



## *Bodhi Stand Presents*

*Upasika Wong New Geok*

*"Good Knowing Advisors, when your own mind takes refuge with your self-nature, it takes refuge with the true Buddha. To take refuge is to rid your self-nature of egotism and unwholesome thoughts as well as of jealousy, obsequiousness, deceitfulness, contemptuous pride, conceit, and deviant views, and all other unwholesome tendencies whenever they arise.*

*"To take refuge is to be always aware of your own transgressions and never to speak of other peoples' good or bad traits. Always to be humble and polite is to have penetrated to the self-nature without any obstacles. That is taking refuge."*

*-from Chapter 6, Repentance and Reform  
THE SIXTH PATRIARCH'S PLATFORM SUTRA*

Upasika Wong New Geok (Niu Yu) was one among the thousands of faithful men and women who took refuge with the Triple Jewel during the first visit that a delegation from the Sino-American Buddhist Association and Dharma Realm Buddhist University, under the leadership of the Venerable Abbot, made to Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia. Like many others, the act of "returning the life and body in homage to the Triple Jewel" precipitated immediate changes in her life. It demanded self-examination and an energetic attempt to change and renew herself.

"I guess one of my worst faults is my temper. I have been good to everyone else in the family, but I have always taken advantage of the gentle consideration my husband has for me. Over the years I have made unreasonable demands and thrown temper tantrums at

him. I knew I was at fault, but the habit was so strong that I couldn't bring myself to change."

But then the decision came to bow to a true teacher, a genuine Good Knowing Advisor, and upon seeing her own reflection in the mirror of his impeccable moral virtue, New Geok was moved to shame.

During the Opening Ceremonies of the Ten Thousand Buddha Hall in 1979, New Geok came and paid homage to the Sagely City, together with a Malaysian delegation which numbered several hundred strong. In October, 1982, at the Inauguration of the Mountain Gate and the Transmission of the Complete Precepts, New Geok came again to bow to the Buddhas. This time she stayed well over two months. Several months prior to her actual date of departure for the USA, unusual circumstances began to arise in her life. For no apparent reason, New Geok became struck with a stream of disturbing and melancholic thoughts. Lapsing into depression, she even contemplated suicide. Her days were restless and her nights fraught with bad dreams. She even had to resort to occasional sleeping pills, something she had never done before. The inertia became so overpowering that both she and her family had doubts about her being able to make the long pilgrimage to the City. However, New Geok insisted on coming and in late October, arrived with the Malaysian delegation.

The first few days at the City, her suffering came to a head. It was as if she was carrying some invisible heavy burden on her shoulders. A Kuan Yin Recitation session was going on and there was round-the-clock cultivation during the festivities. She followed the assembly around and around, circumambulating and reciting the Bodhisattva's name, all the while her eyes uncontrollably brimming with tears.

A growing sense of shame and remorse over her past indulgences and mistakes filled her heart. On the day of the Opening, October 31, while the assembly was circumambulating outside, New Geok quietly knelt before the awesome statue of the Thousand-Handed, Thousand-Eyed Kuan Yin Bodhisattva and made the following vow: "I repent and reform of all my past karmic deeds. I vow never again to use anger as a weapon against my husband, but from now on to be a considerate and good-natured companion for him. I vow to exhaust my efforts in protecting the Proper Dharma, and I vow to open up true wisdom and understanding in order to do my job well."

In a little while, after rejoining the assembly circumambulating the hall, New Geok made a turn so that she came face-to-face with the magnificent statue of Kuan Yin Bodhisattva. Suddenly she saw a bright light streaming from the Bodhisattva's face. The statue's face was transformed into a smile which was the very embodiment of compassion and forgiveness. The next moment, New Geok looked again and the light was gone. It was a momentary manifestation, an auspicious sign from the Bodhisattva, acknowledging New Geok's plea that her repentance and reform be accepted.

