





Welcome  
to the  
Monastery

A Guide for New Visitors

DHARMA REALM BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION

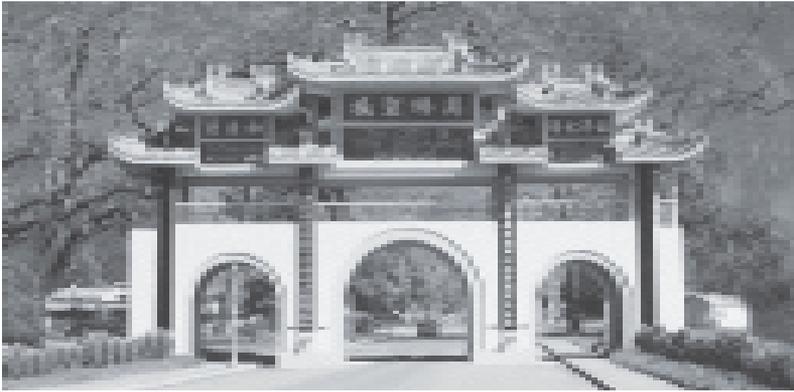
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## Welcome

Welcome to a Buddhist monastery. You have entered an extraordinary place that is devoted to spiritual practice and personal transformation. It is a place where you can let go of worldly concerns and focus on some of the deeper questions in life: “Who am I? Where am I going? And, how can I selflessly benefit others?”

The monastery is also the home of monks and nuns who have dedicated their lives to following the Buddhist path to awakening. Their lives are simple, allowing them to focus on the study and practice of Buddhism. There are many lay people and visitors that frequent the monastery as well. Some are regular supporters of the monastery, while others are simply curious about the lifestyle here.

We welcome you and hope your visit is meaningful and worthwhile. This booklet is designed to provide some background and basic information for you as new visitors and to give you a glimpse of what life is like in the monastery.

# Buddhism: A Historical Perspective

Several thousand years ago, Siddhartha Gautama was born as a prince into a small kingdom. Upon his birth, a seer foretold that he would either become a spiritual guide or a great ruler. His father wanted his son to be the next ruler to carry on his family line, so he attempted to shield his son from all the unpleasantness of life. However, when Prince Siddhartha turned twenty-nine, he witnessed sickness, old age, and death, and resolved to find an answer to these universal sufferings.

He left the palace and studied under meditation masters of his time, but after mastering their techniques, he found that he had not answered his fundamental questions. He then undertook strict ascetic practices, to a point where he was near death, but found himself still no closer to liberation. Reflecting on his previous experiences, he realized that the path consisted of the Middle Way, which avoided the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification.

He then made a vow that he would sit under the Bodhi tree until he attained complete liberation. During the very first night, Prince Siddhartha awoke to the Dharma, the way things truly are, and became known as the Buddha, “The Awakened One.”

Upon his awakening, Prince Siddhartha realized that all beings have the capacity to be fully awake, but their inherent potential is covered by deluded thinking and worldly attachments. Hence, his teachings over the next forty-nine years aimed at helping people return to their original enlightened nature.

Over the millennia, the teachings of the Buddha have spread across many parts of Asia. In Sri Lanka, Burma, Cambodia, and Thailand, a form of Buddhism is practiced known as the Theravada tradition, or “The Teaching of the Elders.” In China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea, and Tibet, the Buddha’s teachings are widely practiced in a tradition known as the Mahayana, “The Great Vehicle.”

In the last one hundred years, all of these different cultural expressions and Buddhist traditions have come to America. Since Buddhism has always adapted itself to the cultures of the countries in which it was taught, hum Buddhism will develop in America still remains to be seen.



A discussion among monastics from many Buddhist traditions at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.



## Introduction to the Founder

The Venerable Master Hsuan Hua (1918-1995), founder of this monastery, was born into a poor family in a small village in Manchuria. He attended school for only two years before he had to return home to take care of his ailing mother. At home, he opened a free school for both children and adults who had even less opportunity than he did. Also as a young boy, he had his first encounter with death and became aware of the impermanence of life. Upon learning that Buddhism had a method for ending the cycle of death and rebirth, he resolved to become a monk.

