

## Appendix F

### ‘On the Easier Practice’ (易行品) (of Faith), Chapter Nine of The Discourse About the Scripture on the Ten Levels of Grounding (Daśa Bhūmika Vibhāṣā Śāstra, 十住毘婆沙論) Attributed to Nāgārjuna (龍樹).

A summary of the eight different parts of this chapter includes:

- A. **The Difficult Path vs. The Easy Path:** The preliminary work of the bodhisattvas in seeking the stage of never turning back in their resolve (avini vartanīya, 阿惟越致) over a three-fold cycle of countless lifetimes (trini asaṃkhyeya kalpa, 三阿僧祇劫) was described in chapter eight of this work. In the course of their practice, there is great danger of falling back into the trap of just being a student of the noble path (śrāvaka, 聲聞) or self-enlightened being (pratyeka buddha, 辟支佛), focused only on one’s own deliverance and neglecting the greater purpose of delivering all sentient beings. In the latter age when the Buddha is no longer in the world and there is the demise of his dispensation (saddharma vipralopa, 末法), the spiritual capacities of people will be weak and not enable them to cultivate the arduous practices necessary to reach this stage of never turning back. For them, the Buddha devised a quicker and easier path of practice that is based on faith (śraddhā vimukti, 信解).
- B. **The Timeless Buddhas in the Ten Directions:** The names of these Buddhas appear in The Scripture on the Great Garland of Universal Enlightenment (Mahā Vaipulya Buddha Avataṃsaka Sūtra, 大方廣佛華嚴經), The Scripture on the Lotus Blossom of Sublime Purpose (Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra, 妙法蓮華經) and other great vehicle scriptures. These Buddhas personify the timeless virtues of the Buddha’s spiritual life (dharma kāya, 法身) and the Pure Lands they are found in. Through worship of these Buddhas, the summoning of their names and meditation on their virtues, the faithful accept and employ them and they are able to work through their lives.
- C. **The Many Names of the Buddhas:** Although ultimately there is only one Buddha, there are countless names expressing the Buddhas’ limitless virtues through which the faithful seek to summon the Buddha nature in their own spiritual lives as well as those of all sentient beings. The names of the Buddhas personify the virtues found in the words of the scriptures. 107 are listed in the extant text but 7 are repeats, so actually 100 names are cited.
- D. **The Easier Path based on the vows of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus) in the west:** Although there are countless names of the Buddhas, in order to focus the mind with perfect mental resolve (samādhi, 三昧), ultimately it is necessary to focus on a single name that includes the virtues of all of them. In terms of directions, the east is a metaphor for looking back at the past (transcendental knowledge of the perfect mirror of life’s greater purpose through introspection with stillness of mind) while the west is a metaphor for looking towards the future (the arising of vows through transcendental knowledge of observing life’s greater purpose with subtly compassionate discernment). The former is most efficacious for becoming aware of karmic obstacles while the latter is the most efficacious for those of faith who are trying to overcome these obstacles.
- E. **Six Buddhas of the Past, One of the Present & One of the Future:** The lineage of the Buddhas guiding the people of this world over time are worshiped, summoned and contemplated.
- F. **Eleven Buddhas of the Eastern Quarter:** The virtues found in the transcendental knowledge of the perfect mirror of life’s greater purpose are worshiped, summoned and contemplated.
- G. **The Buddhas of the Past, Present & Future:** The Buddhas of the past, present and future are praised generally.
- H. **The Great Bodhisattvas:** The countless virtues of the bodhisattvas in the community of faith (saṃgha, 僧) who fulfill the Buddhas’ transcendental knowledge through practical application in this world are summoned and praised.

For the sake of brevity, the following is a translation of only sections A and D of this chapter:

#### A. The Difficult Path vs. The Easy Path

The preliminary work for bodhisattvas seeking the stage of never turning back (avini vartanīya, 阿惟越致) has been explained in the previous chapter (Chapter 8 of this work ‘On the Characteristics of Never Turning Back’). Those who seek this stage may reach it after performing various arduous practices for a long time. In the course of practice there is great danger of falling into the trap of just being a student of the noble path (śrāvaka, 聲聞) or self-enlightened being (pratyeka buddha, 辟支佛). As explained (earlier in this work) in the verse on ‘Aids to Attaining Spiritual Awakening’ (bodhipakṣa dharma, 助道法):

When you have fallen into (just being) a student of the noble path (śrāvaka, 聲聞)  
Or a self-enlightened being (pratyeka buddha, 辟支佛),  
It is called the spiritual death of a being awakening to a greater sense of purpose (bodhisattva, 菩薩).  
It follows that all merit earned will ultimately be lost and of no avail.

