

great.
bodhi
mind

a collection of
dharma talks

BY
VENERABLE MASTER JEN-CHUN

Acknowledgements

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Ven. Jen-chun, in traditional Chinese style, bases his talks on a series of stanzas. He writes his stanzas on scraps of paper and then breaks down each stanza by line and explains its meaning in the lecture. In order to convey the meaning clearly in English and depending on the need of the individual essay, the stanzas were sometimes used in their entirety, at other times used as subtitles and subheads, or also folded hidden in the text.

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Dispel All Pretenses and Smile



*Dispel all pretenses and smile
In a composed and tranquil manner.
Be respectful, wholesome, and sincere
As if the Buddha were standing before you.*

Our pretenses are an expression of the ego-self. Thus, if we are true practitioners of the Dharma, we must dispel all our pretenses, the false masks of the ego-self. The ego-self is the iron fist at the gateway of the mind, the protective fortress of the "I." So we must utilize our time effectively to sever our notion of self. When you can subdue and eradicate the self, then you will be able to face all people with wholesome joy. You will be able to look at everyone with the most sincere mind of Dharma, smile at them warmly, and welcome them in a very composed way.

A true practitioner of the Dharma must understand that the Buddha is one who has attained Buddhahood and that ordinary people are all potential Buddhas. So under all circumstances, we should look upon all people as if we are facing the Buddha. We should look upon all Buddhas as if we are seeing all people. Thereby, we see the Buddha and all people equanimously and equally. If we were to look down at other people with a conceited mind, that would be like looking down on all the Buddhas – a serious transgression indeed. If we look upon all people as if we were seeing the Buddha before us, we will always respect and revere everyone with the purest and most wholesome mind.

When our Buddha Shakyamuni first attained Buddhahood, he said that nothing can be achieved without respect. This means that if we do not extend sincere respect to others, we cannot realize any great achievement. The Buddha respected all the Buddhas as well as all people. Why? Because he truly understood that while his Dharma-body came from all the Buddhas, his form-body came from all sentient beings.

*The wave of compassion surges like the sea,
Purification comes by severing the "I."
Thus, the bodhi task is firm and wide,
Ever bolder, without obstruction.*

All the Buddhas and the great bodhisattvas are the manifestation of great compassion and great wisdom. As practitioners of the bodhisattva path, we should develop a mind of compassion as vast as the great ocean. We also need the wisdom to eradicate and purify ourselves by severing the "I." Thus, we must learn the great wisdom and great compassion of all the great bodhisattvas.

The word "bodhi" is short for bodhi-mind, the aspiration for enlightenment. This is the great vow of a bodhisattva, which combines great wisdom with great compassion. A person who has generated the bodhi-mind is always young, firm, and strong in spirit. Such a person will never regress. In their mind they can embrace and reach out to all sentient beings. They are unobstructed in learning the Dharma and thus can eradicate the "I," the unreal notion of self.

*Distinguish clearly between the old and the new,
Distinguish things to be abandoned and nurtured.
Distinguish clearly what it means to sink and what to generate,
Distinguish clearly between the defiled and the pure.*

In this verse, "the old" refers to old habitual ways, the ways of defilement. An old way, for instance, is not being able to firmly uphold the five precepts; the new way is to firmly uphold the five precepts. If you can clearly distinguish between the old ways and the new, you can proceed to eradicate defiled qualities and nurture the pure, undefiled path.

"To sink" means to fall down to the lower realms; "to generate" means to promote, to be upright and diligent. If we can clearly distinguish what should be eradicated and what should be nurtured, then we will no longer fall down. In countless lifetimes to come, we will always be able to take the initiative and make the resolve to walk this path to Buddhahood. Thereby we will eradicate all defilements and acquire all purity.

These verses of advice clearly show the concise essence of Dharma practice. The Dharma is the highest and purest kind of culture, the most perfect civilization. A true practitioner of the Dharma must learn from

this culture of wisdom how to eradicate the self, the false "I," and then learn to manifest in body, speech, and mind the purity and perfection of that ultimate civilization. Thus, one will become the most righteous and luminous kind of person. You will always walk the path and promote the path for countless lifetimes to come. Our lives can become the Dharma-body of the Dharma, the manifestation of all the Buddhas. So, as I always encourage myself, I urge you all to remember to make that vow in life after life: to live in the Dharma and thereby be a bodily manifestation of Dharma.

*(A talk given at the close of a ten-day Vipassana retreat
held at Bodhi Monastery in June 2003.)*

Respect: The Basis for Compassion and Wisdom



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 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.

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 does it mean to "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 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.

Human beings have two treasures besides the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha) – time and space. (N.B. The word space in Chinese also means empty.) When we spend time on worthy causes, we cultivate an upright character and we are free from the disdain of others. Without integrity, wealth and lofty social position do not make us useful human beings.

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.

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 ego. 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 face a path that is clear and wide. If you can have this open mind, you will 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 the great effectiveness 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.

(A discourse given at Bodhi Monastery, March 13, 2004)

Inspirations from the Natural World



Today my talk will revolve around four natural phenomena: the sun, space, the ocean, and the mountain peaks. If we are inspired by these four great phenomena of the natural world, we can make the great resolve to acquire the right view that functions effectively within the world and the penetrating vision that transcends the world.

The Sun. *“With high spirits, welcome the glorious morning sun. With the light shining through the dark shadows, our eyes open wide and see clearly.”* When we get up early in the morning, we feel a pure energy running through us, invigorating us and filling us with vitality. Most of us have dark shadows or blind spots either within us or around us. Therefore, if we can see the sunlight of the Dharma, we will be able to rise up from the dark places in our life and obtain a clear, open vision of everything.

“The Buddha, Offspring of the Sun, awakened and transcended the world.” The Buddha Shakyamuni, like all the other Buddhas, was called the “Offspring of the Sun.” If we can learn from the “Offspring of the Sun,” we will be able to transcend mundane, worldly affairs. Like the sun, the Buddha was so bright that he could shine through everything. His enlightenment goes beyond the mundane world and can enlighten everyone. However, though the Buddha was the Offspring of the Sun, born into the so-called Solar Race, he was not the least bit arrogant or conceited. He always had the most humble attitude.

In the Mahayana scriptures, the Buddha is described as the foremost in brilliance. This means that he is the foremost in conduct. His conduct is most majestic and sublime. There are no inconsistencies between the Buddha’s mental conduct and his bodily and verbal conduct. His mental

conduct is most pure. His appearance is most pure. His physical appearance, all his bodily features, manifest his pure state of mind. So he is able to devote his entire life to all sentient beings, and he has the greatest aspiration, the greatest resolve to work for the benefit of everybody. His virtue is the greatest, for it does not center around the self. Because he was able to abandon the self, the ego, he was able to devote himself to delivering all sentient beings from suffering.

“Learn transcendence; with backbones straight, we offer ourselves to the world and obliterate the danger of defilements.” Whether we are monastics or lay persons, we should learn from the Buddha. With this kind of spirit to deliver yourself, when you follow the spirit of the Buddha, you will be able to return to the world and devote yourself purely to the benefit of all sentient beings. All your actions, speech, and mental activities will be consistent with this spirit, and you will be able to totally remove all the terrors of the world.

Space. *“Space is a grand opening that is endlessly vast.”* The space that we are familiar with is only a small portion of space in its entirety. The greatest space of the world is boundless, vast beyond description.

“With steady footsteps, he marches straightforward into the state of the foremost in meaning.” What is “the state of the foremost in meaning”? It is the state of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Their attainment is permanent and not subject to change. Because it is permanent and not subject to change, for them there is no birth, aging, illness, and death. What does this mean? If people maintain the five precepts well, they will be reborn in heaven. Such a rebirth, however, is tainted. One day, they will lose their merit and fall down from heaven. In contrast, the attainment of the Buddhas and great bodhisattvas is taintless. They have true brightness, true liberation, and true excellence. They never fall away from their realization of truth. Because such attainment is not subject to change, it transcends the mundane, transcends all phenomena tied up with birth, aging, illness, and death. The great parinirvana attained by the Buddha and the bodhisattvas is not subject to birth, not subject to aging, not subject to illness and death. Therefore, it is called the “taintless attainment.” It will never again be touched by affliction and suffering. The Buddha Shakyamuni realized such truth and the truth he

realized is so universally true in the world today that we say it is without birth, aging, illness, or death.

