



# BODHI BULLETIN

DHARMA NEWS FROM BODHI MONASTERY • AUGUST 2003

## Becoming a Luminous Exemplar of Dharma

*(An excerpt from a lecture by Ven. Jen-Chun to the monks at Ganlun Buddhist Academy, Jiu-Hua Shan, the Sacred Mountain of Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva, China – October 26, 2002.)*

Buddhism needs the Sangha to propagate the Dharma. That is how the Dharma can be transmitted to the world. As monastic practitioners you have this responsibility to train yourselves to make yourselves worthy exemplars of the Dharma.

To fulfill this responsibility, at the outset of our training we must maintain two attitudes. The first is a great sense of shame and moral dread; the other is great compassion.

The sense of shame and moral dread counteract the two most fundamental defilements, greed and ignorance. The sense of shame counteracts greed or craving; moral dread counteracts ignorance. These two defilements are the root causes for sentient beings to transmigrate in samsara, the round of birth and death. If you have a great sense of shame, you will be able to cut off greed or craving. If you have a great sense of moral dread, you will be able to cut off ignorance.

How do the sense of shame and moral dread counteract the two root defilements? When we learn the Dharma, we encounter the right principle of non-self. The grasping of a self underlies all the defilements. When we give rise to the notion of self, at the same time we give rise to craving, ignorance, conceit, arrogance, and all the other related defilements. By arousing a great sense of shame and moral dread, we can eradicate the underlying root of all defilements: the idea of a self. To accomplish this, however, isn't easy.

One needs both strong determination and astuteness. When these two are conjoined, the combination of determination and astuteness enables one to subdue the self and the defilements that spring from it.

Most people view the self as their fortress, "the fortress of ego." For example, they think, "I can live in 'my own home' or 'my own monastery.' That is the fortress of my self, the fortress to which I can always turn for protection." This way of thinking is seriously mistaken. To practice Buddhism properly we need to break through the fortress of the self. Then we will be able to see everything clearly with the eye of the Dharma. Thus, whether one is a monastic or a lay person, one needs great determination and astuteness to destroy the fortress of the self. To make this one's aim is to take the first step in truly practicing the Dharma. But if one does not attempt to destroy the fortress of the self, no matter how much Dharma you have learned, you will only be scratching the surface.

Now what are the measures that must be employed to destroy the fortress of the self? The first is to instantly subdue the mind of conceit. The minds of human beings tend to be very conceited. Some lay people, with only a smattering of worldly knowledge, think they are know-it-alls. Some monks who have acquired a little knowledge of Dharma become puffed up and think they are real Dharma masters. Thus, thinking highly of themselves, they become obsessed by conceit. But one who thinks highly of himself cannot lift himself up. If you think highly of yourself, you will eventually fall down and won't be able to get up. A true practitioner must instantly crush the mind of conceit the moment it arises. If you can put down the ego-self and enter into harmony with the Dharma, then everywhere and at any time, even in lives to come, you will be able to exert a great and positive influence.

Now as ordinary people we cannot expect to achieve instantaneous enlightenment. These days, many people talk about "instant enlightenment and realization of Buddhahood" or "instant enlightenment and seeing the true nature." It isn't so easy. The "instantaneous practice" that I speak about means to instantly subdue the conceit of self in every thought

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### AUGUST PROGRAM

#### New Saturday Schedule

Please note the new Saturday schedule (see back) introduced last month. This schedule aims to balance meditation, devotion, and Dharma study, and also gives everyone an opportunity to help with the upkeep of the monastery.

#### Sutta Study

Ven. Bodhi's discourses on the Majjhima Nikaya continue on Tuesday evenings, 7 to 8 pm. He will next discuss suttas on the training for liberation (MN 63, 29, 27, 39, and 40).

#### Guest Lecturers in Chinese

C.C. Chuang, guest lecturer from Taiwan, is lecturing on the origins and early development of the Mahayana, Thursdays, 1 to 3 pm (in Chinese).

In August, Venerable Zhu Lian, a scholar-monk visiting from Taiwan, will give selected lectures on Tuesdays, 1 to 2 pm (in Chinese, topics to be announced on the Chinese website).



## Regular Dharma Schedule

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### 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

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### 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
<i>(Dates to be determined)</i>	Ven. Jen-Chun Dharma Talks at Ch'an Center, Elmhurst, NY, Phone: 718-592-6593
10:00 - 11:30 am	(in Chinese w/English translations)

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### TUESDAYS

9 - 10 am	Madhyamaka Philosophy with Ven. Jen-Chun (in Chinese Only)
7 - 8 pm	Sutta Study Class with Bhikkhu Bodhi (in English only)

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### THURSDAYS

9 - 10 am	Madhyamaka Philosophy with Ven. Jen-Chun (in Chinese Only)
1 - 3 pm (In August)	Lectures on the origins and early development of Mahayana by C.C. Chuang (in Chinese only)

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### DAILY

4:30 - 5 pm	Chanting Liturgy
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Please contact us for more information on any of these programs.  
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## Luminous Exemplar *(continued from front)*

that arises in the mind. “Instantly” means “immediately,” without giving the conceit of self any scope to grow and thrive.

What is the second measure needed to destroy the self? It is to “instantly illuminate the Dharma,” that is, to shine through dharmas (phenomena) and to shine the light of the Dharma. In the phrase “to shine through dharmas,” the word “dharma” refers to the five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness. These are the mundane dharmas or phenomena of birth and death. In the sutras it is said, “When dharmas arise, suffering arises. When dharmas cease, suffering ceases.” That is, when the phenomena of the five aggregates arise, all suffering arises. Likewise, when the phenomena of the five aggregates cease, all suffering ceases. These five aggregates must be understood with the wisdom of the Dharma, as impermanent and devoid of any self. This is illuminating the mundane dharmas, the phenomena of birth and death.

The phrase “to illuminate the Dharma” also means to shine the light of the Dharma. This refers to the transcendental Dharma: the unsurpassed Dharma, the Dharma of non-self, the Dharma of Nirvana.

Thus the two measures needed to destroy the fortress of the self are: to instantaneously subdue the mind of conceit, and to illuminate the right Dharma by understanding impermanence, non-self, and Nirvana.

When, with a great sense of shame and moral dread, one subdues the self, great compassion can arise within. What is great compassion? It is the wish to uplift people from suffering and delusion. Most people are confused and deluded. We must help to lift them out from their confusion and suffering. However, it isn't easy to exercise such a skill. To equip oneself to truly and effectively uplift others, in everyday life one must persistently learn and practice the wisdom and compassion of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. At the outset, one must deepen and strengthen one's aspiration. We should learn from the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, who has made the great and vast vow, “I will not attain Buddhahood until the hells are empty.” By making such a resolution, we will be making a vast pledge, a pledge that will function like a whip to fortify and sharpen our endeavors.

As we persist in such practices over a long time, one will eventually come to see in a profound way what makes the Buddha the Enlightened One. The Buddha had the wisdom to eradicate the self and the great compassion to devote himself fully to the welfare of all. Through strong aspirations and great pledges, one will be able to profoundly manifest the Buddha in all one's actions and thoughts. 🙏