

## 自覺與行佛

——二〇〇四年九月國際佛光會第十次世界大會主題演說

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各位貴賓、各位會員，大家好！

今天是國際佛光會創會以來第十次召開世界會員代表大會，也是第三次回到台灣佛光山舉行，感謝大家從世界各地不遠千里而來參加。

今年是我出家六十六年、弘法邁入第五十六個年頭；去年出版《雲水三千》時曾有人問我：什麼叫雲水三千？也有人問我：為什麼要經常在五大洲來回奔忙？我回答：天上的白雲飄來又飄去，地下的河流流去又流回來；出家人行腳就是雲水。雲水到哪裡去呢？三千大千世界。所以，雲水就是「行佛」。

這數十年來，看到佛教在台灣乃至世界各地蓬勃發展，不但信仰佛教的人口逐年增加，尤其佛教所辦的各種弘法活動，也都普遍受到社會各界人士的熱烈參與，這真是值得可喜的現象。但是另一方面，卻又感於這麼多年來，一般佛教徒的信仰始終停頓在「信佛」、「拜佛」、「求佛」的階段，不免想到過去佛教之所以衰微、沒有力量，就是因為佛教徒沒有在生活中落實佛法。例如，佛教要我們慈悲，多少佛教徒有真正的慈悲？佛教要我們喜捨，多少佛教徒具有喜捨的性格？佛教要我們有般若，多少佛教徒是真正的明理、有智慧？身為佛教徒而沒有佛法，佛教怎麼不衰微呢？

為了提昇佛教徒的信仰層次，最近我提倡「行佛」運動，並且訂定今年為佛光會的「行佛年」，希望大家在日常生活中都能確實實踐佛法。例如佛要我們慈悲，則不可輕易傷害生命；佛要我們忍辱，則不可瞋心怒罵；佛要我們廣結善緣，則不可以自私自利……。唯有大家真正落實「信仰生活化」、「生活佛法化」，在二六時中，不管行住坐臥都能自動自發、自覺自悟的「行佛所行」，如此自己才能得到佛法的受用，佛教也才能根植人間。所以今年的大會我以「自覺與行佛」為主題，提出四點意見，希望做為大家未來努力的目標。

### 第一、用自覺心昇華自我

人，從小就有父母來教育我們；及長入學，必須接受學校老師的教育；走出家庭、學校，則有社會教育。在很多的教育當中，以「自覺」的教育最為重要。

「自覺」就是一種自我教育，佛經講：「自依止、法依止、莫異依止」，就是自我教育；「觸類旁通、舉一反三、聞一知十」，也都是自我教育。

自我教育的「自覺心」是修學佛法的一個重點，當初佛陀所說的教法，無非是為了讓眾生悟入「覺」的境界，導引有情悟入佛的知見，而與佛平等；就是佛陀自己本身也是因「自覺」而成道。佛陀因證悟宇宙人生的真理（自覺），而又本著無盡的慈心悲願，以真理來教化眾生（覺他），所以是「自覺」、「覺他」、「覺行圓滿」的覺者。佛陀以他自己名號的意義，就是要我們效法他，學佛要靠自己覺悟；一個人能夠「自覺」，繼而「覺他」，才能成就「覺行圓滿」的功德。

自覺的教育，考之於西方社會，他們從小就訓練學生要懂得自己思考、懂得發掘問題、懂得解決問題。老師平時只是啟發、引導學生找資料、寫報告，甚至課堂上也由學生自己講說，而不是由老師講給學生聽，讓老師來幫學生讀書。反之，中國的填鴨式教育一直為人所垢病的，就是受囿於老師在台上講，學生在台下聽，都是由老師單方面的上對下傳授，這是一種框框，讓學生失去自我教育的本能。

所謂「自我教育」，就是要自我要求、自我學習、自我充實、自我反省，而不是只想依賴別人；平時自問、自覺、自發、自悟，透過自我的觀照而能找到自己，這就是自我教育成功。

佛教的自我教育，諸如懺悔、認錯、反省、禪思、自我觀照等。佛教的教育有時用聞思修來受教，有時用參訪來受教，有時用冥思來受教，有時用悟性來受教。甚至，有時候一個人自己學不來、讀不來，如果你發心教人，所謂教學相長，反而能教得會，這就是自我教育。

