



How Lucky We Are to Hear Guan Yin's Name in the Saha World

Guanshiyin (Avalokiteshvara) Bodhisattva has a great affinity with living beings in the Saha world. There is a saying in China, "Guanshiyin in every household, Amitabha in every place." This shows that everyone knows Guanshiyin Bodhisattva and Amitabha (the name means "Limitless Light" and "Limitless Life") Buddha, that their compassion has deeply entered people's hearts. *Guan* means "Contemplate"; *shi* means "world"; *yin* means "sounds." Thus the name means "Contemplating the World's Sounds."

Within Buddhism, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva holds a very important position. Some people say that Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is Chinese and some say he is a Westerner; some say the Bodhisattva is male and some say female. But now I am informing all of you that Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is neither Chinese nor Western, neither male nor female. Well, then, where does he come from? He fills empty space and pervades the Dharma Realm; he is in every place and yet not in any place. He appears according to what kind of body is needed to save each particular category of beings. He manifests in whatever physical form is appropriate to speak Dharma for beings; thus his identity is flexible. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva appears in the form of a Buddha to save those who are ready to become Buddhas. He appears as a Bodhisattva to save those who should become Bodhisattvas. He appears as a heavenly king to speak Dharma for beings in the heavens.

Within Buddhism, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is one who goes about everywhere teaching and transforming living beings, inspiring them to bring forth the Bodhi mind. He first sees what a particular being likes and then makes them happy with what they like. Once they are happy, they will like to listen to the Dharma he speaks and gradually he will be able to rescue them. That's why I say that Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is not necessarily male or female; he could be male or he could be female. In any case those are just transformations. As to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's own body, he is in a state of unmoving Suchness. He is just like the Buddhas. Anyway, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva already became a Buddha a long time ago, by the name of Right Dharma Brightness. He simply appears as a Bodhisattva in order to teach and transform living beings.

In Buddhism, he appears as a Bodhisattva; in other religions he often appears clad in white robes. In Christianity, he is the Holy Mother; he appears as the Holy Mother to teach and transform a certain category of beings. He appears in white robes and Christians call her Mother Mary, but actually she is Guanshiyin Bodhisattva manifesting in that form to inspire beings to bring forth a resolve that will lead them sooner or later to understand the Buddhadharmas. Once they understand the Buddhadharmas, they will bring forth the resolve for Bodhi. These are the endless miraculous functions and inconceivable states of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva.

Guanshiyin Bodhisattva uses kindness, compassion, joy, and giving to save all living beings. He saves beings from the seven difficulties, responds to two kinds of seeking, has fourteen kinds of fearlessness, speaks Dharma in nineteen ways, and has thirty-two

response bodies. If childless people seek sons or daughters, their wishes will be granted. These are the two kinds of seeking. Therefore, in a Guanyin recitation session, any vow can be fulfilled and any result can be obtained, because Guanyin Bodhisattva responds to all requests. You may seek to leave the home-life, to remain a layperson, or to become a Buddha. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva has great kindness and compassion, and will not disappoint you no matter what you ask for. He'll definitely fulfill your wishes. Therefore, during the Guanyin session, you may seek whatever you like. Whether you seek a son, a daughter, wealth, or long life, you will be able to obtain them. But these are forms of happiness subject to "outflows"; you ought to seek the nonoutflow happiness of Buddhahood. Worldly riches, honor, and glory all come to an end, but nonoutflow happiness is endless and infinite. Let's recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name more in order to realize an everlasting fruition.

With Vigor and Courage, Recite with One Heart

Our recitation of Guanyin Bodhisattva's name should continue nonstop, like an ever flowing stream, until everything becomes one. Walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, we recite the name of Guanyin. We must pay close attention and not forget Guanyin's name in thought after thought. Each recitation must be clear and distinct; and we certainly shouldn't fall asleep or have idle thoughts while reciting. We must recite single-mindedly, thinking of nothing but the words "Namo Bodhisattva Guanshiyin," not leaving the name whether we are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down.

