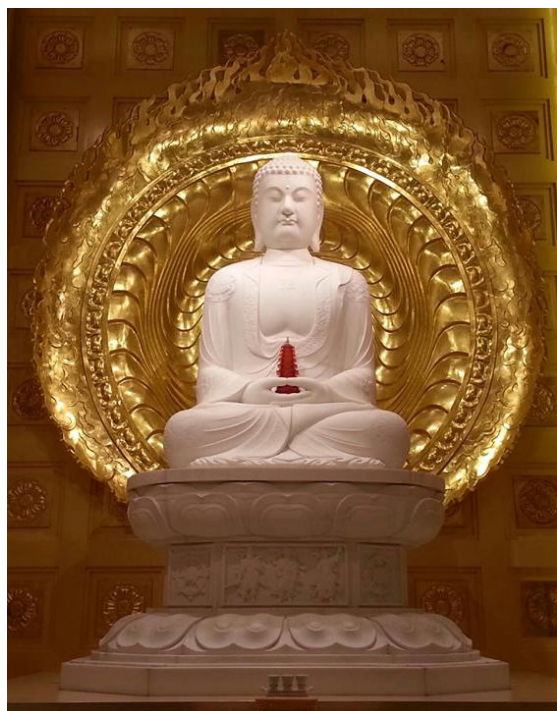


MEDICINE BUDDHA CEREMONY



The path to enlightenment consists of many ways of practice. These different practices serve to accommodate people with different dispositions, needs, and issues in their lives. The Medicine Buddha Ceremony is a practice that is especially good for those who are seeking relief from afflictions of the body and mind. In a Medicine Buddha Ceremony, participants gather in a magnificently decorated hall and chant the Medicine

Buddha Sutra together with mindfulness and respect. Chanting this sutra with single-minded concentration and whole-hearted sincerity will bring about the following benefits:

First, for those who are suffering from many physical ailments, who are poor and deprived of daily necessities, who often encounter disasters, accidents, or situations of distress and danger, chanting the Medicine Buddha Sutra will bring recovery from ailments, abundance and blessings to the participants and to the beings to whom the ceremony is dedicated.

Second, for those who have broken the precepts, or the rules of conduct set up by the Buddha, chanting this sutra can clear the sins and obstacles resulting from their transgressions.

When the Medicine Buddha was practicing to become a Buddha, he decided to help those who were sick, poor, and deprived find the path to

enlightenment once he attained Buddhahood. He made the following twelve vows:

1. May all beings look as radiant and magnificent as the Buddha.
2. May all beings be inspired and enlightened when they see the radiant light emanating from the Buddha.
3. May all beings have inexhaustible supplies to meet all their daily needs.
4. May those who have strayed from the path find their way to enlightenment, and those who have practiced for their own enlightenment alone be inspired to practice for the enlightenment of all beings and never regress from their Bodhisattva vows.
5. May all beings adhere to the practice of pure conduct and fully uphold the precepts.
6. May anyone who hears and recites my name obtain complete recovery from ailments and total relief from pain and suffering.
7. May all beings enjoy good health, peace and happiness, and go on to attain enlightenment.
8. May any women who wish to be reborn as men have their wish fulfilled.
9. May all beings learn to see things as they really are, and practice the Bodhisattva Way.
10. May all beings be free from worries, irritations and miseries.
11. May all beings get nourishment and satisfaction from an abundance of food and drinks and obtain peace, joy, and comfort from the Buddha's teachings.
12. May all beings obtain all the beautiful things they wish for.

However, merely wishing and praying for abundance in material things and comfort of the physical body will only give us temporary relief and blessings. To reap the true benefits of chanting the sutra, we should especially pay attention to this verse in the sutra: "Our mind should be free

of defilement and turbidity, free of anger and wickedness, filled with charity, compassion, joy, and selflessness, and open to embrace all beings and phenomena without bias and attachment.” This verse describes the state of mind of the Buddha. With the wisdom to see through the impermanent, changeable, and empty nature of all phenomena, the Buddha no longer has any greed or attachment for any possessions. With the compassion to feel the anguish suffered by every afflicted being and the wish to grant everyone real joy and comfort, the Buddha is forever free of anger and irritation toward anyone or anything. When we chant, practice, and live every moment of our lives with the state of mind of the Buddha, we will surely attain the fruit of enlightenment.