自我教育就是凡事要反求諸己。禪宗有一則公案，道謙禪師與好友宗圓結伴參訪行腳，途中宗圓不堪跋山涉水之疲困，幾次三番鬧著要回去。道謙安慰他說：「我們已發心出來參學，而且也走了這麼遠的路，現在半途放棄回去，實在可惜。這樣吧！從現在起，一路上如果可以替你做的事，我一定為你代勞，但只有五件事我幫不上忙。」宗圓問道：「哪五件事呢？」道謙非常自然地說：「穿衣、吃飯、屙屎、撒尿、走路。」意思是說，你要自己解決問題，才能一起上路。

人要靠自己自知、自覺、自悟，才能成功，別人的幫助終究有限。因為別人吃飯，我不能當飽；別人走路，我不能到達目標；自己有病了，別人更不能替我痛苦；身體疲倦了，別人也不能替我休息。開悟證果，修行成道，尤其要靠自己來，如趙州禪師說：「像小便這麼

簡單的事，還得我自己去做，何況成佛的大事，別人豈能代替得了？」所以凡事自我要求，一切從自我出發，才有成功的一天。

「自覺」的重要，在《宗鏡錄》說：「如人飲水，冷暖自知。如群盲眼開，分明照境，驗象真體，終不摸其尾牙。」其實早在二千五百年前，佛陀於金剛座上菩提樹下悟道時，對人間發出的第一句宣言就是：「大地眾生皆有如來佛性！」每一個人都具有成佛的性能，人人都可以成佛；人與佛本來是平等無二，但由於凡夫一念不覺，因此長淪生死。學佛，就是要開發自性，要覺悟自性。

「覺」有發現、察覺的功能，和發明不一樣。發明是透過創新，研究出一種新的東西；而發現則是就本有的東西加以察覺。如舉世熟悉的英國大科學家牛頓發現「地心引力」，這就是一種「察覺」的功能，因為即使牛頓不發現，地心引力依然存在。甚至當初佛陀證悟成道，他也只是發覺了「緣起」的真理，而非創新，所以《雜阿含經》說：「若佛出世，若未出世，此法常住，法住法界，彼如來自覺知，成等正覺。」

人類生存在地球上的歷史已經相當悠久，但為什麼只有牛頓發現地心引力？因為牛頓比一般人更有敏銳的觀察力，以佛法來說，就是他的「覺性」比一般人高出許多。覺性的高低對一個人智慧的開發影響很深。佛法非常重視對有情眾生之覺性的開發，有了覺性才能開發智慧，才能看出和體驗出解脫之道。

在佛教的「十法界」中，「四聖」之一的「緣覺」，他是「無師自悟」而「不由他覺」；緣覺因為出於沒有佛陀出世，或者沒有佛法的時代，他是觀十二因緣而覺悟真諦之理，因此稱為緣覺。乃至佛陀的弟子大迦葉，他曾經自豪的說：「如果我不能遇到釋迦牟尼佛，我一樣也能成為獨覺的聖者。」

因為大迦葉尊者的覺性高，所以當初佛陀在靈山會上「拈華示眾」，與會百萬人天大眾皆面面相覷，無法會意，唯有迦葉尊者當下靈犀相應，破顏而笑，於是佛陀把「正法眼藏，涅槃妙心，實相無相，微妙法門，不立文字，教外別傳，付囑摩訶迦葉」。禪也因此在「拈花微笑」、師徒心意相契的剎那之間流傳下來，這就是「自覺」。

在中國的禪門一直很講究「覺悟」，凡事要靠自己去參，不能說破。有一次香嚴智閑因為師兄鴻山靈祐禪師問他：「父母未生前，什麼是你的本分事？」智閑懵然不知應對，他請師兄為他道一句，鴻山禪師說：「我說了，那是我的見解；對你，又有什麼益處呢？」智閑於是回到僧堂，把所有語錄經卷搬出來，左翻右翻，竟然沒有一句合乎應對的話，不禁嘆息道：「說食不能當飽，畫餅豈可充飢？」於是把所有典籍付之一炬，發誓說：「這輩子不研究義學了，從今以後要好好做個粥飯僧，免得浪費心神。」