His mother died when he was nineteen, and he then spent three years in solitary meditation beside his mother's grave. He then entered the monastic life at Three Conditions Monastery in Harbin. Seeing firsthand the hungry and impoverished, he began to practice eating one meal a day, wishing that the food he did not eat would go to feed others. He also diligently studied the Buddhist scriptures, while maintaining a vigorous practice. He felt that both were needed to gain a balanced understanding of Buddhism.

In 1962, Master Hua came to the United States, and by 1968, he had established the Buddhist Lecture Hall in San Francisco where he taught many young Americans. In 1969, five of the Master's American disciples resolved to become monastics thus forming the first Mahayana Buddhist monastic Sangha composed of Westerners. During the subsequent years, the Master trained and oversaw the ordination of hundreds of monks and nuns who came from all over the world to study with him.

Believing in the importance for Buddhists to ground themselves in traditional scriptures, the Master spoke straightforward and practical commentaries to the Sutras. He also encouraged the translation of the Sutras into Western languages.

Master Hua had a lifelong commitment to education. He established a number of schools and exhorted educators and students to think of school not only as a place to learn a skill, but as a place to develop moral character.

With an open heart, the Master welcomed people of diverse religious faiths and backgrounds. He once asked the Roman Catholic leader Paul Cardinal Yubin if he would be “a Buddhist among the Catholics,” adding, “and I’ll be a Catholic among the Buddhists. If we work together we can bring peace among our religions.” Cardinal Yubin subsequently helped the Master found the Institute for World Religions. As a guest speaker at interfaith gatherings, the Master exhorted people to be true followers of their religious founder’s vision and not fight amongst themselves.

Master Hua was a wonderful storyteller with a great sense of humor, a kind father figure who gave encouragement when times were hard, and a strict teacher who held his disciples to high standards. Throughout his life, he hoped to serve as a bridge for others to walk on, so that they could go from confusion and suffering to wisdom and happiness. His energy still continues in the monastery.





## Ceremonies:

### The Heartbeat of the Monastery

The ceremonies can be considered as the heartbeat of the monastery because they provide a structure and rhythm for daily life. They are also times when the community gathers together to practice, thus bringing a sense of cooperation and harmony to the monastery. Numerous visitors are often surprised to find that their most meaningful memories of their visits are of participating in ceremonies. One college student, after attending a bowing ceremony, commented that she felt like she was connecting to an ancient practice that her own background never gave her. A few more benefits are described in an article “Introduction to Buddhist Ceremonies.”

- 1. Ceremonies satisfy the human spirit’s need to find an anchor, a refuge with a higher and purer vision beyond human imperfection.*
- 2. Ceremonies put us in touch with our roots, as we take part in a ritual observance that has been handed down for generations, spanning many successive cultures, languages, and musical patterns. They*

*put us where we belong between heaven and earth. Bowing, in particular, sets the mind in balance and subdues the body.*

*3. Ceremonies can open our inherent wisdom, and can lead to an elevated state of clear seeing and keen insight.*

Ceremonies are a way to transform our body, mind, and spirit, and the best way to find out how this transformation occurs is to participate in one and experience it for yourself. Here are some basic tips on how to participate in the ceremony. (Another way is just to observe or follow people who look like they know what they are doing.)

First, the ceremony begins with three and a half bows. **Bowing** is a practice in humility, as well as a gesture of respect. In Buddhism, bowing is often misunderstood in the West as bowing to idols, but it really is a method for overcoming our egoism and finding our true nature. The Buddhas are not thought of as beings separate from ourselves, but are symbolic of our potential for awakening. When you are mindful as you bow, the seeds of humility and respect in your heart are nurtured and watered.



You begin with your palms together, and as you bend down, put your right hand in the center of the cushion (or directly in front of you on the ground), and then as your body rocks forward, you ease both knees down on the bench or floor as you bring your left hand to the cushion. With your weight now primarily on your knees, you adjust your hands so that to provide space for your head, which you lower to the cushion or floor between your two hands. As your head touches the cushion, you turn your hands palm up. Coming up from the bow is the same process in reverse. You turn your hands palm down, while lifting your head from the cushion, then place your right hand in the center of the cushion. If needed, place your left hand on your left knee for support as you rise. Push firmly to bring yourself back into a standing position with your palms together again. You have completed a full bow.