Even being stuck in hell  
Is not as fearsome.  
Being stuck on these two lesser tracks  
Is the greatest fear of all.

When falling into hell  
One may still ultimately reach enlightenment, but  
When falling into these two lesser tracks  
One is ultimately blocked from the path of enlightenment.

The Buddha himself taught about  
This very matter in the scriptures.  
It is like a person greedily attached to his own life  
Whose greatest fear is being beheaded.

Awakened beings (bodhisattvas) are also like this;  
They should bear the greatest fear  
In being stuck on the two lesser tracks  
Of being just a student of life's purpose or a self-enlightened being.

*Question:*

If, because of this, the Buddhas taught an easier practice to more quickly enter into the ways and means of never turning back (avini vartanīya, 阿惟越致), please teach it to us.

*Answer:*

Your words are those of a coward and a weakling, one without a great aspiration. They are not the words of one with courage and determination. Why is this so? When one raises a vow to seek perfect universal enlightenment (anuttara samyak sambodhi, 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提), one has yet not attained this stage of never turning back. In the meantime, one should not be stingy with one's life or one's livelihood, exerting oneself day and night as if one needed to put out a fire on one's head. And as it is said in the verse on The Aids to Realizing Awakening (bodhipakṣa dharma, 助道法):

Bodhisattvas who have not yet entered  
The stage of never turning back,  
Should always strive to be diligent  
As if they were putting out a fire on their heads.

Since they carry heavy burdens  
In their pursuit of awakening (bodhi, 菩提) to the nature of life's greater purpose,  
They should always strive to be diligent  
And never bear a mind of laziness or negligence.

Even those who seek to become students of the noble path (śrāvakas, 聲聞)  
Or self-enlightened beings (pratyeka buddhas, 辟支佛),  
Only attaining realization for their own benefit,  
Should always strive to be diligent.

How much more so is this true for bodhisattvas  
Delivering themselves as well as others.  
They should strive a million times more diligently  
Than these two kinds of people on lesser tracks.

The Buddha taught those who practice the greater vehicle (mahāyāna, 大乘) this way. Fulfilling a vow to seek the path of enlightenment is more difficult than lifting up the entire universe. You spoke of the stage of never turning back being extremely difficult to attain and taking a long time. You then asked me if there was an easier path of practice whereby people could attain this stage more quickly. These words are cowardly and ignoble. They are not

those of a brave man with a strong aspiration. However, since you insist on hearing about this method, I will now explain it to you. There are innumerable doors of entry into the transcendental nature of the Buddha's true purpose. In this world, there are both difficult and easy paths. For example, traveling by foot is painful while traveling by boat is pleasant. It is the same way on the bodhisattva path. Some exert themselves in their practice diligently, while others quickly enter the stage of never turning back through an easier practice that is based on faith.

(For the sake of brevity, sections B, C, E, F, G & H are omitted here as they are primarily a listing of the many different names of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas)

*D. The Easier Path based on the transcendental vows of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus) in the west*

The original vow of the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus) is as follows:

“When people recall my life, invoke my name and turn their lives over to me with a certainty of mental resolve (samādhi, 必定), may they realize the supreme universal enlightenment (anuttara samyak saṃbodhi, 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提).”

For this reason, they should always mindfully praise this Buddha's name in verse.

The Enlightened Being of Infinite Light & Discernment,  
Has a body like a mountain of pure gold.  
I worship this Buddha in thought, word and deed  
Joining my palms and bowing my head.

The sublime golden radiance of the Buddha's grace  
Flows into all worlds everywhere  
Enhancing their own colors accordingly.  
So I bow my head in worship.

When people at the end of their lives,  
Attain rebirth in this Buddha's land,  
They will be endowed with infinite merit.  
So I turn my life over to the Buddha.

When people can recall the life of this Buddha  
With its infinite powers and awesome virtues,  
They will enter into a certainty of mental resolve.  
So I ever recall the Buddha's name.

When the lives of these people come to an end  
And are subject to many sufferings,  
They will not fall into the evils of hell.  
So I turn my life over to the worship of the Buddha.

