



# **THE AWAKENING OF FAITH**

**ASHVAGOSHA**

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# THE AWAKENING OF FAITH

BY  
ASHVAGOSHA

TRANSLATED BY TIMOTHY RICHARD

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*The Awakening of Faith By Ashvagosa.*

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# CONTENTS

Opening Hymn

1: Reasons For Writing The Book

2: The Fundamental Doctrine Of The Mahayana Faith

3: Expositions Of The Mahayana Faith

4: The Practice Of The Mahayana Faith

5: The Advantages Of The Practice Of The Mahayana Faith

The Closing Hymn

Translator's Supplementary Matter: The Great Physician's Twelve Desires  
(Vows)

The Creed Of Half Asia: To Sin King























things are reflected in a mirror, so does this faculty reflect what the five senses show instantaneously at all times. The fourth is the faculty used when distinguishing between the pure and impure. The fifth is the faculty used when it reflects impressions from one object to the other incessantly. It retains the past infinite manifestations of one's own existence with all their good and evil; it ripens into the knowledge of the causes of present and future joy and sorrow which are the unfailing results of our deeds; it is able to call up the past, lay it instantly before our mind, and to call up our finite knowledge of the future. Therefore the phenomena of the three worlds (of desire, of form, and of no form) are mind-made. Without mind, then, there is practically no objective existence. Thus all existence arises from imperfect notions of our mind. All differences are differences of the mind. But the mind cannot see itself, for it has no form. We should know that all phenomena are created by the imperfect notions of the finite mind, therefore all existence is like a reflection in a mirror, without substance, only a phantom of the mind. When the finite mind acts, then all kinds of things arise; when the finite mind ceases to act, then all kinds of things cease.

Next, the faculty of thought. This comes out of the fifth as above. In common men this is very strong. The consciousness of self and of environment and all the imperfect ideas arising from these, trying to distinguish between all the objects of the senses, is called thought, and is also called the independent faculty, as well as the faculty of distinguishing things. This increases with the senses, with desires, and with their sorrows.

(4) As to the origin of imperfect knowledge working in the finite, common men cannot understand this; nor can the wisdom of the two lower schools understand it; only the Bodhisattvas of Higher Buddhism, when they begin to get right faith, and when they can examine things properly and test the nature of the True Reality, can understand it. Spiritual men can obtain a small insight into this; but even the higher saints when they have attained to their perfect state cannot understand the whole of it. Only Buddha (God) understands all. The mind from the beginning is of a pure nature, but since there is the finite aspect of it which is sullied by finite views, there is the sullied aspect of it. Although there is this defilement, yet the original pure nature is eternally unchanged. This mystery only Buddha understands.

When we speak of the original nature of the mind, eternally without thought, we call it eternally unchanged. As the human mind originally does not know the True Model, the mind does not correspond with the outward universe. Then thought suddenly begins and is called the finite thought.

Confusion from correspondence with the objective. One can be delivered from this confusion by the two lower schools and be kept far from it in the station of full faith of the great school. Confusion arises through feeling corresponding with the objective. One can gradually avoid this by the cultivation of the means of deliverance in the full faith of the great school; by the cultivation to the First station in the pure state of the mind, all the confusion will be gone. (To understand these and the stations below, see *Guide to Buddhahood*, translated by the author.)<sup>1</sup>

Confusion through knowledge of differences by correspondence with the objective. By means of the second stage of separateness from the world, and by means of deliverance in the Seventh station, confusion will be gone.

Confusion through objective forms not corresponding with one another. By means of the Eighth station of freedom from form (or the immovable) all the confusion will be gone.

Confusion through subjective perception not corresponding with the objective. By means of the Ninth station, when the mind is free (in holy wisdom) the confusion can be got rid of.

Confusion through subjective sensation not corresponding with the objective. By means of the complete Ten stations of the saints one may enter the state of Tathagatahood, Buddhahood, and be delivered from this last of the confusions. As the finite mind does not comprehend the Universal Soul, it begins by the correspondence of faith to examine into things and to rid itself of confusion. In its progress towards purity of mind, it step by step gets rid of confusion, and when it arrives at the state of Tathagatahood it is able to be free from it altogether.

The meaning of correspondence is that the finite mind's ideas of the universal True Form differ according to their stages of confusion or

<sup>1</sup> *Hsuan Fo P'u*, Shanghai, 1907.

enlightenment, and that the perfected finite knowledge and the outside universe are exactly the same. The meaning of want of correspondence is that the finite mind is unenlightened and has never known these differences, and that its knowledge and the outside universe are not the same.