When three bows are made, a final half-bow from the waist usually follows. Any time you enter to pay respect to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, it is appropriate to make three full bows and one half-bow. We hope you will find that bowing is something easy to learn and meaningful to practice. Since this is probably your first time in the monastery, you should refer to a *Daily Recitation Handbook* to follow along through the ceremony.

**Chanting** is an important part of the cultivation in the monastery. To get a full experience of chanting, it is important to be single-minded and concentrated. You'll find that if you chant in a concentrated way, then at the end, you will feel recharged and energized in body and mind.

If the chanting is in English, it should be pretty easy to follow, but

if it is in Chinese, it takes a bit more effort (unless you know Chinese). Don't be discouraged if the first few times you get lost or don't know where you are, because it is actually quite difficult the first few times. Fortunately, there are some things that can help to orient you in the *Handbook*. First, the resounding thump on the "wooden fish" (a block of wood that is shaped like a fish) gives the rhythm and pace of the chant. Each knock of the wooden fish is one Chinese character (or syllable of sound). Sometimes, on the page, there is a symbol that is a circle within a circle, which denotes the striking of the big bell. These are helpful markers in case you get lost. Also, people are usually very happy to point out where you are in the *Handbook*. If you can't follow or keep up, you can simply concentrate on the sounds or read the English translations of the chants.

There are **three main ceremonies** that occur in the monastery: morning ceremony, the meal offering, and evening ceremony. All three of these ceremonies are chances for the community to practice together. Just as many different kinds of medicines are needed to heal different types of illnesses, the ceremonies include many distinct practices to give each person something that they find meaningful and transformative. We will describe some of these different practices in the next section.





## Daily Life in the Monastery

The clapping of boards at 3:30AM wakes everyone up for **morning ceremony**, which takes place from 4-5AM. At four in the morning, the stars are still out and the world is asleep. Since our thinking processes have not started full force yet, it is a little easier to concentrate. In fact, it is often quite insightful to see what is going on in our minds this early in the morning.

The ceremony begins with the recitation of the *Shurangama Mantra*, one of the longest and most powerful mantras in Buddhism. The effects of this mantra are many, such as protecting the world from disasters, eradicating past negative karma, and ultimately developing an unshakable concentration.

The ceremony continues with the *Heart Sutra*, which is considered as the essence of the Buddha's wisdom that transcends all dualities. Since the *Heart Sutra* speaks on the emptiness of all phenomena, it serves as a reminder for the practitioner to not get attached to the merits and benefits accrued from participating in the ceremony.

Accessing this transcendent wisdom requires a concentrated and sincere mind; hence, in the monastery, memorizing and reciting Sutras is a way of focusing the mind. In Buddhism, wisdom does not come from gathering more information (which is endless), but rather by uncovering your inherent wisdom (which is complete already).

The morning ceremony ends with the *Bowing to the Patriarchs*. Each of the patriarchs has an inspiring story showing how they underwent considerable hardship and difficulty to keep the Dharma alive. Without their hard work and dedication, the teachings that lead us out of suffering would not be available to us now. And so mindful of their hard work, we bow in gratitude.

After the morning ceremonies, people begin their work for the day. Working in the monastery is considered a blessing, because we can create stronger affinities with the Dharma. Also this is planting blessings for the future because good actions reap good results. By supporting the monastery and others cultivating a spiritual path now, we will be supported by others in the future.



The next major ceremony is the **meal offering** before the lunchtime meal. The food is offered to the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and all beings wishing that they can also partake in what we have. In the monastery, the simple act of eating becomes a chance to practice the Dharma. During the meal, people are encouraged to be mindful of the five contemplations, which are given below in verse:

- 1. This offering of the faithful is the fruit of work and care.*
- 2. I reflect upon my conduct; have I truly earned my share?*
- 3. Of the poisons of the mind, the most destructive one is greed.*
- 4. As medicine cures illness, I take only what I need*
- 5. To sustain my cultivation and to realize the Way,*  
*So we contemplate in silence on this offering today.*

All the food that we eat in the monastery comes as offerings from the generosity of others. The food, then, is taken with a sense of gratitude and thankfulness. To cherish one's blessings, no food is wasted. People are encouraged to take as much as they like (going back for seconds or thirds if need be), but make sure they finish all they take.