If you are mindful of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, he will be mindful of you. You recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name hoping that he will compassionately save all beings; he recites your name hoping that you can leave suffering and attain bliss, be free from disasters and sickness, cancel offenses and create blessings. He hopes you will increase in Bodhi and perfect your mind for the Way. We shouldn't let Guanshiyin Bodhisattva down. He is so compassionate and mindful of us, we ought to set everything else aside and concentrate on reciting his name. If we can do that, he will definitely be with us whether we are moving or still, awake or asleep. He will aid us, destroy our karmic obstacles, and make our good roots grow. Having received Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's aid, we should strengthen our resolve for Bodhi and advance vigorously without slacking off for a moment. We shouldn't chatter so much. If you decide not to talk, eat, or sleep, that's fine; but don't fail to cultivate. Everyone has to cultivate. We should regard every moment and every day as a Guanyin session. In fact, we should wish to cultivate the inconceivable Dharma door of reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva's name every month, every year, and every great eon. Don't think that you're free once the session is over, because you are not truly free unless you become enlightened. So don't entertain the thought of retreating. We should all be wishing for another Guanyin session so we can continue to develop our skill.

The function of reciting Guanyin's name can be compared to using our hands in getting dressed and when eating. The name "Guanshiyin Bodhisattva" is equivalent to your hands, which you use to put on clothes. When you eat, you must use chopsticks or a fork to bring the food to your mouth; likewise, you must recite Guanyin Bodhisattva's name in order to feed your Dharma body.

Reciting Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name is also analogous to unlocking a door. We are locked up in the prison of our ignorance, and Guanyin's name is the key to the prison's door. Each time we recite it, the lock of ignorance opens up a little. The more we recite, the more the lock opens. We use Guanyin Bodhisattva's key of wisdom to open our lock of ignorance. The moment it opens, we gain sudden enlightenment. Confucianism speaks of a state of sudden comprehension, but that is only a partial, not a total, enlightenment. With sudden enlightenment, one breaks through ignorance and cuts off the very source of births and deaths without beginning.

Guanyin Bodhisattva listens to the sounds of living beings and rescues them from suffering. He has particularly deep affinities with the living beings in our Saha world. There are many cases in which Guanyin Bodhisattva has protected people and shined his light upon them. Why haven't we obtained such a response? Our minds are not sincere. We have too many scattered thoughts. On the one hand we recite his name, but on the other hand our mind chases after external states and strikes up all kinds of impure thoughts, so we waste all our time. We should realize that life is short. If we don't cultivate seriously right now, we might not have another chance.

Cherish the time and don't let it go by in vain. Don't just mindlessly follow the crowd. You ought to take advantage of this opportunity to cultivate at a monastery by sincerely reciting Guanyin's name. You will have completed your work only when you attain the Guanyin Recitation Samadhi, the state of proper concentration which cannot be disturbed by the gusty winds or the driving rain. Don't overlook that point.

A Thousand Hands and A Thousand Eyes Bestow Great Compassion

Let us get to know Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, the most venerated of sages, as we pay homage to him. The Bodhisattva's image shows a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, but actually, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's hands and eyes are infinite. With his infinite hands, he pulls

living beings out of the sea of suffering and sets them on the blissful other shore. With his infinite eyes, he beholds all living beings and rescues those who are in difficulty or danger. He will not ignore any living being with whom he has an affinity.

Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is a most diligent Bodhisattva. He is extremely vigorous and doesn't ever rest. He rescues living beings all day long. No matter how much trouble living beings get into, he doesn't mind the work of saving them. He is a tremendously busy and energetic Bodhisattva, not a lazy one who likes to rest. One or two hands can't save very many people, so he has a thousand hands to rescue living beings from disasters and a thousand eyes to take care of suffering living beings in the great thousand world system.

When living beings are in trouble, they think of their greatly compassionate father and mother, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. Then they start reciting, "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva." When living beings who are in difficulty recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva," the Bodhisattva sees them with his thousand eyes. He beholds them with his wisdom eyes, hears them with his wisdom ears, and uses his wisdom hands to save them. Even if millions of living beings who are in difficulty call out to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva at the same time, the Bodhisattva can rescue them and make them all happy.