“Only when the ground has frozen over and the air is chilling cold can the seed germinate in the barren field.” Venerable Master Yin-shun once said that we must have the spirit of a person who is willing to spread the seed in the most barren climate, in chilling cold and on frozen ground. We need such a spirit to spread the seed of the Dharma wherever we are. Why is that? If we vow to practice the bodhisattva way among people of good predispositions and under favorable conditions, then when we meet such conditions we will feel satisfied and not want to move forward. When the situation is bad, we will feel frustrated and want to give up the practice. So the seed of the Buddha’s Dharma needs to be spread no matter what kind of climate we are in, no matter what our conditions might be. Whether the climate is extremely cold or extremely hot, we must unrelentingly spread the Buddha’s Dharma.

“With resilience, we take up our responsibility with humility, humbled by our own inadequacies.” We Buddhist followers need to accept responsibility for spreading the Buddha’s Dharma both by our own practice and by benefiting others. We need to arouse a great sense of shame and moral dread so that we will not waste our lives. I am warning you here, everyone: if you waste your time, you will never be able to see the Buddha. As I have said again and again, we need to make the great resolve to wholeheartedly devote ourselves to the practice of the six paramitas in order to deliver the sentient beings of the six realms from suffering. Please pay careful attention to this.

Ocean. *“The vast ocean seen from the shore – how spectacular the view!”* If we come to a seashore or a great body of water, we can appreciate the spectacular view and all the varieties presented by the view of the ocean.

“Without selection or bias, the ocean provides food and transport for all.” It provides all human beings with all kinds of nutrition and sustenance. Great products, including fish, come from the ocean. The ocean also provides the connection between civilizations. When civilizations first needed to communicate with each other, the ocean provided the best channel of traffic, which facilitated communication between civilizations. Human beings were able to create culture and civilization, but the ocean

provided the means of communication. Therefore, we should learn from the ocean to become the great medium of different civilizations and different cultures.

The ocean is extremely vast. It does not discriminate against people. Whether you are Caucasian, African American, or South Asian, or East Asian, the ocean is not concerned. For the great ocean, everybody is equal.

“The great Dharma, so wonderful and extensive, is also an ocean. It liberates universally, without distinction or bias.” So we often refer to the “Ocean of Dharma.” Why is the Dharma referred to as an ocean? It is because the Dharma is spectacular and most pure. It is just like a lotus flower, whose every part – from its roots to its leaves – is useful and beneficial to others. Because the lotus flower is without any clinging, it can completely devote itself to benefit others.

The Buddha’s Dharma teaches us to be level-headed – not impeding our own practice or that of others. Hence it is vast and deep, like the great void. It is this virtue that brings deliverance to everyone rather than to a select few.

All Buddhas and bodhisattvas deliver sentient beings from suffering without discrimination. They do not pick just a select few and deliver them but not others. Such a sense of equality is like a square whose four sides are all equal. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas will deliver sentient beings equally, like the sides of a square, without any boundaries, without any end.

Mountain. *“High and solemn beneath the sky, the mountain towers above a store of wealth. Likewise, the virtues and merits abound in a bodhisattva’s mind.”* An ancient Chinese saying teaches us that if we learn to be like an ocean and a mountain, we will be able to store all wealth. Just as a mountain has the greatest wealth stored inside, so the mind of a bodhisattva is a store of excellent qualities. A bodhisattva’s mind is as vast as a mountain and also stores all the wealth under the great blue sky.

“As firm as Mount Diamond, as equally indestructible, it benefits beings with wholesome deeds throughout endless eons.” When there are earthquakes, some mountains break down and can even be brought to ground-level. However, a mountain of diamond cannot be broken. The

excellent qualities of the bodhisattva are similar. No matter what kind of affliction people try to inflict upon the bodhisattva, nothing can diminish his excellent qualities. Not even Mara can distract him from his mission.

It is the landmark. Through an extremely long period of time, throughout extremely vast space, a bodhisattva is able to establish the landmark, the symbol of true virtue, to guide and benefit all sentient beings.

In closing, I encourage you to have the qualities of the sun, the sky, an ocean, and a mountain.

(A discourse given at Bodhi Monastery, January 10, 2004)

Becoming a Great Vessel of Dharma



*One who accomplishes greatness
changes the fate of the world.*

The word “greatness” in the Buddhadharma means something different from ordinary greatness. Ordinary greatness is a relative greatness, being greater than things of the same kind. The term “greatness” in the Buddha Dharma refers to absolute greatness. Many doctrines are included in the world-transcending teaching of Buddhism, and that is why we say that greatness means a large amount. Greatness also implies depth. Because of its depth, the Buddha’s teaching is difficult not only for ordinary people to comprehend, but also for Buddhist followers. It challenges them as well to understand its truth.

Greatness also means perfection – perfection in the sense that nothing is missing or deficient. The term “perfection” in Buddhism refers to the enlightenment of a Buddha as well as that of a bodhisattva. No matter what period of history we might be living in, no matter what place in the world we might occupy, the truth of perfection realized by enlightenment always remains valid. It cannot be disproved by any great philosopher or thinker. The perfect enlightenment of the Buddha can dispel all illusions. It cannot be broken by anything.

To accomplish greatness is to become a great vessel of the Dharma. Those who can accomplish greatness, those who can become great Dharma vessels, are those who can learn greatness, vastness, and depth; they are those who can learn to excel. If one can accomplish this kind of greatness, one will be able to turn around the fate of the world. The fate of the world today is terrible because the world is filled with terrorists,

with violence, with suffering. In order to become a limitless vessel of Buddhadharma, one has to possess great wisdom and great compassion. With great wisdom, one comprehends the truth of non-self and does not cling to anything. With great compassion, one will be able to devote oneself to eliminating the suffering of all sentient beings and be able to turn around the fate of the world.

Level 1: Internally he establishes great moral integrity.

As Buddhist followers, we do not believe that the mind is the only element of the world, but we do believe that the mind plays an instrumental role in creating the conditions that determine the quality of our lives. If you can understand the importance of the mind, you will be able to build up character; you will have a sturdy backbone. A Buddhist follower does not consider as important what ordinary people pursue. They seek more important goals. Having a sturdy backbone means that you will be tenacious. You will be able to withstand any kind of distraction: to stand in midstream, to withstand the current, and to move in the other direction.

Level 2: Externally, he sustains a great atmosphere of viability.

If internally a person has true great moral integrity, then he will have a character that is totally different from that of ordinary people. He will be able to pass the external test, which means that when he is experiencing many problems, he will be able to maintain a great atmosphere of viability to present the spirit of the Buddhadharma to the world.

Level 3: He opens up internally and externally to a great capacity.

This means that if internally a person can build up great character and moral integrity, and externally has great tenacity, this person will have limitless capacity. Unlike an ordinary person, whose capacity is limited, a person such as this will be able to transcend all, to receive all, and to transform all. If one is able to do this, one will reach the beginning of limitless capacity.

Level 4: Everywhere he goes, he exerts great influence.

Thus, whether you are a monastic person or a householder, you will be able to exert a great influence stemming from your great aspiration. There is a word in Chinese that represents the point of maturity, the boiling point, for something that has been brewing. This word represents the ability to truly develop and demonstrate one's great aspiration.

One who is able to exert great influence creates opportunity and fortunes for the suffering world.

The word "able" is very important in Buddhism. For example, when we receive the five precepts, we are asked, "Are you able to keep the five precepts?" and we answer, "Yes, I am able." However, most of the time, when ordinary people say that they are able, they are referring to a limited ability; they are not talking about a limitless ability. Thus, if we are able to keep the five precepts and perform the ten good deeds to perfection, then we will be able to do what others cannot do. This is the true meaning of "being able."