The food is also **vegetarian**, and for those who choose, vegan as well. There are many reasons people in the monastery are vegetarian: compassion for animals, protecting the environment, sustaining personal health and well-being, and creating wholesome karma. We try to minimize the amount of suffering we create through our lifestyles and eating habits. Buddhism also teaches that food has a profound connection with our thoughts and desires, and being vegetarian helps us have clearer minds and more compassionate hearts.

In Buddhism, the monastics traditionally give a **Dharma talk** at the end of the meal. There is a mutual relationship between laity and monastics, where the laity provides sustenance and material support (traditionally: bedding, clothing, food, and medicine), and the monastics give teachings to the laity. Depending on the monastery, there is sometimes a Dharma talk or often a taped lecture of Master Hua instead. His instructions remind everyone to practice diligently and vigorously. For many, because of the immense respect they have for the Master, his words carry special weight and have the power to inspire and encourage.

After the noon meal, there is the **Great Compassion Repentance**, which is a ceremony focusing on Avalokiteshvara (Chinese: *Guan Shi Yin*), the Bodhisattva of Great Compassion. Repentance is a central practice in Buddhism because it allows us to turn a new leaf—to recognize what we have done wrong, to repent of our mistakes, and to reform ourselves for the better. The ceremony gives a form to the very personal act of repentance. Doing this in a communal setting also adds to its power. Many people report that the ceremonies leave them feeling cleansed in body, mouth, and mind. More specifically, the body is purified through bowing, the mouth through chanting, and the mind through positive intentions and concentration.

**Evening ceremony** is the next time the community gathers. The ceremony begins with the *Incense Praise* and is followed by either the *Amitabha Sutra* or the Eighty-eight Buddhas Repentance. The *Amitabha Sutra* is a teaching about Amitabha Buddha and his Pure Land, the Land of Ultimate Bliss. The *Sutra* gives a description of the radiance of the Land of Ultimate Bliss, which is adorned with

many different treasures. In addition, the music and scenery causes its inhabitants to always be mindful of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This is an ideal place for cultivation, and the people who go there are assured irreversibility on the path to Buddhahood. Then, with the steadfast resolve of a great Bodhisattva, the inhabitants can return to this world to help others awaken to the Way and let go of all greed, anger, and delusion.

Another way of approaching the Pure Land teaching is to see it applying to every thought. Every kind, compassionate, and selfless thought is like being in the Pure Land, and every greedy, angry, and deluded thought is like being stuck in the world of suffering. The Pure Land, then, exists in the present state of our minds.

In the middle of the ceremony, the entire congregation recites the *Four Great Vows* of the Bodhisattva. They are:

1. *I vow to rescue the countless beings.*
2. *I vow to eliminate the inexhaustible afflictions.*
3. *I vow to learn the innumerable Dharma practices.*
4. *I vow to realize the unsurpassed path of the Buddha.*

These Four Great Vows relate to the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha. The first noble truth of suffering becomes the Bodhisattva's vow to free all beings from suffering. The second noble truth identifies ignorance and craving as the source of suffering, and accordingly, the Bodhisattva vows to transform all afflictions. The third vow of learning all the Dharma-doors (i.e. methods for ending suffering) relates to the fourth noble truth of following the Eightfold Path. And finally, the third noble truth that suffering can cease becomes the

Bodhisattva's fourth vow which is to become a Buddha, who is able to lead all beings to complete awakening.

The evening ceremony is followed by a **Sutra lecture**, which is a chance to hear the words of the Buddha explained in a traditional setting. The lecture begins with a Dharma Request, where one person (sometimes more) formally requests the Dharma by circumambulating the speaker three times. This period of silence is a chance to settle the mind before listening to the teachings. The lecture itself actually varies considerably depending on the Sutra, the speaker, and the audience. In general, the Sutra lecture is a chance to use the Dharma as a tool for reflecting on the day and developing one's wisdom. At the end of the lecture, there is the *Dedication of Merit*:

*May the merit and virtue accrued from this work*

*Adorn the Buddhas' Pure Lands,*

*Repaying four kinds of kindness above*

*And aiding those suffering in the paths below.*

*May those who see and hear of this*

*All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi*

*And, when this retribution body is over,*

*Be born together in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.*

This dedication is a form of Buddhist prayer where all our merit is transferred for the benefit of all beings.

