ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the cultivation methods of the Kshitigarbha Sutra which are focused on vows and practices. In the sixth chapter of the Kshitigarbha Sutra, Sayamuni Buddha stated that this Sutra can be known by three names, namely Kshitigarbha Fundamental Vow Sutra, Kshitigarbha Fundamental Practices Sutra and Kshitigarbha Fundamental Commitment Sutra. This reflects the Kshitigarbha Sutra’s emphasis on vows, practices and commitment to cultivation - the sutra should therefore not be mistaken for superstition or to merely be advice on doing good deeds. In Buddhism, the vow and the practice are the two main, symbiotic aspects to attaining Buddhahood. The cultivator is able to commit to his vows and practices only through Buddhist cultivation methods. By studying the vows, practices and cultivation methods of the Kshitigarbha Sutra, this paper aims to provide a fundamental and complete analysis of the sutra.

This paper divides Kshitigarbha practices and vows into two parts: inner vows and inner practices, and outer vows and outer
practices. Inner vows and practice refers to a way of cultivation where
the inner Buddha nature that is innate in each and every one of us
liberates our inner sentient beings which are the source of our
frustration and troubles. Outer vows and practice refers to a way of
cultivation where the cultivator focuses on liberating all living sentient
beings.

This paper is divided into four main chapters. The third
chapter aims to define the term ‘Namo Kshitigarbha’ or ‘taking refuge
with Kshitigarbha’, which serves as a vital part in Kshitigarbha
practices and vows. Chapter 4 discusses the cultivation methods of
Kshitigarbha inner practices through the study of the title
‘Kshitigarbha’. Chapter 5 explores the vows made by Kshitigarbha,
and analyses in greater depth the cultivation methods of Kshitigarbha
inner vows. The last chapter studies the filial piety tenets of the Sutra,
and analyzes in greater depth the cultivation methods of Kshitigarbha
outer vows and outer practices. Through the exploration of
Kshitigarbha practices and vows relating to the various dimensions of
the Kishitigarbha Sutra, this paper concludes eventually that Kishitigarbha Sutra cultivation methods equal those of the Mahayana Prajnaparamita Sutras in their depth.