If we want to be able to exert great influence, to create opportunities and fortune for the world, we need to understand that we are currently facing an age in which there is a general explosion of all defilements. Therefore, if a person can create and exert true influence, and make the most sincere resolve, he will be able to pass through the test of great calamities. He will be able to cultivate the aspiration of great deeds and then be able to create new opportunities and great fortunes for the world. In Chinese, the word "opportunity" is translated as organic, which is defined as operating according to Buddhadharma without being hindered by defilements. If one cannot operate organically, one will not be able to operate with a deliberate mind. One operating organically will be able to develop his karmic roots with utmost sincerity, as well as help others to develop their karmic roots with utmost sincerity.

In order for a person to turn around the fortunes of the world, he needs to pay special attention to time. Time is very precious. Two thousand years ago in China, there was an emperor of the Xia Dynasty who solved the irrigation problem of the Yangze River. He was famous for never wasting time and thus it is said that he spent 365 days outside of his house, never returning home. Even when he was traveling, if he passed by his home, he did not go in because for him every moment was precious; he did not want to waste time. We need to learn from this emperor to pay attention to precious time. Not even one moment should be wasted. Drinking, wandering the streets, and conducting immoral deeds are all a waste of time. If one wastes time like this, one will not make any contribution to the world. A wasteful person has no value and is not qualified to be a human being because he has wasted his life. According to the law of karma, a wasteful person will fall to a lower realm of rebirth.

*Use time and space
to accomplish greatness.*

One should treasure precious time so that the passing of each thought is very clear.

When we are mindful of the passing of time, we can make good use of it. Although it is difficult to be mindful of every single thought, if a person is truly sincere in practicing the Buddhadharma, he would be alarmed if he did not pay attention to a passing thought, and would immediately start to be mindful and pay attention to the next thought. When one is able to begin practicing such clear mindfulness, from one thought to the next, the Buddhadharma will become a mirror for oneself. The Buddhadharma will be able to reflect everything internally, and externally one will be able to clearly see through the mirror of Dharma without being muddled.

When one is able to thoroughly observe the meaning of emptiness, one will be able to reach purity wherever one goes.

One needs to respect the deep meaning of emptiness because if one is able to thoroughly understand the true meaning of it, one will have purity wherever one goes. Purity means nonattachment. If a person is without attachment, he will be able to pass through every kind of obstruction and can transform and change everything.

If one can make good use of time, one will be able to develop space or emptiness to guide this age.

If one is able to use time precisely, one will be able to broadly develop space and to grow or extend one day at a time. One will be guided by the wisdom of emptiness and then be able to guide the world. Therefore, whether you are a monastic person or a householder, if you are not able to grasp time, you will gradually be left behind. You will then be left without a stand and whatever you do or whatever you say, no one will pay attention to you or want to be close to you.

One realizes the meaning of emptiness and inspired by this age, one will frequently practice the doctrine of emptiness.

If we are able to verify both existence and emptiness, then we will be able to rejoice in what others fear. What are people afraid of? Most

people fear death. If one truly understands the wisdom of emptiness, one will be able to gladly devote oneself and will rejoice in the devotion of life. One will then be able to realize the meanings of nonattachment and nonobstruction within emptiness and be able to inspire and guide the world. How is this accomplished? If you are a householder, do not be attached to your physical or mental being, or to your families. If you are a monastic person, do not be attached to the monastery you live in. If you can truly practice in this way, then you will be able to truly practice nonattachment and nonobstruction.

In closing, my great wish for you is that you will be able to become a great world-transcending vessel of the Dharma.

(A discourse given at Bodhi Monastery on May 15th, 2004.)

Sunyata: Losing Face, Gaining Emptiness



In Buddhism we talk about Sunyata (Emptiness). This talk of Sunyata is essentially trying to tell us to widen our eyes, sharpen our vision, and open our hearts, so that we can gain freedom.

Understanding this fundamental meaning of Sunyata, we will be able to thoroughly examine countless phenomena of the universe: heaven, the earth, and all the phenomena between them.

All the Buddhas are called the Great Enlightened Ones. They have thoroughly awakened to everything. What is it that they have realized, what have they been enlightened to? They have seen that all things, transcendent and mundane, arise through dependent origination. Defiled dependent origination gives rise to defiled worlds. Pure dependent origination will create a transcendent world.

If we observe and examine them, we will see that all phenomena, regardless of what they are, arise due to the coming together of all sorts of causes and conditions. Today, for example, we are all gathered here to have lunch. This is one kind of dependent origination based upon the coming together of various causes and conditions. Under these good causes and conditions, we have also come to listen to the Dharma. Therefore, we can say that through “conditioned” dependent origination we are entering the “unconditioned” world of dependent origination.

It takes someone with wisdom to see this. An ignorant person, one who is deluded and arrogant, who has a false sense of dignity, won’t be able to see the dependent origination of phenomena. What is this false sense of dignity to which I refer? And what creates it? It is created by our notion of a self. Then what is the meaning of self? It is the subtle

consciousness in our mind that inserts into every thought, at every moment, the notion, “this is me,” “this is I.” Without ceasing, it investigates and attaches to everything around us the idea “this is me” and “this is also me.”

This attachment to the ego-self is created by this notion of a self, by the thought that one is real, that one has a true substance, a permanent substance. Being persistently attached to oneself as having a true substance, one will develop this sense of wanting to control. When one has access to great power, one will come into conflict with other people and will want to get things from them – all because of this “face” – this false sense of dignity. One against another, they will come into conflict and will harm and even kill each other because of this notion of a true essence. For someone who understands Buddhism, the Chinese character for “I” or “self” is quite relevant. It is a combination of two characters that depict a hand holding a sword. This signifies that because of their attachment to an “I”, to a “self,” humans end up killing other humans.

The Buddha is known as the King of Sunyata. After he realized great enlightenment, he saw that most ordinary people are attached to a self, to an essence, and take that essence to be an ego-self. Most sentient beings still living in ignorance always think that there is an ego-self, a self-essence. After his enlightenment, the Buddha realized that there was no such thing. He then generated this great compassion to explain to all the world that life and all phenomena are dependently arisen. There is no true substance to anything. Everything is due to the coming together of causes and conditions.

Two kinds of Emptiness interpenetrate, able to free. There are many aspects to Sunyata or Emptiness, but the most important two are: *the Sunyata of selflessness and the ultimate Sunyata*. Most people are attached to a self-essence, to a substance. Because of that attachment, when they interact with each other, problems arise. Through observation and analysis, the Buddha realized there is no true substance, no self-arisen, self-existing substance. This is *Sunyata of selflessness*.

All sorts of conditions are needed to sustain our lives. For example, because we have to eat, we need to go shopping and we need people to cook. So where is that self-existing, independent self? There is no such thing. If we were to open our minds a little and look beyond the farthest

horizons, we still could not find a true substance, whether mundane or transcendent. Here we must be careful, however. Buddhism is not saying that nothing exists. Actually, everything is established due to this understanding of non-substantiality.

With brutish face and aggressive attitude, showing prominent supremacy and might. Many people do not understand the Sunyata of selflessness. Because of that they ride on emotional roller coasters. When they become emotional, sometimes their face will turn threatening, brutish, and they will become aggressive, wanting to threaten others. This is a demonstration of the supremacy and might of self. Understanding *ultimate Sunyata* – true emptiness – we will no longer allow the ego-self to get out of control.

The Buddha told us that regardless of whether it is mundane or transcendent, there is no such thing as a true substance, no truly existent phenomena. And all problems arise due to that attachment to a true substance, a true essence, to true phenomena, to the thought that I am a true body, a true essence, and because I have a true essence, I can command and control everything; everything must be under my control and everyone must be under my command and listen to me. And due to this notion of an essence, of true phenomena, human beings come in conflict with one another and the result is unbearable suffering.

Entrapped within space, one falls into darkness – old ways and appearance. As human beings, we need “space,” a place to dwell. We live at home or we live in a monastery. If you think that this space that you are living in is yours and yours alone, that “I” is real, then you are wrong. And if you’re living in this space and yet you do not make good use of it, then you will fall into darkness. Perhaps in your next rebirth you will be reborn in a lower realm and will have an ugly, unpleasant appearance.

