

# WHO IS QUAN YIN?



**Quan Yin** (sometimes spelled *Kuan Yin*, *Kwan Yin* or *Guan Yin*) is the Bodhisattva of compassion, revered by Buddhists as the Goddess of Mercy. A Bodhisattva is an “enlightenment being” pledged to universal liberation and happiness. Her name is short for Guan Shi Yin. “Guan” means to observe, watch, or monitor; “Shi” means the world; “Yin” in this context means sounds, specifically sounds of those who suffer. Thus, Guan Yin is a compassionate being who is the “Hearer of the Cries of the Suffering World”.

Epithets for Quan Yin include *The Joyful One*, *The Pure One*, *The Light-giver*, *The Radiant One*, *Difficult to Conquer*, *Face to Face with Emptiness*, *The Far-Going One*, *The Immovable One*, *Becoming the Good*, and *Cloud of the Dharma*.

She is considered a gate to the paradise world or “Pure Land”, a clean, bright place full of delight -- an oasis, island, mountain, garden or jeweled city that is the source of great rivers and the waters of life. This world is outside of linear time and space and mechanical cause and effect. Souls reborn here are wrapped in a lotus that unfolds to show the truth of their eternal nature and the reality of compassion and joy.

The Pure Land holds Fullness of Being – a flowing abundance of food, life, communication, creativity, space, beauty, intelligence, freedom and spontaneity, along with release from greed, lust, ignorance and compulsion. When aligned with the Body of Light, we exist there, freed from the paradigm of opposites, easily integrating sensuality and spirituality.

The Pure Land is the great enclosure that keeps us safe as we cross what the Buddhists call the Sea of Suffering. We experience the Pure Land from the Hsin (sometimes spelled *xin*), the Chinese word signifying heart-mind, the uncorrupted, unconditioned thought, spirit and energy of the heart that relates to the “spirit” or divine, sacred capacity of human beings to connect with and manifest the Tao.

Many of us are unable to awaken to this spirit on our own and the figure of the Savior or Redeemer who acts as a bridge or boat that sails the waters between

ordinary existence (referred to as the Tomb World) and the Pure Lands is one of humanity's most powerful archetypes in every religious and mythical tradition.

This is how Quan Yin functions -- as a symbolic bridge to the imaginal world, an experience of the spirit of paradise. She helps us understand ourselves in a new way and redirects our consciousness, freeing us to live compassionately by pointing at the insightful wisdom that reality is actually a symbolic, not a literal experience.

The Chinese word for this is *Hsiang*. It means "symbolizing". *Hsiang* means making images that have the power to connect the visible world of our daily existence to the invisible world of the spirit. We *hsiang* things by imagining, creating, imitating, acting and acting out, playing, writing, or divining.

When we pose a question that expresses a real "cry from the heart", Quan Yin is there for us. She expresses her compassion through practices, divination, dreams, and visions that affirm the bond between the human realm and the world of what is considered divine. From this connection, flows the experience we call "paradise" or a direct "acquaintance" with the source of reality.

By connecting with Quan Yin in this manner, we acquire what the Taoists called *te*. This word can be translated as power and virtue, potency, or "actualizing-tao". An ancient word, *Te* is associated with *Tao*, as in the *Tao-te ching*. *Te* is the power or virtue that allows something to fully exist, a realizing power that can be accumulated, nurtured and acquired by people and objects. In the human world it is the charisma or inner power that makes a 'great person' great. Powerful *te* generates a powerful person; exalted *te* produces a sage. If we are full of *te*, we are numinous because we hold the power to realize the way or *tao* in ourselves. By accumulating and refining *te*, we both contribute to and partake of paradise.

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Source Material - *The Kuan Yin Oracle, the Voice of the Goddess of Compassion* by Stephen Karcher