



Respect: The Basis for Compassion and Wisdom

(A discourse given by Ven. Master Jen-Chun at Bodhi Monastery, March 13, 2004)

**A compassionate resolve of walking through fire and water,
A wise planning that "offers one's heart on a platter,"
When generated with clarity and purity, enables
An (ordinary) person to see the great bodhisattvas.**

Throughout history we have seen many examples of people who were willing "to walk through fire and water" to uphold justice, to preserve the integrity of their religion, and to protect their country. These are very difficult tasks. The fire fighters who were involved with the rescue missions following the 9/11 terrorist attacks were examples of those who "walk through fire." They went right through the fire to fight the fire, even though they knew they might die. They did this because it was their

responsibility. When one is willing to go through fire and water, one demonstrates compassion and resolve in action.

A focus of wisdom is openness. "Openness" means that there's nothing covert; our heart and mind are clearly displayed for others to see; we are willing to "show our cards." Such openness and enthusiasm require true wisdom. True wisdom illuminates: it puts our physical and mental conduct under the spotlight so that everyone knows what's on our mind. We will then have the courage and vigor to put our moral beliefs into action.

The wisdom of Dharma is the most excellent. The teaching of the Buddha is most worthy of our respect. We revere the words of the Buddha – the Teacher of the plain and simple truth. We aspire to truly understand the Dharma.

Compassion means the ability to place everyone else above ourselves. Even the Buddha, the most lofty of all, upheld the notion of equality. Our willingness to endure our own pain and suffering will enable us to provide others with protection and safety.

Buddhism often speaks of having great aspiration and resolve. "Aspiration and resolve" means the firmness of our determination. We apply this firmness to everything we do – true firmness arises only if we are never deceitful – and with such purity of all our actions, we do what should be done and refrain from doing what shouldn't be done.

When an ordinary person's own determination gradually becomes pure, he/she begins to see the greatness of the great bodhisattvas. Great bodhisattvas are great because of their extraordinary qualities, the qualities that stem from their great resolve. They do what others hesitate to do; they take up what others fear to undertake. They consider such difficult deeds as their own responsibility, which they must never shirk.

**Contemplate with wisdom and destroy the ego, which hinders and conceals.
Act with compassion and support others, who open our hearts and broaden our minds.
By the luminosity and virtuous qualities of great resolve and pure karmic action,
internal breakthroughs and support from others will continuously come.**

Though we all have a heart and a pair of eyes, they are often blind. They are blinded by the delusion of self. Therefore, the single most important aim in practicing Buddhism is to eliminate the fallacy of self. We should first understand that a "true self" does not exist; there is only a "conditioned self" – this entity that we call "self" is only a temporary conditional existence. If we understand the nature of this conditioned self, we can make good use of the conventional entity "self." Through the conditioned self, we resolve to create a bright future. With such wisdom, we will be able to break through our delusion of self.

We walk around as if we are wearing a blindfold over our eyes and a veil over our hearts and minds. If we understand this, we should apply wisdom to remove the blindfold and pull off the veil. Then we will be able to truly care for others and extend to them our loving-kindness. There are two elements of loving-kindness. The first element is rational differentiation – knowing and choosing right from wrong; the second is forbearance of the truth, holding back on personal liberation in order to help others. If we understand the true meaning of loving-kindness, we can truly devote ourselves and truly promote and spread morality through loving-kindness.

What is the meaning of "open and broaden"? We should first recognize that we cannot exist in this world independently. We exist through our connections with innumerable supporting conditions, both human and material. Therefore, we need to devote ourselves to the public welfare and *open the valve of our hearts to broaden the capacity of our minds.*

How do we open our hearts and broaden our minds? First we make a determination to purify our actions by removing the blindfolds, by not being controlled by the delusion of self. Gradually our deeds become righteous and our resolve solidifies. The luminous and virtuous quality will eventually manifest itself, enabling us to break

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through the blindfold of self and sustain our practice. Over time, our wisdom will gradually gain in strength, and the capacity of our mind will be further enlarged.

