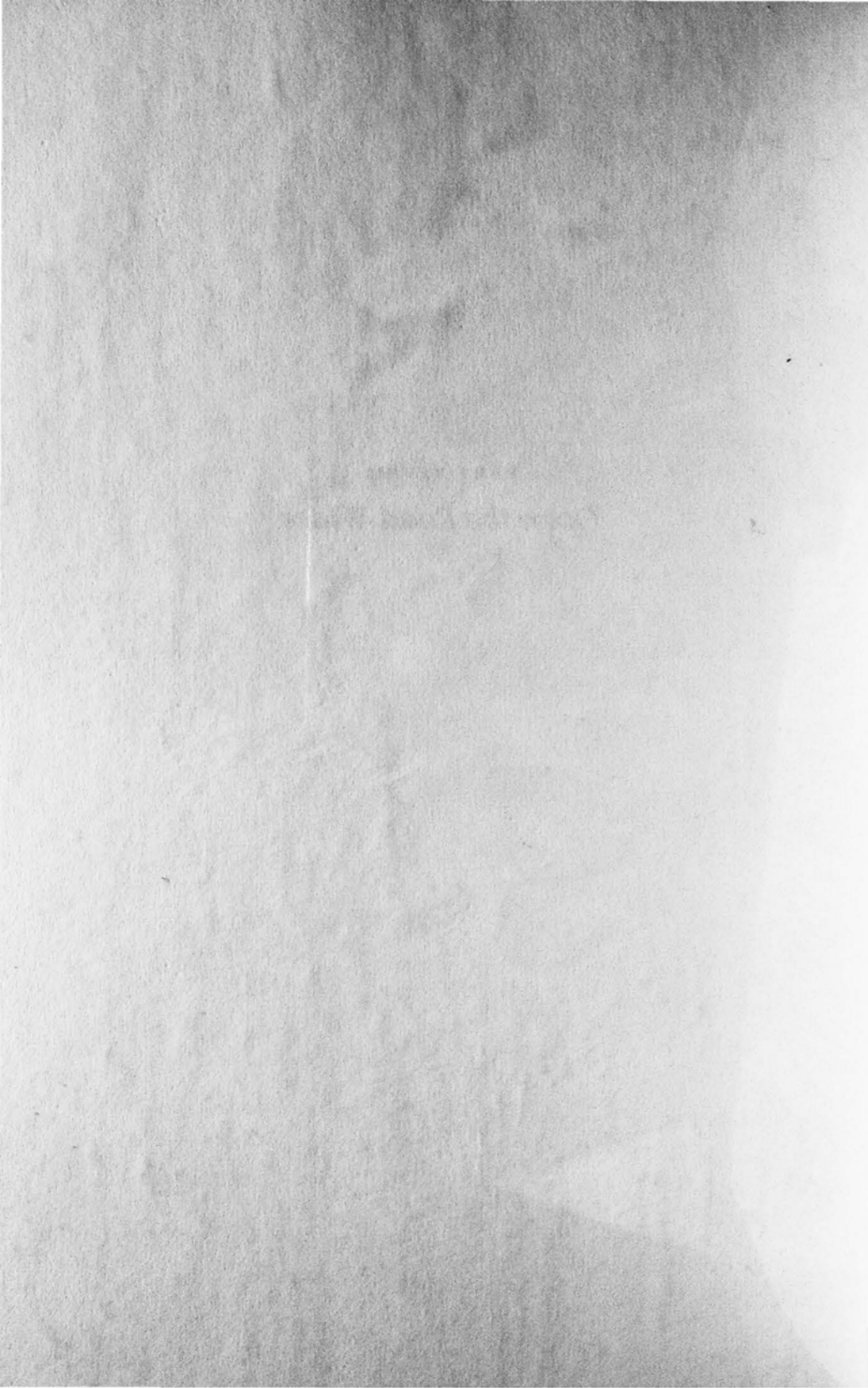
Closing Chant

Reciting the sutras, practicing the way of awareness,
gives rise to benefits without limit.
We vow to share the fruits with all beings.
We vow to offer tribute to parents, teachers,
friends, and numerous beings
who give guidance and support along the path.