Transcend the era joyfully and brilliantly, voice and face renewed. Those most successful in the practice of the Dharma are the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas, and the arahants. These are the noble ones who have transcended the world; the truth that they have realized is not confined to time. It is all-pervasive through time and space. Even though Buddha Shakyamuni entered parinirvana over 2,000 years ago, his teachings are still living and are always showing up with this brand new face and renewed voice.

Understanding Sunyata, one will be able to face everything and examine everything and see the illusory nature of all phenomena. Understanding that everything arises due to dependent origination, the mind-gates will open up. If our mind-gate opens up, we will no longer be hindered in mind and obstructed in our vision. We will not be like those who fear the cycle of birth and death and just seek immediate liberation. Someone who is unobstructed can see those unlimited, superb states that other people cannot see.

What is meant by an unlimited, superb person? 1) *Superb person: free of evil*. This is a superb person who can see through his or her own defilements. Such a person is free from unwholesomeness. 2) *Superb Dharma: free from attachment*. This is someone who is no longer controlled by emotions, someone who is free from attachments. 3) *Superb state: free from worry*. Those who dwell in such a superb state no longer harm themselves and will no longer be harmed by their own defilements – they will be free from worry.

(A discourse given at Bodhi Monastery on February 1st, 2003.)

Becoming a Luminous Exemplar of Dharma

VERSES

“Becoming a Luminous Exemplar of the Dharma”

I

*Having great shame, subdue the self with utmost
determination and astuteness.*

*Instantly control the mind of conceit, instantly
illuminate the Dharma.*

Use great compassion to uplift people, act with utmost courage.

*By deep aspiration and a great pledge,
profoundly manifest the Buddha.*

II

Don't let the ego-self conquer body and mind.

Liberate oneself from body and mind, and see the Buddha's mind.

*When the Buddha's mind is clearly seen,
one's own mind becomes luminous and peaceful.*

Deeply practice the Buddha path, deeply understanding cessation.

III

*Have no wealth for private ends, no sense of privacy,
no selfish ambition.*

Develop a mind that has no limits, no ceiling, no time frame.

*Firmly practice these six no's and generate
the Samantabhadra vow.*

*With wisdom steadfast, compassion gentle, stand erect
as an exemplar of Dharma.*

IV

Appreciate merits, revere wisdom, wisdom transfers merits.

Accumulate wisdom, utilize merits, merit helps wisdom.



*(A lecture to the monks at Ganlun Buddhist Academy,
Jiu-Hua Shan, the Sacred Mountain of Kshitigarbha Bodhisattva,
China – October 26, 2002)*

I

*Having great shame, subdue the self with utmost
determination and astuteness.*

Instantly control the mind of conceit, instantly illuminate the Dharma.

Use great compassion to uplift people, act with utmost courage.

By deep aspiration and a great pledge, profoundly manifest the Buddha.

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 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, we 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, we will be able to profoundly manifest the Buddha in all our actions and thoughts.

II

Don't let the ego-self conquer body and mind.

Liberate oneself from body and mind, and see the Buddha's mind.

When the Buddha's mind is clearly seen, one's own mind becomes luminous and peaceful.

Deeply practice the Buddha path, deeply understanding cessation.

As human beings, we all have a notion of self, and because of that the self never departs from our thoughts, from our body and mind. If one has a great sense of shame and moral dread together with great compassion, one will know how much misery the idea of self brings about. Therefore one should not allow the self to conquer one's body and mind. If we can eradicate the self from its dwelling place in our body and mind, we will be able to see the mind of the Buddha. As ordinary human beings, we cannot see such depth and vastness. To get even a glimpse of it, we must cultivate and purify ourselves. Thus in the sutras and commentaries it is said: "If one wishes to know the sphere of the Buddha's realization, one must purify one's thoughts to make them as pure as empty space." That is, one must purify one's scattered thoughts to make them as pure as empty space. Then one will gradually come to see the mind of the Buddha. When one can clearly see the Buddha's mind, one's own mind will be at peace.

To "clearly see the mind of the Buddha" means to see that there is no true self. Understanding this, you will not allow the "self" to play tricks on you. The more clearly you see, the more your mind will be at peace.

What is "being clear" and "being at peace"? Under all circumstances, favorable or adverse, one maintains a high degree of alertness. One is not attached to favorable circumstances; under adverse circumstances, one remains fearless, even when one's life is at stake. One can look death squarely in the face without blinking. To achieve such a state requires that in our everyday life we learn the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha. Understanding clearly and being at peace, one will be able to subdue the self and won't be trapped by the self. One will truly be walking the Buddha's path.

What is the Buddha's path? It is the bodhi-mind, the mind of Nirvana. To walk on the Buddha's path is to follow the path of the Great Enlightened One, the one who attained the Great Nirvana, the one who has reached ultimate liberation. Through great enlightenment, one sees all phenomena with pure luminosity. From the perspective of departing from all defilements, the Buddha saw the ultimate truth: the non-arising and non-ceasing of all phenomena. Through complete cessation, he achieved total peace of mind. This complete cessation does not mean that everything is extinguished. It is the cessation of all defilements and habitual tendencies. After achieving cessation, an Enlightened One begins a new life, a life of selfless service to benefit sentient beings.

As practitioners, we must understand impermanence. Impermanence is the gateway to emptiness.

Thus to understand emptiness, we must start with an understanding of impermanence. Emptiness, in turn, is the gateway to non-birth. By understanding emptiness, you will not be attached to life. In other words, you will transcend the two extremes and all dualities. In this way, you will be able to enter non-birth. Non-birth is the gateway to Buddhahood. Understanding non-birth, one will no longer be attached to life, one will no longer be afflicted by the miseries of life. One can learn and practice the Dharma in the cycle of birth and death and enter the path to Buddhahood.

III

*Have no wealth for private ends, no sense of privacy,
no selfish ambition.*

Develop a mind that has no limits, no ceiling, no time frame.

Firmly practice these six no's and generate the Samantabhadra vow.

*With wisdom steadfast, compassion gentle, stand erect as
an exemplar of Dharma.*

As monastics, we should not have personal wealth, a sense of privacy, or selfish ambitions. Sentient beings in the desire realm are principally motivated by desire or greed. That is why the set of "three poisons" begins with greed. When greed is mentioned, hatred and delusion, the other two poisons, are also implied. If we look at the misery in the world, we can see that so much of it stems from uncontrolled desire.

Therefore, as practitioners of Dharma, we must renounce and depart from all kinds of desires. First there is the desire for the five attractive sense objects: delightful forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and tactile objects.

Then there is the desire for wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep. The desire for wealth and the other objects captivates people's minds and keeps them tied to the cycle of birth and death. Once people have wealth, they then indulge in carnal pleasures, the variety of sexual pleasures.

Then they want fame. If one runs after name and fame, one won't be able to shed light on the true Dharma. Someone who can truly shed light on the true Dharma won't be interested in fame. Even if a skillful expounder of the Dharma acquires fame, he won't be attached to it but will regard it with indifference. Such people will always learn the Dharma with a great sense of shame and moral dread, and thus they can't be trapped by fame.*

Nowadays people are constantly concerned with nutrition. To be concerned with healthy food is good, but one should not be intent on delicious food or on eating exorbitantly. In the affluent countries often a single person consumes the resources of thousands. The wealthy person might spend prodigiously on food and drink, while millions of others go to bed hungry and have difficulty finding a single nourishing meal.

When one overindulges in the former four desires, one tends to sleep as much as one can. This is because one exhausts oneself pursuing the objects of the other four desires and thus needs more sleep.

Some people even need to sleep ten hours! Truly speaking, a real practitioner of Dharma should need only four or five hours of sleep a night. As young monastics, you might need six hours of sleep, which is all right. If, however, one overindulges in sleep, one will become ignorant. People who spend many hours sleeping are just wasting time. They never think of using their time to learn the Dharma. Lay Buddhist practitioners naturally find it hard to avoid pursuing wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep, but as monastics you should develop a high degree of alertness regarding these five desires.

