Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

Contents

Preface

Practice Manual for the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

Teachings by Master Wang Xianglu on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

Master Yuanyin's Teachings on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

Teachings by Teacher Qi Zhijun on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

Teachings of Patriarch Nona

Selected Excerpts from Buddhist Sūtras

Preface

In the course of human life, we are often beset by the suffering of illness or by depression and distress, unable to free or console ourselves. Some people even experience various terrors and confusions. All this is because the mind is not at peace.

As long as the mind is peaceful, meditative stability can give rise to wisdom. Once wisdom opens, one can examine all worldly success and failure, favorable and adverse conditions, right and wrong, gain and loss, wealth and poverty, birth and death, coming and going, and see that they are all empty and illusory. If one further contemplates emptiness, no afflictive anger will arise; causes and results will become clearly understood, one's thoughts will not be biased, and all human sorrow and suffering will naturally disappear. Illness and pain will also naturally ease and may even be healed.

The key to all this lies in the single word "mind." This Dharma is a method for cultivating the mind; it is the wondrous Dharma by which Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva relieves suffering and rescues beings from adversity. Those who practice it have something upon which to rely in their minds: it can cure illness, enable them to

attain meditative stability and increase wisdom, benefit society and humankind, and enable Buddhist practitioners to comprehend the Dharma teachings, realize the nature of mind, be liberated from the future cycle of birth and death, plant immeasurable fields of merit, and help people fulfill their aspiration for rebirth in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

This Dharma has already been transmitted to countless people. I now explain it clearly once again for the benefit of those with aspiration, so that those who have not yet aroused the resolve may do so, those who have aroused it may advance diligently, and those who have advanced diligently may cultivate and realize it. As for those who are ill, relying on Avalokiteśvara's great compassion, they may recover without medicine. Those whose illnesses are already grave and whose lifespan is limited may also promptly plant fields of merit.

Through this, they may be freed from the suffering of the lower realms, and there may still be a chance of averting misfortune. Those afflicted by past karma involving ghosts, malignant spirits, and the like may likewise be released through this practice. There are also those who become ill because they practice seated meditation incorrectly—for example, Buddha-recitation that injures the vital energy, rigid sitting in non-Buddhist practices, wooden meditative absorption causing abdominal distention, or madness and confusion. Only this Dharma can cure them.

In short, a human life of a hundred years passes in the blink of an eye. Even if one awakens and turns back early, one may still fear that there is too little time. With this vessel, one can cross the sea of suffering, benefiting oneself and helping others cross as well.

Practice Manual for the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

I. Take your seat, join your palms, and recite the Four Refuges Mantra 3–7 times:

“Namo Gurubhya, Namo Buddhaya, Namo Dharmaya, Namo Sanghaya.”

II. Recite three times:

“Homage to Root Guru Acharya Yuanyin. Homage to all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, vajras, and Dharma protectors throughout the ten directions and the three times.”

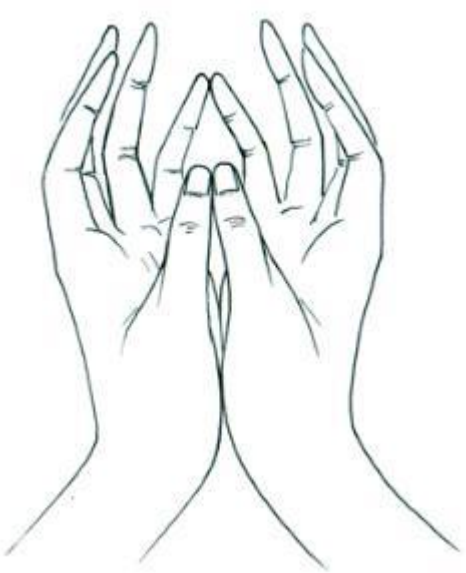
III. Recite once:

“I beseech Root Guru Acharya Yuanyin and all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, vajras, and Dharma protectors throughout the ten directions and the three times to bestow

their compassionate blessings, remove my karmic obstacles, and enable me to settle my mind and enter the Buddha Way, cultivate the wondrous Dharma sincerely, attain realization soon, and liberate sentient beings."

IV. Form the Great Lotus mudrā (cover the hands with a yellow cloth):

Join the bases of the palms, the thumbs, and the little fingers at three points; let the other six fingers part naturally, and hold the mudrā before the chest. That is, after joining the palms, naturally separate the six fingers.



