

**GIVE RISE TO THE BODHI MIND  
ATTAIN SUPREME ENLIGHTENMENT**

*The aim of cultivation is to attain supreme enlightenment as well as to further attain unsurpassed supreme enlightenment. If we wish to attain perfect buddhahood, we must bring forth the bodhi mind, because the bodhi mind is the Way.*

Buddhism comprises the methods of gradual cultivation and sudden enlightenment, of Mahayana (Great Vehicle) and Theravada (Lesser Vehicle). The Theravada practitioner's aim is to attain arhatship, be freed from the three realms and attain liberation. The Mahayana practitioner practices the six paramitas, benefits self and others, liberates all sentient beings, and broadly cultivates good affinities with others, until all virtues and merits are perfected and one attains buddhahood. The methods of Mahayana or Theravada, of sudden enlightenment or gradual cultivation, are all directed at the different capacities of sentient beings, using different expedient means. But they are all based on [the same principle](#)—bodhi and nirvana, which are the ultimate aim of cultivation in Buddhism.

Because everyone's mental resolve is different, their achievements also differ. Whether we wish to attain the fruit of the arhat, the pratyekabuddha, the bodhisattva, or the Buddha, achieve samadhi, or non-regression—not regressing from our states, actions, or mindfulness—we need to work hard on our cultivation. If we wish to attain the Way by practicing meditation, we must be in accord with this pure mind, this mind of wu-wei, because the Way is not apart from the mind. When enlightened, this mind is the Way. Unenlightened, this mind is deluded.

In practicing Buddhism, whether it is by principle or by practice, gradual cultivation or sudden enlightenment, the exoteric or esoteric teaching, we must follow two important principles: first, “bring forth the bodhi mind,” second, “uphold the pure precepts.” When we have achieved these, we will not let ourselves down in this life; even if we do not

attain enlightenment, we will attain the state of non-regression. By strictly upholding the precepts, the three karmas of body speech and mind will be pure; we will attain the state of true emptiness and achieve arhatship. Furthermore, if we practice from the [Theravada stage toward the Mahayana stage](#), practice the six paramitas and other myriad practices, we will attain the fruit of the bodhisattva; when the Bodhisattva Way is perfected, we will attain buddhahood. Yet, all these practices are not apart from the bodhi mind and the precepts. Therefore, giving rise to the bodhi mind and upholding the pure precepts are two most important factors in our cultivation.

### **The Ultimate State of Bodhi and Nirvana**

The bodhi mind is the enlightened mind; it is the mind that is pure, lucid, undefiled, and master of itself; it neither moves nor wavers, neither comes nor goes, neither arises nor perishes. The scripture says, “If we do not bring forth the bodhi mind in our cultivation, it is like farming without planting seeds.” If we risk our lives in tilling the soil and plowing the field, but do not plant the bodhi seed, how can we get flowers and fruit?

The *Wisdom Treatise* also states:

The bodhisattva’s initial resolve,  
Is to attain supreme enlightenment.  
I aspire to buddhahood,  
That is the bodhi mind.

So we can see that the most important thing in our cultivation is to bring forth the bodhi mind.

If we wish to attain this mind of purity, we need many auxiliary conditions to help us bring forth the bodhi mind. These conditions are the precepts. The difference between Buddhism and other religions is the upholding of the precepts. The rules of some of the other religions are either based on erroneous views, heterodox views, mistaking wrong

causes for right causes, or mistaking wrong effects for right effects. These are not conditions for achieving nirvana.

What is nirvana? Nirvana is not death. It is the mind that has arrived at the most tranquil and highest state; it is also to realize emptiness. We not only must realize emptiness, but must also realize the bodhi mind.

There are four stages of nirvana: “nirvana with residue,” “nirvana without residue,” “nirvana of non-abidance,” and “nirvana of pure self-nature.” In achieving “nirvana with residue” and “nirvana without residue”, we realize emptiness. In achieving “nirvana of non-abidance” and “nirvana of pure self-nature,” we realize the bodhi mind. Actually, all the different types of nirvana point to this very mind. But the realization of emptiness has different degrees, depending on how long can one maintain this clarity of mind, and how long this mind can remain absolutely still. If we can only maintain it for three minutes and the mind begins to have delusive thoughts or becomes drowsy, then this bodhi mind cannot be maintained for very long.

