

Facing Anger

By Ven. Xin-xing

The Buddha says that when others point out our faults, we should be thankful to them just as if they were pointing out a hidden treasure.

There are times when we will be provoked by another person's angry words. At such times, it is very important that instead of reacting automatically, we are prepared to listen to what the other person has to say. It is precisely at this time that our patience is tried. It is at this time that we should generate compassion for the other person and listen to their suffering. We should not let the angry words, deeds, and thoughts of the other person trigger off our own anger. Rather, we should make an effort to win the other's friendship and restore peace. We should try to avoid debates; we shouldn't try to use our power of argument to prove that we are right. We should ask our opponent first, "What is troubling you? Is there anything that I did, or said, or thought, that makes you suffer?"

Most of the time, we can learn from our hostile friends. Because of their bluntness, they dare to point out our shortcomings, which our close friends or people in lower positions don't want to speak about. We should be thankful to our honest, candid friends. The Buddha says that when others point out our faults, we should be thankful to them just as if they were pointing out a hidden treasure.

We must bear in mind that we should abstain from acting, speaking, or thinking in ways that cause others painful feeling. If we act, speak, or think in ways that cause others painful feeling, that is a manifestation of our ignorance. And it is this ignorance that buries the seeds of other's anger. So, if we aim at peace, we must act like a peaceful person silently before we tell others how to be a peacemaker. Action is much more powerful than words. We must act as a peacemaker when facing anger.

Each of us is just an ordinary person. Unless we are fully enlightened, we all have some dust in our eyes. It is so important that we should not see the little dust in our brother's or sister's eyes! Instead, we should see the dust in our own eyes! We should use our vision to help build a real harmonious society and to preserve the teachings of the Buddha from generation to generation.

Understanding this, I would like to relate some relevant teachings of the Buddha. First, let us understand that arming oneself to fight is suffering. When we face anger we should first disarm ourselves. The Buddha expressed the danger in taking up arms and preparing to fight in a poem called *Attadanda*. *Atta* means "taken up," and *danda* means "stick," which is a symbol for arms. Putting these two words together, we can see *attadanda* as symbolizing a person who has taken up arms and is ready to fight.

The "stick" of violence can assume three forms: *physical* violence (the three forms of bodily misconduct – especially the first, the destruction of life), *verbal* violence (the four forms of verbal misconduct – especially harsh speech), and *mental* violence (the three forms of mental misconduct – especially ill will). Thus, *attadanda* includes all wrong conduct in deeds, words, and thoughts.

The verse begins with a very powerful line: "violence breeds misery" (*attadanda bhayam jatam*). *Bhayam* is either a subjective state of mind, "fear," or the objective condition of "fearfulness," danger and misery; and

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thus it is explained in the commentary as the evil consequences of wrong conduct, in this life and in future existence. So the Venerable Thanissaro Bhikkhu translates this line as:

When embraced,
the rod of violence
breeds danger & fear.

It is our survival skill to arm oneself when we are threatened. But by doing so, we only end up creating more suffering for ourselves and others.

It is our survival skill to arm oneself when we are threatened. But by doing so, we only end up creating more suffering for ourselves and others. The cause of suffering is “the arrow” of lust, hate, delusion, and wrong views. Hit by “the arrow” and driven by the pain of the wound, men are maddened just like an animal running here and there looking for an opponent. Just like a strong general, well-fed on the king’s royal food, he goes here and there looking for an enemy. In the verse, this image is described as “people floundering like fish in small puddles, competing with one another.”

The arrow is buried so deep in our mind, and so difficult to see. Unless the arrow is pulled out, there is no safe place anywhere in the world. It is only by pulling out the arrow that we will find a peaceful place to rest. A peaceful world must start inside our mind. So the next time you find yourself facing angry words, remind yourself: “How foolish it is to exchange verbal bullets, trying to prove that I am right and you are wrong!”

The Buddha emphasized the importance of patience in a story he told about a great battle between the *devas*, or gods, and the *asuras*, or demons (Samyutta Nikaya 11:4). In the battle the *devas* were victorious and captured Vepacitti, the ruler of the demons. Bound in chains, he was brought into the presence of Sakka, the ruler of the gods. In accordance with his demonic nature, Vepacitti hurled a torrent of abuse at his captor, calling him all sorts of insulting names. Sakka, however, was unmoved. Matali, the charioteer of the gods, thought that Sakka was afraid of Vepacitti and tolerated him out of fear. Sakka, however, explained that he tolerated Vepacitti, not from fear or weakness, but because he understood the value of patience. Matali didn’t accept this explanation easily. He argued that patience and restraint are not the proper way to respond to an abusive fool. The proper way to restrain the fool, he insisted, is to wield “a mighty stick.” But Sakka remained firm:

“I myself think this alone
Is the way to check the fool:
When one knows one’s foe is angry
One mindfully maintains one’s peace.”