Recite the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra (recite it mentally and listen with the ears): "Om Ma Ni Bei Mei Hong."

When forming the mudrā, keep the hands covered with a yellow cloth. Recite the mantra neither too quickly nor too slowly (approximately 60–80 repetitions per minute). Do not let the mudrā come apart; keep the mantra unbroken, reciting it mentally and listening with the ears. Sit in meditation for at least half an hour every day; two hours is better.

V. Dedication after completing the practice:

Raise the mudrā above the crown of the head, recite the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra 15 times, and make this dedication: "May I swiftly open wisdom and attain Buddhahood in this very life, liberate sentient beings, and seek no other fruition."

VI. Release the mudrā above the head and rise from the seat.

Teachings by Master Wang Xianglu on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

I. Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

In the course of life, we are often beset by illness and suffering, or by depression and melancholy from which it is difficult to free or console ourselves. Some may even experience various terrors and states of confusion. All this is due to the mind's lack of peace.

So long as the mind is peaceful, meditative stability can give rise to wisdom. Once wisdom has opened, one may examine all the world's success and failure, favorable and adverse conditions, right and wrong, gain and loss, wealth and poverty, birth and death, coming and going, and see that they are all empty illusions. If one further contemplates emptiness, anger and vexation will no longer arise; causes and results will be clearly understood; one's thoughts will not be biased; and all human sorrow and suffering will naturally dissolve. Illness and pain will likewise naturally be relieved and may even be cured.

The key to all this lies in the single word "mind." This Dharma is a method for cultivating the mind, a wondrous practice by which the Great Being Avalokiteśvara relieves suffering and rescues beings from distress. Those who practice it have something upon which their minds may rely; it can dispel illness, enable them to attain meditative stability and increase wisdom, make them useful to society, and benefit humanity. For Buddhist practitioners, it can lead to an understanding of the Buddhadharma and of their own mind and nature, liberation from the cycle of birth and death in future lives, and the planting of boundless fields of merit. It can also help fulfill one's aspiration for rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

This Dharma has already been transmitted to countless people. I now set it forth clearly once again for the benefit of those with aspiration: so that those who have not yet aroused the resolve may do so, those who have aroused it may advance diligently, and those already diligent may cultivate and realize it. As for those who are ill, through the power of Avalokiteśvara's great compassion they may recover without medicine. Even those whose illness is grave and whose remaining lifespan is limited may plant fields of merit early.

This may free them from the suffering of the lower realms and perhaps avert misfortune, even if only in some measure. Those burdened by past karma involving ghosts, delusive influences, and malevolent spirits may likewise be freed through this practice. Only this Dharma can treat those who have become ill because they practiced seated meditation improperly—for example, those whose Buddha-recitation has injured their vital energy, who engage in the dead sitting of non-Buddhist paths, who fall into rigid absorption with abdominal distension, or who become deranged and confused.

In short, a human life of a hundred years passes in the blink of an eye. Even if one awakens and turns back early, one may still fear that there is too little time. With this vessel, one can cross the sea of suffering, benefiting oneself and helping others cross as well.

(I) The Merits of the Mantra and Mudrā

Mantra: Om (ong), ma (ma), ni (ni), bei (bei), mei (mei), hong (hong)

This mantra is also called the Supreme Heart Mantra of the Great Being Avalokiteśvara. Its benefits are as follows: (1) subduing demons; (2) curing illness; (3) avoiding calamities; (4) attaining various accomplishments; (5) removing obstacles; and (6) ascending to the Buddha stage—that is, realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature.

This mantra is the subtle fundamental mind of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva attained Buddhahood through maintaining this very mantra and is known as the Tathāgata of the Brightness of the True Dharma. In recent millennia, the Tathāgata of the Brightness of the True Dharma has manifested in the Sahā world to assist the World-Honored One Śākyamuni in liberating sentient beings. With a love like that of a mother, he guides sentient beings and enables them to leave suffering and attain happiness.