The bodhi mind and nirvana are the highest states that we seek. If we cannot immediately realize this, the Buddha offers us some expedient means to temporarily calm our mind so that it is not fearful or alarmed, so that it can find a temporary resting place. This is due to the Buddha’s compassion. If we truly wish to attain buddhahood, we must be awakened to the bodhi mind. The sutra says, “Only Buddhas and Buddhas can enter this door; the pratyekabuddhas and the sravakas cannot reach it.” This means that even if pratyekabuddhas and sravakas are as numerous as the grains of sands of the Ganges, they cannot know the state of the Buddha. Why? Because the bodhi mind is the foundation of buddhahood; the bodhi mind is the seed of all Buddhas. All the Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have practiced for innumerable kalpas<sup>1</sup> have given rise to this mind, worked diligently to swiftly attain supreme enlightenment. The bodhi mind is the great mind that

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<sup>1</sup> A kalpa is an inconceivably long period of time. In Buddhism, a kalpa generally indicates the length of time between the creation and re-creation of a world or universe.

Mahayana bodhisattvas must bring forth at the beginning. Therefore, it is extremely important to be awakened and to attain this mind.

### **There Are Different Degrees of Enlightenment**

What really is the bodhi mind? How do we bring forth the bodhi mind? The *Diamond Sutra* says, “Give rise to the mind without any attachments.” The bodhi mind is a mind of non-abidance . The Chan School says, “Sudden enlightenment of the mind; directly becoming a Buddha.” (With sudden enlightenment of the mind, one directly becomes a Buddha) This is the bodhi mind; it is also the self nature of bodhi.

In the autobiographical section of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, it is recorded:

One day, the Fifth Patriarch Hong Ren said to his disciples, “You have practiced under me for a long time. Today, write me a gatha (verse) to describe what you have learned and to show your understanding of the truth.” The great Chan Master Shen Xiu, who was very erudite and was the foremost instructor under the Fifth Patriarch, wrote the following gatha on the wall of the South corridor:

The body is a bodhi tree,  
The mind a standing mirror bright;  
At all times diligently wipe it,  
And let no dust alight.

This gatha seemed to be very meaningful and to make a lot of sense.

At that time, the Sixth Patriarch, who was also a disciple under Chan Master Hong Ren, was working in the kitchen, splitting firewood and pounding rice. When he heard someone reading Shen Xiu’s gatha, he had an insight and asked someone to write the following right next to Shen Xiu’s gatha:

Bodhi is no tree,  
Nor a standing mirror bright;  
Since all is originally empty,  
Whence comes the dust to alight?

This means that, in bodhi, not a single thing or dharma can be grasped. Therefore, “Bodhi is no tree/Nor standing mirror bright”—the bright mirror is our mind of absolute clarity and understanding; it is the absolute emptiness. “Whence comes the dust to alight?”—everything is empty, so where can the dust alight? From these gathas, we can see that the realization of Chan Master Shen Xiu was that of “gradual enlightenment.” He had not yet truly realized the bodhi mind. But the Sixth Patriarch’s gatha was that of “sudden enlightenment.”

There are different degrees of enlightenment—the profound and the simple. “Tens of great enlightenments; thousands of small enlightenments.” For example, when we feel that life is impermanent and resolve to cultivate the Way, it is only the beginning of enlightenment. After enlightenment, we must know to cultivate the Way, because if we only realize impermanence and the principle of practice, we have not fully realized our mind’s true nature; therefore, we must continue to work hard so that in the future we will experience great enlightenment. The realization of the truth is different in everyone; therefore, the levels of enlightenment in our minds and the Dharmas that are spoken are different.

Even though the gatha written by Shen Xiu is of gradual enlightenment, it can be a guide for most people. If they cultivate according to his method, they can still attain the fruit of enlightenment.