PART SEVEN

Open the Road Wider



Open the Road Wider

Hair the color of precious wood
is now offered as incense.
Beauty becomes eternity.
How wondrous the awareness of impermanence!

Since everything is as a dream,
the true mind is determined to lead the way.
After listening to the voice of the rising tide,
steps are made in the direction of the unconditioned.

The winds chant this morning on the slope of
Gridhrakuta.
The mind is no longer bound to anything.
The song now is that of the lovely teaching;
its fragrance is the essence of truth.

In times past, it was with *boket* water
that her hair was washed,
then dried in the fragrant breeze of the late
afternoon.
This morning it is the bodhi nectar that she
receives

for the mind of enlightenment to appear in its
wholeness.

For twenty-five years
she has made daily offerings
of loving kindness with her hands.
Compassion has never ceased to grow in her
heart.

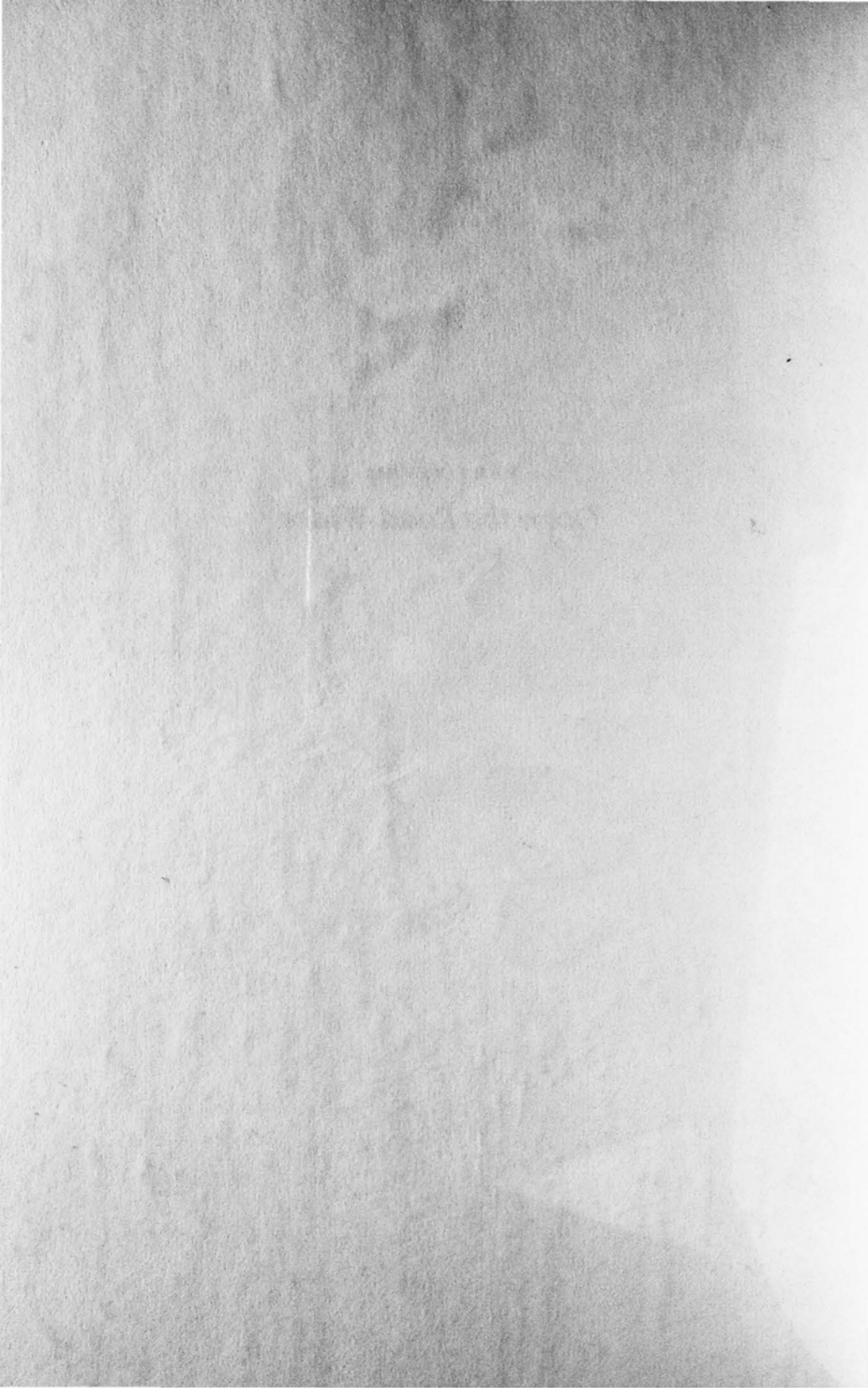
This morning her hair is shed,
and the Way becomes wide open.
Suffering and illusion, though limitless,
are entirely ended.

