

BODHI BULLETIN

DHARMA NEWS FROM BODHI MONASTERY • MAY/JUNE 2004

News Briefs

Spiritual Friendship

Part II: "Vertical" Friendship

Thus spiritual friendship is of two types, horizontal and vertical. Horizontal spiritual friendship, as I explained in the previous installment of this essay, is friendship between

**If you find a wise person
Who points out your faults and corrects you,
You should follow such a sage
As you would a revealer of treasures.
It is better, never worse
To follow such a sage.**

— Dhammapada v.76

people who are at roughly the same level in following the path; that is, it is the friendship between companions on the path, and what unites them as spiritual friends is a common dedication to following the Buddhist path. The other aspect of spiritual friendship is what I call "vertical" friendship. This is the spiritual friendship between people who are at widely different levels on the path. We might also call this "asymmetrical" friend-

ship, in that the relationship between the two members is not one of equality. This type of spiritual friendship is the bond between senior and junior followers on the path, especially the bond between a teacher and a student.

Because the relationship between the two is not equal or symmetrical, if this relationship is to be mutually beneficial, different qualities are required of the teacher and the student. In a relationship that revolves around the Dharma, the ideal teacher should have wide knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures and also abundant practical experience in following the teaching. Few teachers measure up to the ideal in all respects, and thus most students must be ready to settle for teachers who, like themselves, are still far from perfect. But two essential qualities in a teacher are a clear understanding of the fundamental principles of the Dharma and a sincere dedication to the proper practice. Besides knowledge and practical experience, the teacher must be willing or eager to teach. This willingness or eagerness to teach, however, shouldn't stem from personal ambition or egotism, from the desire to be an outstanding teacher surrounded by a flock of admiring disciples. Rather, the teacher should regard himself as a humble transmitter of the tradition, and his desire to teach should be motivated by compassion for his students and by a sincere wish to uplift the students by improving their knowledge and practical experience. The teacher should treat the students with kindness and gentleness when they are well disciplined and obedient; but though he should be kind and gentle, he should not treat his students too leniently but should know how to maintain the proper distance needed to preserve his own dignity as a teacher. And if he's a true spiritual teacher and not just one who is imparting knowledge, he should be ready to discipline his students when necessary by admonishing them, pointing out their faults, and attempting to correct their faults.

The student should adopt the proper attitude in relation to the teacher. In Buddhist spiritual training, the attitude required is quite different from that of a student at a university. The attitude required of a student is one directed toward spiritual understanding and realization. Whereas academic study can lead to success independently of the personal character of the student, in the study of the Dharma, success is directly proportional to the purification of one's character. Thus at the outset students need the qualities conducive to spiritual growth.

Students should have faith in the teacher, confidence that the teacher is a superior person able to help them, to guide them in their spiritual development. This, of course, is

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SAVE THESE DATES!

**Ven. Yin-Shun 100th Birthday
Dedication: May 1st**

**Vesak Celebration: May 22nd
Dharma Retreat: July 10th-16th**

Please see articles on the separate Special Events sheet.

Youth and Small Children's Dharma Class Continues

These classes for children between ages 4 and 13 years old will take place between 9:50 and 11:00 am on Saturdays, May 1st and May 15th. For more information, please e-mail Duke (dukedegroat@nac.net) or William (williambertolotti@yahoo.com).

Venerable Dhammadipa (Xing-Kong Fashi) to Lecture on May 1st

Topic: Approaches to meditation in Yogachara Buddhism.

Time: 12:30 - 2:30 pm (including a short break and a 15 minute Q&A).

While Ven. Dhammadipa was here in January, he gave four lectures on the same subject. This will be the last lecture on his lecture tour of the United States, before he leaves for Europe on May 3rd.

Venerable Anlayo to Lecture on May 15th

From April 26th until early June, Bodhi Monastery will again host a visit from Ven. Anlayo, a Buddhist monk from Germany. On May 15th he will give the afternoon Dharma talk on "Contemplation of Mind."

Mr. Sheng-Chuang Lu to Give 8-Week Seminar in Chinese on an Essay by Ven. Yin-Shun

Mr. Sheng-Chiang Lu, a Taiwanese speaker and writer recognized for his knowledge of Ven. Yin-Shun's thought, will be visiting Bodhi Monastery. He will give an eight-week seminar (Chinese only) on Saturdays from May 8th to July 3rd, excluding May 22nd, from 1:45 to 2:35 pm. His talks will be based on Master Yin-Shun's essay *Human-centric Buddhism - the Timeless Truth with the Timely Approach* [Qi4 Li3 Qi4 Ji1 Zhi1 Ren2 Jian1 Fo2 Jiao4]. He will also be speaking at the July Dharma Retreat on "Venerable Master Yin-Shun's Unique Discourse on Samatha and Vipassana."