“The body is a bodhi tree/The mind a standing mirror bright.” If we wish to attain the Way, it is like planting a bodhi tree—there must be soil, water, sunshine, constant weeding, tilling of the soil, so that flowers and fruits can grow. Cultivating the Way is

the same, we must regulate body and mind, strictly and cautiously uphold the precepts, so that the three karmas of body, speech, and mind are pure; we also must diligently perform good deeds to increase blessings. With blessings, the necessities of life needed in aiding our cultivation will not be lacking.

“The mind a standing mirror bright.” This mind is like a bright standing mirror, not the least bit defiled. When ‘Han (person from a civilized tribe)’ comes, Han will appear; when ‘Hu (person from a barbarian tribe)’ comes, ‘Hu’ will appear; phenomenon will appear when it arises, and will disappear when it leaves. The mind is not the least bit defiled, is totally empty and bright, devoid of greed, anger, ignorance, pride, and doubt, with no attachment to dharmas, no attachment to self—only this absolute mind, bright as a mirror. To reach this state, we must “constantly wipe it.” How do we wipe it? By examination, reflection, and contemplation, and by making amends for our offences—this is the method of gradual cultivation.

The gatha of the Sixth Patriarch elucidates the method of sudden enlightenment. “Bodhi is no tree/Nor standing mirror bright/Since all is empty/Whence comes the dust to alight.” This is Hui Neng’s state when he realized prajna wisdom and emptiness, realized that all dharmas are fundamentally empty, without subject or object; everything is cleansed and is in the state of perfect purity. This is the principle of the Chan patriarch’s, “When the Buddha appears, kill the Buddha; when the mara appears kill the mara.”

Why should we “kill the Buddha when the Buddha appears?” Buddha represents favorable circumstances. When we face favorable circumstances and develop cravings and attachments to them, the mind develops obstacles, and we cannot enlighten the mind and see our true nature. Therefore, during meditation, even if we see the Buddhas of the ten directions coming to stroke our heads, to prophesize for us, our mind should not give rise to joy, because joy will influence the mind, resulting in a mind that arises and ceases. That would no longer be an unperturbed mind, a pure and lucid mind. “Mara” represents fearful situations. When we encounter fearful circumstances, we do not have to be afraid.

We must reflect that “all phenomena are delusive.” Bad circumstances arise from our own consciousness; they are illusive and unreal, because all dharmas are ultimately empty.

Then what is “to kill”? “Not paying attention to it” is to “kill,”—not paying attention to either good or bad circumstances; when they come let them come, when they go let them go. Continue to harbor right mindfulness, with clarity and discrimination of every thought, be master of ourselves everywhere; the bodhi mind will then manifest.

Therefore, whether it is gradual cultivation or sudden enlightenment, their aim is to attain the bodhi mind. Only their methods differ.

### **Sudden Enlightenment and Gradual Cultivation are Compatible**

Because the basic capacities of sentient beings are different, their methods of cultivation differ—there are the methods of gradual cultivation and sudden enlightenment. Gradual cultivation means to enter by practice and to realize the fundamental principle through practice (by way of [perfecting] our actions). Sudden enlightenment means to enter by principle, to realize the fundamental principle first, then perfect our actions (to perfect our practice through the principle). Sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation are compatible and non-conflictive. Their practices complement each other.

“Gradual cultivation” is attainment by going through various stages—from that of an ordinary person until all merits and virtues are perfected and one attains Buddhahood. These stages refer to gradual cultivation. Like going to school, one goes through elementary school, high school, college, all the way up to earning a doctorate, gradually climbing step by step. This is gradual cultivation.

“Sudden enlightenment” is to awaken to this present mind, this awareness, this bodhi mind, this pure and lucid mind, awaken to the ordinary person’s inherent pure nature

without any affectation; this is the wisdom of the Tathagatha, true suchness, the profound bodhi mind. When we are enlightened to this mind we realize that the mind is Buddha, the mind is the Way. Once we are enlightened, based on the realization of the principle, whether we are in stillness or in motion, idle or busy, this mind is never clinging or confused; it is always clear and lucid, and master of itself, maintaining this state from enlightenment until the attainment of Buddhahood. This is sudden enlightenment.