The last ceremony in the monastery brings together all the energy and work of the day. In the beginning, the *Heart of the Shurangama Mantra* is recited 108 times at a fairly rapid pace (memorizing it makes it much easier to follow). Finally, the day in the monastery ends with the *Verse of Exhortation* that encourages the assembly to be vigorous

and mindful of impermanence. Who knows if this day will be the last day one can cultivate and practice? With that thought, everyone files out of the Buddha hall chanting “Namo Amitufo.” The day is over, but the next day is just around the corner ready to start at 4AM the next morning.



## Guidelines for Your Visit

### *Separation of Men and Women*

Usually the first thing people notice when they visit is that men and women are separated. The reason for this separation is to allow everyone to focus on the practice with fewer distractions.

### *Comfortable and Modest Clothing*

Clothing in the monastery should be comfortable and modest. Comfortable clothing is ideal for meditation and cultivation because it allows you to bow and sit cross-legged unimpeded. Modest clothing is important because it causes fewer distractions for other people. As a visitor, please refrain from wearing clothing such as mini-skirts, shorts and sleeveless shirts. (If you already are wearing them, don't worry about it. We are very happy to have you, but please try to be more careful next time you visit.)

### *Cherishing All Forms of Life*

Please refrain from killing any living creatures in the monastery, including even small insects such as spiders, ants, flies, or mosquitoes. Buddhists practice non-harming in order to cultivate a heart of compassion and empathy for others. In Buddhism, all life forms are interconnected, and all creatures are considered “family.”

### *Respecting Buddhist Sutras and Texts*

Buddhist Sutras and texts are the words of the Buddhist sages that give instructions on how to become awakened, and for this reason they are treated with utmost care and respect. Furthermore, our attitude toward a sacred text affects our ability to access the teachings contained within it. Hence, people are encouraged not to put Buddhist books on the ground or bring them into the bathroom. Other customs in the monastery are keeping Sutras in good condition and making sure one’s hands are clean before reading them. In general, the intent of all these customs is the same—to show one’s respect for the text.

### *Things Not to Bring into the Monastery*

Please do not bring alcohol, meat (including fish & poultry), eggs, illicit drugs, or cigarettes into the monastery.



## Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What do the different colors of robes and sashes signify?

A: The yellow robes with a brown or yellow sash are reserved for fully ordained monks and nuns. The grey robes with the brown sash signify novices, people who have made the resolve to begin the training to become a monastic. The lay people who have taken refuge and the five precepts wear the black robes with the brown sash, and the black robe without a sash can be worn by anyone.

Q: What does it mean to take refuge or take the five precepts?

A: Taking refuge with the Three Jewels (explained in “Helpful Buddhist Terms”) is a formal ceremony whereby one becomes a Buddhist. After taking refuge, one takes the Buddha as one’s spiritual teacher and ultimate place of refuge, the Dharma as the teachings that provide the methods to end suffering, and the Sangha as the ordained monastic community that embodies the practice.

The five precepts are: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no intoxicants. These precepts are thought of as guidelines for life. The Buddha, through seeing the workings of karma, taught these precepts as a way to help people to stop planting the seeds of suffering in their lives. Solid moral conduct is also the foundation for any spiritual growth. A person who takes the precepts makes a lifelong commitment to uphold them.

Q: Why are there *swastikas* in the Buddhist monastery?

A: This question has to be answered by giving a short history. The *swastika* is an ancient symbol that is shared by many different cultures: Indians, Chinese, Japanese, Europeans, and Native Americans, among others. This symbol represents life, prosperity, good luck, and strength; and in Buddhism, it is one of the marks of the Buddha symbolizing the perfection of virtue. In World War II, however, Adolf Hitler took the *swastika*, flipped it around, and made it a symbol of the Nazi regime, which now becomes associated with fascism, hate, and death. The corruption of this symbol is truly tragic for many Buddhists who see it in a positive light. In a way, this is a good chance to see how our minds create our realities, since two groups of people can have opposite interpretations of this symbol.