Again, the confused mind is a hindrance to thought and darkens the original wisdom of the True Reality. Ignorance is called the hindrance of wisdom, and darkens the natural wisdom of the world. What does this mean? It means that, owing to the confused mind, its perceptions, its objects and thoughts are not in accordance with the Eternal Nature. It means that, owing to the universal True Form being eternally at rest, without being finite or temporary, ignorance and unenlightenment differ from the eternal, therefore, they are unable to follow the perfect wisdom of all the universe.

(5) Next the finite state. This is of two kinds. First, the rough, ordinary state, when it corresponds with the finite mind. Second, the fine extraordinary state when it does not correspond with the finite mind. There is also the lowest of the ordinary, such as the state of common men, and the highest of the ordinary. There is, too, the lowest of the extraordinary, such as the state of the Bodhisattvas; and the highest of the extraordinary, such as the state of Buddha. These two kinds of the finite state arise from the different extent of the influence of ignorance. As to cause and effect, the cause is unenlightenment, the effect is the manufacture of a false imperfect world. If the cause is removed, then the effect is removed. If the imperfect cause ceases, then the imperfect mind which does not correspond with the real universe also ceases. If the result ceases to be erroneous, then the mind which corresponds with the real universe also ceases to be erroneous.

QUESTION 4. If the finite mind ceases, how can there be continuation? If there be continuation, how then do you speak of finally ceasing altogether?

ANSWER. What is destroyed is only the finite state of the mind, not the mind's being, just as wind in relation to water is a moving power. If there be no water, the effect of the wind is not apparent; there is nothing to show it. If the water remains, the state of the wind is made apparent; only when the wind ceases does the moving of the water cease. It is not the water that

ceases to exist. So ignorance in relation to the True Real Nature is made apparent.

If there were no True Real Nature of the mind, then all existence would not exist; there would be nothing to show it. If the True Real Nature of the mind remains, then finite mind continues. Only when the madness of finite mind ceases will the finite mind cease. It is not the Wisdom of the True Reality that ceases.

(6) Influences. There are four influences--the confused and the pure--incessantly at work. The first is a pure influence called the True Real One. The second is the cause of all confusion, called ignorance. The third is the confused mind, called sensation. The fourth is the false world as known to the senses and called the objective.

Influences may be thus illustrated. Clothes have no scent, but if anyone smoked them with incense, the clothes would then be perfumed like the incenses. So it is with influences. The True Reality is pure and has really no confusion colouring it, but ignorance in man colours his views, so that there is a confused state. The confusion caused by ignorance has really no true purity, but the True Reality influences the mind, so that there is an effort after the true purity.

(a) How is it that confused influences are acting incessantly? It is in relation to the True Model that there is ignorance as a cause of the confusion. This ignorance colours the True Model in the finite mind. As there is an influence at work, there arise false imperfect ideas, and these colour the True Model again so that one does not understand it. Unenlightenment then arises, bringing a new world of false conceptions on account of this result. These false ideas in turn colour other false conceptions again, causing the mind to be fixed on these, and to desire to do all sorts of things, incurring thus all kinds of trouble of both mind and body.

(i) The influences of the false objective world are of two kinds; namely, those which arise from increased thought, and those which arise from increased action.

(ii) The influences of the false imperfection of faculties are of two kinds; namely, those which arise voluntarily from faculties producing the highest saints of the lower school (the Hinayana), the highest saints of the middle school, and the highest saints (Bodhisattvas) of the advanced school (the Mahayana), causing them to suffer the sorrows of life and change; and those which arise involuntarily from faculties producing ordinary men and causing them to suffer the sorrows of successive transmigrations.

(iii) The influences of ignorance are of two kinds: first, those which arise from the very root of things--intuition--which give rise to imperfect sensation; and second, those which arise from the senses and desires, and which give rise to imperfect impressions.

(b) How is it that pure influences are acting incessantly? It is because there is a True Model able to influence the ignorant, a power at work causing man's misguided mind to dislike the sorrows of transmigration and to seek the joys of divine rest (Nirvana). As this ignorant mind is moved to dislike transmigration and love Nirvana, this fact influences the finite mind to believe that its nature is finite and to know that its finite mind is full of false ideas; and further, that there is no true objective world before men, and that therefore they are to cultivate some way of deliverance. As from the True Model man knows that there is no objective world, then the various means of following and obeying this True Model arise spontaneously (without thought and without action); and when influenced by this power for a long time, ignorance disappears. As ignorance disappears, then false ideas cease to arise. When false ideas cease to arise, the former objective world also ends. As the forces cease to exist, then the false powers of the finite mind cease to exist, and this is called NIRVANA, when the natural forces of the True Reality alone work.