智閑拜辭鴻山禪師，來到南陽慧忠國師住過的遺址禁足潛修。有一天，在割除雜草時，無意中瓦礫擊中石子，發出響聲，他廓然頓悟，說偈云：「一擊忘所知，更不假修治；動容揚古道，不墮悄然機。處處無蹤跡，聲色外威儀；諸方達道者，咸言上上機。」

當初如果鴻山禪師一語道破，何來智閑的廓然頓悟呢？所以六祖大師說：「與汝說者，即非密也；汝若返照，密在汝邊。」一個人如果忘記了自己，不管修學什麼，都是別人的。此即所謂：「從門入者，不是家珍；從心流出，才是本性。」

人生在成長的過程中，有時候需要父母的教導、老師的訓誡、社會大眾的幫助、長官的提攜、朋友的勉勵；但是最重要的，還是要靠自己「自覺」。如果自己不能自覺，光是依靠別人，就如自己的身體，血管裡的血液是自己的，是自發的營養，對增進健康有最大的功效與幫助；如果靠打針、注射營養劑，總是外來的，利益有限。所以平常我們說「皈依三寶」，其實是皈依自己的自性三寶，是為了找到自己、認識自己。人的自性本來清淨無染，因為一念不覺，不能自知，故而忘失自家本來面目，所以沉淪苦海。學佛，就是要開發自己的真心，摘下自己的面具，誠懇地剖析自己、認識自己。但是這一切，不能依靠別人完成，唯有自覺，才能達成目標。

「覺」就是證悟涅槃妙理的智慧，我們常說要發菩提心，要行菩薩道。何謂菩薩？《大智度論》卷四說：「自覺復能覺他，是名菩薩。」如果將這一份功德再行提昇，再行圓滿，就是成佛的境界。成就佛的功德主要是從自覺、覺他和覺行圓滿中來，意思就是告訴我們，在學佛的過程中，要時常以覺性的啟發來面對當前的生活，以恆常覺性的圓滿來成就佛道。所以，菩提心、菩薩道基本上是在說明，人生的過程其實就是一條覺悟之路。

要開發自己的覺性其實並不是難事，可以說只要留心，處處都是覺悟的表現。儒家的「一日三省吾身」，佛教的「往昔所造諸惡業，一切我今皆懺悔」，都是自覺的功夫。宋朝大慧普覺禪師更說：「學道人逐日但將檢點他人底工夫常自檢點，道業無有不辦。或喜或怒，或靜或鬧，皆是檢點時節。」一個人一旦發覺自己有了過失，必須要有「自覺心」來自我改造。如梁啟超說：「今日之我不惜與昨日之我宣戰。」儒家也有「苟日新、日日新、又日新」的自我改造之言；佛教裡的沙門生活規範是「勤修戒定慧，息滅貪瞋癡」，因能時時自覺而擁有戒定慧的武器，當然就能降伏貪瞋癡。所以，懂得自覺、自悟，才能自我進步。

自覺是一條趨向自我解脫的道路，自己一句「我會了」、「我懂了」、「我明白了」，比別人的千言萬語教導我，還要管用；反之，如果自己不求覺悟，光靠別人，就如《遺教經》說：「我如善導，導人善路，汝若不行，咎不在導；我如良醫，應病與藥，汝若不服，過不在醫。」又如《金剛經》說：「凡所有相，皆是虛妄。」「若人以色見我，以音聲求我，是人行邪道，不能見如來。」執相而求，終是離道愈遠；唯有自覺，才能找到自己內心的天真佛，才能發掘自己本自具足的真如佛性。因此，希望今後所有佛光會員大眾，大家都能用自

覺心來昇華自我，平時要發心聽經聞法，要自我思想來「聞所成慧」、「思所成慧」，進而「解行並重」的精進修行，透過「修所成慧」的實修來體證自我的覺悟，如此才能圓滿自己。