Q: When should I visit the monastery?

A: Please check when the monastery is open to the public. There are also a number of weekend retreats, week-long sessions, and days to volunteer or attend ceremonies. The front desk has a schedule of events at the monastery, and you are welcome to participate in any event you find interesting. Also, events are posted at [www.drba.org/events](http://www.drba.org/events), but still check with the person in the front office to be sure, because sometimes the dates or times may change.

Q: Where can I go if I have more questions?

A: Please ask the person in the front office. There is usually a person there answering the phone and greeting visitors. Answers to common questions can also be found online at [www.drba.org](http://www.drba.org)

(Dharma Realm Buddhist Association), [www.drba.org](http://www.drba.org) (Dharma Realm Buddhist University), and [www.drby.net](http://www.drby.net) (Dharma Realm Buddhist Youth). You can also send your questions by email to [info@drba.org](mailto:info@drba.org).

Q: Where can I learn more about Buddhism?

A: *Words of Wisdom: Beginning Buddhism* and *Dharma Talks in Europe* are good places to start to read some of the teachings by Master Hua. For Chan (Zen) meditation, *The Sixth Patriarch Sutra* contains the records of the life and teachings of Chan Master Hui Neng in China. If you would like some instructions in meditation and recitation, please refer to *Listen to Yourself, Think Everything Over, vol two*. To get an explanation of the Buddha's conception of reality, please read *The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not Beyond a Single Thought*. Another popular text that gives a first-hand account of two American monks on a bowing pilgrimage up the California coastline is *News From True Cultivators* (by Heng Sure and Heng Chau). These books can be found in the monastery or online at the Buddhist Text Translation Society ([www.bttsonline.org](http://www.bttsonline.org)). Audio and video files, as well as a live webcast, can all be found at [www.dharmaradio.org](http://www.dharmaradio.org).

For the study of Theravada Buddhism, we recommend *The Four Noble Truths* by Ajahn Sumedho, an American monk trained in the Thai forest monastery tradition. Abhayagiri Monastery also has a website filled with Dharma talks and meditation instructions ([www.abhayagiri.org](http://www.abhayagiri.org)).

Other resources abound in the United States, and we encourage

you to join a retreat or meditation/recitation session held at the various monasteries (information at [www.drba.org](http://www.drba.org), [www.drbu.org](http://www.drbu.org), and [www.drby.net](http://www.drby.net)).

It is said that if you only read about Buddhism without actually applying it to life, then it is like reading the directions for taking medicine without actually taking it. Hence, you never get better or see the benefits. In other words, the best way to learn about Buddhism is to practice it!

Q: Can I help out at the monastery?

A: Yes, please visit [www.drbavolunteers.org](http://www.drbavolunteers.org) for volunteer opportunities in DRBA.



A Sutra lecture at Berkeley Buddhist Monastery that is broadcast around the world.

# Helpful Buddhist Terms

**Amitabha Buddha** (Chinese: *Amitufo*) is the Buddha of Limitless Light. In the past, Amitabha Buddha was a cultivator who, after seeing how difficult it was to cultivate in this world, made forty-eight vows to create a Land of Ultimate Bliss where people can cultivate more easily and progress on the spiritual path. By being mindful of Amitabha Buddha, people have the opportunity to go to his Land of Ultimate Bliss after this life. Although less well known in America, the Pure Land practice is very popular in Asia. In fact, in the monastery, people often greet each other with palms together saying, “Amitufo.”

**Bodhisattva** can be split into two parts—Bodhi means “awakened” and sattva means “being.” Together, a Bodhisattva means an “awakened being” or “a being who awakens others.”

**Bodhi Resolve** is the resolve to become fully awake for the sake of all beings.

**Buddha** refers to someone who is completely awake and sees things as they truly are and thereby transcends all suffering. The Buddha has also put an end to the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion.