Today some refugees brought a photograph which they say was taken when they were on the refugee boat. In this shot of the sky, taken by the boat captain, a distinct image of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva appears at the fringe of the clouds. From this, we know that Guanshiyin Bodhisattva responds to prayers everywhere, sailing the sea of suffering and crossing people over. However, if we have not yet deeply recognized Guanshiyin Bodhisattva and produced a deep and sincere faith in him, Guanshiyin Bodhisattva may not be aware of us when we are in trouble. If we bring forth true faith, then Guanshiyin Bodhisattva certainly won't ignore us when we are in trouble.

He Neutralizes the Three Poisons and Resolves All Difficulties

Why should we recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name? It's because he made vows in the past that if people have much greed, much anger, or much stupidity, and if they constantly recite his name and worship him, their greed, anger, and stupidity will disappear even before they realize it. They will forget about these poisons and think instead of samadhi and precepts. And so, if we constantly recite and venerate Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, not only will our greed, anger, and stupidity vanish, but we will be safe from all disasters. If we enter a blazing fire, we will not be burned. If we fall into deep waters, we won't drown. That's how incredibly powerful his name is! If we can recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name for a full seven days, we will gain inconceivable merit and escape all misfortunes.

Even though Guanshiyin Bodhisattva can protect you from being burned by fire or drowned by water, you must have total faith in him to obtain such a response. If you have doubts: "That's what they say, but is it for real?" then even the true will become false. If you have no doubts, then the false can become true. The response occurs in your own mind, not on Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's side.

If you encounter something troublesome, just recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva" and the trouble will go away. Troubles fear Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, because he can contemplate them and find their cause; as soon as he discovers their cause, the troubles go away. This is a most wonderful method, the best way to solve problems. You say, "Okay, I'll recite Guanyin's name next time." But when the time comes and you are faced with a problem, you fret and worry and forget all about this method.

The chapter on "Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Universal Door" in the *Lotus Sutra* says very clearly that "Those with much greed and desire," people who have heavy sexual desire, should constantly and reverently recite the Bodhisattva's name. Emotional people are easily flustered by problems. When you encounter trouble, don't get nervous. Calm down and recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva." You don't have to shout the name, just recite it in your mind. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's ear can pick up the voice in your mind. He'll hear you and say, "This poor child can't control his emotions and he's asking me for help." Then he helps you to calm your emotions.

The Sutra also says "Those with much anger and hatred," people with big tempers, should recite. If you are about to lose your temper, hold on! Before you explode, first recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva" in your mind a few times. When you have done so, you won't be able to find your anger anymore. It'll be gone. Now wouldn't you say this is wonderful Dharma? Wonderful it may be, but you didn't understand it before. Now that I've told you, you think, "These are great responses!" Actually, there are even greater ones. "Those with much stupidity" can get rid of it by constantly reciting Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name.

Shakyamuni Buddha spoke this chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* to praise Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. Now, would the Buddha praise him if he didn't possess such awesome spiritual powers? No, the Buddha wouldn't casually say, "Such and such a Bodhisattva has such merit and virtue, such practices, such powers," unless it were true. Because Guanshiyin Bodhisattva really does have such powers and bestows such responses, the Buddha introduced him to us, giving us this method to handle the problems we cannot solve on our own.

Now I've explained this method to you so clearly and simply that you should be able to apply it. "But I'm pretty fond of my greed, anger, and stupidity," you say, "so I don't want to recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name." Then you can recite your own name. Figure out who you are, and then you'll recognize Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. We recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name simply because we don't

recognize ourselves. We are not troubled by our greed, anger, and stupidity, so we don't want to recite. But our very unwillingness to recite is itself trouble.

Now, if you're not afraid of trouble, then you don't have to learn anything. If you fear trouble, then you should study the Buddhadharmā and learn to recite Guanyin's name. If you don't want to recognize yourself and you say, "I'm a nobody, so I don't need to be mindful of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha," then you'll soon turn into a ghost, since you don't want to be a person. At that time you can still recite Guanyin's name. Guanyin Bodhisattva doesn't abandon you when you become a ghost. Ghosts can recite Guanyin's name, and so can animals. If you're in the hells, you can recite his name as well. You can recite in any of the three evil paths, so don't think you'll be doomed. That's why it's called the Wonderful Dharma. Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's state is inconceivable. If you recite his name in the three evil paths, you will leave suffering and attain bliss. All of you should go home and cross over your own hell-beings, hungry ghosts, and animals. If you can cross over the suffering beings in your own home, you are practicing the Bodhisattva Way. "Do such beings exist in my home?" you ask. By your home, I mean your own mind. Your greedy thoughts, angry thoughts, and stupid thoughts are living beings in the three evil paths.