(i) The influence of the imperfect mind is of two kinds, namely, that which arises from positiveness and literalness, as in common men and in those of the two lower schools, causing them to dislike the rounds of transmigration and, according to their strength, to gradually move towards the unsurpassed way of Buddhism; and that which arises from the five faculties of the mind, where the higher saints start to copy the True Model to reach Nirvana quickly.





































checking vain thoughts and make them follow miscellaneous matters and be chained by the many affairs of the world, so as to give men a certain kind of peace, somewhat similar to the true peace, but which is the product of outside religions and not the true peace of the Eternal.

Or, again, these evil spirits cause men for one, two, three, or even seven days, to remain in contemplation, as if enjoying delicious food; they are most happy in mind and body without any hunger or thirst; or they may be led to eat without any control, sometimes much and sometimes little, so that the countenance changes, and 'exhibits gladness or sorrow accordingly.

As there are such things, religious people should always wisely examine themselves, lest their minds should fall into the nets of heresy. They should carefully rectify their thoughts and neither adopt nor be attached to them, but keep themselves far from all delusions.

One should know that the peace of outside religions is of the senses, of the affections, to gratify self, desiring the honours of fame and the wealth of the world.

But the true peace is not in the realms of the senses or in possessions, and even after contemplation there is neither the feeling of having attained perfection with no further effort, nor conceit for what has been accomplished. All trials gradually diminish.

If men do not cultivate this peace, there is no other way to get the seed of the Tathagata, the Incarnate Lord.

As the peace of this world mostly arises from the pleasure which is given to the senses, it is bound to the three worlds of form, of desire, and of no-form, like that of the outside religions. Once men leave the guidance of sound wisdom, false doctrines at once arise.

(d) Next note that those who diligently set their minds on securing this peace, should, in the present generation, obtain ten advantages--

(1) All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas throughout all space always protect them.

- (2) None of the evil spirits can cause them any fear.
- (3) They cannot be deceived by any of the ninety-five kinds of outside religions.
- (4) They are far beyond questioning the deep things of the Buddhist religion, and great sins gradually diminish.
- (5) There is an end to all doubt and all kinds of heresies.
- (6) Faith in the world of the Tathagata (God Incarnate) grows.
- (7) They leave sorrow far behind in the minds of mortals, while they themselves have no fear.
- (8) Their spirits become gentle and peaceable, they put off pride and conceit, and are not troubled by other people's opinions.
- (9) Although they have not obtained full peace at all times and in every place, they are able to lessen their trials, and do not covet the world's pleasures.
- (10) When their peace is secured, they are unmoved by any seductions of outside attractions.

2. Now, if men practise only contemplation, the mind is damped, or gets weary, and does not rejoice in all goodness, but is far from pity; therefore it is necessary to cultivate reasoning or reflection.

- (a) One should reflect that nothing made throughout the universe can last long; in a moment it may be destroyed.
- (b) One should reflect that all thought rises and vanishes again like a wave, and is therefore a sorrow.
- (c) One should reflect that all the past is misty like a dream, that all the present is like lightning, that all the future rises suddenly like a cloud in the sky.
- (d) One should reflect that the bodies of all living beings are unclean, full of all kinds of uncleanness, and therefore not to be rejoiced in.

(e) Thus one should reflect that all living beings, from eternity down the ages, being influenced by ignorance, live and die and endure all the great sorrows of mind and body; and reflect on the endless trials of the present and on the immeasurable sorrows of the future, which cannot be got rid of and which men are scarcely aware of. When all men's lives are so full of sorrow, they are greatly to be pitied.

(f) Having thought of these things, one should stir oneself up to make a GREAT VOW to lead one's own soul to leave the finite and gain the infinite, cultivate every means of grace to deliver all men for ever from their sorrows and obtain the highest joys of Nirvana.

(g) Having made this great vow, one must not give up practising it or be weary in it, but at all times and all places engage in every good that is in one's power.

3. Whilst sitting in meditation, one's mind should be bent on checking vain thoughts. At other times one should reflect carefully in regard to everything whether it should or should not be done. Whether walking or resting, lying down or rising up, both reflecting and checking vain thoughts should go together. This is what is meant by the saying that although we practise all these things, our perfection is not really produced by ourselves, but by the nature of the Eternal working through us.