Actually, everyone has this mind. From the past to the present and to the future, everyone has it; everywhere in the world, men and women, young and old, rich or poor, noble or lowly, all have this mind that knows and is aware. Even though our original awareness is equal and absolute, everyone has it. It is neither less in the ordinary person nor more in the saint. But the manifestation of wisdom and compassion is very different. This is because the degree of each person's awareness is not the same. When there are vexations, attachments, delusions, and erroneous views in the mind, our awareness is clouded and wisdom cannot manifest; therefore, to obtain a mind of purity and clarity, we must make diligent efforts in our cultivation.

In Buddhism, there are four levels of enlightenment —those of the sravakas, the pratyeka-buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the Tathagatha. These are the attainment of the saints. Their wisdom surpasses that of the ordinary person. For the ordinary person to reach the state of the Tathagatha, there are two methods: the first is “gradual cultivation,” the second is “sudden enlightenment.” Gradual cultivation is to practice the six paramitas—charity, moral conduct, tolerance, diligence, meditation, and prajna. These are the vows and conducts of the bodhisattva. By perfecting the six paramitas, one will reach the state of the Tathagata. By both perfection of time and perfection of merits and virtue, one reaches the realm of the Tathagatha.

**Three Asamkyeya Kalpas to Cultive Blessings and Wisdom**  
**A Hundred Kalpas to Cultivate Good Characteristics**

“Perfection of time” means that no matter what job we undertake, there is a fixed time for completing it, unless certain conditions lead to delay. For example, when we go to school, we start from elementary school, go on to high school, and eventually graduate from college. This needs a certain amount of time—this is the perfection of time. It takes a bodhisattva three asamkheya kalpas to reach perfection. An asamkheya kalpa is a measure of time. There are small, medium, and large kalpas. Because the length of time is so long, we cannot use tens of thousands or billions of years to measure it; so instead we measure it by “kalpas.” [What is a small kalpa? The scriptures give an analogy of how long this time is—it is the period required for a celestial woman to wear away a stone of ten cubic miles once every hundred years with a fabric lighter than feather and softer than silk.](#) A middle kalpa is equal to 20 small kalpas. Four middle kalpas complete the four stages of the life of the universe: “creation, duration, deterioration, and emptiness”—that is a large kalpa. The length of immeasurable time is an asamkheya kalpa. It takes three asamkheya kalpas of cultivation for a bodhisattva to perfect the Buddha Way. This is the perfection of time. Therefore cultivating the Way is somewhat like going to school. It needs a certain amount of time to reach perfection.

Besides the perfection of time, in the course of going to school, our studies also must be perfected. According to Buddhism, in cultivating the bodhisattva way and the six paramitas, when every paramita is perfected, that is the perfection of merits. For example, how do we perfect the charity paramita? Besides the giving of money and all our possessions, we must even give up our life to perfect the merits of the charity paramita. In his previous lifetimes, when Sakyamuni Buddha cultivated the bodhisattava way, the first thing that he practiced was the charity paramita. He cut off his flesh to feed an eagle; he fed himself to tigers; he offered his own life to save sentient beings. This is the perfection of merits.

When the bodhisattva practices the six paramitas, he must perfect the merits of each paramita. He must also perfect the time period of three asamkheya kalpas. Finally, he needs another 100 small kalpas to perfect the 32 physical marks and 80 fine characteristics of the Buddha.

The Buddhist sutras record that every Buddha has 32 physical marks and 80 fine characteristics. For example, “Brahma sound” is when the Buddha teaches, people of all different nationalities and even animals can understand him without the need of translation. This is the samadhi of communication. It is one of the 32 physical marks. Another mark of the Buddha is that no matter what kind of food he eats, it tastes good to him. In contrast, ordinary people need to flavor their food; without proper flavoring, the food doesn’t taste good to them.