Constantly Be Mindful of the Guanshiyin in Your Own Nature

In studying Buddhism, we should not seek for what is lofty or profound. The ordinary mind is the Way. The straight mind is the Way-place. Cultivation must be done with an honest mind. Don't use a greedy mind to recite Guanyin's name. Recite with an ordinary mind, without seeking anything. If you truly recite Guanyin's name, how could you think of eating good food, wearing nice clothes, or living in a fine place? You would forget everything else and become one with Guanyin Bodhisattva. There is a Guanyin Bodhisattva in every person's mind. That's why you are able to be mindful. You are being mindful of the Guanyin Bodhisattva in your mind.

Guanyin Bodhisattva has no thoughts, no attachments, and nothing that he seeks. His work is to cross over living beings, to help living beings leave suffering and attain bliss, end birth and death, and quickly become Buddhas. He doesn't seek anything from living beings; he simply wants them to gain true understanding and put down all their greed. That's his hope for each of us. And so, as we recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name, we should not constantly indulge in idle thoughts.

We recite Guanyin Bodhisattva's name and bow to him, but when he manifests before us we don't recognize him. We are truly pathetic. Not recognizing Guanyin Bodhisattva when he manifests, we fail the test. When we recite his name, we should learn to have Guanyin Bodhisattva's great kindness, compassion, vows, and power. When people treat us badly, scold us, beat us, or try to kill us, we should remain unmoved and endure it, paying back the debts we owe. If we hadn't killed, scolded, or beaten others in past lives, they wouldn't be treating us that way now. They want to hurt us now, because in the past when we were stupid and deluded, we also hurt them. In the past when we didn't understand this principle, we refused to pay our debts. Now that we understand, we should honestly acknowledge our debts. To acknowledge and pay our debts is to truly see Guanyin Bodhisattva and become a true member of his Dharma family.

He Contemplates with Kindness, Compassion, Joy and Giving

How can we recognize Guanshiyin Bodhisattva? We have to know his principles. His principles are kindness, compassion, joy, and giving. We should learn Guanyin Bodhisattva's kindness and be kind towards those with whom we have no affinities. Kindness means making living beings happy. It means sharing our own happiness with living beings, not being selfish. Compassion pulls beings out of suffering. We should help those who are suffering or in difficulty. Joy means being happy and not feeling anger even when others get angry at us. Giving means taking our most prized possessions and giving them to living beings. If we can base our practice on the four limitless minds of kindness, compassion, joy, and giving, then we are true Buddhists. Those who lack the four limitless minds are not qualified to be Buddhists. We should never be selfish, seek personal gain, tell lies, or covet what is not ours. If we wish to win a fortune at a casino so we can do meritorious deeds, we are seeking beyond our rightful due and Guanyin Bodhisattva will not help us out. We should follow the Six Guiding Principles that are advocated every day at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas: no fighting, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, no pursuit of self-benefit, and no lying. If we can honestly apply the six guidelines as our function and take the four limitless minds as our substance, so that function and substance assist each other, then we will recognize what Buddhism and Guanshiyin Bodhisattva are all about.

We recite "Guanshiyin Bodhisattva," but do we know what it means? Those who know Chinese might understand a little, but for Westerners who don't know Chinese, it's just like reciting a mantra. For example, people recite "Om mani padme hum" but they don't know what it means. *Guan* means to contemplate, to observe the sounds (*yin*) of the world (*shi*). That's what this Bodhisattva does, because he has nothing better to do. He looks, not outside, but inside living beings' minds, to see whose mind is free of idle thoughts.

Once the mind is empty, then one can become enlightened. A verse says, "People flock from the ten directions / To study the unconditioned." All the faithful men and women come together to cultivate the unconditioned dharma. Reciting Guanyin's name is an unconditioned dharma for stopping our idle thoughts. It is unconditioned, and yet nothing is not conditioned by it.