**Buddha-nature** is the innate, inherent potential to become a Buddha that resides in every being.

**Cultivation** essentially means “practice.” Spiritual practice is very similar to cultivating and tending a garden. We first need to prepare the soil, clear out the weeds, plant the seeds, water them everyday, and finally after some time the seeds grow. Cultivation captures the principle of patience and everyday hard work required in gaining the

fruits of Buddhist practice.

**Dharma** refers to the teachings of the Buddha. Another meaning is the reality that the Buddha realized upon enlightenment. But when not capitalized, dharma(s) refer(s) to all phenomena—everything, whether concrete or abstract.

**Dharma Realm** encompasses the entire universe ad infinitum. Buddhist cosmology does not speak simply of one world, or one universe, but rather speaks of world-systems upon world-systems extending beyond the bounds of space and time. Yet this infinite reality is not beyond a single thought in the mind.

**Dharma Protectors** are beings who dedicate themselves to protecting the Dharma. Many lay people who support and “protect” the monastery are considered Dharma Protectors. Dharma Protectors can also refer to spiritual beings, who protect the monastery and people who are sincerely cultivating the Way.

**Eightfold Path** consists of right understanding, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

**False Thinking** is having scattered and random thoughts that cover up our inherent wisdom. By developing a single-pointed mind from practice, we can penetrate through the myriad false thoughts and see reality as it is.

**Karma** refers to mental, physical, and verbal deeds, each of which are causes that will bring about corresponding results in the future. The deeds we do are also the result of our past karma. Buddhism teaches that our choices affect our karma. The saying goes: We are what we

have done and what we do we will become.

**Namo** has multiple meanings, two of which are “homage” or “I return to.” This is often used in chants such as “Namo Amitufo.”

**Sangha** literally means “community,” and in the traditional Buddhist definition refers to the ordained monastics.

**Shakyamuni Buddha** is the name of the historical Buddha who lived in India. Shakyamuni literally means sage (muni) of the Shakyan clan.

**Sutras** are the teachings of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, or other awakened beings certified by the Buddha.

**The Three Refuges / Triple Jewel** refer to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. They are refuges in the sense that they are dependable guides that we can rely on in life. They are called jewels because they are considered rare and precious.



## Conclusion

We hope this booklet has been useful to you in getting acquainted with life in the monastery. We would like to end with another Buddhist principle—”nothing is fixed.” Don’t worry if you feel awkward or unsure how to act. That’s how we all start out. Many of us come in the door spurred on by curiosity, a spiritual quest, or simply seeking a safe haven from the busyness of modern life. We couldn’t possibly list all the different reasons people come to the monastery, but simply put, the monastery is a place where we can let go of worldly concerns and possibly find answers to the deeper questions in life. We hope this booklet has helped you understand a little bit of the spirit and purpose of this monastery. Please enjoy your visit.



# Directory of Monasteries

## **The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas**

P.O. Box 217 / 4951 Bodhi Way, Ukiah, CA 95482 U.S.A.

Tel: (707) 462-0939

Fax: (707) 462-0949

Website: [www.drba.org](http://www.drba.org)

## **The International Translation Institute**

1777 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010-4504

Tel: (650) 692-5912

Fax: (650) 692-5056

## **Berkeley Buddhist Monastery / Institute for World Religions**

2304 McKinley Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94703 U.S.A.

Tel: (510) 848-3440

Fax: (510) 548-4551

E-mail: [paramita@drba.org](mailto:paramita@drba.org)

[www.berkeleymonastery.org](http://www.berkeleymonastery.org)

## **Gold Mountain Monastery**

800 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94108 U.S.A.

Tel: (415) 421-6117

Fax: (415) 788-6001

## **Gold Sage Monastery**

11455 Clayton Road, San Jose, CA 95127 U.S.A.

Tel: (408) 923-7243

Fax: (408) 923-1064

E-mail: [gsm@drba.org](mailto:gsm@drba.org)

## **The City of Dharma Realm**

1029 West Capitol Ave., West Sacramento, CA 95691 U.S.A.

Tel/Fax: (916) 374-8268

## **Gold Wheel Monastery**

235 N. Avenue 58, Los Angeles, CA 90042 U.S.A.

Tel/Fax: (323) 258-6668

E-mail: [drbagwm@pacbell.net](mailto:drbagwm@pacbell.net)

## **Long Beach Monastery**

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