Cultivating the Bodhi Path

Composed by Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

Going Against the Current

Cherish each moment, curb social circles,
For blunt words make people uneasy.
Creating no affinity with gratitude and hatred
That is truly going against the current.
Pure Yang nourishes a great inspiring spirit,
Whose radiance shall illumine the great macrocosm.
Universally cross over the nature of the Dharma Realm,
And, together, leave the Samsara’s circle.
With a gathering of great bhikshus, twelve hundred fifty in all.

Great Bhikshus are different from small Bhikshus. Great Bhikshus are at the stage in their cultivation where they are just about to attain enlightenment. “Bhikshu” is a Sanskrit word that has three meanings: mendicant, frightener of Mara, and destroyer of evil.

1) Mendicant: A Bhikshu is a mendicant who brings his bowl to beg or collect alms in the streets. He reaches out to both the wealthy and the poor. During his begging of alms, a Bhikshu must practice equality in which he must go from door to door. So it is said, “One should not avoid the poor and go to the rich, nor ignore the lowly and seek out the honorable.”

2) Frightener of Mara: When a Bhikshu ascends the precept platform to receive the Bhikshu Precepts, he will meet the Three Masters and Seven Certifiers. The Three Masters are the Precept Transmitter, the Karmadana, and the Teaching Transmitter. The Seven Certifiers act as guarantors that, as a monk, the
Bhikshu will not break the Precepts or violate the rules of pure eating.

When the Precepts are being transmitted to the Bhikshu, the Karmadana poses a question: “Have you already resolved to attain Bodhi?” A Bhikshu’s answer is, “I have already resolved to attain Bodhi.” When another question is asked, “Are you a great hero?” A Bhikshu’s answer is, “Yes, I am a great hero.” When the questions have been answered in this way, an earth-traveling rakshasa ghost, a being of our world who records good and evil, says, “Now the Buddha’s retinue has increased by one, and Mara’s retinue has decreased by one.” The earth-traveling rakshasa sends this news to a space-traveling yaksha ghost, who then relays it across space to the Sixth Desire Heaven where Mara dwells. When Mara, who is king of the heavenly demons, receives the news, he becomes terrified. Hence the second meaning of Bhikshu as the frightener of Mara.

3) Destroyer of Evil: A Bhikshu is also a destroyer of evil, because he puts an end to ignorance and afflictions.

Besides the three meanings that describe a Bhikshu, the word Bhikshu falls in the category of “terms not translated because it contains many meanings.” So, the word remains written in Sanskrit according to the rules of translation.
In the Jeta Grove assembly, there were twelve hundred fifty-five great Bhikshus, but their number is rounded off to twelve hundred fifty in all. These disciples comprised the Buddha’s constant followers. Most of whom had once adhered to non-Buddhist paths, but were transformed upon receiving the Buddha’s teaching. They were moved by the Buddha’s deep kindness, and subsequently dwelt with him.

Of the twelve hundred fifty disciples, the Buddha first took across Ajnatakaundinya and the other four of the five Bhikshus in the Deer Park. Next he converted the three Kashyapa brothers, who had been fire-worshipers. When they took refuge with the Buddha, they also brought along with them a thousand disciples to take refuge. That makes one thousand five disciples. Maudgalyayana and Shariputra each had a hundred disciples: they brought the total to one thousand two hundred and five. Then Yashas, the son of an elder, and his disciples took refuge for a total of fifty people, which makes one thousand two hundred fifty-five disciples in all.

What is meant by a “gathering”? One person cannot be called a gathering, nor can two, nor three. It takes four or more to form an assembly. In this case, however, the gathering consisted of more than twelve hundred fifty.

(To be continued …)
Listen to my verse:

The Supreme, Great Nirvana—perfect, radiant, eternally unchanging, quiescent yet constantly shining.

Commoners and deluded ones call it death. Heretics attach it to annihilation.

Seekers of the Two Vehicle regard it as non-creation. These notions arise from feelings and doubts, and form the basis for Sixty-two Views.

From illusions come pseudo names. What is the true, real principle?

Only one who has gone beyond reckoning breaks through without grasping or rejecting, knowing the dharma of the Five Skandhas and the self that lies within.

All external marks of forms and sounds—equally illusory as dreams.