We Have a Bodhisattva for a Brother and a Dharma King for a Father

When you recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva," Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is mindful of you. It's just as when you think of your relative, your relative thinks of you. We have been relatives in the Dharma with Guanshiyin Bodhisattva for countless ages. It all began with Amitabha Buddha, the teaching host of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss and the teacher of Guanyin Bodhisattva. Guanyin Bodhisattva and Great Strength Bodhisattva help Amitabha Buddha to propagate the Pure Land Dharma door. If we recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha," we will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss and Amitabha Buddha will be our guide and teacher. Since Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is Amitabha Buddha's disciple, he is our elder Dharma brother. In fact, he is the elder brother of all living beings who have not yet been born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. If I explain it this way, we become very close relatives. So we are mindful of our brother, and our brother also keeps us in mind. We are Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's younger brothers, and Guanyin Bodhisattva is our elder brother.

Someone is saying, "How can Guanshiyin Bodhisattva be my elder brother? Doesn't that make me too exalted?" Not only does Guanyin Bodhisattva regard us as his younger brothers, he treats all living beings as his younger brothers. Otherwise, why would he listen to our sounds and come rescue us from our suffering? When we get ourselves into trouble, why would he want to help us out? He sees that all living beings are just the same as his own hands and feet, his own flesh and bones. That's why he fears neither trouble nor difficulty, and comes to rescue all the beings who are suffering in this Saha world. None of us should forget our Dharma brother. When we recite "Namo Guanshiyin Bodhisattva," Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is also mindful of us. When we call out to Guanshiyin Bodhisattva, we're calling our elder brother. He then calls out to his younger brothers, who are future Bodhisattvas and future Buddhas. If we contemplate in this way, we'll recite Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's name even more sincerely, as if we were reciting our own brother's name. Now that we have encountered the Dharma door of reciting Guanyin Bodhisattva's name, we shouldn't miss our chance. We should recite as sincerely as we can. But as we recite, we shouldn't let our heads droop. We should lift our heads up and recite with courage and vigor. When Guanyin Bodhisattva sees our vigorous spirit, he'll take us by the hand and say, "Quickly come with me!" Then he'll lead us step by step towards the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Someone else is wondering, "Why does Guanshiyin Bodhisattva do so much looking, while I am not allowed to look at anything at all?" You should know that your looking and Guanyin Bodhisattva's looking are not the same. Guanyin Bodhisattva looks inside, but you look outside. Guanyin Bodhisattva looks at his own nature. He has every living being on his radar screen, and he knows all the thoughts in their minds. Because some living beings are far away from him, even a thousand hands and a thousand eyes are not enough. He wants to look at infinite living beings, but he cannot see them all. That's why he turns his attention inward to look at and listen to his own nature. He looks at the living beings in his own nature and saves those who are in suffering. You, on the other hand, look outside and forget all about your inherent wisdom. That's why, in response to your idle thought, I said your looking and his looking are different.

Kindness and Compassion Are Guanshiyin

Guanshiyin Bodhisattva contemplates not his own sound, but all the sounds of the world. There's a saying, "With no self and no others, he contemplates at ease." "He Who Contemplates at Ease" is another name for Guanshiyin, so Guanshiyin is also devoid of self and others. Anyone who is devoid of self and others is Guanshiyin. If you are free of arrogance, jealousy, contrariness, and attachment to self and others, then you are Guanshiyin. If you have these faults, then you are not. Seek within yourself, not outside, for Guanshiyin. If you wish to become one with Guanshiyin, then you cannot be jealous of or wish to obstruct others.

Learn to be like Guanshiyin by getting rid of your bad temper, greed, anger, and stupidity. If you can get rid of the three poisons and cultivate precepts, concentration, and wisdom, you are Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. Are you Guanshiyin Bodhisattva? If so, then you should not give rise to anger or ignorance, but instead should cultivate compassion, patience, vigor, giving, morality, Chan samadhi, and Prajna. Whoever has Prajna is Guanshiyin; whoever doesn't, is not. The little child who knows how to nod his head is also demonstrating that he has Prajna. We all have a Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in our hearts, but we haven't seen him so we don't know that he's there. Now that I've introduced him to you, you should always listen to the Guanshiyin Bodhisattva in your mind.

