



BODHI BULLETIN

DHARMA NEWS FROM BODHI MONASTERY • SEPTEMBER 2003

Bringing the Dharma Back Home

(The following is a condensed version of Bhante Bodhi's closing talk at this year's Dharma Retreat at Bodhi Monastery.)

The Buddha speaks of two kinds of good — one's own good and the good of others — and he says that we enjoy the most meaningful life when we dedicate our efforts to fulfilling this two-fold good. So, in your day-to-day life, you must give attention both to achieving your own good and to promoting the good of others.

The retreat is coming to an end and soon you'll have to go home. But when you return home, don't think that you have left your Dharma practice behind and won't be able to take it up again until next year. Don't divide your life into two compartments: into Dharma practice, which is something you do at the monastery, and worldly life, which is what you will face when you open the front door to your house. You have to bring together your Dharma practice and your life. It is when your life becomes full-bodied practice, and your practice is expressed in your daily life, that you have truly entered the path of Dharma practice in the proper sense.

In philosophical terms, Buddhism makes a distinction between Nirvana and Samsara. We think of Nirvana as the transcendent realm of freedom and ultimate peace, and Samsara as the realm of finitude and suffering, as the bondage of worldly life. On the basis of this understanding, we regard a Dharma retreat as an opportunity to leave behind our worldly cares and move a few steps closer to Nirvana, a few steps closer to real purity and wisdom. If you think of this distinction in absolutistic terms, then when you leave the monastery to return home, you might feel miserable, for you don't want to face the mundane concerns, pressures, and obligations of household life.

But there is another way to look at our situation. In Buddhism we often use the image of a lotus flower growing up from the mud to illustrate the process of spiritual growth. The lotus flower is the symbol of perfect beauty and purity, yet it grows from the mud at the bottom of the pond. If there were no mud, the lotus flower could not grow; the lotus flower does not grow in a well-prepared garden on dry land. It is only in the mud, the mire of the pond, that the lotus flower can send down roots and rise up through the pond, inch by inch, until it reaches the surface of the pond. Then it opens up to share its beauty and fragrance with everyone.

This image of the lotus flower rising from the mud, rising higher and higher in the pond until it reaches the surface, symbolizes the life of a Buddhist living in the world. The lotus flower grows up from the lotus seed. The seed for your spiritual growth is strong faith in the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. As a seed, faith has the potential to grow into a beautiful lotus flower, the flower of the enlightened mind. And what nurtures the seed is your life within the world, your experiences in your everyday lives. With the guidance of the Dharma, you can learn the skills needed to integrate your daily lives with the path to enlightenment and liberation. In so doing, you will give true meaning to your lives. Meaning comes into our lives when we pursue a goal that is truly good. The Buddha speaks of two kinds of good — one's own good and the good of others — and he says that we enjoy the most meaningful life when we dedicate our efforts to fulfilling this two-fold good. So, in your day-to-day life, you must give attention both to achieving your own good and to promoting the good of others.

You promote your own good by undertaking sincere practice of the Dharma. There are three important spheres of Buddhist practice: devotion, study, and meditation. Devotion is the cultivation of the emotional side of our life. It leads the emotions into spiritually beneficial channels, inspiring the will, arousing our aspirations, settling our determinations. Like fuel for a car, devotion provides the power that makes study and meditation channels of Dharma progress. Study is necessary to sharpen your understanding of the Buddha's teach-

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SEPTEMBER NEWS

Ven. Analayo to Visit Again

Ven. Analayo will be visiting us at Bodhi Monastery again from mid-September to mid-October. His two talks, given during his visit earlier this year were greatly appreciated. His study of the Satipatthana Sutta, *Satipatthana: The Direct Way to Realization*, has recently been published (Windhorse). During his stay here, he will give a Saturday Dharma talk on Oct. 4th.

Ven. Zhi-han on Extended Retreat

Ven. Zhi-han (Bhikkhu Antony) will be on an extended retreat until December. Since the inception of Bodhi Monastery four years ago, he has worked almost non-stop to bring both the monastery and the Yin-Shun Foundation onto a secure footing. Though he will be sorely missed, we hope this period of seclusion will enable him to make a more mature contribution to the progress of the monastery after his return.