Another event that happened during her visit is worth relating. New Geok's father-in-law had passed away about six months prior, and in her dreams she would sometimes see him. This coincided with the period of time when she was experiencing the deep depression. When she arrived at the City, following the usual custom, she dedicated a plaque of rebirth to her father-in-law. Special occasions like Recitation Sessions are the most efficacious time to dedicate such memorials, because the entire assembly with one heart makes transferences of all the merit and virtue to both the living and the deceased. After she erected the plaque, a noticeable change took place. She felt a lightening of the load she had been carrying around for months.

*"Moreover, Universally Expansive, in the future men or women may long be bedridden and in spite of their wishes, be unable, either to get well or to die. At night they may dream of evil ghosts, of family and relatives, and of wandering onto dangerous roads. In numerous nightmares they may roam with ghosts and spirits. As these dreams continue, over a period of days, months, and years, such persons may weaken and waste away, cry out in pain in their sleep, and be depressed and melancholy.*

*Chapter 6, The Thus Come One's Praises*

#### EARTH STORE SUTRA

Relying on the sincerity and power of the four-fold assembly, New Geok crossed over the beings that haunted her spirit and experienced a great relief.

As her inner vistas opened up, New Geok began to deeply rejoice and to understand the causes and conditions that had brought her to the City. Despite all the hardships and obstacles that tested her prior to her coming, she found the benefits gained from the pilgrimage transcending the steep requirements by a thousand, ten thousand fold. "The other day the Venerable Abbot said something that really hit home. I vow to take it as my personal motto: 'Hit me, I won't retreat. Scold me, I won't turn back. I'll be a living jewel within the Triple Gem.'" Every night during the Sutra lectures, she felt deep peace and joy in her heart as the wisdom of the Buddha poured in. It was as if the Dharma was especially spoken for her.

*"Moreover, Earth Store, In the future, good men and good women may plant good roots in the Buddhadharma by making offerings, repairing stupas and monasteries, rebinding Sutras, or they may plant good roots only as small as a strand of hair, a mote, of dust, a grain of sand, or a drop of water. Merely by transferring the merit from such deeds to the Dharma Realm, those people's meritorious virtuous will be such that they will enjoy superior and wonderful bliss one hundred thousand lives. If they dedicate the merit only to their own family and relatives or to their own personal benefit, as a result, they will enjoy the bliss for three lives. By giving up one, a ten-thousand reward is obtained."*

*Chapter 10, The Conditions and Comparative Merit and Virtue of Giving*

#### EARTH STORE SUTRA

New Geok understood. "My family situation is such an amiable one to begin with. You could say that I have the best of all possible worlds as far as being a householder is concerned. But I have been small-minded and picky and didn't know my own

blessings. The Sutra has enlightened me to cause and effect. Now I know that the blessings I enjoy in this life are due to past lives' cultivation and to giving to the Triple Jewel. Instead of draining those blessings, I should make hasty steps to reinforce my merit."

*Why do some people live in tall mansions and big estates?  
Because in the past they made gifts of rice and grains to the monasteries.  
Why are some people replete with blessings and abundance?  
Because in the past they erected temples and built huts and shelters.  
Why do some people have loyal spouses and filial children?  
Because in the past they tied up good conditions in the Buddha's door....  
We do the myriad deeds and reap our own rewards.  
As for suffering in the hells--who else can we blame but ourselves?  
Do not say that cause and effect is invisible;  
It is manifest in your own person, in your children and grandchildren.  
If, you do not believe in the merits of pure eating and giving,  
Then take a look at those who enjoy their good fortune now.  
In the past they cultivated, and in this life they harvest.  
If in this life they cultivate, then they will amass blessings for the future...  
The causes and effects of past, present and future,  
Cannot be spoken to their end.  
Gods and dragons will not neglect those with wholesome intentions.  
If one cultivates blessings within the door of the Triple Gem,  
Then, for every part of joyous giving, one will reap ten thousand parts in reward.  
Such blessings are stored up in a firm and solid treasury,  
To be enjoyed throughout future rebirths without end.*

*-from the SUTRA OF CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF THE THREE PERIODS OF TIME*