Neither give rise to views of commoners and sages, nor explanations of Nirvana made.

The two extremes and the three limits, all severed. Always in accord to the functions of the faculties, yet never have the thought of a function.

Distinguishing all the myriad dharmas, yet without a thought of discrimination arising.

When the fire at the eon’s end burns the bottom of the sea and the winds blow the mountains against each other, the true, permanent, still extinct bliss, the mark of Nirvana is ‘thus.’

Compelled to explain you this dharma, to cause you cast aside false views.

By not understanding through words alone you may comprehend a little bit of this.

After hearing this verse, Chih Tao was greatly enlightened. Overwhelmed with joy, he made obeisance and withdrew.
The Sixth Patriarch said, “Listen! The highest unsurpassed, great Nirvana is perfect, radiant, eternally unchanging, and quiescent yet constantly shining.”

Commoners and deluded people refer to it as death; heretics, annihilation; those of the Two Vehicles, Shravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, non-creation that arises spontaneously. Whether it is death, annihilation or non-creation, these are discriminations born of feelings and doubts. And these comprise of the Sixty-two Views.

What are the Sixty-two Views? There are four within each of the Five Skandhas: 4 x 5 = 20. Span the Three Periods of time – past, present, future: 20 x 3 = 60. Then, add the two extremes of permanence and annihilation: 60 + 2 = 62.

Each skandha has four sections.
1. The skandha is big and I am within it.
2. I am big and the skandha is within me.
3. The skandha itself is me.
4. I am apart from the skandha.

The Sixty-two Views are pseudo names created by illusions. What is the true real principle? By transcending the reckoning of commoners, Sravakas, Pratyekabuddhas and the heretics, one breaks through and fully fathom the dharma of the Five Skandhas (form, feeling, thinking, activity, consciousness) without rejecting or grasping at them. One understands that the self within the skandha, and all forms that appear outside of the self, as well as all marks of sounds are all equally illusory like dreams, bubbles and shadows. One does not give rise to the views of commoners or of sages, and does not try to explain the bliss of Nirvana.

One does not fall into the two extremes of attachment: existence and emptiness. One severs the three limits - past, present, future.
The self-nature of True Suchness accords with external conditions and yet remain unchanged. With an inexhaustible function, it infinitely corresponds to the functions of the faculties, yet does not give rise to thoughts of ‘my functioning’. It regards all dharmas without any thought of discrimination, yet without thinking, “I am not making discriminations.” If you do think that, you still have the mark of discrimination. To be truly without discrimination is to be without the mark of non-discrimination as well.

Three disasters occur at the end of an eon: flood, fire, and wind. The bottom of the sea is scorched dry when the fire burns. The mountains collide with one another when the wind blows. If you can attain the true permanence and the bliss of tranquil extinction, the mark of Nirvana is just as it was explained above, and the three disasters cannot affect you.

The Great Master concludes, “I am now compelled to speak this dharma to make you cast aside your present knowledge and views. Do not explain the sutra by following the text word for word. This way, you will be able to attain a little understanding of the sutra principle.”

After listening to the Great Master’s explanation, Chih Tao was greatly enlightened. Overwhelmed with joy, he made obeisance and withdrew.

(To be continued ...)

真如自性常能随缘不変, 不變随缘, 應用無窮, 即是能應諸根之用而不窮盡。但也不生出我有個「用」的想。也沒有一切分別諸法相的心，也不起「我沒有分別」的想。你若還有一個「不起分別」想，這還是有分別想，要連分別想都沒有也。

劫火即三災起時有火災，能將海底都燒乾。風災起時能鼓動群山互相撞擊。你若能得到真常寂滅樂時，涅槃相就像前邊所說，無論三災起時，對你都沒有關係。

我現在勉強說這個法，而使令你捨去現在的這個知見。你不要隨著文字來解釋經典，這樣就能小小領略到一分經義。

志道聽六祖大師講究此偈頌後大悟，高興踊躍，叩頭頂禮，而退到一邊去。

(下期待續)
In every move you make, in every word you say, you should aim to be true.