In various ways, Matali tried to argue that one should use violence to subdue the fool, punish the criminal with force, build more prisons and beef up the police force, raise larger armies and invent more powerful weapons. Sakka met each argument with his contention that patience and restraint, mindfulness and a peaceful manner, are the only effective means to subdue the violent person:

“He behaves for the good of both:
Himself and the other person.
When he knows his foe is angry
He mindfully maintains his peace.”

2006 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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| Feb. 4th | Chinese Lunar New Year | Aug. 12th | Ullambana Day: Expressing Gratitude towards Parents |
| Apr. 8th | Spring One-day Meditation Retreat | August 19th | Summer One-Day Meditation Retreat |
| May 27th | Vesak Program | Oct. 27th - 29th | Fall Weekend Meditation Retreat |
| June 3rd | Memorial Service for Ven. Master Yin-shun | Dec. 29th - Jan. 1st .. | Welcoming the New Year Meditation Retreat |
| July 1st - 7th | One-week Dharma Retreat | | |

Government of Sri Lanka Confers Honorary Title to Ven. Bodhi

This year, from May 15th to 19th, the Government of Sri Lanka will be holding elaborate celebrations of the 2550th anniversary of Vesak, which commemorates the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and passing away. In connection with these celebrations, the Government of

Sri Lanka has decided to confer an honorary title upon Ven. Bodhi "for the noble and laudable services rendered to be conferred at the inaugural session of the celebrations in Colombo on May 15th.

NEWS BRIEFS

Shifu's and Bhante's Travel Schedules:

Shifu Lecture Tour in Asia

Travel: April 8th - Early June

On April 8th Ven. Jen-chun accompanied by Ven. Guo-ching will leave for a lecture tour that will take them to Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. They will return to New Jersey by early June.

Bhante Lectures in Taiwan

Travel: February 14th - March 13th

Ven. Bodhi will be in Taiwan for close to a month. He will be teaching for two weeks (Feb. 17th to March 4th) at Xiang-guang Si, the home monastery of our two resident bhikkhunis, and will give lectures at Fu-yan Buddhist Institute (March 11th) and Fa-yuan Lecture Hall (March 12th). He returns to New Jersey on March 13th.

Bhante in Sri Lanka in May

Travel: Early to Mid-May

See article above for details on this trip.

Events:

Chinese Lunar New Year Program Review

The program was a great success this year and was attended by over a hundred adults and twenty children. Our guests included the deputy mayor of Andover Township, Michael Hanifan and the Zoning Officer, Jim Cutler, Food Pantry associates, and Bodhi Monastery contractors.

Special thanks to Tai-hua (Kathy) Wu for donating most of the groceries

for the event, managing the kitchen staff, and preparing the menu, and to Hui-mei (Amy) King, Mrs. Liu, and Ching-she for preparing the bountiful luncheon with special Chinese New Year dishes. The delicious pumpkin soup was donated by the employer of Ching-she. The children made the program lively by doing the dragon dance at lunchtime.

One-Day Meditation Retreat on Saturday, April 8th

We look forward to our second one-day silent meditation retreat. The retreat will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 5:30 p.m. Participants must attend the entire retreat from start to finish. The main subject of practice will be mindfulness of breathing. There will be periods of sitting meditation alternating with walking meditation throughout the day. Retreatants are welcome to stay over at the monastery on the Friday evening prior to the retreat. We will provide more details in the near future by e-mail and on our website.

Vesak Commemoration on Saturday, May 27th

We will pay tribute to the Buddha on Vesak, the day marking his birth, enlightenment, and passing away. There will be Dharma activities during both the morning and afternoon. Look for more details in the next Bulletin.

July 2006 Week-long Dharma Retreat

English Program: July 1st - July 4th

Chinese Program: July 1st - July 7th

The week-long 2006 Dharma Retreat (Fo Fa Du Jia) will be held this summer at Bodhi Monastery from Saturday,

July 1st, to Friday, July 7th.

The Chinese program, based primarily on the teachings of Ven. Master Yin-shun, will run the entire week. The English program of the retreat will run for four days and will have a more general range of Dharma teachings. Those who attend the retreat for the English program are welcome to stay on for the entire retreat and use the additional time for independent study and practice.

As is the tradition, the retreat will feature Dharma talks, meditation sessions, study groups, and liturgy. Look for more details in the next Bulletin.

Dharma Studies:

Sutta Study with Bhante Resumes March 21st

Tuesdays, 7:00 - 8:15 pm (English)

Winter Break: Feb. 14 - Mar. 14

Our systematic study of the *Majjhima Nikaya* is now well into the "Wisdom" section. We will resume on March 21st when we begin our study of the Chachaka Sutta (MN 148). Even newcomers are welcome to attend.