A heart can touch the ten directions.*

* See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Call Me by My True Names: The Collected Poems of Thich Nhat Hanh* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1993), p. 182.

PART EIGHT

Sources



Sources

In Vietnamese Buddhism, when someone has just been ordained, she or he is given the precepts and the Mindful Manners of a novice to study and practice. These precepts and Mindful Manners were published in a collection of volumes called *The Minor Vinaya*, to be distinguished from *The Vinaya with Commentaries*, a work that includes commentaries on the points expounded in *The Minor Vinaya*. *The Minor Vinaya* is divided into three parts: (1) *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use*, which was compiled by Chinese Meditation Master Duti; (2) *Summary of Novice Vinaya*, compiled by Meditation Master Zhuhong; and (3) *Encouraging Words*, by Master Guishan.

PART ONE

Gathas for the Practice of Mindful Living

Essential Vinaya for Daily Use is a collection of *gathas* or short poems that are used by monks and nuns as a way of practicing mindfulness in daily life. The use of gathas to practice meditation and look deeply began during the lifetime of the Buddha. We can find gathas for the practice scattered throughout the sutras of early Buddhism as well as in the Mahayana. In the Ming Dynasty, Meditation

Master Xingqi gathered together many gathas from the *Purifying Practices* chapter of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* and put them together with gathas and *dharanis** from various Mantrayana sutras to make the book *Vinaya for Daily Use*. Later, in the Qing Dynasty, Meditation Master Duti (1601-1679) used *Vinaya for Daily Use* as the basis for compiling his *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use*. Not long after that, also in the Qing Dynasty, Meditation Master Shuyu wrote a commentary on Meditation Master Duti's work and made it into a book entitled *Fragrant Milk of the Essential Vinaya for Daily Use*.

Vinaya is the Sanskrit and Pali word for "precepts." The basis of precepts is the practice of mindfulness in daily life. The book *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use* is not only for the use of novice monks and nuns. All monks and nuns, however long they have been ordained, need to practice with gathas to maintain mindfulness in daily life.

Meditation Master Duti came from Yunnan Province. As a child he painted very well. When he was fourteen, he lost his mother and father, and was brought up by an uncle. At the age of seventeen, he was ordained as a monk by Meditation Master Liangru on the Baohong Mountain. Later he studied under Meditation Master Jiquang, a vinaya master, and he received full ordination from this teacher. He had a very firm grasp of the *Vinaya*

* Dharanis are verbal formulas thought to have magical properties. The power of concentration during the recitation of a dharani can bring about transformation in the reciter and in the world.

Pitaka.^{*} Although he was still young, his teacher sometimes asked him to teach the *Brahmajala Sutra* and the *Four-Part Vinaya*. When his root teacher passed away, he continued to study and teach, and later he became a renowned vinaya master. People of his time praised him, saying that he was the reincarnation of the Vinaya Master Daoxuan. Meditation Master Duti passed away at the age of seventy-eight. His writings include *Collection of Exhortative and Prohibitive Vinaya*, *Exhortative and Prohibitive Vinaya Further Explained*, *The Principal Chapter on Transmitting the Precepts*, and *The Wonderful Meaning of the Mahayana*. His *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use* has been studied and practiced by novice monks and nuns in Vietnam for more than three hundred years.