How to cultivate the marks and characteristics? One hundred blessings are needed to perfect each good mark or characteristic. Most people think that building temples or saving a life results in great blessings and merit. But these are far from the virtues and merits of the causal stage of a bodhisattva’s cultivation toward Buddhahood. It is recorded in the Buddhist sutra that “one single blessing” is when all the people in the [great tri-chiliosms](#) (all the worlds) are poisoned and we can cure every one of them—that is “one single blessing.” From this we can see that it is not easy to achieve one great merit. It is also difficult to perfect the six paramitas, to perfect the time period of three asamkheya kalpas, and it is even more difficult to become a Buddha.

Therefore the Buddha, in his great compassion, taught the method of sudden enlightenment, which does not take three asamkheya kalpas. This is the method of “suddenly realize the original mind and directly become a Buddha.” It is like going to school—from elementary school to college—most people need to move up step by step, but people with superior capacities can skip grades go directly to college. What do we realize in “sudden enlightenment”? We realize the bodhi mind, the pure and lucid mind, the mind of awareness, the original mind and fundamental nature. The sutra says, “Not giving rise to a mind of mundane defilement is the way to supreme enlightenment.” The ordinary person’s mind is the bodhi mind. If the ordinary mind is not polluted by all kinds of defilements, has no delusive thoughts and no attachments, that is the Bodhi Way.

### **The Lesser Vehicle, Great Vehicle, and Unsurpassed Supreme Vehicle**

There are many methods in practicing Buddhism. The Lesser Vehicle (Theravada) practices “eradicating vexations.” The Great Vehicle (Mahayana) “transforms vexations.” In the Unsurpassed Supreme Vehicle “vexations are bodhi.” Each method cannot be apart from this mind. In the end, they all enable all sentient beings to attain unsurpassed supreme enlightenment.

Those who practice the Lesser Vehicle take vexations as real, therefore they must exterminate them. They still have the concept of subject and object, therefore there is still attachment to the dharmas. They only realize emptiness of self and enter into partial nirvana.

Those who practice the Great Vehicle use the method of “transformation” because they understand that amid our vexations there is our inherent Buddha nature. It is like forging steel from iron. The nature of steel is within the iron waste. If we throw away the pieces of iron, we will not be able to refine the steel. It is also the principle of “We cannot find water if we move away from the waves.” Therefore the Mahayana Bodhisattvas broadly cultivate the myriad good practices of the six paramitas. By benefiting self and others, they transform vexations, and return to their pure self nature. Just as when we practice charity for a long time, we naturally will have no greed. By practicing the contemplation on compassion, anger will naturally be transformed. When we diligently cultivate body, speech, and mind, we can overcome sloth. When the mind is scattered and confused, we must use samadhi to overcome delusive thoughts. This is known as “transformation.”

The last of the six paramitas is “prajna.” Prajna overcomes ignorance. Our mind is filled with ignorance and confusion; it easily forms attachments to the external environment. If we can reflect inward, without sinking into dualism, without the concept of subject and object, and attain “triple emptiness,” we perfect the prajna paramita. We can then reflect inwardly when we are in contact with objects and extinguish all our vexations.

In the unsurpassed supreme vehicle, we neither have to transform our vexations nor extinguish them; our mind is originally pure and lucid. This mind is inherent in everyone; we do not need to seek it externally. This is the Chan School's principle of "vexation is bodhi; birth and death (samsara) is nirvana."

### **The Bodhi Mind is Not Found Externally**

The *Diamond Sutra* says, "All dharmas are equal; none are superior or inferior."

Whichever method we practice, in the end it returns to the bodhi mind. The bodhi mind is our fundamental mind and nature, our inherent awareness. It is not bestowed by our parents, by demons, spirits, God, or even the bodhisattva. It is inherent in everyone. Therefore, the bodhi mind is most real, most evident.