Shifu Teaching History of Indian Buddhism*

Saturdays, 9:50 - 10:40 am (Chinese)

Spring Break: April 8th - Early June

Master Jen-chun has been teaching the history of Indian Buddhism, based on Master Yin-shun's work, *Yindu Fojiao Sixiangshi*. These classes have been highly appreciated by those who attend. Please inquire about the Chinese program running while Shifu is away.

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NEWS BRIEFS

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Study Group on "The Word of the Buddha"

Saturdays, 9:50 - 10:40 am (English)
Ven. Bodhi and Ven. Xin-xing lead this study group that is based on Ven. Nyanatiloka Thera's book, *The Word of the Buddha*. This is available for free online at: http://www.buddhistinformation.com/the_word_of_the_buddha.htm.

Saturday Lectures:

Shifu Lectures in Chinese*

Saturdays, 1:45-2:30 pm (Chinese)
Ven. Jen-chun gives lectures to the Chinese-speaking community every Saturday afternoon.

Bhante Lectures on "Sutta-Nipata"***

Alternate Saturdays, 12:40-1:30 pm (English)

Bhante continues his series of Dharma talks based on the *Sutta-Nipata*. The *Suciloma Sutta*, *Nava Sutta*, *Kimsila Sutta*, and *Rahula Sutta* are next up. The *Sutta-Nipata* is a rich source of texts offering guidance to both lay Buddhists and monastics.

Ven. Xin-xing Lectures on Teachings from "The Way to Buddhahood"

Alternate Saturdays, 12:40-1:30 pm (English)

Ven. Xin-xing has begun a series of Dharma talks based on the systematic teachings in Ven. Master Yin-shun's book, *The Way to Buddhahood*.

Beginning Studies:

Bodhi Youth Program

Saturdays, March 4th and April 1st, 9:50 - 11:00 am,

This class for kids ages 9 - 13 years old is taught by William Bertolotti. For more information contact William at 516.314.0306 or by email, williambertolotti@yahoo.com.

Dana:

Alms Food for the Sangha

The gift of food is always greatly appreciated by the Sangha. The custom of giving alms food to the monastics goes as far back as the time of the Buddha over 2,500 years ago.

FOOD RESTRICTIONS: Bodhi Monastery observes a vegetarian diet. In accordance with Chinese monastic tradition, the monastics avoid the "five pungent herbs" – garlic, onions, leeks, chives, and scallions. They also do not eat any foods with eggs or animal by-products such as shortening, etc., made from animal fat. They will eat dairy products such as milk, yogurt, and cheese. Dates, raisins, and dried fruit are preferred to pastries and candies. As a general rule of thumb, please consider the above restrictions when you are preparing dishes or when buying prepared or store-made food products to bring to the monastery.

FOOD STAPLES: Food staples such as fruits, vegetables, dried fruits, and shelled nuts are always welcome. Rice, tofu, Quaker Oatmeal, honey, and olive oil are used on a daily basis as well.

SUNDAY MEAL HELP: Currently there is no cook for the Sangha on Sundays. If you would like to help by preparing a dish to bring in on a Sunday morning for the Sangha's main meal at 11:00 am, please contact Ven. Hui-yong at contactus@bodhimonastery.net or 973.940.0473, by the Friday before.

Thank You for the Bodhi Food Pantry Freezers

Friends of Bodhi Monastery donated money for the purchase of a new freezer as well as donating a like-new freezer that we in turn gave to an associated food pantry. This new freezer enables the Food Pantry to stock more food for the growing number of individuals/families relying on the Bodhi Food Pantry for assistance.

MARCH/APRIL DHARMA SCHEDULE

SATURDAYS:

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| 9:50 - 10:40 am | Study Groups in English & Chinese* |
| 10:50 - 11:10 pm | Devotional Service |
| 11:15 - 12:15 pm | Lunch and cleanup |
| 12:40 - 1:30 pm | Dharma Talk (English) by Ven. Bodhi, Ven. Xin-xing, or guest lecturer |
| 1:45 - 2:30 pm | Dharma Talk (Chinese) by Ven. Jen-chun* |
| 2:45 - 4:45 pm | Pali class |

SUNDAYS:

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| 9:30 - 10:45 am | Meditation Group guided by resident monks |
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FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH:

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| 9:00 - 9:30 am | Beginners instruction in meditation |
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TUESDAYS:

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| 7:00 - 8:15 pm | Sutta Study Class with Ven. Bodhi** |
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DAILY:

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| 4:30 - 5:00 pm | Chanting Liturgy |
| 5:05 - 6:00 pm | Sitting meditation |

* Please inquire about the Chinese program running while Shifu is away from April 8th through early June.

** Bhante's Sutta Study on Winter Break Feb. 14th- Mar. 14th. While Bhante is away, Saturday lectures will be by Ven. Xin-xing.

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bodhimonastery@gmail.com.