Studying Buddhism requires that you bring forth a true mind. In every move you make and every word you say, you should aim to be true. Don't be like worldly people, half true and half false, sometimes telling the truth and sometimes telling lies. Cultivators must always speak truthfully, do true deeds, and tell no lies. In every thought, we must get rid of our habitual faults. We must also repent of offenses or bad habits we had created in limitless eons past.

Why haven't we received any response after studying the Buddhadharma for so long? It's because we have defended our own faults and have not brought forth a true resolve to cultivate. Therefore, we have wasted all this time and have not achieved any genuine wisdom or attained any genuine samadhi. The time has passed in vain, and we have not had any accomplishment in our cultivation. This is very lamentable.

In the monastery, we must be thrifty with all materials. It is said,

Cherish the things of the temple
As if they were the pupils in your own eyes.

Foods in the temple such as rice, oil, sauce, or vinegar are blessings that we should always cherish. They are not to be misused or wasted, nor is even a single blade of grass, a piece of wood, or a sheet of paper. If we are not careful and do not cherish our blessings, all our merit and virtue will diminish. Then,
Our offenses will exceed our blessings, and
Our losses will surpass our gains.

Moreover, in our every move and every word, we must not hurt anyone. We should keep the virtue of our mouth from speaking frivolous words, untruthful words, harsh words, or words which cause disharmony. As with the virtue of our mouth, we should also direct our attention to our body. We should not use it to kill, steal, or lead promiscuous lifestyles. And within our mind no greed, hatred, or delusion must dwell. We shouldn’t be so concerned about our stinking skinbag in every thought -- stealing good things to feed it, adorning it with ornaments, wanting it to enjoy pleasures and ecstasy. That is being upside down. If we want to liberate ourselves from the Triple Realm and the six paths of rebirth, we must address our bad habits. We must also see through emotional love in order to fulfill our vows and accomplish the fruition of Bodhi.

In walking the path of cultivation, we should not be indulging in enjoyment. We must remember that before Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated the Way and thence founded Buddhism, he was a noble prince of tremendous wealth. His royal status would have provided him a comfortable living with foods to eat, with clothes to wear, and with a place to stay. Instead, he left the home-life for the Way. He went to the Himalayas and cultivated for six years, enduring pain, hunger, cold and heat. During those six years, he never ate any good food nor did he ask for offerings from people. He just endured the suffering.

Shakyamuni Buddha, who had relinquished his royalty, endured suffering for the path of cultivation. We, on the other hand, are just ordinary, common people, why do we still aspire after fine clothes, good food, nice house, or a life of enjoyment? Why can't we take on suffering? Why do we fear suffering? Think about it. When we compare ourselves to Shakyamuni Buddha, do we not feel remorse?

(The End of the Article)
When the Venerable Master told me this story, I asked, “Why was she always so hungry?” The Master said, “Because in her past life she said one wrong sentence.” Her friend had also suffered the same condition that was later cured by a left-home person. When her friend told her about this, she (Upasika Kuo Jhuan) replied brusquely, “Oh! Do not be fooled. There is no such thing!” Thus, the remark she had made caused her to suffer the retribution in this life. How we treat others will come back to us. The working of cause-and-effect is precise. At that time I asked the Master, “Who was this left-home person?” The Master replied, “Of course that was I.”

See, such retribution for just one bad remark. The Flower Adornment Sutra states, “If the karmic offenses created throughout hundreds of thousands of eons are not eradicated, one will undergo corresponding retributions when causal conditions emerge.” Whether or not we remember the causes we have had planted for hundreds and thousands of kalpas past, our karma is never forgotten. When causal conditions ripen, we are to undergo the corresponding retribution. Retributions always catch up with us in time; everything is the center of cause and effect.

People who learn the Buddha-dharma must deeply believe in the working of cause-and-effect. What we are now experiencing is the retribution of
what we had done in the past. We are reaping what we had sown. Good or bad retribution, karmic or proper retribution is the result of our own doing. We should not be blaming others for our lot.

Many people, including myself, behave in such manner, complaining about their lot. Why am I not as good as others? Why am I not as smart as others? Why am I not as wealthy as others? Why am I not living a comfortable life as others? Why am I not as adorned as others? The time we spend on comparing ourselves with other people is truly a waste, because we overlook the qualities that we do possess. Time passes very fast.