The point to begin tackling these five desires is the desire for food. Some monastics might be indifferent to wealth, but when it comes to food, they won't budge an inch. Thus we must be alert regarding this desire. One who

* In Chinese, both fame and light are represented by the word 'ming', which is pronounced the same in both cases though depicted by different ideograms.

understands the art of living will not be indulgent in eating, especially when presented with delicious dishes. When they are half full, they will put down their fork or chopsticks. These people will never have digestive problems. If you eat something delicious, and you want more and more, eventually you will have health problems. People with digestive problems often tend to be moody. Because they have a lot of residue in their bodies, it is difficult for them to feel at peace. One with a good digestive system will have more stable moods. This is the real art of living.

In brief, monastics should not be indulgent in food. However, the abbot or administrator of the monastery should realize that providing sufficient nutrition for the resident monks is an important matter and should ensure that all the monks receive enough food to keep them in good health.

We must further generate "a mind that has no limits," an infinite mind. Take as an example the bodhisattva Kshitigarbha, who has vowed not to attain Buddhahood until the hells are empty: that is an example of the infinite mind, the mind that knows no limits.

When we learn wisdom and generate compassion, we must diligently exert ourselves to learn as extensively and profoundly as possible: we should not set any bounds to our learning. That is, we should have no ceiling but should strive ever higher.

Also, we should not confine ourselves to any specific time frame. We must not have any notion of the day we are to attain Buddhahood. As long as the method we are practicing is correct, we should just exert ourselves wholeheartedly. From the perspective of "the Dharma common to the Three Vehicles" [that is, the teachings common to practitioners of the paths of sravakas, pratyekabuddhas, and bodhisattvas], the fulfillment of the path to Buddhahood is said to require three incalculable aeons (*asankheyya*). However, from the Mahayana perspective, it should be said that it takes infinite and endless incalculable aeons. There is no such concept as that of "three incalculable aeons." A true bodhisattva who has generated the great Bodhi mind has no notion of an end to learning the Dharma. If one were to set a limit, then that would be characteristic of the mindset of a sravaka or pratyekabuddha. Of course, we must have the utmost respect for the sravakas and pratyekabuddhas, even though we adopt a different approach to the path from theirs.

Thus we must resolve to practice the "six no's": no accumulation of

wealth for private purposes, no sense of privacy, no selfish ambitions, no limits to our vows, no ceiling to our practice, and no time frame for our attainment. With this foundation, one should learn the way of Samantabhadra. Here, “the way of Samantabhadra” doesn’t necessarily refer to the bodhisattva of that name. What then is Samantabhadra?

“Samanta” means universal or extensive, and “bhadra” means goodness. Thus, whether you are a monastic or a lay person, having generated the bodhi-mind, you should extensively establish wholesome roots and generate wholesome energy. You must exert yourself unsparingly in regard to everything that is good and wholesome. To do so is to follow the way of Samantabhadra.

As Mahayana practitioners, we should know that the practice of the Great Vehicle has two aspects, wisdom and compassion. What is wisdom? Wisdom is firmness. Wisdom creates the firmest character, the most steadfast and unwavering character. Under all circumstances, such wisdom is able to see through all affairs. Because of one’s wisdom, one will never succumb to the defilements even at the cost of one’s life.

The ability to subdue defilements: that is steadfastness.

Without steadfastness, one cannot acquire wisdom. Someone who is steadfast will be capable of upholding the Buddhadharmas within the cycle of birth and death. He is able to live amidst people with defilements and devote himself wholeheartedly to the good of all, even to the point of being ready to sacrifice his own body and life. Of course, we are not yet at that stage, but we have to realize that such a stage exists. A person like this can penetrate through the self and will never lower his head in homage to the self. One with wisdom must have this quality of steadfastness to shoulder all burdens.

Now what is compassion? Compassion is gentleness. In order to win over sentient beings, one must be gentle and harmonious. In this way, one will be able to touch people’s hearts, to move them and transform them with one’s virtuous actions.

In addition to the wisdom that makes one steadfast and enables one to persistently learn; in addition to the compassion that gives one the gentleness needed to deliver others, one also needs morality. Morality is established by observing the precepts. In the sutras it is said that the Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, avoid all evil. How do they avoid all evil? It is by means of their pure moral conduct, their strict upholding of the pure precepts. That enables them to avoid all afflictions. Thus one

must uphold the precepts to the utmost degree of purity.

In this way, as a monastic, no matter where you go, you will be a luminous exemplar of Dharma, setting a noble example to others. A “luminous exemplar” is one who brings light wherever he goes.

Wherever one goes, luminosity follows one. Wherever one goes, that is a “way place,” a place where the path prevails.* For practical purposes, naturally one needs an actual dwelling place. You can’t just float around in the air without a dwelling. But one should always remember that the real “way place” is invisible. It is wherever one is practicing in accordance with the path. Then, wherever one goes, without any pretense or outward display, one will be manifesting the Dharma. Wherever one goes, people will be able to see what the Buddha’s Dharma is truly about. That is the real meaning of “way place.”

Granted that a visible place to practice is necessary, if such a “way place” is only a “place” but doesn’t have “the way” – that is, if it lacks the practice of the path – it is no different from any ordinary place where people gather. It cannot be designated a “way place,” a place of the path. If there is a place where the way prevails, and one practices diligently in such a place, then when one’s learning and practice reach maturity, one will manifest the way everywhere one goes, even if one is alone. One’s body will manifest the way through one’s actions. One’s speech will manifest the way through one’s words. One’s mind will always accord with the way in its thoughts. A person like this is truly a luminous exemplar of the Dharma.

IV

*Appreciate merits, revere wisdom, wisdom transfers merits.
Accumulate wisdom, utilize merits, merit helps wisdom.*

To conclude, I have two further points to share with you. First, as practitioners, we must appreciate our merits. Most worldly people are concerned with the fruits of merit, but it is clear that all of us already have sufficient merit. Why do I say that? Because we in no way lack enough food to eat, a place to dwell, and articles to use in daily life. This indicates that we have sufficient merit. However, we must appreciate our

* In Chinese Buddhism, a monastery is referred to idiomatically as a “way place.” The master’s point here is that a real “way place” is constituted by the practice of the path and not by the physical structure of a monastery.

merits, that is, we must appreciate every grain of rice we receive, every drop of water we draw, and not waste anything. Some people leave food over in their bowls when they come to the end of their meal. This is wastefulness, disregard for one's merits.

The Buddha was very attentive when he ate. He did not waste a single grain of rice or a drop of water. There is a Chinese saying, "Every grain of rice on our plate is a drop of the farmer's sweat." The rice on our plate is a direct product of the farmer's hard work. If, at the end of our meal, we leave rice over in our bowls, aren't we wasting the blood and sweat of the farmer? That would be committing a great offense.

Thus we must appreciate our merits, and we must start with our food habits and our usage of water. Do not be wasteful!

At the same time, we must revere wisdom. One with wisdom does not waste merits. While having merits, he does not indulge in the merits. We should transfer the merits to all suffering, unfortunate sentient beings. Do not disregard merits. What we must do is accumulate the wisdom needed to better utilize our merits. In this way, the merits can help the growth of wisdom.

To sum up: Wisdom is like electricity, and merit is like water. It is said that nowadays what people in the world need most is water and electricity. Without these two, everything would be at a standstill. As monastics, wisdom is our electricity and merit is our water. If we can accumulate wisdom and appreciate our merits, in lifetime after lifetime we will be able to live within the sphere of wisdom and the ocean of merits. Thus we will be able to generate the bodhi-mind and progress in our practice of the bodhisattva path.

Generate the Great Bodhi-Mind Without Delay



(Text of a talk given at the World Buddhist Forum, Hangzhou, China, April 14, 2006. Translated from the Chinese original by Ven. Xin-xing.)

A modern disciple of the Buddha should generate the great bodhi-mind without delay and everywhere develop the practice of the bodhi-mind. The Buddha Shakyamuni says: "With the mind tainted, beings are tainted; with the mind purified, beings are purified." Whether a being is tainted or purified is closely connected with the being's mind. Therefore, in the practice of the Buddhadharma, "to purify one's mind" is of the first importance.