If people are reborn in this Buddha's land,  
They will never again fall into the three evil realms  
Or among the giants of ego (asuras, 阿修羅).  
I now turn my life over to and worship the Buddha.

Those of heaven and humanity all look alike here,  
Each like the peak of a golden mountain.  
There are so many distinguished places of refuge here.  
And so I bow my head in worship.

Those reborn in this land  
Are endowed with divine eyes and ears.  
Nothing in the ten directions obstructs their vision or hearing  
I bow my head to this most honored of noble beings.

The sentient beings in this land  
Are endowed with spiritual powers that penetrate the mind,  
Knowing their past lives as well as those of others.  
And so I turn my life over to and worship the Buddha.

Those reborn in this land  
Are freed from the attachments of 'me' and 'mine',  
And no longer produce these mental speculations.  
So I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

Free from the prison that is the three-fold sphere of sentient existence  
There are countless students of the noble path in this land  
With eyes like lotus petals.  
So I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

The sentient beings of this land  
Have a nature that is gentle and compliant,  
Spontaneously performing the ten virtuous kinds of action.  
I bow my head to its noble lord.

Those here performing virtuous actions that are pure of affliction;  
Are incalculable in number.  
They are the noblest of all human beings.  
So I turn my life over to the Buddha.

When people vow to become enlightened,  
With their minds recalling the Buddha of Infinite Life (Amitāyus),  
The grace of this Buddha's spiritual life will be revealed before them.  
So I turn my life over to the Buddha.

Through the power of the Buddha's original vow,  
Bodhisattvas descend from the ten directions  
To make offerings and hear about the true nature of life's purpose.  
So I bow my head to the Buddha.

The awakened beings (bodhisattvas) of this land  
Are endowed with the (32) auspicious signs and (80) excellent refinements  
Perfectly adorning their own lives.  
And so I now turn my life over to and worship the Buddha.

The great bodhisattvas of this land  
Make offerings to the Buddhas of the ten directions  
Three times each and every day.  
So I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

If a person sows the roots of virtue  
With doubts, the lotus blossom (of spiritual rebirth) will not open up.  
For one with purity of faith  
This blossom will open up and one will see the Buddha.

The Buddhas present in the ten directions  
Through different causes and conditions  
Praise this Buddha's merits.  
I now turn my life over to and worship the Buddha.

The Buddha's land is beautifully adorned  
Superior to the palaces in the heavens (of meditation).  
Its merits are deep and vast.  
So I bow at the Buddha's feet.

The soles of the Buddha's feet bear the thousand-spoked wheel.  
They are soft, gentle and lotus-colored.  
All those who see this rejoice.  
I bow my head and worship at the Buddha's feet.

A light emanates from the white curl of hair in the middle of the Buddha's brow  
Its luster is like that of the pure moon,  
Adding to the luster of the Buddha's countenance.  
I bow my head and worship at the Buddha's feet.

When originally seeking the path of enlightenment,  
The Buddha performed many marvelous works  
As described in the scriptures.  
I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

The Buddha's teachings  
Destroy the roots of evil;  
They are beautifully worded and bring about great benefits.  
I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

These beautifully worded teachings  
Cure all attachments and addictions to pleasure  
They have delivered beings in the past and they deliver them now.  
So I bow my head and worship the Buddha.

The Buddha is the most honored being among the heavens and humanity.  
The gods bow their heads and worship the Buddha,  
With their crowns made of the seven treasures touching his feet.  
So I turn my life over to the Buddha.

All those that are noble and virtuous  
And the hosts of humanity and heaven  
All turn their lives over to the Buddha together.  
So I, too, worship the Buddha.

Piloting the boat of the noble eight-fold path  
The Buddha has delivered people over the sea difficult to cross;  
Having already crossed it, they now deliver others.  
I worship the one who has mastered this deliverance.

Even if all the Buddhas  
Praised the Buddha's merit for countless lifetimes  
They could not fully honor it.  
So I turn my life over to the pure humanity of the Buddha.

Like them,  
I praise this Buddha's infinite virtues.  
By this act of blessing,  
May the Buddha ever keep me in mind.

Whatever merit, great or small  
I have acquired in this or previous lives,  
May I in the presence of the Buddha  
Always retain a purity of heart.

Through these blessings  
And the most sublime virtues of the Buddha's grace  
May all sentient beings everywhere  
Acquire it as well.