

Across the Sea of Suffering

in a Boat of Vows

-by *Bhikshu Heng Ch'i*
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The primary intention of these vows is to protect and purify my practice of Ch'an; to use the power of vows to completely eradicate any possibility of selfishness or self-benefit.

1. If in investigating Ch'an, there is in me the least bit of a mind of selfishness or self-benefit, I vow to completely change and eradicate all trace of it so that I may accomplish proper samadhi and proper reception and attain samadhi powers and benefits to use in teaching and transforming beings.

2. If in investigating Ch'an, there is in me the least bit of seeking for or indulgence in the Bliss of Ch'an or any attachment to the flavor of Ch'an, I vow to completely change and eradicate all trace of it so that I may accomplish proper samadhi and proper reception and attain samadhi powers and benefits to use in teaching and transforming beings.

3. Precepts are the foundation for the proper cultivation of samadhi; therefore, in practicing Ch'an, I vow to never fail to uphold and study the precepts so that I may accomplish proper samadhi and proper reception and attain samadhi powers and benefits to use in teaching and transforming beings.

4. A bright-eyed Good Knowing Advisor is the primary pre-requisite for the practice of Ch'an and to meet with such a one is rare in a myriad kalpas; therefore, having now met such a precious teacher, I vow to find him again and again in life after life; moreover, if in the cultivation of Ch'an I fail to follow his instructions or am disobedient to his instructions, I vow to immediately perceive my fault and quickly change so as to eradicate all trace of it so that I may accomplish proper samadhi and proper reception and attain samadhi powers and benefits to use in teaching and transforming beings.

5. The *SHURANGAMA SUTRA* is the Supreme Guide for those who wish to cultivate proper samadhi; therefore in investigating Ch'an, I vow to always practice in accord with this Sutra. I vow to study it exhaustively and to memorize it completely.

6. Although I have selected this Dharma door for the concentration of my efforts in cultivation, I vow never to slight other Dharma doors, to uphold and propagate all five of the Great Vehicle Teaching Schools, to faithfully transmit and extensively propagate the teaching of my Teacher in all its manifold aspects, and ultimately to study all the limitless Dharma doors in order to gain skillful expedients to cross over all beings.

7. I vow in the future to work to establish Way Places for the practice of Ch'an, to establish affinities with beings and to seek to create opportunities for others to practice this Dharma door.

8. When sitting in Ch'an, in order to fortify myself with proper views and to avoid the deviant, I vow to use the following contemplations:

1) In order to repay the kindness of the Buddha, my Teacher, and my parents, therefore I sit in meditation.

2) Because I wish to vastly cross over all living beings, therefore I sit in meditation.

3) Because of the widespread practice of deviant samadhis in this country and the prevalence of ignorant and evil teachers, there is a great need for proper teachers who are well-seasoned in cultivation; therefore I sit in meditation.

4) Because I wish to help with the transmission of the Buddha's Mind-Seal Dharma door, that the Buddha-seed not be cut off, and that the Buddhadharma long dwell in the world, therefore I sit in meditation.

5) Ultimately, because I wish to become a Buddha, and for no other reasons, therefore I sit in meditation.

9. Further, when sitting in Ch'an, in order to urge myself on to be constantly vigorous and to never retreat, I vow to use these following contemplations:

1) If when sitting, there are false thoughts and I do not cut them off, I will regard it as the same as heaping scorn and abuse upon the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

2) If while sitting, there are attachments and I do not renounce them, I will regard it to be the same as seeking out the demons and calling forth the hells.

3) If while sitting, there is mental or physical pain or internal or external annoyance and I do not overcome it with patience, I will regard it to be the same as abandoning living beings.

4) If while sitting, there is physical weariness or a scattering of the mind and I do not bring forth vigor and concentration, I will regard it to be the same as turning my back on Enlightenment to drift forever in the six paths of rebirth.

5) If in this life, there is no accomplishment, I will consider it to be the same as cheating and deceiving my Teacher.

10. Finally, I vow to remember these vows in life after life, to constantly remake them, and to bring them to perfection.

May all the merit from making and cultivating these vows be transferred to Anuttarasamyaksambodhi, the ultimate Enlightenment of all beings.