The main point for the Mahayana practitioner is to generate the great bodhi-mind and to develop the great bodhi practice. Internally, one should spare no efforts to subdue the mischievous and confining ways of the ego. Externally, one should pay attention to the difficulties and needs of sentient beings as well as to their oppression, giving these matters careful consideration. Actively and sincerely, one should dedicate oneself to protect humankind. One should not lose touch with the multitudes of people and keep aloof from them. Rather, one should be "an uninvited friend" of the people. The bodhisattva always lives in an emancipating, open, and unobstructed mental state. Therefore, he associates with all people harmoniously and sincerely, and becomes a most trustworthy companion and Dharma friend. He offers the most sincere and substantial friendship. The longer this kind of friendship lasts, the mellower it grows; it becomes as well blended as glue and varnish are closely bound together. However one dilutes it, one cannot separate it or make it thinner.

Embracing both restrained compassion and profound wisdom, the Mahayana practitioner associates with everyone without any misunderstanding, because he is very friendly with everyone.

Thus, we can see that the bodhisattva's merit and virtue in the practice, whether for himself or for others, are so mature and successful that people are ready to recognize him as a person who has generated the bodhi-mind for all sentient beings. Whatever he does, he does for the sake of everyone, not just for himself. Therefore, people think he is the one person to seek when they are in urgent need, and people cannot go without him. Through the inspiring power of non-self and their boundless virtue in attracting followers, all the bodhisattvas generate the bodhi-mind and exert themselves to practice in this way.

The inner cultivation and external development of the Mahayana practitioner are both based upon his generation of the bodhi-mind. It is a calming down and clearing away. It is also a thoroughgoing revolution and innovation. The Mahayana practitioner controls equally the defilements together with their residual impressions. He practices so hard as to completely abandon them and purify them to the utmost. The bodhisattva takes responsibility with a genuine feeling and with the virtue of equanimity. Concurrently operating with compassion and wisdom, he gives real substance to what he does and strengthens his virtue until it becomes incomparable.

To achieve and maintain virtuous conduct of body, speech, and mind, the bodhisattva develops the practice in a purified and strengthened way. As his purity and strength progress to increasingly higher levels, the bodhisattva marches toward the three awakenings* inter-relatedly both through and thoroughly. He often goes back and forth skillfully with the three roots.** In this way, the bodhi-mind is transformed into a dynamic, energetic power and an illuminating guidemark. Internally, the bodhisattva is never so weak as to collapse, and externally he does not drift aimlessly through life. Since he is able to do this, the bodhi-mind becomes a daily spiritual practice. Facing all phenomena in the eternity of time and vastness of space, the bodhisattva thoroughly sees through them all, and his behavior is utterly straightforward – so straightforward that he is neither detached nor attached. He invariably cures himself and

* The “three awakenings” are self-awakening, awakening of others, and awakening of both.

** The “three roots” are non-greed, non-hatred, and non-delusion.

makes others stand erect; he is willing to sacrifice his life and yet uses his life to take responsibility for the Dharma. He guides the clinging consciousness, transforming it into the spontaneously illuminating wisdom. Whatever he faces and does is righteous, and he is able to face the Buddha and the multitude of people. He never separates himself from the Buddha even for a single thought-moment. The living Buddha constantly manifests in his thoughts, so alive that the bodhisattva can see him and hear the Dharma. By hearing the Dharma, he looks at all sentient beings with a fresh view. He lives amidst the multitude alive and relaxed, transformed from the tainted to the taintless. It is thus that the completely enlightened Buddha took root and laid the foundation when he was a bodhisattva, practicing in a pure way for a long time, ever-alive, completely alive, ultimately alive.

From this perspective, being alive – absolutely alive – is not only what ordinary people yearn for, but also what the bodhisattva aspires for when he generates the bodhi-mind. We can see that the inspiring connotations of the word “alive” are so thick and deep! This world of human beings is so alive in sound and color, so vivid with light and heat. This comes from the power of human beings in creativity and invention. To put it in terms of dependent origination and the influence of karma: this world is neither beginningless nor without any cause, but rather, it exists through the common karma of living beings. Karma, briefly, is the totality of all the activities of living beings. It is all the accumulated limitless vitality, which can be classified into two classes: defiled and purified. When the defiled power is stronger than the pure power, the human being's dispositions and the society's inclinations deteriorate and stagnate. When the pure is stronger than the defiled, the human being's dispositions and the society's inclinations improve and become fresh. Therefore, Buddhism especially emphasizes the transformation of defilement into purity.

Considering the latent wholesome and pure nature of the human being, we can see that, among all living beings, human beings stand out by their ability to transform the unwholesome into the wholesome. For this reason, Buddhism stresses the difficulty of being born as a human being. So, if one truly understands the value of the human state, one will positively resolve to progress towards the wholesome. One practices the wholesome by putting an end to the unwholesome and bringing forth the wholesome. Practicing continually for a long time, the accumulated

power of wholesome virtue becomes pervasive and profound. In this way, one's human nature becomes firm and solid; one's facial expression becomes generous and peaceful. When associating with others, one will be respectful and auspicious. A human being's special characteristics include "right view" and "right action" in communicating with others and in helping others. Guided by wisdom and nurtured by reason, one applies this right view and right action to boundless human beings without making any distinctions between oneself and others. A person's nature and talent are totally endowed with a perspective on the world. With this view, one is inspired by an all-embracing heart for the world; one dedicates oneself to the world; one vows to relieve the suffering of the world and to make the world prosperous. Welling up and filled with great enthusiasm, one becomes a mellow-tempered person.

Here, I sincerely invite all honorable friends to generate the great bodhi-mind, to undertake the bodhisattva practice at any time. From the mental disposition of great bodhi-mind, give your best, develop virtue, and emit the light of wisdom. Please generate the great bodhi-mind without delay, illuminate and guide all the people of the world. Out of this world of suffering, as soon as possible build a pure magnificent world of enlightenment.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my appreciation for my mother country's administrative officers' great and profound sincerity in their reverence for the Dharma, and in protecting the Dharma.

I offer four verses to conclude my talk. Please kindly correct any errors of mine.

I.

*When one goes in front of others, one does not fall down with fright.
When one follows others in procession, one does not become
tired and fall away.
Living amongst the people, one lives for the people.
The more one lives for the people, the happier one becomes.*

II.

*Using time carefully and correctly,
one turns to brightness and breaks through the darkness.
Acting within this space with purity and pervasion,
one turns to morality and transcends suffering.*

III.

*Search for the profound culture and deep wisdom!
Expand civilization and make reason all-pervasive!
Let the customs and morals of the people become so excellent, broad,
and deep as to go beyond the measure of national boundaries!
People all over the world praise and hope for the world commonwealth.*

IV.

*The one who is best liked and most respected by the people
is great yet not pretentious.
He promotes harmony and happiness, and puts peace into practice.
He serves the people's welfare and becomes an example for the world.*

Change!



*(Lectures given at Bodhi Monastery
on May 3rd and 10th, 2003.)*

Great Change, Thorough Change, and Immediate Change!
Eliminate the old ways in every thought and renew at every moment.

**The changes of the floating worldlings
lead to rebirth in lower realms;
thus going back and forth in the sea of existence,
they are oppressed by clusters of suffering.**

Those who have not severed their defilements are considered worldlings. These worldlings are always changing, floating up and down, drifting here and there, due to emotional bonds and defilements. Emotional bondage nurtures the cycle of life and death and induces future existence. Regardless of whether you are a lay person or monastic, if you have not severed your cravings and other emotional attachments, you will have to face the cycle of existence over and over. People are bound, however, not only by their emotional bonds, but also by their attachments to view and opinions, especially to those built upon faulty concepts. These conceptual attachments hinder the mind. For most people, their biggest conceptual attachment is their view of a self, the notion of a self, a very serious matter.

**The Buddha showed kindness toward the floating worldlings
by liberating them from the clusters of suffering.
The Buddha illustrated the changes and immediately made changes,
thus the three "towards" are affirmed.**

Sentient beings are always drifting about in the six realms of rebirth, drifting about in an ocean where they encounter innumerable kinds of sufferings and oppression; so often they come to rebirth in the three lower realms. The Buddha appeared in our world because he saw that sentient beings were floating in an ocean of suffering and he expounded the Dharma in order to alleviate their limitless suffering.