Again, thinking of the never-failing law of cause and effect, and joy and sorrow as the reward of good and evil, when we think of law we must also think of this goal so difficult to attain.

The practice of checking vain thoughts is to sever attachment to the world, and to put away the fears and weaknesses of the two lower schools of Buddhism.

The practice of reflection is to deliver from the narrow sin of the two lower schools, who do not have the vow of great pity for others, and who do not keep far from ordinary men who do not practise goodness.

In this way the two methods of reflection and the checking of vain thoughts are mutually helpful to one another and inseparable. If both are not practised, one cannot then enter on the way of wisdom.

4. Next consider those who begin to learn the five methods of this chapter, p. 81, and desire to get right faith, but are timid and weak. As they live in this world of extreme suffering, they fear they cannot constantly approach God (Buddha) and personally contribute to His service. Thus they fear they cannot attain to this perfect faith, and have a mind to renounce their search after it.

These should know that the Tathagata has most excellent means to strengthen their faith. It is by having the mind set only on the things, of God (Buddha), and by desiring that one may be born in another world of Buddha and be constantly with Him forever, far from all evil, that one may attain this end. As the Sutra says, if a man sets his mind to think only of God (the Amitabha Buddha), who is in the happiest realm of the west (Paradise), and if his good deeds are in the right direction, and if he desires to get to that happy Paradise, he will then get there; and as he is always in the presence of Buddha, he will never fall back.

If we reflect on the eternal nature of God (the Amitabha Buddha), and constantly practise this method, we will in the end reach the place of true wisdom.



## 5: THE ADVANTAGES OF THE PRACTICE OF THE MAHAYANA FAITH

HAVING discussed the practice of these principles we will now discuss the advantages of practising them. We have already given a general idea of the mysterious resources of the Buddhas of the Mahayana school.

A. If any one desires to get a right faith in the deep things of the Tathagata, and desires to be far from error, which brings religion into disrepute, and to get the Mahayana Faith, he should lay hold of this book, study it and practise it. In the end he will attain to the very highest truth.

B. If a man listens to this truth, and has neither fear nor weakness, such a man is certain to succeed to the rank of Buddha, and to be enrolled as such by all the Divine Ones.

C. If a man should be able to reform all living beings throughout all the systems in the universe, in order to make them good, he would not be equal to a man who, for only the time he takes to eat a meal, studies this way of deliverance. The two methods are incomparable.

D. Next, if a man takes this book, studies and practises it only for a day and a night, the blessings received would be incalculable. Even if all the Buddhas of the universe were each to speak of these blessings for incalculably and immeasurably long kalpas, they could not exhaust them, for the blessings of the Eternal Nature are endless, and the blessings to this man would be also in like manner endless.

E. But if there should be any who speak evil and do not believe in this book, the recompense of their sin will be to suffer immense pain for measureless ages. On this account all men should respectfully believe and not speak evil of it, thereby injuring themselves more and more and others too, destroying every hope of deliverance by destroying the Eternal Soul of the Three Precious Ones originally in man (the soul of the universe, the body of laws pervading the universe, the body of men teaching these laws), for all the

Divine Ones attain to Nirvana by this means, and all the Saints attain Buddha-wisdom by the same practice.

F. Know that it is by this means that the Bodhisattvas of the past obtained pure faith, and that it is by this means that the Bodhisattvas of the present obtain pure faith, therefore it is by this means that the Bodhisattvas of the future must obtain pure faith. Thus all men should diligently study and practise it.

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## THE CLOSING HYMN

Deep and wide is Buddhist Law,  
This in brief I have declared;  
Godward are eternal stores,  
Blessings give to countless worlds!

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## TRANSLATOR'S SUPPLEMENTARY MATTER: THE GREAT PHYSICIAN'S TWELVE DESIRES (VOWS)

### NOTE

THE first Buddhist temple in or around Nara in Japan was built by Koreans, at the invitation of the Japanese rulers in the sixth century of the Christian era.

One of the most remarkable sights I have seen in Japan is a temple at Horiyuji, near Nara, to the Great Physician (Yakushi they call him). It is filled with innumerable votive offerings, to show that the sick were healed by prayers to him. The zeal of modern Christian scientists is far more than eclipsed by this wonderful record of fifteen centuries there.