His manifest form is Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara, and he has innumerable emanations, such as Green Tārā, White Parasol, Cundī, and Amoghapāśa. There are also countless mantras, all of which may collectively be called the Great Compassion Mantra; not one fails to emerge from the wish-fulfilling wheel of great compassion. This mantra is also the heart of all mantras and is therefore called the Heart Mantra of Great Compassion. It is the pure essence of the Mahāyāna, and because it has only six syllables, it is easy to recite. Those who recite this mantra, regardless of wealth or poverty, gender, age, or youth, may enable seven generations of ancestors to ascend and attain liberation. The Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra specifically explains the merits of this mantra.

In Tibet, only the pronunciation of the six-syllable mantra is transmitted; its mudrā is not readily transmitted. In Tibetan it is pronounced "Om Mani Peme Hung"; in Mongolian, "Om Mani Beite Mai Hung." Master Nona further added the syllable "she" after "hung," without transmitting a mudrā, in order to emphasize swift accomplishment. Acharya Dayu gave the correct pronunciation as "Om Mani Bei Mei Hung," adopting the advantage of the shorter Mongolian pronunciation for swift accomplishment, while also transmitting the Great Lotus Mudrā. This mudrā is used to invoke the bodhisattva. For those who both maintain the mantra and form the mudrā, its efficacy is increased a hundredfold.

For attaining meditative stability and curing illness, the mudrā is especially indispensable.

The symbolic teaching of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra uses its six syllables to represent the six realms of rebirth: “Om” represents the deva realm; “ma,” the asura realm; “ni,” the human realm; “bei,” the animal realm; “mei,” the ghost realm; and “hung,” the hell realm. By reciting this six-syllable mantra, one can sever cyclic rebirth, leave the three realms, and attain the fruition of sagehood.

According to the symbolic teaching of the four noble stages: the syllable “Om” arises from the bodhisattva mind and first enters the stage of the ten faiths; advancing from there, the syllable “ma” enters the stage of the ten abodes; advancing from there, the syllable “ni” enters the stage of the ten practices; then “bei” enters the stage of the ten dedications; “mei” enters the stage of the ten bhūmis; and “hung” enters the Vajrayāna and reaches the stage of great awakening. Therefore, reciting this six-syllable mantra can enable one to swiftly transcend the ten bhūmis and attain unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening.

(II) Procedures for the Practice

One must first request empowerment and transmission of the Dharma from a teacher before practicing. After receiving the Dharma, first become thoroughly familiar with the mantra, then sit down to practice.

Before sitting: (1) wash your hands; (2) prepare everything needed; (3) bow to the Buddha. It is not necessary to burn incense; in particular, avoid fine incense that produces much smoke. It is preferable to practice seated on a bed. If you are away from home or this is inconvenient, you may simply bow mentally and offer incense of the heart.

There are eight prohibitions when sitting in practice: (1) do not sit in a drafty place; (2) do not sit immediately after eating; wait an hour and a half after a meal; (3) do not relieve yourself immediately after rising from the seat; wait at least ten minutes; (4) do not be greedy for extended sitting. Do not sit excessively long merely because you are enthusiastic on one occasion, for this may later lead to regression. One session daily is suitable, with two sessions at most, each lasting one to two hours; (5)

do not recite loudly, lest you injure your vital energy. Use vajra recitation: move the lips without making sound, while hearing it yourself; (6) do not move the body excessively, as this will inevitably cause lower-back pain. Stretch slowly, and do not make the body excessively erect; (7) do not seek visions of light or Buddhas; (8) when illusory appearances arise, do not grasp at them or give rise to doubt. Experiencing wonderful fragrances or hearing beautiful sounds and becoming delighted by them, and similar reactions, can all cause illness.

This Dharma uses a mudrā to directly realize the gate of the formless. It takes the mind as primary; there is no need to visualize light or letters. It differs from Tibetan esoteric practice.

There are three essentials in this practice:

First, while sitting in practice, the mudrā must not be released. This is the mystery of body, and through it one refrains from the three evil bodily deeds of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Second, keep reciting the mantra without stopping and do not speak. This is the mystery of speech, and through it one refrains from the four evil deeds of speech.

Third, let the mind be empty like that of a Buddha. Regard yourself as Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara, and contemplate all sentient beings as Buddhas intoxicated or ill: once they awaken, they are healed. Self and others are of one substance and nondual. This is the mystery of mind, and through it one refrains from the three evil mental deeds of greed, anger, and ignorance.