The Buddha expounded the Dharma to sentient beings to help them to thoroughly, persistently, and perpetually change. What is the method of such change? It can be summed up with these three decisive objectives, the three "towards": toward wholeness, toward an upward direction, and toward the ultimate.

1) **Toward wholeness.** When Buddhism talks about wholeness, the essential element is having a sense of shame and moral dread. Wholesome roots are mental factors infused with a sense of shame and moral dread. Once infusion becomes perpetual and habitual, the wholesome roots become firm. Through constant practice infused with a sense of shame and moral dread, habits are formed, and these habits can affirm and solidify one's wholesome roots so that they are solid and unwavering.

2) **Toward an upward direction.** After one knows how to practice wholesome deeds, one can continually move upwards. This means that if one is to move in an upward direction, one must be able to move up and down freely, without obstruction. One must be able to stand on the summit of a mountain to see the Dharma ocean clearly and unwaveringly, thereby acquiring wisdom. With that wisdom, one is able to observe and contemplate the depths of the Dharma ocean. One must learn from the Buddha above and then care for sentient beings down below.

3) **Toward the ultimate.** With the the other two "towards" as a foundation one is able to march straight toward equanimity, perfection, and ultimate attainment.

Great Change!

**Great change stems from the "two" (vows and actions)
and transcends all dualities.
Being able to transcend all dualities,
one is able to eradicate them.**

1) *Vows* that are not self-serving will certainly serve people. In order to achieve true change, one must make the great pledge and vow to serve all people and the world.

2) *Actions* that emulate those of the Buddha will not deviate from the Dharma. One must acquire all the pure virtues, which in essence are reflected in our actions. All the Buddhas have attained Buddhahood through the Dharma and we must emulate and learn from the ancient Buddhas by acquiring all the virtues through the Dharma. Here, I would like to explain a little more about the Dharma:



What is the Dharma?

**The thorough analysis and penetration of phenomena;
the experience and revelation of body and mind.**

When Buddhism speaks of the Dharma, it is referring to all phenomena around us and it does not depart from our body and mind. The Buddha has thoroughly explained that we cannot look at ourselves as being permanent. Many people see themselves as being permanent and are trapped by their worldly afflictions. Regardless of the time period in history, we must understand that everything is undergoing constant change. Nothing stays still. If we observe our bodies and minds, we will see that there is no real self. After thorough examination, the Buddha concluded that there is no true self to which we can become attached. He expounded what is binding us in order to break through our notion of a self and to penetrate our attachment to this life and death.

How can we come to understand the Dharma? In the practice of Buddhism, if we do not possess good literary skills, we cannot learn the Dharma. One must understand the words in order to delve into the Dharma and thereby manifest the culture and civilization.

What is culture? Having true culture is being able to purify the fire

of the three defilements, or the three poisons from within. The person who accomplishes this will be as refreshing as the moonlight.

What is civilization? It is being able to uphold the precepts purely. The Patimokkha (disciplinary code) is the precept of liberation and embracing and helping sentient beings. One who has the Patimokkha will be just like the sun and will shine radiantly and brightly upon us.

How do we come to acquire the Dharma? One must perpetually and persistently try to remember the Dharma and then utilize and apply it, thereby gaining its strength. In order to acquire the Dharma, one must enter into the words in order to understand it.

When it comes to worldly knowledge, one must be able to delve into the words in order to understand and acquire the knowledge of the world. For example, over fifty years ago in China, there was a very prominent scholar by the name of Hu-Shi. Although he did not want to be involved in politics, the Chinese government asked him to be ambassador to the United States during the final Japanese war. He was very knowledgeable and fluent in English. After several meetings with President Roosevelt, he actually gained his confidence. In fact, President Roosevelt told his secretary that if other people needed to meet with him, they had to make appointments, but Hu-Shi could meet with him at any time. This was because President Roosevelt was inspired by Hu-Shi.

Another example also occurred in China regarding Governor Bai, a great poet and statesman, who later became the governor of Hung Tso, China. In Hung Tso there also lived a famous, peculiar Chan master. He did not dwell in a monastery, but in a little shed that he built high in a big old pine tree in front of the monastery. Hence, he was known as the Bird's Nest Chan master.

At one time, Governor Bai asked the Chan master, "Isn't it very dangerous living in that shed high up in the pine tree?"

The Chan master replied, "I am carefree. What kind of danger am I in? I think you are in greater danger than me." He continued, "Wouldn't you consider it dangerous that just as the union of wood and fire burns, the defiled consciousness does not cease to burn? Aren't you in more danger than me?"

Governor Bai understood and agreed, startled by the Chan master's statements. He then asked the Chan master, "What is the essence of Buddhism? What is the essence of the Dharma?"

To this, the Chan master replied, "Do no evil, do all good."

Governor Bai said, "Even a three year old could say these two verses."

The Chan master then said, "Although a three year old is able to say these verses, an eighty year old man cannot practice it."

After this incident, Governor Bai had even more respect and appreciation for the Bird's Nest Chan master.

There's a saying from a Chinese poem that literally means: "When one's belly contains books and poetry, one's spirit and deportment will have splendor." In this context books and poetry refers to culture in totality. In other words, when one is well learned and knowledgeable, then that person's spirit and deportment will be very brilliant and solid.

In essence, in order to deliver to highly intellectual people, one cannot be without wisdom and virtue. I encourage all monastics and lay likewise to delve into the Tripitaka, the three facets of the Buddha Dharma.



Ordinary people, worldlings, are usually attached to themselves or the notion of others and due to differences in their views all sorts of unseemly conflicts arise in their relationships with others. People become attached to their own views as right, and they look down at the views of others as wrong. From this difference of views, conflicts and disputes arise. We start with verbal fights and then move on to physical fighting, and eventually the result is battles and wars.

Thorough Change!

**Thorough change counteracts equally;
one is able to see the "two" indifferently.
With the two "withouts", quiescence manifests;
thus it is said to be intrinsically pure.**

Equally counteracting delusion, defilements, and habits. The term "delusion" refers to the afflictions and defilements that relate to habitual tendencies. Sravaka practitioners want to be free from defilements, and thus, in their practice, do not pay much attention to their habitual

tendencies. Bodhisattvas, on the other hand, are different. They address both the defilements and the habitual tendencies equally, trying to control and prevent their core defilements from arising, and at the same time, trying to subdue their related habitual tendencies. A practitioner must be able to counteract both defilements and habitual tendencies equally and see the “two,” all sentient beings and Buddhas, with an equanimous mind.

Seeing sentient beings and all Buddhas indifferently. Ordinary people revere and pay respect to the Buddha. This, of course, is good. However, when they see other people, they tend to criticize them, look down on them, and even feel disgusted with them. This is not being *equanimous*. One should realize that the Buddha is a real-life Buddha and all human beings are future Buddhas. Therefore, under the right conditions, all sentient beings have the potential to attain Buddhahood. If one looks down on other people, who are unrealized Buddhas and have the potential to become Buddhas, one is then actually looking down on the Buddha himself. For this reason, someone who truly wants to see the Buddha must be able to respect the Buddha as well as all human beings. This is the meaning of equanimity in respect.

Such teachings are the same and undifferentiated for anyone, whether he or she is ‘high’ (Tathagata) or ‘low’ (sentient beings). The two “withouts” refer to “without high” and “without low.” According to the Buddhadharmā, the truth that the Buddha has realized pervades all time and space. There is no high or low. In the minds of ordinary people, there is a difference between high and low. When someone is high in attainments or otherwise, then we like him. If someone else is inferior to us, then we might dislike him. One who has realized the Truth will understand that there is no such thing as high or low. It is just like the morning sun pervasively shining on the whole earth. The sun will not selectively shine on only some areas. It shines on all areas equally. This is similar to the Truth as realized by the Buddha. There is no differentiation between high or low sentient beings.

Birth and death is not disorderly and confused. Nirvana is not quiescence. The above phrase is from the Avatamsaka Sutra. Ordinary people are often disorderly and confused. There are some who see other people suffering and in such disorder and confusion that they

decide to realize quiescence so that they themselves can be liberated from their sufferings. Bodhisattvas, however, are different. They understand that birth and death are not disorderly and confused. They can dwell in disorder and confusion, yet they are not themselves disorderly and confused. Bodhisattvas can counteract and subdue their core defilements to the degree that they can actually generate the mind that is able to liberate sentient beings.

