

Across the Sea of Suffering in a Boat of Vows

-by Bhikshuni Heng Lyan

On the anniversary day of Shakyamuni Buddha's Accomplishment of the Way Bhikshuni Heng Lyan made the following vows:

"Before the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions and the three periods of time, before the Venerable Abbot, and this Shurangama Four-fold Assembly I, disciple Kuo Hua resolve to make the following vows:

1) I vow in life after life to follow the Reverend humane, Noble Hua with proper faith, leave the home-life and cultivate according to the teachings, to protect and uphold the Master's great vows and propagate the Proper Dharma throughout the three thousand great thousand world systems, in all Way places.

2) I vow in life after life to be born as a man complete with blessings and wisdom, constantly meet up with bright-eyed teachers and good friends, enter the Way as a virgin youth and sternly uphold and proclaim the precepts.

3) I vow in life after life never to meet with any of the Eight Difficulties, not to follow vulgar extremes, and not to be deficient in the Four Conditions. I will be born in a family of Proper faith, have upright and awesome demeanor, wisdom and eloquence whereby I may separate completely from unwholesome dharmas.

4) I vow in life after life to dwell in the Buddha's Perfect Enlightenment, look for good knowing advisors, never to encounter outside ways or the ways of the Two Vehicles, but to practice according to great vows, and quickly break through all obstacles. These great vows will be accomplished when all obstructions have been exhausted. Thereupon I will ascend to the Pure Dharma Hall of Liberation and certify to the wonderful adorned region of Great and Perfect Enlightenment.

5) I vow in life after life to cultivate and uphold the Dharma of Kuan Yin Bodhisattva's Forty-two Hands and Eyes, quickly obtain the thousand hands and thousand eyes, and be replete with great wisdom and expedients to rescue living beings from their sufferings.

6) I vow in life after life to uphold and proclaim the Great Compassion Mantra, the Shurangama Mantra, the Great Vehicle Sutras and deeply enter the Sutras' treasury and have wisdom like the sea. Without becoming fatigued or weary I will turn the Great Dharma Wheel to cross over all living beings.

7) I vow in life after life to obtain the samadhi of languages and translate the Buddha's Sutras with their true principles into various languages.

8) I vow in life after life to cultivate and uphold the Ten Great Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva, and transfer all merit and virtue to all living beings so that we may all leave the sufferings of the turning wheel and reach the Ground of All-wisdom together.

9) I vow in life after life to carefully uphold the Five Principles of no fighting, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, and no self benefit.

10) I vow quickly to obtain the Three Bodies, Four Wisdoms, Five Eyes, Six Penetrations, and to fly with comfort and self-mastery to fulfill the wishes of all completely.

11) I vow to cross over all living beings and regard all men as my fathers and all women as my mothers. And as long as the hells remain unemptied I vow not to obtain Proper Enlightenment.

12) I vow that at the end of my life I will be without obstructions, that I will certainly be reborn in Amitabha Buddha's Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, naturally transformed, and ascend to the superior grade of Lotus. There I will receive the Buddha's bestowal of predictions, obtain certification of limitless Dharani Doors, and completely realize all merit and virtue. Afterwards I will divide into bodies pervading the ten directions and in a single thought make offerings to all Buddhas throughout the Dharma realm. In a single thought I will manifest all kinds of spiritual powers to cross over and liberate all living beings causing them to realize Proper and Equal Enlightenment.

Empty space may be exhausted, but my vows are inexhaustible. May all sentient and insentient beings alike perfect the seeds of wisdom.

*Living beings are limitless,
I vow to cross them over.
Afflictions are inexhaustible,
I vow to cut them off.
Dharma door are immeasurable,
I vow to learn them all.
The Buddha Path is unsurpassed,
I vow to realize it.*

I want to transfer the cultivation of merit and virtue of vows to all sentient beings of the Dharma realm, my teacher, and my parents, and in life after life renew these vows. I wish for the Venerable Master to long dwell in the world as a bright torch, to constantly turn the Dharma Wheel. I wish for the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to flourish day by day, and I pray for world peace. May all the heavenly demons and those of outside ways quickly renounce all that is deviant and turn towards what is true and proper.