In this Dharma, the three practices of precepts, meditative stability, and wisdom are complete, bringing purity to the three karmic activities.

In practicing this Dharma, diligent effort in ordinary daily life is especially essential. At all times, pay attention to the following:

(1) Do not commit such offenses as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, or false speech. Reform and eliminate habitual tendencies; otherwise, even if you learn the Dharma, it will be of no benefit.

(2) Do not give rise to wrong views of greed, anger, and ignorance. Always seek to open wisdom; everywhere contemplate emptiness and learn to practice giving.

(3) Do not disparage other dharmas or those who have not practiced. Regard all with equal compassion. Do not seek spiritual powers, fame, reputation, or material gain.

(4) Often reflect gratefully upon the compassion of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and of the Dharma-transmitting masters of successive generations. Respect your own Buddha-nature, knowing that everyone is inherently capable of becoming a Buddha. You should make vows to liberate sentient beings; this is the greatest offering.

(5) Fulfill the human virtues of filial piety, fraternal respect, loyalty, and righteousness. Perfect worldly dharmas and fulfill all human responsibilities; only then can one become a Buddha.

(6) Practitioners should enshrine an image of Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara. If an image of Avalokiteśvara is unavailable, another excellent image may be used. If one truly lacks the means, it is also permissible not to enshrine an image, for wherever there are sentient beings, there is Buddha.

(7) During practice, cover the mudrā with yellow cloth or another clean cloth. Do not make mudrās playfully with people who do not practice or children. Accurate pronunciation is essential in reciting the mantra.

When practicing, scattered thoughts may arise in profusion, perhaps seeming even more numerous than usual. This is good; it is a sign of progress, not something bad. Do not stop practicing out of doubt. So long as you do not attend to them and keep your attention single-mindedly on the mantra, your thoughts will naturally become tranquil and the mind settled. Do not forcefully seek to be without thoughts, especially when first learning. Trying to eliminate thoughts at that stage amounts to repression; over time, one becomes like wood or stone, which is also an illness. Thoughts may arise; simply do not cling to them or follow after them. It is like an open highway: vehicles, horses, and people do not cease coming and going, nor is it that they are neither seen nor heard; rather, they are neither retained nor allowed to abide. This is what is called no-thought.

(III) The Various Ways This Dharma Dispels Illness

This Dharma was not originally established for treating illness. Yet when the mind is settled, vital energy is harmonious and the blood flourishes, so all illnesses may naturally dissolve. Among these six syllables, “Om” eliminates all illnesses; “ma” eliminates heat disorders; “ni,” disorders of vital energy; “bei,” phlegm disorders; “mei,” cold disorders; and “hung,” gallbladder disorders. From this perspective, it is also suitable for the ill to practice it. It has relatively notable effects for insomnia, high blood pressure, brain disorders, liver and stomach ailments, cardiovascular conditions, palpitations, numbness, gynecological disorders, and other conditions. The following points should be noted:

(1) Whatever the illness, the primary concern should always be to nourish the heart. This may be divided into two methods: opening the source and reducing expenditure. Do not stir up liver fire; settle the mind and calm the spirit. When vital energy is harmonious and the blood flourishes, this is called opening the source. When one has fewer anxious thoughts and no anger arises, vital energy and blood are not depleted; this is called reducing expenditure.

If one can open the source and reduce expenditure, one will naturally enjoy longevity. Practicing this Dharma daily will certainly calm the mind, pacify vital energy, and increase blood cells. Yet if, while sitting, the body feels unwell or an old

illness recurs, this is the uprooting of the latent roots of past illness and is beneficial; it differs from becoming ill. Given a little time, it will naturally be cured.

Never stop practicing because doubts arise. Instead, make a great vow and recite: “I practice this Dharma to resolve all past karma. Though old illnesses may come, I rejoice; from now on, their roots are uprooted. May I bear the suffering of all in the world who share these illnesses. If I succeed in this practice, may I universally liberate all sentient beings, enabling them all to realize the mind and become Buddhas, forever cutting off every illness and suffering.” Make this great vow daily before sitting in practice, and do not forget it. Practice this Dharma for one hundred days, and extraordinary results will surely be attained. Complete one thousand days of practice, and you will surely attain samādhi.

(2) After sitting down to practice, forget that you are an ill person. Do not think of the afflicted part of your body; otherwise, vital energy and blood will congeal there, making the illness difficult to remove.