In the ocean of birth and death the bodhisattva is able to liberate and transport sentient beings from this shore to the ultimate shore of bliss and happiness. The bodhisattva liberates and saves many sentient beings who have attachments to the self and everything that pertains to the self. Unlike ordinary sentient beings, the bodhisattva is not troubled or trapped by any affliction and is thus able to liberate them unceasingly.

**Profound understanding that all phenomena
are just combinations of conventional designations
enables true investigation into
the essential emptiness of all phenomena.**

The Chinese character for conventional designation also has the meaning “to use.” One can use conventional designations for practical purposes because all phenomena are due to the combination of necessary conditions. Human beings, for example, cannot exist without the union of their parents. Through examination and investigation, we come to understand that all phenomena have no decisive shape or form. It is because they lack a decisive nature that all phenomena are said to be empty of essence. Having realized this, we understand all phenomenon to be just conventional designations.

How can we change? As we evolve, we pervasively penetrate and remove all entanglements and bondages. Through understanding such conventional designations, we can pervasively penetrate everything. With wisdom, we will be able to see internally through everything and pacify our minds. We will be able to dissolve all kinds of defilements and rid ourselves of all those afflictions in the past. Externally, in our communication with others, we will be able to eradicate all afflictions and remove all entanglements.

Immediate Change!

**Happy to change, awakening change,
joyous, startling change.**

**Joyful change dissolves cruelty,
thus advance towards dharmic change.**

There are four kinds of change: emotional change, existential change, dharmic change, and sunyata change. Ordinary people are subjected to emotional change and existential change. “Emotional change” occurs when ordinary people’s feelings and emotions fluctuate. “Existential change” refers to changes in the sense of their belongings or possessions that they believe to be real. The truth, as expounded by Buddhism, is that to be able to truly change we must understand and eradicate both emotional change and existential change.

We must acquire the good quality of wanting to change for the better – in an upward direction and toward the wholesome. When we do so, a joyous, startling change occurs. First it occurs in ourselves. Then, when others see us changing for the better, a sense of joy arises in them and they want to learn from us. Knowing that we have internally changed for the better, we will be filled with Dharma joy.

**Dharmic change increases strength,
immediate change becomes frequent;
one is able to show one’s capabilities,
pervading space and time.**

Someone who truly has Dharma joy can truly and thoroughly change. That internal joy will soften the mind and make one more compassionate. Therefore, all cruelty and violence of the mind will dissolve, and each day one will thoroughly change and progress toward the Truth. Many people cannot change because they are always confused, unaware of what is taking place around them. When one is able to change and immerse oneself in truth and luminosity, one’s strength will unceasingly increase. One will then be able to immediately change. We must be aware that once change gains momentum, we can acquire more power; hence one will “show one’s capabilities.” We will then be able to persistently change throughout space and time. In Chinese “capability” literally means “body and hands.” Thus we say next:

**The body, not attached to the ego-self,
is able to generate the mind.
The hands will only give wealth,
able to harmonize with people.**

Is there a true self? Most ordinary people have a notion of a true self and think that they are real and independent from everything else. If you had a real and true self you could not die, and if you were independent you could actually survive on your own. But in fact this is not possible. A true practitioner of Buddhism understands that there is no such thing as a true, substantial, independent self. Many people show their sense of self through their grasping of wealth. A Buddhist should reverse this grasping, making offerings to all sentient beings with a pure mind. Of course, lay people must continue to care for their families and offer things according to their ability, but beyond what we need for ourselves, we should try to offer as much as possible to all sentient beings. In this way, we can begin to gather inner strength.

**Thoroughly counteract unwholesome causes
and uproot the notion of a self;
beyond, pervasively share all wholesome effects
and cultivate the body and mind.**

The concept of a self is the root cause of all transgressions and defilements. Therefore, if you are able to counteract the self, you will be able to counteract all defilements and transgressions that arise from the notion of the self. We must pervasively generate the mind towards all sentient beings and then try to nurture all wholesome effects by planting wholesome causes in order to cultivate the body and mind. We must cultivate in such a way that we are not attached to this body and mind having a substantial self. Then we can truly generate the bodhi-mind.

**Suspend the “three changes”
in front of every thought
and use it to lash and prompt
a sense of concern about danger in you.**

As human beings, we must learn to change. If we do not change, other people will not respect us. One will not even be able to respect oneself. Therefore, we must be able to suspend the three changes – great

change, thorough change, and immediate change – in front of our every thought. This will enable us “to lash and prompt a sense of concern about danger” within ourselves. By suspending the three changes in front of every thought, you alert yourself to the problems or dangers that may arise. This has two benefits. First, you will not become lax, for you will be anxious about the uncertainties of the future. Secondly, you can anticipate problems that might arise in your country or community and thereby subdue them or eradicate them before they wreak havoc.

**Diligently exert oneself day and night
and promote the four “do nots.”
Be eager to eliminate the old ways,
fiercely renewing oneself at every moment.**

The Chinese character that renders “day and night” means “whole night” and “whole morning,” which equals one whole day. One should diligently exert oneself throughout the whole day in promoting the four “do nots”:

- 1) *Do not wait.* One must act immediately, without hesitating.
- 2) *Do not be lax.* One should diligently do what one must without quitting.
- 3) *Do not expect appreciation.* When you perform a good act, you should not expect others to appreciate your efforts.
- 4) *Do not owe.* It is your duty to serve others.

We must have this aspiration to eliminate the old ways, fiercely renewing one’s determination at every moment.

**The great youthfulness of emptiness starts
after one has severed all views.
Views eradicated, wisdom perfected,
all without exception is seen.**

How do we eliminate the old ways? When Buddhism discusses emptiness, or sunyata, it proposes that all existence is established through emptiness. Until we have severed all our erroneous views, emptiness cannot generate its utmost “youthfulness.” Therefore, we must sever all erroneous views in order for the youthfulness of emptiness to manifest. Once all erroneous views have been eradicated, wisdom will be perfected. Thus one will be able to see all mundane and transcendent dharmas.

**With unobstructed vision,
one is without fear and hindrances.
Realize quiescence, emerge from quiescence,
thoroughly renew.**

When most people see emptiness or existence, they become attached. We must not become attached to either one. In this way, we will be able to depart from all fear and hindrances. A sravaka practitioner is in a hurry to realize and enter Nirvana. Although the bodhisattva has a similar realization of Nirvana, he is able to emerge from quiescence with a wish to learn from all the Buddhas. He is then able to liberate all sentient beings. In this way, he always marches forward.

About the Author



VENERABLE MASTER JEN-CHUN has written extensively on the Buddhadharma and lectured throughout the United States and many other countries. Born in Jiangsu Province, China, in 1919, he embraced the monastic life at age 7 under the guidance of Ven. Master Chuan-dao. At age 20 he entered the Buddhist academy of Tian-Ning Temple. Thereafter he studied at the Ming-Nan Buddhist Academy, beginning his teaching career after graduation. In 1949, he moved to Hong Kong where he met Ven. Master Yin-shun and became his disciple. He then moved with Master Yin-shun to Taiwan where he taught at the Fu-yan Buddhist Academy.

In 1973, Master Jen-chun was invited by the Buddhist Association of the United States (BAUS) to be the abbot of the Great Enlightenment Temple in The Bronx, New York City. He also became Chairman of BAUS. For the past 20 years, he has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching numerous followers.

Through his influence, the Yin Shun Foundation was created to translate Master Yin-shun's works into English. In response to his followers' urging to pass on his great learning, he founded Bodhi Monastery in 2000 with Yin Shun Foundation help. His purpose in founding Bodhi Monastery is to present Buddhism in its original essence, aiming to promote the practice of Buddhism as an integral whole rather than to focus on the teachings of a particular Buddhist sect or branch.

great bodhi mind
A collection of dharma talks

BY VENERABLE MASTER JEN-CHUN

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