Children's Dharma Class to Begin

The class is to begin on Sept. 20 and will take place on alternate Saturdays, between 9:30 and 10:30 am. It is intended for children between the ages of 10 and 12. The main teacher will be William Bertolotti. If you need more information, you can e-mail him at: chwenw@yahoo.com.



Regular Dharma Schedule

SATURDAYS

9:00 - 9:50 am	Refuges & Precepts; guided meditation
10:00 - 10:30 am	Devotional service
10:30 - 11:15 am	Work period
11:15 am - 12 pm	Lunch and cleanup
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Dharma discourse by either Ven. Jen-Chun or Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi
1:45 - 2:15 pm	Dharma discussion
2:45 - 3:45 pm	Pali class

SUNDAYS

9:00 - 9:30 am (First Sunday of each month)	Beginners instruction in sitting and walking meditation
9:30 - 11:00 am (Every Sunday)	Meditation Group meets in the Buddha Hall, guided by Shifu and Bhante
10:00 - 11:30 am (Dates to be determined)	Ven. Jen-Chun Dharma Talks at Ch'an Center, Elmhurst, NY, Phone: 718-592-6593 (in Chinese w/English translations)

TUESDAYS

9 - 10 am	Madhyamaka Philosophy with Ven. Jen-Chun (in Chinese Only)
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THURSDAYS

9 - 10 am	Madhyamaka Philosophy with Ven. Jen-Chun (in Chinese Only)
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DAILY

4:30 - 5 pm	Chanting Liturgy
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NEW DAILY

5:05 - 6 pm	Sitting meditation after evening liturgy is open to anyone who wishes to join us.
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Bringing the Dharma *(continued from front)*

ings, to increase wisdom, but study without practice won't lead to realization. So, to transform what is learned through study into true realization one has to practice bhavana, meditation. Meditation purifies the mind and enables us to see with direct insight the truth of the teaching, the truth of all phenomena.

So while you live your household life, fulfilling your responsibilities to your family, you should dedicate certain fixed periods each day to your Dharma practice: to devotions, serious study of the Buddha's teachings, and mental cultivation. You should also maintain regular contact with the monastery. This sounds like a sales pitch, but it isn't. It's for your own benefit to have regular contact with wise and compassionate advisors, who can guide you, explain difficult points, and help you cultivate the path.

So far I've spoken about fulfilling your own good, but you should also give attention to the good of others. One way to do so is by the practice of generosity. Here in America we live in a very affluent society. We must consider the billions of people in this world living on the edge of starvation, the edge of poverty, the edge of misery and despair. We should help to alleviate their poverty to whatever extent we can and contribute in concrete ways to rescue them from misery.

You can also contribute to the good of others by helping the monastery itself. The monks want to use their time to study the Dharma in greater depth so they can share the Dharma with others, share it with you so that you too will reap the fruits of the path. But in order to have that time and opportunity to investigate the Dharma in depth, we really do need contributions of help — physical help and moral support.

I think Bodhi Monastery has the potential to make a powerful and effective contribution to the spread of Buddhism in North America. But for this monastery to succeed, we'll need close and harmonious cooperation between the monastics and the affiliated lay community. So let us all join hands to make Bodhi Monastery a true Bodhi site for studying, practicing, and realizing the teachings of the Buddha. 🙏

Majjhima Nikaya Class Update

Bhante intends to resume his class on the Majjhima Nikaya in October but is unable to specify a date just now. The date will be given in the October bulletin. While the class is on break you are welcome to listen to the preliminary lectures that ran from January through July of this year. The MP3 files of the lectures are available to listen to at the monastery by appointment only. You can also bring in blank CDs and we will copy the lectures for you.

New Bodhi Monastery Meditation Schedule

Group meditation is open to anyone who wishes to join us at these times:
DAILY, 5:05 - 6:00 pm: Sitting meditation after evening liturgy.
SATURDAYS, 9:00 - 9:50 am: Sitting meditation before devotional service.
SUNDAYS, 9:30 - 11:00 am: Walking and sitting meditation group.
FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH, 9:00 - 9:30 am: Beginners instruction in sitting and walking meditation.