(3) After each session, the main point is to minimize irritation and anger. Avoid eating scallions and garlic, and avoid smelling strong fragrances, as these can easily stir the liver. Fish and meat should likewise be eaten sparingly, as they can easily arouse desire; when the mind is filled with thoughts of desire, it is not in accord with the Dharma. In daily encounters, value forbearance above all. Reflect that these are all retributions for karmic grievances from one’s past karma, which should be accepted and dispelled through practice, thereby turning misfortune into good fortune.

(4) In practicing this Dharma, there is no need to select a time, place, or direction; it is sufficient to be wholeheartedly reverent. Women may practice it every day without interruption. It is even more beneficial for elderly people. If those suffering from age-related pain in the waist and legs practice in accordance with the Dharma, they will surely recover; they will also be free of such ailments as stroke and palpitations. First rely on the power of one’s own devout practice, and then on the grace of the bodhisattvas’ blessings; the circulation of blood and vital energy will naturally become unimpeded.

After practicing in accordance with the Dharma for a full hundred days, if there is an ill person at home, form the mudrā and recite the mantra 108 or 1,000 times over clean boiled water, then have the patient drink it. It will prove effective in every case. If the patient can recite it as well, the result will be even better.

II. Essential Instructions for Practice (7): Key Instructions

(I) Ordinary beings and Buddhas are nondual in their fundamental nature. It is only because people do not understand cause and effect that awakening comes later—

awakening at the stage of fruition—and some remain unawakened from beginning to end. The moment one awakens, one has reached the other shore. Therefore, one should employ the one-character formula: “Ah.” When something arises in the mind, it is a stirring of thought at the causal stage. One should first become vigilantly aware and reflect: “If I create such a cause today, I will certainly receive such a result in the future.” Then, out of apprehension, one will not enter into it. After a long time, when this becomes thoroughly familiar, one will not mistakenly enter into it. This word ah is vigilant awareness; it is clear seeing; it is turning; it is emptiness; it is freedom from defilement; it is the Pure Land.

(II) Regard this mind as though it were on a great thoroughfare: all manner of forms and appearances are clearly seen and heard, yet they pass without remaining and do not stain me. This is the realm of a Buddha.

(III) When encountering anything, simply respond according to conditions. Distinguish clearly between good and evil, yet do not give rise to a view of self. Continually contend with your own temperament. Emotion is self-love: turn from it and keep it at a distance. Views are attachment to self: resolve them and empty them. In time, one will naturally be at ease.

(IV) Discern what is weighty and what is light. Of all the greatest matters in the world, however many there may be, none outweighs a single death. Yet ten thousand deaths do not outweigh a single practice of mine, and ten thousand practices do not outweigh a single awakening of mine. With awakening, the mind is empty. This is the highest merit and blessing; no comparison can be made between what is weighty and light, beneficial and harmful. Know that all suffering arises solely from non-awakening, and that no bliss surpasses realizing the mind.

(V) Do not forget. But what if one sometimes forgets, or, though one does not forget, lacks the strength to turn? There are two key methods: first, contemplate in advance the frightening events that may occur in the future; second, recite a mantra. Then one can immediately awaken and turn.

Dear friends who truly wish to apply yourselves: do not forget to practice the Dharma every day. When every thought abides in awakening, every thought abides in the Buddha. Practice at all times; illuminate at all times. Each day, read these seven points once and explain them to someone once. Practice and illuminate; continue in this way for a year and a half without interruption. If you do not realize samādhi and see true reality, then I am speaking falsely and acting as a demon. I also hope that you will dedicate the merit to all sentient beings, so that all may attain Buddhahood. This is the method for dispelling calamities and prolonging life.

Master Yuanyin’s Teachings on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

I. Letter from Master Yuanyin to lay practitioner Qi Wenjin of Jiayu County, Hunan, March 5, 1991:

“With regard to the transmission and practice of Esoteric Buddhism, empowerment is generally required; the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra is no exception.

However, out of the master's deep compassion, and taking skillful means as ultimate, certain well-known esoteric practices that are simple to perform and unlikely to lead to deviations after practice—such as the Great Amitābha Practice, the Green and White Tārā Practices, the Avalokiteśvara Deliverance Practice, and the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra—may be transmitted openly and practiced without empowerment. This applies especially to those who live far away or are unable to travel because of illness. So long as one makes sincere and reverent offerings and pays homage to the yidam, one may practice them. Should questions arise, write to a virtuous teacher whom you know and consult with them; then you will not stray onto a mistaken path and may safely reach the other shore.”