By bringing the highest ideals of the East and the West together for comparison, it is hoped that special attention should be called to this rather than to the failings and low practices of either East or West.

The Scripture which describes this Great Physician has one very striking passage on his twelve Vows or Purpose in coming to the world. These twelve Vows I translate below--

1. I come from Heaven with the highest wisdom to shine on infinite innumerable worlds accompanied by thirty-two great angels, different forms of Kwanyin, and glorious legions, it will be for the purpose of delivering all beings, to be godlike like myself.
2. I come with my body within and without pure as crystal, without a flaw, with great light and profound virtue living in peace with a glory surpassing that of sun and moon, it will be to enlighten all who are living in darkness.
3. I come again with wisdom bringing infinite knowledge and goodness so that no living creature may suffer from any want but have all they need.

4. I come in order that those who are in evil ways may find peace in the way of wisdom, and in order that those who only know the old Buddhism, may know the new Buddhism.

5. I come in order that the multitudes who study religion may discover the perfect way, and if they have erred on hearing my name may be delivered from hell, and also attain to holiness.

6. I come so that all beings who are cripples, ugly and foolish, blind, deaf and dumb, hunchback, leprous and mad, and all sorts of suffering, on hearing my name may be healed of all their diseases.

7. I come so that the incurables, the homeless, those without doctors or medicine, without friends or relatives, the poor and the sorrowful, on hearing my name shall be delivered from all their troubles and live in peace of mind and body, have their families flourish in abundance and attain the highest wisdom.

8. I come so that women driven by all sorts of trials to hate their lives, and no longer desire to be women, on hearing my name may be changed to men, and attain the highest wisdom.

9. I come so that those who are in the bonds of evil spirits, or of heresies fallen into all sorts of evil, on hearing my name may be led to right knowledge, and gradually practise goodness and attain to the highest wisdom.

10. I come so that those who have fallen to the clutches of the law, are bound and beaten and imprisoned, or are about to be executed or have endless calamities, insults, sorrows burning both body and soul, on hearing my name may secure my grace and power, and be delivered from all their sorrows.

11. I come so that those driven by hunger and thirst to do wrong, on hearing my name shall be fed and satisfied with wisdom and find perfect rest.

12. I come so that all the poor and naked, and those suffering from heat and cold, and divers flies and secret creepers night and day, on hearing my name may turn to practise religion, according to their bent, will receive the

garments of highest wisdom, glorious treasures and best music, and be fully satisfied with all.



## THE CREED OF HALF ASIA: TO SIN KING

THIS Creed deserves to rank among the sublimest literary productions of the human mind, from Job to Kant, together with those of the best thinkers of India and China.

Many devout people of the Confucian and Taoist schools, as well as Buddhists, recite it daily just as Christians sing a choice hymn.

It states the solid fundamental principles of religion which commend themselves, not merely to the majority of Asiatics, but also to the majority of men universally. It includes the need of Divine Power to save men, the great At-One-ment, Divine Inspiration, Divinest Miracles, past, present, and to come, and Immortality.

When this best Eastern thought is united to the best Western thought, whatever may be deficient in definition in either singly, may meet the approval of that conscience which God has given to mankind collectively.

The Creed is as follows--

Hail self-existent Illuminator. Who in exercising deepest Wisdom seest the unreality of all that is reached by the five senses, and canst save from all troubles and dangers.

O Sariputra (the Divine Seed?), the Manifested is not different from the Eternal, and the Eternal is not different from the Manifested. Thought and Action are also thus mutually related.

The Divine Seed (?) is the Eternal in all laws of the Universe. He was never born, nor will ever die.

He is neither clean nor unclean, is neither added to nor subtracted from. He is without sorrow, and will not perish. He is without acquired Wisdom, because he has received none.

The Illuminators depending on this Eternal Wisdom are without anxiety. Having no anxiety, they have no fear and are far from impossible dreams and thoughts. They are eventually immortals.

All the Illuminated past, present, and to come, depending on this Divine Wisdom, obtain the Highest Wisdom.

Therefore know that this Divine Wisdom is a great Divine Magic, a great brilliant magic, the greatest magic, and a magic without a peer.

It can deliver you from all kinds of troubles. This is a real truth without any falsehood. Therefore in repeating this magic Incantation, sum up and say--

Praise, Praise,  
 Praise God.  
 Praise His eternal wisdom (Law)  
 Praise the students of this Law  
 The Illumined!

(Translated from the Buddhist Tripitaka, Nanjio's Catalogue, No 20)

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