**Time is spent on worthy causes,
conduct with integrity will be free from disdain.
The emptiness doctrine is observed with pure clarity,
the principle that is lucidly explicated can transform
and inspire (others).**

The doctrine of emptiness teaches us not to cling to the two extreme wrong views of eternalism and annihilationism. When we understand the true nature of self and are free from any false view of self, there would be no adverse effect (the delusion) in the activities of “self,” and we will gradually achieve purity in our physical and mental conduct.

The word “discourse” in Chinese (*li*) also means the ultimate principle or guideline. What kind of principle is considered the ultimate guideline? The principle refers to the ultimate truth – the truth that can withstand the scrutiny of the most rigorous logic. Once we penetrate this ultimate truth, we are “victorious” because from then on our actions will always reflect the principle, namely, the truth. If we can then clearly explicate this principle, we can transform and inspire others.

Everyone should share the responsibility to spread the Dharma. Whether you are a lay person or a monastic, you need to spend time studying the Dharma, so that you will be able to give discourses. Do not think it is another person’s responsibility. Do not simply enjoy the benefit of the Dharma. Do not be lazy and waste your time. Don’t waste your life as a human being.

**For those who never diverge from the mindfulness
of respect,
herein mundane and supramundane qualities arise.
For those who frequently make ample use of
mindfulness of respect,
wherever they go, their path is clear and wide.**

We should have respect at all times. Having respect is more than paying lip service. We demonstrate respect in all our actions. Once we can hold respect in our minds at all times, it naturally flows out through all our activities. All moral actions, whether mundane or supramundane, will then be born from respect.

What difference does it make to have a sense of respect? Without a sense of respect, we are without sincerity. An insincere person follows

the flow of samsara, from life to life, like a leaf drifting on flowing water. If we apply respect, we can reach a relaxed state of mind because the mind will be free from the control of our egos. Any pressure that we normally feel in life will not affect us, and our mind will be calm and strong.

Whether you are a monastic or lay person, if you are a pure follower of the Buddha, you will be able to win respect wherever you go and you will be faced with a path that is clear and wide. If you can have this open mind, you do not have any selfishness in your mind and everything you do, you do for others; wherever you go, others will want to make a connection with you. Once you are able to make connections with everyone, you will be able to make connections with all the Buddhas. That is where the great effectiveness lies. On the other hand, whether you are a lay person or a monastic, if you can maintain pure Dharma practice, you will also win the respect of others. The path in front of you will be clear and wide. Because of your openness and selflessness, everything you do, you do it to benefit others. People will then want to connect with you wherever you go. Building a connection with everyone, you are building a connection with all the Buddhas. This is the great use of respect.

We should look to the Buddha to learn how to show respect. The Buddha Shakyamuni not only paid respect and showed reverence to all the Buddhas of the past, he also showed respect to all sentient beings in the past, present, and future. This is the true essence of Buddhism. This is the difference between it and other worldly religions.

You should apply the same kind of reverence and respect to everybody surrounding you. With this kind of universal reverence, you will not lose your temper. Not only should you show respect to good people, you should also show respect to bad people because whatever these people did that makes them bad is only temporary. You should apply this attitude of equality to everyone and then you will have no anger or aversion. Your mind will then be calm, pure, and steady.

What kind of person was the Buddha? He was one who always placed others before himself. He never had one thought of craving for himself. Because he possessed this kind of mentality, he was able to dedicate everything he had to everybody else. If you are able to follow the example set by the Buddha, you will have no craving and greed. With non-greed, your behavior will show integrity and wherever you go, you will exude purity and integrity in your actions. ☸

NEWS BRIEFS

IMPORTANT:

• **January 1st – No Lay Activities**

There will be no scheduled lay activities at the monastery on this day.