II. Teachings given by Master Yuanyin while conferring empowerment and transmitting the Dharma in the United States in 1997: “Procedures for Practicing the Heart-of-Heart Dharma” (transcribed from an audio recording):

…The lotus mudrā signifies that our minds are like lotus flowers. This mudrā is very simple, yet exceptionally sublime and highly efficacious. It may be used to dispel calamities, remove obstacles, cure illness, accomplish undertakings, and so forth. With the protection of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, we can all attain accomplishment. Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara is Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva with four arms.

The mantra is also important. It has six syllables: Om, Ma, Ni, Bei, Mei, Hong. In practicing this Dharma, begin meditation with half an hour, then gradually increase it to one hour, one and a half hours, and two hours. To practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, one must sit for at least two hours. Many people cannot manage this at first, so they may first practice the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra.

There are two reasons for covering the mudrā with a yellow cloth while forming it:

First, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and spiritual beings may pass through the air. Buddhas will not bow to us, but when bodhisattvas and spiritual beings see the mudrā, they may regard it as a Buddha and bow to us. Yet when we have only just begun the practice, we are still ordinary beings, not Buddhas or bodhisattvas, and cannot accept their homage. Therefore, we cover the mudrā with a yellow cloth. When

passing spiritual beings see that we have covered the mudrā while practicing, they will not bow.

Second, if others see us forming this mudrā, they may imitate it and steal the Buddhadharma, which would not be good. If we practice with it covered by a yellow cloth, others cannot see it and will not imitate the mudrā, thereby avoiding the creation of wrongdoing.

There are several prohibitions to observe while meditating:

1. While seated, avoid thinking things over or racking your brains. Thoughts that ordinarily do not come to mind all arise as soon as you sit down: “Oh! How should I handle this matter? And how should I handle that one?” This is not good. Meditating in this way is of no use.

When we sit down to meditate, we must settle our minds as though we were dead. What affairs could a dead person still attend to? Do not concern yourself with family matters or work matters. When deluded thoughts arise during meditation, bring up the mantra and use it to transform your thoughts.

This does not mean suppressing thoughts. When thoughts arise, do not suppress or stop them; let them come. Simply do not heed or attend to them, and they will naturally dissolve into emptiness. This is transformation. It is not repression. Repression means crushing thoughts into lifeless stillness, like a stagnant pool: not a single thought arises, and one remains stuck there. Dead water does not harbor dragons. In that way, one cannot awaken. Our realization of the Way is to become living Buddhas and give rise to wondrous functioning. Do not suppress thoughts. Let thoughts come as they will; simply do not heed them.

2. Do not seek spiritual powers—not in the least! Seeking spiritual powers will not only prevent you from becoming a Buddha; it will instead make you liable to become a demon. For whenever the mind seeks something, it is attached, and attachment is a factor in becoming a demon. When our minds are empty and pure, as clean as if washed, without the slightest clinging, attachment, or seeking, only then can we truly become Buddhas: one's own mind is Buddha, and one's own nature becomes Buddha.

Only when the mind is empty and pure can one become a Buddha; if the mind is not empty and pure, one cannot become a Buddha. Thus Buddhahood lies in the mind, not in spiritual powers. Non-Buddhist paths also possess spiritual powers; why, then, do their followers become adherents of non-Buddhist paths, even demon kings? It is because they are too attached and their minds are not empty and pure. When the mind is truly empty and pure, nothing can be obtained: not establishing a single dharma, utterly bare, unstained by a single speck of dust. Only then can one

become a Buddha. Therefore, one becomes a Buddha by opening wisdom, not by developing spiritual powers. Do not be attached to spiritual powers. This is extremely important.

3. Do not sit to meditate immediately after a full meal. It is harmful to the stomach. Wait one to one and a half hours before meditating.

4. Do not meditate when you are unhappy or afflicted. Suppressing the vital energy of the liver so that it cannot circulate may cause illness. When you are unhappy, you may go out for a walk and work through those feelings before returning to meditate.