"Who is Guanshiyin Bodhisattva?" you ask. I don't know. But the Sixth Patriarch long ago said, "Kindness and compassion are Guanyin; joy and giving are Great Strength." If you do kind and compassionate things, you are Guanshiyin Bodhisattva. If you joyfully give to others, you are Great Strength Bodhisattva. Not recognizing these two Bodhisattvas who are right beside you every day, you get mad at them all the time. And you recite "Namo Amitabha Buddha" all day long, but you don't even look at Amitabha Buddha when he

appears before you. You fail to recognize Guanshiyin, Great Strength, and Amitabha when coming face to face with them. The Three Sages of the Western Land are constantly right next to you, but you insist on putting them at a distance. And so although Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is so kind and compassionate, he cannot help you. Great Strength Bodhisattva is joyous and giving, but he has no way either. Amitabha Buddha thinks, "Let's wait a little longer. Gradually, one of these days, he will bring forth the Bodhi mind."

Turn the Light Around and Contemplate at Ease

"When Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara was practicing the profound Prajna Paramita, he illuminated the five skandhas and saw that they are all empty, and he crossed beyond all suffering and difficulty." This line from the *Heart Sutra* speaks of Guanshiyin (whose name in Sanskrit is Avalokiteshvara) Bodhisattva, who realized perfect penetration by means of the faculty of hearing. He "turned the hearing back to listen to his own nature, so his nature attained the unsurpassed Way." To turn the hearing back means to "turn the light around and reflect within," and to "investigate." If you investigate, you will discover an inconceivable state. I cannot describe this state to you; if you want to taste its flavor, you have to work at your own practice. Turning the light around means to reflect, to investigate, to illuminate. You have to truly practice if you want to experience that inconceivable state. You turn the light around and reflect within, using your Prajna wisdom to illuminate it and dispel all the darkness. This is also known as turning the hearing back to listen to your own nature. Your inherent nature is pure and undefiled, but your mind--not the true mind, but the human mind which exploits for selfish benefit--is defiled. That mind is very unreliable, like a monkey that bounces up and down all day long. Turning the hearing back to listen to the nature means watching over the mind until the mind returns to the nature. The mind moves, but the nature is still and unmoving. When the stillness reaches an extreme, the light becomes penetrating. When you are still to the utmost point, the light appears and your nature attains to the unsurpassed Way. This is the method that Guanshiyin Bodhisattva cultivated. Reflecting within means seeking inside yourself, listening to your nature to see if you have thoughts of greed, anger, or stupidity. If the three poisons are not present, then you have the three nonoutflow studies: precepts, concentration, and wisdom. This is the general meaning of turning the hearing around to listen to the nature.

Because he turned the hearing back to listen to his own nature, he was able to contemplate at ease. Being at ease is a state of being without others, self, living beings, or a life span. "At what level is one at ease?" you ask. One is at ease at the level of sagehood. Ordinary people are not at ease. Sages have no mark of others, self, living beings, or life span, so they can be at ease. Ordinary people are attached to these four marks, so they are never at ease. People study the Buddhadharma but cannot see the four marks as empty, so they cannot obtain ease. To be at ease, you must sweep away the three minds and annul the four marks. "The mind of the past cannot be got at," because it has already passed. "The mind of the present cannot be got at." "You may say "this" is the present, but by then it has already become the past. There is no such thing as "the present"; it is false. "The mind of the future cannot be got at," because it is not here yet. Since the future hasn't arrived, why think about it? If you know that the three minds cannot be obtained and the four marks are empty, then you are the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates at Ease.

We are holding a Chan session so we can contemplate at ease. Everyone should contemplate at ease. Don't say, "Guanshiyin Bodhisattva is the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates at Ease; it says so in the *Heart Sutra*." Whoever is at ease is the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates at Ease. This Bodhisattva doesn't have a fixed identity. All living beings can be the Bodhisattva Who Contemplates at Ease. As you begin to sit in Chan, contemplate yourself to see if you are at ease. If you are, you'll be able to "illuminate the five skandhas and see that they are all empty." That is what is meant by "practicing the profound Prajna Paramita." If you can do that, then you'll be able to "cross beyond all suffering and difficulty." Having ended all suffering, you are at ease. Not only will Guanshiyin Bodhisattva become one with us, all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions will become one with us.