

# BODHI BULLETIN

DHARMA NEWS FROM BODHI MONASTERY • MARCH 2003

## Our Mind Is Our Best Friend

*Excerpt from a talk by Bhikkhu Bodhi (August 2, 2002)*

**Whatever an enemy  
might do to an enemy,  
a foe to a foe, a badly  
directed mind inflicts  
worse harm upon oneself.**

**Neither mother,  
nor father, nor any  
other relative can bring  
one greater benefit  
than one's own  
well-directed mind.**

*Dhammapada, vv. 42-43*

In our lives we often distinguish people as enemies and friends. We consider as enemies those people who are bent on harming us, on doing some damage to us or to our loved ones. And we consider as friends those people who wish to benefit us, to provide for our welfare and the well-being of those close to us. Now let us consider what kind of harm an enemy can do to us.

An enemy might slander us by spreading false rumors about us; but if we know that we are not guilty of the fault he ascribes to us we have no need to worry. An enemy might even harm us physically; in the worst scenario, he might kill us. But even if the enemy kills us, we need not be overly despondent. For if we have a good mind, a strong mind, a well-developed and virtuous mind, then although the body dies, the mind will go on to some fortunate state of existence in the future. But if our mind strays from the path of Dhamma, if we surrender to the impulses of selfishness, greed, and hatred, then we will suffer far more in life after life than we would when the enemy takes our life. So long as the enemy is not able to harm our mind, we can still consider ourselves secure.

We consider as friends or benefactors the people who benefit us. Of all the people in our lives who benefit us, the most important, from the worldly point of view, are our parents. Yet, even if our parents look after all our material and social needs, they wouldn't be benefiting us as much as they would if they give us moral instruction, give us guidance in the right way of life. When they give us wise instruction in the proper conduct of life, whether we accept it or not depends upon ourselves, and that means that it depends upon our own minds. This is why the Buddha makes the mind the focal point of his entire teaching. The mind is the central force in our lives, and the whole quality of our lives is just a reflection of the quality of our own minds.

The Buddha teaches the way to develop the mind, to elevate the mind. His teaching isn't intended for those who are already enlightened sages, but for ordinary people living very ordinary lives. What he teaches is how to transform the defiled mind, the mind troubled by afflictions, desires, sorrow, pain and suffering, into the enlightened mind, the liberated mind, the mind that is radiant with wisdom, loving-kindness, and compassion, into a mind that is peaceful and content under any circumstances. This is illustrated by the famous simile of the lotus flower. The lotus begins growing at the bottom of a muddy pond, but it rises up through the muddy water until it emerges from the pond, unfolds its petals, and reveals its sublime beauty.

In practicing the Dhamma, we begin with our ordinary mind, which is like the lotus seed in the mud, the mind soiled by desires and delusions. By following the Buddha's instructions step by step we elevate the mind above the mud of the world, we unfold its petals of virtuous qualities, until it opens fully and displays its radiant beauty.



### MARCH SUTTA STUDY

Bhante's class on  
Majjhima Nikaya,  
Tuesday evenings,  
7:00-8:00pm  
(in English only)

In March, Bhante will discuss the wise approach to the choice of a spiritual path (Apannaka Sutta, MN 60), the way to investigate a spiritual teacher (Vimamsaka Sutta, MN 47); and the relationship between faith, practice, and attainment in following the Buddhist path (Canki Sutta, MN 95).

The course will be ongoing for approximately the next two years. There is no fee. Newcomers are welcome at any time. Previous exposure to basic Buddhist teachings is recommended but not required.

If you are unable to attend on Tuesdays, you can make an appointment to listen to the recorded classes at your convenience.

The course syllabus is posted on our website. If you have any questions please call the monastery or email us at [info@bodhimonastery.net](mailto:info@bodhimonastery.net). Type in "Re: Sutta Study" in the subject box.

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Please call or e-mail us for more information:  
tel: 973.940.0473 email: [info@bodhimonastery.net](mailto:info@bodhimonastery.net)



## March Saturday Dharma Talk Schedule

Ven. Master Jen-Chun and Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi will be giving Dharma Talks through March.

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SAT., MARCH 1ST	
10:00am-10:35am	Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi Dharma Talk
10:45am-11:30am	Monthly Ceremony (Circumambulation, chanting, offerings)
11:35am-12:00pm	Lunch/Free time
12:00pm-1:00pm	Merit Gathering (volunteer chores)
1:15pm-2:00pm	Ven. Master Jen-Chun Dharma Talk

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SAT., MARCH 8TH, 15TH, 22ND & 29TH	
10:00am-10:45am	Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi Dharma Talk
11:15am-12:00pm	Lunch/Free time
12:00pm-1:00pm	Merit Gathering (volunteer chores)
1:15pm-2:00pm	Ven. Master Jen-Chun Dharma Talk

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## Vesak Commemoration at Bodhi Monastery on Saturday, May 17th

We will pay tribute to the Buddha on Vesak, the day marking his birth, enlightenment, and passing away. There will be Dharma activities during both the morning and afternoon. We intend to discuss a pertinent topic such as the application of Buddhist teachings to problems of present-day life. A ceremony and a meditation period will be included. Lunch will be served as well. Look for more details in a future bulletin.

REMINDER: EVENING CHANTING LITURGY IS HELD 7 DAYS A WEEK FROM 4:30-5:00PM. ALL ARE WELCOME.

## BODHI BRIEFS

### DHARMA:

Shifu's Lectures on Madhyamaka philosophy, Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 9:00-10:00am (in Chinese only).

Shifu will give Dharma Talks in Chinese (with English translations) at the Ch'an Center on Sundays, March 2nd and March 16th from 10:00-11:30am. Address: 90-56 Corona Ave. Elmhurst, NY 11373 Phone: 718-592-6593

### VEN. MASTER YIN-SHUN'S 97TH BIRTHDAY:

On March 28th Shifu will travel to Taiwan for Master Yin-shun's 97th birthday. From there he will go to Hongkong and China to give Dharma

Talks, returning to New Jersey on April 27th. We will be playing recorded Dharma Talks by Shifu in his absence.

UPCOMING DHARMA ACTIVITIES:  
Ajahn Amaro Dharma Talk on Wednesday evening, April 30th.  
Vesak Saturday, May 17th  
2003 Dharma Retreat July 18th - July 25th.  
We will post more information in a future bulletin.

### MEDITATION:

Ven. Adam will give basic meditation instruction on March 2nd from 9:30-11:00am. Instruction is given on the

first Sunday of every month. Please inform us that you are coming and leave contact information.

All are welcome to join our ongoing sitting and walking meditation group guided by Bhante and Shifu. We meet every Sunday from 9:30-11:00am in the Buddha Hall. If you have no previous meditation experience, we ask that within the first month of sitting with us you take the basic meditation instruction here.

Please use the Buddha Hall for meditation while the Meditation Room is being repaired. The Buddha Hall is available for use from 9:00am-4:30pm daily.