The bodhi mind is replete within us. If we look for it elsewhere, we will not find it. Just as the Chan patriarch says, "Giving rise to the mind is wrong; moving our thoughts is an error." Because as soon as we look for it we lose it; it is like looking for an ox while riding an ox; we are already sitting on its back, but because we are deluded, we do not know it. It is also like looking for a shadow at mid-day. Under the noonday sun, we can never find our shadow. Therefore, at the moment when everyone is listening to the Dharma, this mind that does not give rise to a single thought is the profound and clear bodhi mind. Not giving rise to a single thought is the mind of total clarity, knowing, and awareness, without a single bit of delusion, drowsiness, or scattered thoughts. When we realize this mind that is unborn and undying, we attain enlightenment.

Once there was a Chan Master, who, in order to cultivate and attain enlightenment, traveled all over the country to study the Dharma, scaling mountains to seek an enlightened teacher until he was exhausted. He finally returned to his native village. As he was leaning on the plum tree by the roadside to rest, he suddenly was enlightened and uttered the following verse:

I looked for spring all day but could not find it;

My sandals were tattered from climbing the cloudy peaks;  
Returning home and smelling the plum blossoms  
I found that spring was already on the branch.

“Spring” represents the bodhi mind. The poem describes that in order to enlighten the mind and see the true nature, we suffer great hardships to seek a wise teacher but still cannot attain enlightenment. However, when we let go, when this mind is no longer seeking everywhere, when we let go of body and mind and come to a complete state of rest, we attain enlightenment. “Returning home and smelling the plum blossoms/Spring was already on the branch.” When we smell the fragrance of the plum blossom, we realize that enlightenment was always there; this mind that can see and smell was always present.

The Honored Po Lo Ti also said, “In the eyes it is the seeing; in the ears it is the hearing; in the nose it is the smelling; in the mouth it is the speaking; in the hands it is the grasping; in the feet it is the walking.” This awareness that sees the plum blossom and smells its fragrance is inherent in us. It is neither more in the saint nor less in the ordinary person. In those who have not attained enlightenment, it is not a bit less; in those who are enlightened, it is not a bit more. That is the bodhi mind.

### **Five Kinds of Bodhi**

The ancients say, “Cultivating for billions of kalpas, enlightenment is in a single instant.” Knowing this principle, we still need to make efforts in our daily life and bring forth the bodhi mind. To attain the bodhi mind there are five stages: Bodhi of Making Resolve,” “Bodhi of Subduing the Mind,” “Bodhi of Awakening the Mind,” “Bodhi of Gradual Progression,” and “Bodhi of Supreme Realization.”

First, “Bodhi of Making Resolve”—this means we make a great resolve to achieve enlightenment, vow to attain the bodhi mind and attain buddhahood, liberate all sentient beings, not do any evil, do all good, purify our mind, and constantly work hard in this

direction. Whether practicing gradual cultivation or sudden enlightenment, in motion or in stillness, busy or idle, our every thought must be clear (and in command) and we must always be masters of ourselves. We should adhere to Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha's great vow, Bodhisattva Avalokitevara's great compassion, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra's great conduct, Bodhisattva Manjushri's great wisdom, and incorporate these into our daily lives. This is the beginning of the bodhisattva way.

The second stage is "Bodhi of Subduing the Mind"—this means we resolve to study hard, constantly examine and reflect inwardly, harbor a mind of repentance, gradually control our delusive thoughts and vexations. For example, if we reflect and find that we have given rise to anger, we can immediately repress it and not create bad karma. If the mind of greed arises, we can also realize it and repress it. Or, if we give rise to sensual desires and lust, as soon as such thoughts arise, we immediately repress them. This is "Bodhi of Subduing the Mind."

The third stage is "Bodhi of Awakening the Mind." Due to the power resulting from practicing "Bodhi of Subduing the Mind," we finally can arrive at "Bodhi of Supreme Realization." "Awakening" is to awaken the mind and see the true nature. When we see our original self, we will realize that our mind is inherent, unborn, and undying.

The Chan patriarch said, "A thousand years in a dark room; the light of one lamp instantly shatters the darkness." If we only awaken to this present mind, always abide in right mindfulness, all our past karmic obstacles can be totally swept away. For example, after a thousand years in a dark room, if we suddenly turn on the light, the room is instantly filled with brightness. But if we lose our right mindfulness, it is like turning the light off; then everything will again be filled with darkness. Therefore, once we are enlightened, in our daily lives, we still must constantly maintain right mindfulness, abide in awareness, be totally clear in every thought, and always be master of ourselves.