Spiritual Friendship *(continued from front)*

not a blind faith, but a trusting confidence in the spiritual capacities of the teacher. It is the trust that the teacher has invested a long period of time in his own spiritual training and thus is sufficiently qualified to guide the student at least a few steps further in the practice of the Dharma. Both teacher and student are united in a common faith, faith in the Triple Gem, faith in the efficacy of the Dharma as a path to liberation and to the realization of the ultimate good. But students should assume that the teacher, by reason of his role, has a faith that is deeper and more solidly grounded than their own and thus that the teacher's advice and guidance should be accepted as worthy of trust. This does not mean that the student must regard the teacher as infallible and accept every bit of advice that the teacher offers, nor does it mean that the student must docilely follow every order that the teacher issues. The Buddha respected the capacity of mature human beings to make independent judgments; he did not subscribe to the view held by many Indian religious teachers that disciples must regard their teacher's word as absolute law. In the Vinaya, the Buddhist code of monastic discipline, pupils are authorized to correct their teachers if they see them engaging in improper modes of conduct or hear them advancing wrong interpretations of the teaching. This principle, laid down over two thousand years ago, is still valid today and should regulate the relationship between teachers and their students.

But to allow students to evaluate their teachers' ideas and conduct does not mean that the students are entitled to act without respect. To the contrary, one can only advance in the Dharma if one is respectful and reverential towards one's teachers. One should never be obstinate, proud, or arrogant towards anyone, least of all towards the person one regards as one's guide to the understanding and practice of the Dharma. The practice of the Dharma aims at subduing the ego, the false sense of self, and to act in ways that inflate the sense of self is to defeat one's very purpose in following the Dharma.

The relationship between student and teacher provides an ideal field for both to work at tackling the importunate demands of the ego. The student gains this opportunity by developing a respectful attitude towards the teacher and by showing respect in bodily and verbal conduct: for example, by standing up when the teacher enters the room, by making *anjali* towards him, by speaking to him politely and with a humble demeanor. The teacher also can use the relationship to subdue his own ego: by refusing to adopt an arrogant attitude towards the pupil, by treating the pupil with kindness and consideration, by sharing his knowledge with the pupil.

One quality that the Buddha considered essential in a qualified student is called (in Pali) *suvaso*, which means being "easy to speak to." A student who is "easy to speak to" is ready to listen to his or her teacher and to accept the teacher's advice without resentment, without vindictiveness, without arguing back, without complaints. Spiritual growth in the Dharma is a process of abandoning one's faults and replacing them with the opposing virtues. Yet too often we are blind to our own faults, unable or unwilling to see them. A skillful teacher is like a mirror: he shows us our faults clearly, insistently, without deception, reminding us of the faults we continually strive to hide from ourselves. For it is only when we are willing to see our faults that we can correct them. If we go on denying these faults, insisting that we are perfect, then we will continue to wallow in them, like a buffalo in the mud. But when we open up to the teacher and show a willingness to see our own faults, to subdue our self-will, we then take the first major step in the direction of correcting them. It is through this consistent, continuous process of removing our faults, of subduing our egocentric tendencies, that we move in the direction that the Buddha is pointing us, the direction taken by all the noble ones of the past. It is in this way that we can collect the precious jewels of the noble virtues and embed them in our own hearts and minds, so that we shine resplendent in the world. For this reason, the Dhammapada says that when the teacher points out a student's faults and tries to correct them, the student should feel as though the teacher were pointing out hidden treasure.

(An excerpt from a lecture by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi. Part I: "Horizontal" Friendships appeared in the March/April Bodhi Bulletin.)

May/June Dharma Schedule

Please note that from now on the afternoon lecture starts at 12:40 pm instead of 12:30 pm. We will be following our regular Dharma Schedule in May/June except for the Ven. Yin-Shun Dedication on May 1st and Vesak on May 22nd. Please refer to the articles on the Special Events sheet for the schedules on those days.

SATURDAYS:

9:50 - 10:40 am	Dharma discourse by Ven. Jen-Chun
10:45 - 11:15 pm	Work period
11:15 - 12:15 pm	Lunch and cleanup
12:40 - 1:30 pm	Dharma discourse by Ven. Bodhi, Ven. Xin-Xing or guest lecturer
1:45 - 2:35 pm	Dharma discussion
2:45 - 4:45 pm	Pali class

FIRST SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH:

9:50 - 10:30 am	Dharma discourse 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 (First Sunday of each month)	Beginners instruction in meditation
9:30 - 11:00 am (Every Sunday)	Meditation Group guided by Bhante
10:00 - 11:30 am (dates to be determined)	Ven. Jen-Chun Dharma Talk at Ch'an Center

WEEKDAYS:

Tuesdays,* 9:50 - 10:50 am and 1 - 2 pm	Madhyamaka Philosophy with Ven. Jen-Chun (in Chinese)
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*Cancelled May 4th.