• **Feb. 12th – Chinese Lunar New Year**

On this day we will have a special morning service and New Year luncheon. The rule of "Noble Silence" during lunch will be lifted on this day, so that we can enjoy getting to know one another better.

Shifu Lectures Every Saturday Morning

Since Shifu's return from Taiwan in late October, he has been back on schedule lecturing every Saturday morning at 9:50 am in Chinese with English translation.

Bhante Lectures on the "Mahamangala Sutta" from the "Sutta-Nipata"

This sutta contains an enumeration of the blessings (mangalas) of leading a pure life and its subject matter is also of great practical application in our lay lives. After Bhante's first talk on this sutta which was on Dec. 11th, he will then continue with this series on alternate Saturdays at 12:40 pm starting on January 8th. Ven. Xin-Xing lectures on the other Saturdays.

Bodhi Kids Program Winter Session Begins

The *Bodhi Kids for Friendliness Program* is taught by lay people with monastic guidance and is open to children from any religious background. For Info: Duke DeGroat 973 940 0711 or email, duke@thedukeagency.com
 Ages 4-8 years: Classes Saturdays, 9:50-11am, 1/8, 1/22, 2/12, 3/5, 3/19
 Ages 9-13 years: Classes Saturdays, 9:50-11am, 2/12, 3/5

Bhante's Majjhima Nikaya Class on Winter Break in February

This class will be on break for the entire month of February starting on February 1st and will then resume on March 8th.

"Gateway to the Dharma" Ven. Jen-Chun's First Work Published in English Now Available at Bodhi Monastery

Gateway to the Dharma is a small but rich and potent booklet consisting of talks that Ven. Master Jen-Chen gave in Chinese as preparation for the study of Ven. Master Yin-Shun's monumental treatise *The Way to Buddhahood*. The publication of this booklet is a joint effort of the Yin-Shun Foundation and the Buddhist Association of the United States (BAUS).

The Food Pantry – A Team Effort

Over the holidays, the Bodhi Monastery Food Pantry provided food (donated turkeys and all the trimmings) to 40+ families. The Cub Scouts of Lafayette and the volunteer group Pass It Along are now working in conjunction with The Pantry. The Cub Scouts collected over 150 warm coats for those in need and continue to offer their help in other ways. Pass It Along volunteers help with the pick up of food and one of their members is now working at The Pantry. The Apple Tree of Wharton is yet another grocery store who is providing food supplies. They have been donating abundant quantities of produce each week. The United Way recently gave a generous monetary allocation to The Pantry.

We greatly appreciate the efforts of the individuals and organizations who participate in helping us to provide for those in need. For more information on how you can donate food, clothing, services, or time, contact Barbara Albeck by phone 973 328 8557 or e-mail barbalbeck@aol.com.

JAN/FEB
DHARMA SCHEDULE

SATURDAYS:

9:50 - 10:50 am Dharma Talk by Ven. Jen-Chun
 10:50 - 11:15 pm Work period
 11:15 - 12:15 pm Lunch and cleanup
 12:40 - 1:40 pm Dharma Talk by Ven. Bodhi, Ven. Xin-Xing or guest lecturer
 2:00 - 2:30 pm Q&A session
 2:45 - 4:45 pm Pali class

FIRST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH:

9:50 - 10:30 am Dharma Talk by Ven. Jen-Chun
 10:40 - 11:10 pm Devotional Service

(The rest of the schedule follows as above.)

SUNDAYS:

9:00 - 9:30 am Beginners instruction in meditation (First Sunday of each month)
 9:30 - 10:45 am Meditation Group guided by resident monks (Every Sunday)

WEEKDAYS:

Tuesdays, 7 - 8:15 pm* Sutta Study Class with Ven. Bodhi (in English)

*February classes cancelled for winter break. Class resumes on March 8th.

DAILY:

4:30 - 5 pm Chanting Liturgy
 5:05 - 6 pm Sitting meditation

Please make a note of Bodhi Monastery's new e-mail address: contactus@bodhimonastery.net