If we indulge ourselves in the hours of self-pity or feeling inadequate, we will miss many a precious opportunity each day, each month, and each year. We ought to learn and benefit from our mistakes. When we seek peace with our minds, we will discover that we have many wealth within ourselves. But far too often we are overshadowed by our lack of contentment with our lot, and failed to see or enhance our inherent qualities. We allow ourselves to let great opportunities pass by us. What a pitiful life!

Upasaka Kuo-Jhuan, who had suffered the retribution for her careless remark, happened to be my grandfather’s sister-in-law. I recalled mentioning about the words that Elder Master Hsu-Yun had inscribed on the plaque at Cloud-Dwelling Mountain. Those words described that how much we eat and how much we expend are imputed to the retributions of causes we planted in the past. All that transpire follows a fixed causal condition. I believe there is no need to impose this.

A similar occurrence happened to some of our students. They woke up one early Saturday morning, and were set to leave for Los Angeles at 5 am to take part
in the repentance dharma session in Gold Wheel Monastery. What had taken place, however, seemed to suggest that their sincerity did not take root in their resolve to bow in repentance, thus causing them to suffer consequential retribution. So what happened?

After waking up that morning, they attended to their morning recitation. I was surprised, but pleased to see such good roots in them. Another fellow cultivator of mine, a Dharma Master, told me that, instead of doing her morning recitation, she was going to prepare their morning meals to take with them on the road. I was about to ask the students to assist the Dharma Master, but chose to let them finish the entire morning recitation.

When they completed their morning recitation, I told the students, “You see, the Dharma Master sacrificed her morning recitation so that you can have your meals on the road.” One student asked, “Can we go help now?” I said, “Of course you can. I will help out as well.” Three of us went to the kitchen where we saw the Dharma Master preparing and wrapping a total of nine rice rolls for the students.

Later that morning a call was received between 7 and 8 o’clock in the office. The students asked about their meals, “Where is our breakfast? We are very hungry!” We soon discovered that Upasika Tiffany drove with the group in a different vehicle. Her car that had the breakfast meals was still parked at the CDR. The male student who helped carry the bag with the breakfast meals inside thought the students would be riding in Tiffany’s car. In fact, he did as told. The male student apologized, “I am sorry, I am sorry. It’s my fault. I
後來才發現，原來 Tiffany 居士把自己的車停在停車場，然後幫忙開另一台車下來 LA。便當裏熱騰騰的九個飯糰就安然坐在停車場上。大家都沒得吃。當時我們那個男同學就說：「對不起，對不起。是我錯。我聽錯了。」結果女孩子也沒得吃。

她們下來假如是真的用功拜懺，可能就沒有這個果報。聽說她們已經很認真地拜懺。所以後來我想怪不得會是這樣子，護法神都不給她們吃，罰罰她們，警惕警惕她們。反而我們那個男同學自己吃了一個熱騰騰的飯糰。讓我我就想到是真的「如是因，如是果。」

果，是從我們的心念就開始計算的。所以我們不要隨便亂講，打妄語，心要很誠。我們講話算話，不要亂講話，說的時候很得意，隨便亂講，一切一切都有因果。也以可以很隨便，心就打起妄想，嘴巴也不管家，亂講或者打妄語等等。沒有近的果報將來就有遠的果報等著我們的。所以我真的希望我們的小朋友，從小就知道因果是絲毫不爽的。不能打妄語，不能亂講亂說，把口管好，把我們的念頭管好。

為什麼小孩子在上人的道場讀書這麼寶貴？我相信寶貴就在於，他們從小就能學到真正做人的道理，學到不能胡作非為，知道要約束自己的身口意。 heard it wrong.” The female students did not have anything to eat.

I heard that they were not sincere in their bowing repentance. Had they been sincere, their retribution would not have happened. Even the Dharma-Protecting Spirits denied their breakfast meal. The male student, on the other hand, got to enjoy the delicious rice rolls. Then I realized, “Thus is the cause; thus is the effect.”

What our mind conceives has already initiated the effect. Therefore, we shouldn’t speak nonchalantly or tell lies. With a sincere mind, we must remain true to our words. Do not be too confident to speak carelessly when caught in the moment. The working of cause-and-effect applies to all. Do not think that you can be casual with your mind and your mouth or get carried away with false thoughts, loose speech and lying.