The part of this book that is called "Gathas for the Practice of Mindful Living" was compiled in the spirit of and using the methods of the *Vinaya for Daily Use* of Master Xingqi and *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use* of Master Duti. New gathas have been added for the monks and nuns of today. These gathas are rich in poetry and very practical. They do not rely on abstract thinking. All the gathas presented here should be learned by heart to make the practice easy. Most of these gathas, along with commentaries, can be found in the book *Present Moment Wonderful Moment*.[†]

* Pitaka means a basket or collection. There are three pitakas of the Buddhist teachings: sutra or discourses, vinaya or precepts, and shastra or commentaries.

† See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Present Moment Wonderful Moment: Mindfulness Verses for Daily Living* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).

PARTS TWO AND THREE

Ten Precepts and Mindful Manners

The *Summary of Novice Vinaya* has two parts: on the Ten Novice Precepts and on the Mindful Manners of a novice. Mindful Manners are the principles underlying the graceful and decorous conduct of a monk or nun, and they make possible the outward expression of the beauty of the spiritual life. Although we distinguish between them, if we look deeply, we see that every precept is also a point of Mindful Manners and every point of Mindful Manners is also a precept. The Ten Precepts can all be considered to be trainings in Mindful Manners, and the last five of them are almost purely mindful manners. Most of the bhikshu and bhikshuni precepts can also be considered to be Mindful Manners. We could say that Mindful Manners *are* precepts, although perhaps less serious if they are broken. If precepts of a more serious nature are broken, the novice immediately ceases to be a novice, whereas if the precepts of a less serious nature are broken, it is sufficient to confess and begin anew. The Ten Precepts in this book are presented with only a short commentary.

Monastic elders and novice practitioners will find the Ten Precepts in this book well-suited to the demands of the needs of practitioners today. They respond to the deep aspirations of a new monk or nun. Although the Mindful Manners presented in this book are mostly from chapters written just for the novices, they also need to be practiced by those who have received full ordination. Some of the Mindful Manners in this book have been

taken from the Mindful Manners for bhikshus and bhikshunis. Fully ordained monks practice two hundred and fifty precepts, which when combined with the four positions of walking, standing, lying down, and sitting become One Thousand Mindful Manners. When further combined with the three actions of body, speech, and mind, they become what are called the Three Thousand Mindful Manners. The Novice Mindful Manners are, for the most part, derived from the Vinaya Pitaka and other writings on the vinaya that belong to original Buddhism.

Master Zhuhong (1535-1615), when writing the twenty-four Mindful Manners chapters for novices, used these documents: the *Sutra on Three Thousand Mindful Manners of the Bhikshu* (Taisho 1470), which were translated by Master Shigao of the Han Dynasty (second century C.E.); the *Ten Novice Precept-Dharmas and Mindful Manners* (Taisho 1471), translated by a meditation master whose name we do not know, in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420); and the *Sutra on the Ten Novice Precepts and Disciplines*. (Taisho 1473), which was translated by Master Shihu in the Song Dynasty in the year 980. Master Duti, the author of *Essential Vinaya for Daily Use* about forty years later, wrote the *Summary of Vinaya for Nun Novices*, which is based on the *Mahaprajapati Bhikshuni Sutra* (Taisho 1478) and the *Sutra on the Nun Novice Precepts* (Taisho 1474). It was written in imitation of the book *Summary of Novice Vinaya* of Master Zhuhong. Later, in the Ming Dynasty, Meditation Master Zhixu (1599-1655) wrote, in addition, *A Summary of the Ten Novice Precepts and Mindful Manners*, which is an at-

tempt to fulfill the same purpose as the book *The Summary of Novice Vinaya* by Master Yunqi. Monk and nun novices in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam have used these three books by Master Zhuhong, Master Duti, and Master Zhixu to train from for nearly four hundred years.

