

Postgraduate/Distance Learning Assignment coversheet & feedback form

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For completion by the student:		
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Module code: SIC7005 Module title: Chinese Buddhist Scriptural Studies-the Sutras	Student ID number: 1703556	Educational support needs: No
Module tutor: Professor Yu-Hern Chang		
Assignment due date: 7 Sep 2018		
If your module has multiple submissions please indicate which piece of work this is. 1 st ☒ 2 nd ☐ 3 rd ☐ 4 th ☐ 5 th ☐ 6 th ☐		
I confirm that this is my original work and that I have adhered to the University policy on plagiarism. Signed Nan Deng..... Email submission: if you are submitting this form via email, please tick this box ☒ (as a substitute for your signature) to confirm that you agree to the above declaration.		

Assignment Mark

1 st Marker's Provisional mark	
2 nd Marker's/Moderator's provisional mark	
Agreed Internal Mark:	
External Examiner's mark (if relevant)	
Final Mark	

NB. All marks are provisional until confirmed by the Final Examination Board.

For completion by Marker 1 :

Comments:

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AGREED INTERNAL MARK (where necessary):

Comment on process on arriving at agreed mark:

External Examiner's comments (if relevant)

External Examiner's Signature:

Date:

The eight phases in manifesting as a Buddha in *the Infinite life Sutra*

1. The first phase in manifesting as a Buddha-birth in this world

Scriptures: Leaving the Tushita Heaven.

The words “the Tushita Heaven” means to be aware that one has had enough, which is the fourth Devaloka, Maitreya's(彌勒佛) heaven of full knowledge. All bodhisattvas will be born from the Tushita Heaven to this world before they become the Buddha. This manifests that people must first be content before attaining Buddhahood in mundane and supramundane phenomena.

2. The second and third phases in manifesting as a Buddha -entering the womb and taking birth

Scriptures: they were born in the King's palaces.

These scriptures include the second and third phases of eight aspects of the Buddha's life. Buddha renounced the throne and abandoned the secular enjoyment of the rich and noble family. He decided to become a monk and learnt to enter the Way(道).

There is a ceremony in Buddhism to celebrate Sakyamuni Buddha's(釋迦牟尼佛) birthday on April 8th of the lunar calendar every year. On that day, Buddhist practitioners will hold a ritual of washing the image of the Buddha. In this Dharma Ceremony, there will be a flower pavilion in which the small statue of Prince Siddhartha(悉達多太子) will be placed. Then Buddhist practitioners bathe this Buddha-image with scented water after paying obeisance and making offerings.

In foreign countries, there is the Vesak Festival, which is on the first full moon day in May. It is a festival in which Southern Buddhism merges Sakyamuni Buddha's(釋迦牟尼佛) Birthday, Enlightenment Day and Nirvana Day(涅槃日).

The ceremony of the bathing Buddha-image is held to cultivate our respectful mind to our parents and teachers. Through the ritual of bathing Buddha, we can achieve the goals of reflecting on ourselves and cleansing our minds of impurities.

3. The forth phase in manifesting as a Buddha -leaving home and becoming a monk

Scriptures: They renounced the throne of the King and left the home life. They cultivated themselves diligently. They manifested like this in order to follow the tradition of the Earthly World.¹

This is the fourth phase of the Buddha's life. The World-honoured renounced the secular life at 19 age. He visited fifty-three non-Buddhist philosophers for five years. However, he found that he could not reach to perfection through them. Therefore, he did ascetic practices for six years and ate only one hempseed and a grain of rice a day. His purpose is to seek for the truth of liberating from birth and death.

4. The fifth phase in manifesting as a Buddha -subduing Mara's evil obstacle

Scriptures: with the power of meditation concentration and wisdom, they subdued Mara's enmities.

This is the fifth phase of the Buddha's life, which is called defeating Mara's enmities. The words "Mara" does not refer to demons but to various afflictions that torture and torment us. The sufferings in this world are so painful that they are even more terrifying than encountering demons. Therefore, Mara's enmities can obstruct cultivating for practitioners.

The words "Mara's enmities" also refer to the enemy, including inner and outer adversaries. The sutras talk about "ten evil the enemy", which means the ten kinds of enemies within us.

5. The sixth phase in manifesting as a Buddha-attaining perfect enlightenment

Scriptures: they obtained the wonderful Dharma and attained the Supreme Proper Enlightenment².

This is the sixth phase of the Buddha's life. The words "the wonderful Dharma" mean the true reality of all Dharma. Based on this sutra, we can see that the wonderful Dharma refers to this wondrous teaching of the Pure Land school: "Mindfully chant the Buddha-name, attain rebirth in the Western Pure Land, and, without retrogression, attain Buddhahood". The *Infinite Life Sutra* is also "the wonderful Dharma".

¹ Contemporary Buddhist Book: *The Infinite life Sutra* 《無量壽經》
<http://www.fjtsw.org/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213>, 5 Sep 2018.

² Contemporary Buddhist Book: *The Infinite life Sutra* 《無量壽經》
<http://www.fjtsw.org/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213>, 5 Sep 2018.

The words “the Supreme Proper Enlightenment” refer to perfect and complete Buddhahood.

6. The seventh phase in manifesting as a Buddha-turning the Dharma wheel

This is the seventh phase of the Buddha's life. This part of the scripture is the longest, from “heavenly beings and human beings take refuge with them and request them to teach the Dharma³” to “with good and appropriate skill in means, they show the three vehicles⁴”. After attaining enlightenment, the Buddha in Deer Park taught to the first five of Buddha's converts about four noble truths: suffering, origination, cessation, path. The Buddha said these three times in total. The first time teaching was called the indicative aspect of the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. It was a direct revelation of the truth of the four noble truths to the people with superior capacity. For the people with medium capacity, they did not know much about these truths for the first time. So the Buddha taught them for the second time, which was called the hortative aspect of the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. The third time was called evidential aspect of the turning of the wheel of the Dharma. For those who have a low capacity, they still cannot believe in understanding after teaching repeatedly. Therefore, the Buddha used his own experience to prove these truths.

7. The eighth phase in manifesting as a Buddha-entering the state of Nirvana

Scriptures: Then among the living beings of medium and low capacity, they enter the state of Nirvana.⁵

This is the eighth phase of the Buddha's life. In fact, for the people with superior capacity, the Buddha is neither arising nor ceasing. However, for those who are with medium and low capacity, the Buddha shows entering parinirvana. The purpose is to improve the cultivating vigilance of people with medium and low capacity.

³ Contemporary Buddhist Book: *The Infinite life Sutra* 《無量壽經》
<http://www.fjtsw.org/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213>, 5 Sep 2018.

⁴ Translation with modification as appropriate. Contemporary Buddhist Book: *The Infinite life Sutra* 《無量壽經》
<http://www.fjtsw.org/e/action/ShowInfo.php?classid=10967&id=156213>, 5 Sep 2018.

⁵ Translation with modification as appropriate. Contemporary Buddhist Book: *The Infinite life Sutra* 《無量壽經》
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