5. One should be especially attentive to sexual relations between husband and wife. Such relations are very taxing on the body. After meditating, do not have sexual relations immediately; wait five to six hours. Likewise, after sexual relations, do not meditate immediately. Rest for five to six hours before meditating again. If you meditate at once, you may easily fall ill.

6. Menstruation is not a problem; women may meditate, but they should not sit in the full lotus posture, as it may easily create a risk of severe bleeding. Therefore, take care during menstruation. During pregnancy, one may continue meditating, but after four months one should not sit cross-legged; one may practice lying down. When eight or nine months pregnant and close to delivery, do not practice meditation; one may lie in bed and recite the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra. With the blessing of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, this poses no obstacle to practice.

(Editor's note: According to teachings in Master Yinguang's "Essay Urging Compatriots Throughout the World to Recite the Sacred Name of Avalokiteśvara Together," when women suffer unbearable pain in childbirth, they may audibly recite the sacred name or heart mantra of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva; silent recitation is not advisable.)

Question: Must there be an image of the Buddha in the place where one practices? Which direction is best to face when meditating?

Answer: Not necessarily. It does not matter if there is no Buddha image at home, and the direction does not matter either, because Buddhas are present in every direction; Buddhas are not necessarily all in the West.

Question: What time is best for meditation?

Answer: Each person may arrange the time according to their own circumstances. Morning is best. After sleeping through the night, your physical strength is restored, and you will be alert when you sit. If you sit in the evening, you may be tired after a day of work and easily become drowsy. Therefore, morning meditation is best.

Question: Is it all right to pay homage to the Buddha first and then meditate?

Answer: That is very good! First pay homage to the Buddha, refresh your spirit, and settle the mind into purity; then meditate. This is very good.

Question: When one no longer wishes to recite the mantra, should one stop reciting it?

Answer: No. If you do not wish to recite it, deluded thoughts are still present! Recite until you are unable to recite, until the mantra can no longer be brought forth. Then recitation will naturally cease.

Question: Should one still meditate when the body is unwell?

Answer: If the discomfort is minor, you may still meditate. If you are seriously ill and cannot sit in meditation, you may practice lying down. Elderly people who cannot sit may also practice lying down.

Question: May one recite the mantra while urinating or defecating? Would that not be irreverent?

Answer: You may recite the mantra while urinating or defecating, but do not recite it aloud; then it will not be irreverent.

Teachings by Teacher Qi Zhijun on the Practice of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra

I. What is the relationship between the Six-Syllable Mantra as practiced in the Heart-of-Heart tradition and the Heart-of-Heart Dharma?

Question: If one is unable to sit for two hours but wishes to practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma, what should one do?

Answer: First practice the Six-Syllable Mantra. Once you can sit for a full two hours, you may then practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma.

Question: Teacher, how long must one practice the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra before one may practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma?

Answer: Oh! It is only said that, before empowerment, one may first practice the Six-Syllable Mantra. There is no stipulation concerning how much one must practice the Six-Syllable Mantra before being permitted to practice the Heart-of-Heart Dharma. Therefore, the Six-Syllable Mantra is not a preliminary practice of the Heart-of-Heart Dharma; the Heart-of-Heart Dharma has no preliminary practices.

II. Can the Six-Syllable Mantra of the Heart-of-Heart tradition be practiced without empowerment?

Question: Is the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra practice on the “Buddhadharma Heart-of-Heart” webpage a practice that is taught openly? May one practice it independently without receiving empowerment and lineage transmission? May one also teach such an openly taught practice to others?

Answer: Originally, the Six-Syllable Mantra too could be practiced only after one had received empowerment. In those days, my master’s teacher, Master Wang Xianglu, out of compassion for those for whom it was difficult to request the Dharma in person, established an altar and conferred empowerment upon all karmically connected sentient beings of the future. Although he did not use the term “universally transmitted practice,” the Six-Syllable Mantra may be transmitted from one person to another. When I requested the Heart-of-Heart Dharma from my teacher, Master Yuanyin, he instructed me first to practice the Six-Syllable Mantra. The mantra and mudrā were mailed to me in a letter. After practicing for half a year, I went to Shanghai to receive empowerment.