Stepping into Freedom was compiled using these three books as a basis, and can be seen as a continuation of them. Instead of only twenty-four chapters on Mindful Manners for male novices and twenty-two chapters for female novices, we now have thirty-nine chapters which can be used for monk and nun novices alike. These chapters on Mindful Manners reflect the needs of novices in our time. They not only instruct you in how to practice the precepts but also offer practical methods for maintaining mindfulness in daily activities, nourishing concentration and increasing wisdom every day. To practice Mindful Manners, the novice needs, first of all, to have real mindfulness. Without this, the Mindful Manners are only a show. The gathas for practicing mindfulness need to be learned by heart to support the practice of mindful manners. Gathas of mindfulness go along with Mindful Manners as shadow follows form. Most of the gathas in this book have been explained in the book *Present Moment Wonderful Moment* by Thich Nhat Hanh.

Meditation Master Zhuhong was born in Hangzhou. He also has the names Lianchi and Yunqi. He became a novice monk when he was thirty-three on Wutai (Five Platform) Mountain under Meditation Master Xingtian. Later he received full ordination under Master Wuzhu in Zhaoqing Temple. From the age of thirty-seven, he was

abbot of the Yunqi Temple. He practiced diligently and was a skilled artist and teacher. He wrote commentaries to the *Shurangama Sutra*, the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Last Recommendation of the Buddha*, and the *Brabmajala Sutra*, and he composed more than thirty works about the Vinaya School and the Pure Land School. His writings bring together the meditation school, the Pure Land School, and other schools. *Essays Written Before the Bamboo Window* and *Exhortation for Practitioners of Meditation* are two of his most famous works.

PART FOUR

Encouraging Words

Encouraging Words, by Master Guishan is a well-known treatise written to help monks and nuns wake up. Guishan points out the pitfalls into which novices may have fallen and encourages them to practice diligently. In the Zen school, people hold this work on the same level as *Last Recommendation of the Buddha Sutra* and the *Forty-Two Chapters Sutra*. These three writings have been compiled in one volume called *The Three Sutras of the Buddha*. Scholars usually divide *Encouraging Words* by Guishan into five parts.

The first part deals with the difficulties associated with the body, the second with the activities that can corrupt the practice of monks and nuns, the third with the real aim of a monk or nun, the fourth with the way of practice, and the fifth with Master Guishan's love for his disciples and his warm words of encouragement. The treatise ends with a poem of thirty-six lines, four charac-

ters to each line, that summarizes all the main points of the treatise. In this translation, Master Guishan's treatise has been put into everyday language, while at the same time expressing all that Master Guishan wanted to say to stir the mind of awakening, or beginner's mind, in every monk and nun.

Meditation Master Guishan (771-853) was one of the great Tang Dynasty meditation masters. He was the first patriarch of the meditation school called Guiyang. His lineage name was Lingyou. He became a monk when he was fifteen years old under Master Fachang. He then received full ordination under the same master in Hangzhou. When he was twenty-three, he became one of the foremost disciples of Master Baizhang. After that he returned to the Dagui Mountain, where he was very much respected and loved by the people. He built the Tongqing Temple. Large numbers of meditation students gathered there to study and practice. Prime Minister Peixiu often came to consult with the master. Master Guishan practiced and taught there for more than forty years, before he passed away in his eighty-third year.

PART FIVE

A Talk for Young Monks and Nuns

This chapter is intended to be a supplement to the work of Master Guishan. It is intended to encourage young monks and nuns today to look deeply at their situation and determine what direction they should go. Thich Nhat Hanh is not trying to make specific recommendations or even give advice, but rather to present young monks and

SOURCES

nuns with the facts so they can overcome their difficulties and free themselves from situations they may feel caught in. Read these words the way you would take in words of comfort from your mother or your elder brother.

Stepping Into Freedom contains only the essential points. In the future, we will need a commentary on this book, like the *Commentaries on the Summary of Novice Vinaya* by Master Hongzan.