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

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

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Please contact us for more information on any of our programs: 973 940 0473 or info@bodhimonastery.net



Special Events at Bodhi Monastery

BODHI BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT • MAY/JUNE 2004

Special Dedication to Venerable Yin-Shun on May 1st

On May 1st, the Monastery will hold a special service to dedicate merits to Master Yin-Shun, to coincide with the celebration of his 100th birth anniversary at Fu Yan Buddhist Institute in Taiwan over the same weekend. As most of you know, Master Yin-Shun, the foremost scholar-monk in the modern Chinese Buddhist world, is the teacher of our founder, Master Jen-Chun, and it is

his work that forms the guiding ideal of Bodhi Monastery. At 9:50 am, Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi will give a short talk on Master Yin-Shun's life and work. Then at 10:30 am we will conduct a half-hour liturgy, which will be dedicated to the continued long life and good health of Master Yin-Shun.

Ven. Master Jen-Chun, accompanied by Ven. Guo-Ching (Rev. John), left

Bodhi Monastery in early April for a one-month lecture tour through May 7th that will take him to mainland China and Taiwan. He will be in Taiwan to join the one hundredth birthday celebration of Master Yin-Shun. The Yin-Shun Foundation has sent Master Yin-Shun a gift of a beautiful photograph album, prepared by Kathy Wu, showing the facilities and activities at Bodhi Monastery.

Vesak Celebration to be Held on May 22nd

On May 22nd, Bodhi Monastery will celebrate the international Buddhist holiday of Vesak, the day commemorating the birth, Enlightenment, and Parinirvana (passing away) of Lord Buddha. According to the Southern Buddhist tradition, these three events all occurred on the full-moon day of the Indian month Vaisakha (April-May). It is a day when Buddhists of all affiliations should express their homage and dedication to the Supreme Teacher whose appearance in this world opened up the gates to the highest happiness and peace.

The Vesak schedule at Bodhi Monastery will feature a number of special events including a ceremony of initiation into the Buddha Dharma for those who have never before formally taken the Refuges and Precepts and would like to do so. *If any of our readers wish to participate in this ceremony, please inform us as early as possible.*

In the Buddhist tradition, on days of special religious significance, lay disciples commonly undertake to observe, for a full day and night, a more stringent set of eight precepts. *You are welcome to take the temporary eight precepts on this occasion.*

Please visit our website, www.bodhimonastery.net, for more information on Vesak, the meaning of going for Refuge formally, and the taking of the temporary Eight Precepts. We have also posted Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi's 2000 keynote address to the United Nations on its first official celebration of Vesak.

VESAK PROGRAM MAY 22ND

At 8:30 am there will be an informal briefing on taking the Refuges, Five Precepts, and Eight Precepts for new candidates only.

9:00 am	Communal Taking of the Three Refuges/Five Precepts
9:10 am	Initiation into the Dharma (for those formally taking the Refuges & Precepts for the first time)
9:20 am	Taking of the temporary Eight Precepts
9:40 am	Devotional Service
10:10 am	(Break)
10:30 am	<i>The Meaning of Vesak</i> by Ven. Bodhi
11:15 am	(Lunch and Rest Period)
1:00 pm	Dharma Talk by Ven. Jen-Chun
1:45 pm	(Break)
2:00 pm	<i>King Asoka for President</i> by William Bertolotti
2:20 pm	Dedication of merits (10 minutes)

Dharma Retreat July 10th-16th

This summer the annual Dharma Retreat will be held at Bodhi Monastery from July 10th to 16th, *with registration on Friday afternoon, July 9th*. The retreat will feature Dharma talks, meditation sessions, study groups, and liturgy – a balanced blend of the intellectual, contemplative, and emotional sides of the Buddhist path. Those who can't attend the retreat every day can still attend on selected days; those who can't attend for a full day can come when it fits their schedule.

This year the English program will run in the afternoon only, while the Chinese program will run all day. The two will

merge for key events, such as the evening lectures, as well as afternoon meditation and liturgy. The evening lectures will be given in English only. The theme for this year's lectures is "The Spectrum of Buddhist Wisdom, from Shakyamuni to Early Chan." Speakers will include Ven. Bodhi; Mu Soeng, director of the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies in Barre, Massachusetts; and Ven. Guo Yuan, abbot of The Chan Center in Corona, Queens.

The mid-afternoon program in English will consist of seminars relating to the evening lecture topics and other discussion groups. Though the English program

is not extensive this year, we welcome you to participate fully in the Dharma retreat, using the open time periods for independent study and meditation.

In accordance with our established policy, there is no charge, but please remember that such retreats are made possible through the sponsorship of the Yin Shun Foundation and the generous donations of our friends and supporters, whether large or small. We will be sending a separate mailing with more details about the retreat in the near future. Please note that the monastery will be closed to the public during this retreat period.