—Excerpted from Selections from the Mind Altar

Teachings of Patriarch Nona

The Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra is the wondrous Mind-Seal of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. It possesses immeasurable and boundless, inconceivable merit and virtue, and is praised by all Buddhas throughout the ten directions. To write the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra is equivalent to writing the Three Baskets of the Dharma Treasury. Through penetrating the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra, all karmic obstacles of the three times are completely purified; one is liberated from birth and death, ultimately attains realization, and can also cut off ignorance.

It opens wisdom, dispels disasters and prolongs life, increases wealth and rescues the poor, relieves hundreds of thousands of hardships, destroys greed, anger, and ignorance, and closes off the path of rebirth. Family members throughout the generations may all transcend rebirth, and even the worms within one’s abdomen and intestines may attain fruition. It also contains immeasurable dharma gates of samādhi. Each day, one may fully possess the merit and virtue of the six pāramitās, and all Vajra Dharma protectors, devas, dragons, and the eight classes of beings rejoice and offer their protection.

Whichever Buddha-land one wishes to be born in, one’s aspiration will be fulfilled.

Not only are there merits in reciting, writing, and visualizing it; so long as this true mantra is worn on the body, touched by the hands, heard by the ears, or seen by the eyes; whether it is kept in the home, written upon a door, or displayed on banners and flags, any sentient being who partakes of the flavor of this Dharma gains the cause for liberation from birth and death, the virtue of jointly realizing the fruition of the bodhi path, and the transformation of misfortune into good fortune and adversity into auspiciousness.

For all who have not yet attained Buddhahood, whether they seek long life, children, the elimination of all dangers and disasters involving earth, water, fire, wind, and space, or anything else they seek, all their wishes will be fulfilled like those granted by a wish-fulfilling jewel. In short, even if one were to speak of the merit and virtue of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra with the Buddha's wisdom, one could not exhaust it through kalpas. Even to expound the merits recorded in the present Buddhist canon would require three years to complete.

Moreover, the Great Compassion Mantra is Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's long mantra, while the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra is Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva's heart mantra and also the heart mantra of the Great Compassion Mantra.

—Excerpted from Record of Esoteric Buddhist Practice Instructions by Nona Hutuktu

Selected Excerpts from Buddhist Sūtras

The Lotus Treasury Sūtra:
"If one upholds the sacred mantra of Avalokiteśvara, one can obtain wealth, food, and other necessities; avoid encounters with enemies, infectious diseases, poisons, weapons, imprisonment, and untimely accidental death; and be liberated from them."

The Thousand-Armed and Thousand-Eyed Sūtra:

"If food or drink has been poisoned, and one single-mindedly recites the Great Compassion Mantra of Avalokiteśvara, then consuming it will instead become the enjoyment of excellent celestial food."

The Eleven-Faced Sūtra:
"If one recites this mantra, one will be watched over by a thousand eyes and protected by a thousand hands. If water is blessed with this mantra, whoever drinks it will certainly have their karmic obstacles purified. Anyone who hears this mantra,

or whom the sound of the mantra touches as it is carried by the wind, can likewise purify karmic obstacles."

The Sūtra of the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra:
"Whoever recites or brings to mind the mantra 'Om Mani Padme Hum' can avoid the harm of all illnesses and be liberated from them, purify all karmic obstacles, obtain long life, and increase their enjoyment of wealth."

The Sūtra of the Wheel of Sovereignty:
"If one recites the Six-Syllable Great Bright Mantra 1,800 times each day, one purifies all evil karma and obstacles and is liberated from adverse conditions such as illness and demons."

The Sūtra of the One Hundred and Eight Names:
"Those who recite Om Mani Padme Hum will not fall into the three lower realms; will not contract leprosy, skin diseases such as yellow-water sores, abscesses, emphysema, or any other illnesses brought about by their karma; and will be liberated from them. They will be able to remember all past lives and, at the end of life, be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."

Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra:
"That Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara: the six-syllable great dhāraṇī is difficult to encounter. If anyone can recite his name, they will be born within his pores and will not undergo sinking into the cycle of rebirth. Emerging from one pore, they will again proceed to enter another pore, abiding there until they attain the ground of perfect cessation."

The Precious Casket Sūtra: "Whoever hears the six-syllable true words, 'Om Mani Padme Hum,' will, at the end of life, be guided by twelve Buddhas and eight great bodhisattvas to be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss."