

## Preface

The Buddhadharma—Buddha’s teaching—is expansive and all-embracing. It encompasses all the phenomena in the mundane and transmundane world. Yet, the essence and core of the Buddha’s teaching always rely on each sentient being’s own true mind—the eighth consciousness *tathāgatagarbha*—as their basis.

Sentient beings have experienced suffering for innumerable eons because they do not understand the meritorious virtues and functions of the true mind; as a result, they have been performing assorted wholesome and unwholesome acts, and are bound in the cycle of birth and death in the three realms. Sentient beings do not know that they all possess their own individual Buddha-nature—the inherent potential of all sentient beings to achieve Buddhahood. It is precisely due to this Buddha-nature that all sentient beings are equal.

The practice and realization of the Buddhadharma has its specific order and sequence just like the building of a house, which has to start from the foundation. Deviating from this sequential order will eventually cause the house to collapse. Cultivation and practice in the Buddhadharma starts with the development of firm confidence, followed by the accumulation of merits, fostering of the correct teachings, strengthening of mental concentration, and taming and elimination of habitual hindrances. Only after a lengthy and continuous practice and cultivation can one eventually achieve the ultimate goal of attaining Buddhahood—nirvana.

The Buddhadharma is and must be verifiable, not just based in theory. Otherwise, it would just be a collection of conjectures and speculations, which should be classified as theory or hearsay. The Overview of the Three-vehicle Bodhi series systematically introduces the content of the practice and cultivation of the Buddhadharma. Even though there are three vehicles taught by the Buddha based on the predisposition of individuals, the Buddhadharma really consists of only

one vehicle—the vehicle that leads to Buddhahood. The three vehicles are just a convenient way to classify the content in the Buddhadharma. It is important to reiterate that the Buddhadharma cannot be established independently of the eighth consciousness *tathāgatagarbha* possessed by each sentient being.

It is our hope that readers can obtain a holistic view of the basic structure and skeleton of the Buddhadharma through this series, elicit the aspiration to enlightenment (Bodhi mind) in the not-too-distant future, and follow the teaching of the Buddha to benefit others as well as themselves.