The ancient sages say, "When hungry, eat; when drowsy, sleep." Also, "When eating, one has not chewed a single grain of rice; when wearing clothes, one has not put on a

single thread.” What does this mean? It means to know yet not cling, and to firmly abide in right mindfulness. For example, when eating, do not daydream. The “knowing” that can differentiate among the sour, sweet, bitter, and spicy always exists. Do not overeat the good and tasty food; do not complain when eating unsavory food. Whether facing pleasant or unpleasant circumstances, we know yet do not cling, do not give rise to the mind of greed or anger. This is to truly abide in right mindfulness.

The aim of cultivation is to attain right mindfulness. Right mindfulness is a mind of clarity and purity; it is liberation; it is the Buddha. Right mindfulness is the place of enlightenment; it is also the Pure Land. Therefore, “Hauling wood and carrying rice is the Way.” In our daily lives, in our food, clothing, housing, and transportation, always maintain right mindfulness. Maintain the existence of this “knowing” mind. Thus maintaining peace and stability in life is to cultivate the Way.

The fourth stage is “Bodhi of Gradual Progression.” After we are aware of where our mind is, we still must continue to practice after enlightenment, continue to abide firmly in right mindfulness, maintain our awareness, so that ignorance is totally eradicated and the Dharma body fully manifests. This process is “Bodhi of Gradual Progression.”

After we have eradicated the last traces of ignorance, vexations, and delusions, we arrive at “Bodhi of Supreme Realization,” benefiting ourselves and others, and perfecting our awareness and conduct. When we arrive at this stage, it is the ultimate state.

### **The Ten Dharma Realms Are in This One Mind**

The most important thing in Buddhism is this mind. This mind is replete with the ten Dharma realms. Whether we are deluded or enlightened depends on the mind’s resolve. To give rise to the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance is to sink into the realms of hells, hungry ghosts, or animals. If we observe the five precepts, we will be guaranteed to return as humans in the next life and dwell in the human realm. If we can further cultivate the ten virtues and [uphold the] precepts, our mind will be replete with virtuous

thoughts and brightness, and we can ascend to the heavenly realm, receive the retribution of heaven in the future. Practicing the four Noble Truths is the realm of the sravakas. Contemplating the twelve links of dependent origination is the realm of the pratyekabuddhas. By giving rise to the great mind of compassion and making great vow to benefit others, seeking the Buddha Way above and liberating sentient beings below, practicing the six paramitas, we immediately enter the realm of the bodhisattva. Going one step further, we [should cultivate non-cultivation](#), [be mindful of no-mind](#), return to the source, not give rise to a single thought; with total clarity, we enter into the inconceivable Dharma realm. This mind is then replete with all things. It is, “When One Dharma realm manifests, nine Dharma realms are obscured.” One Dharma realm means the true Dharma realm; it is the mind of all of you who are listening to the Dharma, not thinking of the past, present, or future, with total clarity in every thought, being master of the self at all times. When we are enlightened to this Dharma realm, we enter the realm of the Buddha.

“A tall building of ten thousand feet begins with a flat piece of land.” Everyone’s mind, from beginningless kalpas, is filled with attachments and delusions, ignorance and erroneous views. Now that we can listen to the true Dharma is the result of our previous virtuous roots; our good retribution now manifests. Therefore we must treasure this state. Buddhism embodies both practice and principle. In practice we must make efforts in cultivating the Way and upholding the pure precepts. In principle, we must bring forth the bodhi mind. If we have not given rise to the bodhi mind and only observe the pure precepts, in the future we will ascend into the heavens and at least will not descend into the evil realms. If we can observe the pure precepts, give rise to the bodhi mind, and are replete with practice and principle, this is the practice of the great bodhisattvas. In the future, we will surely attain perfect enlightenment, not only benefiting ourselves but also benefiting others.