Retribution will manifest, whether immediately or remotely. I hope that our students will realize henceforth how precise the working of cause-and-effect is. Once again, refrain from dishonest and loose speech. Be mindful of our thoughts and our words. Guard our mind and our mouth well.

Why is it invaluable for children to study at the Venerable Master’s Way Place? Because while still young they learn to acquire the principle of being a person, to refrain from wrongdoing, and to discipline their body, mouth, and mind. Do not think that you have the teachers and adults fooled. You are just fooling yourself.

Life is an enduring lesson that applies to the young and the old. It is learned through what we hear or what
we see. That which we hear or see influences our mind. Whether wholesome or unwholesome, our minds are affected accordingly.

There’s an on-going propaganda in Hong Kong. We don’t talk about politics, nor do I understand it. But, I do see the failure of education in our homes, in our schools, and in our communities. Education is supposed to be taught by examples, by words, and by the environment. Teaching by examples is where children observe and emulate the good actions of their parents, teachers, elders, and other adults. Teaching by words is where a teacher or an adult imparts proper instructions or codes of conduct to children. Teaching by the environment is the molding of a character.

For instance, Mencius’s mother moved three times to different places in order to provide the best environment for her son. The environment does not only play an important role in shaping a person’s formative years, but affects every walks of life including the left-home people. Teaching by examples, teaching by words, and teaching by the environment help us to be cautious in our journey of life. As often reminded by the Venerable Master, we take caution, refrain from unwholesome deeds, and acknowledge the principle of cause-and-effect. You should believe firmly in the principle of cause-and-effect. Do not take cause-and-effect lightly, or disregard it, or even become muddled in it. This is the first important step to learning Buddhism and cultivating the Way. Amitabha!
### 2015年11月法會時間表  Schedule of Events – November of 2015

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<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
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|     | 夏令時間結束（撥回1小時）  
Return to Standard Time at 2:00 am |     |     |     |     |     |
|     | 椹嚴法會  
Recitation of Shurangama Mantra  
8:00 am — 3:00 pm |     |     |     |     |     |
| 8   | 9◎   | 10◎  | 11◎  | 12◎  | 13◎  | 14◎  |
|     | 念佛法會  
Amitabha Buddha Recitation  
8:00 am — 3:00 pm |     |     | 三十  | 十月初一 |     |     |
|     |     |     | 藥師佛聖誕  
Medicine Master Buddha’s Birthday |     |     |     |
| 15  | 16◎  | 17◎  | 18◎  | 19◎  | 20◎  | 21◎  |
|     | 初五  |      |      |      |      | 初十  |
|     | 逢摩祖師誕辰  
Venerable First Patriarch Bodhi dharma’s Birthday |     |     |     |     | 梁皇實讐  
The Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Lyang |
|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 22  | 18◎  | 23◎  | 24◎  | 25◎  | 26◎  | 27◎  | 28◎  |
|     | 逢五  |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|     | 梁皇實讐  
The Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Lyang  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm | 逢五  | 梁皇實讐  
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8:00 am - 5:00 pm | 逢五  |
| 29  | 30◎  |     |◎禮拜大悲懺  
Great Compassion Repentance 12:30 pm |     |     |     |
|     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

November 22th - 29th, 2015 (8:00 am - 5:00 pm) Gold Wheel Monastery will be holding the **Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Lyang**. All faithful ones are welcome to participate.
### Schedule of Events – December of 2015

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<th>Sun</th>
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**6**

楞嚴法會
Recitation of Shurangama Mantra
8:00 am — 3:00 pm

**13**

大悲法會 — 普門品
Dharma Assembly of Great Compassion
(Recitation of Universal Door Chapter)
8:00 am — 10:00 am

大悲護
Great Compassion Repentance
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**20**

室公上人涅槃每月紀念日
Monthly Memorial of Venerable Master Hua

地藏法會
Recitation of Earth Store Sutra
8:00 am — 3:00 pm

**27**

慶祝阿彌陀佛聖誕法會
Celebration of Amitabha Buddha’s Birthday (Actual Day)
8:00 am — 3:00 pm

～常將有日思無日，莫待無時想有時～