## 第二、用本土化發展佛教

隨著時代進步，在資訊發達、交通便利的帶動下，整個世界的大環境正朝向全球化、國際化的方向發展，「地球村」的時代已儼然成形。然而在此同時，「本土化」的議題卻從來不會在人類的歷史舞台上消失過，最近台灣的政治圈便對此展開廣泛而熱烈的討論。

其實，在佛教裡，天堂也分三十三天，也有三界之別，所謂欲界六天、色界十八天、無色界四天；甚至佛的國土也有東方與西方之不同。在現實人生裡，世界上有許多國家、種族的不同，這是不爭的事實，而在各種不同當中，彼此最怕的就是被侵略、被征服，不但國土不容侵略，文化更不希望被征服。

記得過去我在世界各地雲遊弘法，有一次在美國康乃爾大學講演。會後有一位約翰·麥克雷教授跟我說：「你來美國弘法可以，但是不能老是拿中華文化來壓迫美國人，開口閉口都是中華文化，好像是來征服美國文化的。」當時我聽了心中就有一個覺悟：我應該要尊重別人的文化，我們來只是為了奉獻、服務，如同佛教徒以香花供養諸佛菩薩一樣。所以對於不同的國家、文化，大家要互相尊重，要容許不同的存在，就如東方琉璃淨土有琉璃淨土的特色，西方極樂世界有極樂世界的殊勝，甚至山林佛教有山林佛教的風格，人間佛教有人間佛教的性向。能夠「異中求同，同中存異」，世界才會多彩多姿。

回想當初佛教從印度傳到東土，印度比丘到中國來大多從事翻譯經典的工作，建寺廟的責任則讓給中國比丘去做，所以才有現在的中國佛教。假如當時印度的迦葉摩騰、竺法蘭等人，不融入當地的文化，不培養當地的弟子，哪裡會有現在中國佛教的特色呢？甚至當初達摩祖師東來，將大法傳給慧可，為什麼？只為了本土化。所以，佛光山在多年前，我把住持之位傳給心平法師繼承，心平法師是台灣人，這也是本土化的落實。

所謂「本土化」，我所提倡的本土化是奉獻的、是友好的、是融和的、是增加的，不是排斥的，不是否決的。例如，過去我看一般華人在美國參加國慶日遊行時，雖然他們都已移民美國，取得美國公民的身份，但是他們的心中並未認定美國是他們的國家，所謂「人在曹營心在漢」，所以我就鼓勵佛光會員在遊行時，高喊口號「我是美國人」，因為我們來到別人的國家，既然身在美國、生活在美國，就不希望一直把自己當成「中國人」，做人家的「國中之國」。

當然，文化是可以互相交流的，但是將心比心，如果我們把立場互換，自然也不希望在中華民國裡還有「美利堅合眾國」，或是「大日本帝國」的存在。所以現代的新移民，不管

走到哪裡，要有「落地生根」的思想，要本土化，要融入當地，不能老是在別人的國家裡還要「國中有國」地發展自己。

因此，對於過去華人走到世界任何地方，不管做事或是傳教，都要強調「發揚中華文化」，這句話是不對的！因為歐洲有歐洲的文化，美洲有美洲的文化，澳洲有澳洲的文化，我們應該尊重當地的文化，用中華文化與當地的文化融和交流，不要用我們的文化去侵略別人的文化。所以每個國家、種族，都要本土化，乃至今後的佛教，大家來自於世界各地，也一定要發揚本土化。

佛教的傳播，雖然其根本教義是不容改變的，甚至戒律也有它的堅持，但是佛教傳到中國、日本、韓國，就是北傳佛教；傳到斯里蘭卡、緬甸、錫蘭、泰國，即成南傳佛教；傳到新疆、西藏、蒙古，就是藏傳佛教。這是因為氣候、地理、風俗、民情不同，所以要隨順世間。如同天主教的丁松筠神父曾經對我說：「如果你生長在西方，可能會當神父；如果我生長在東方，也可能會去作和尚。」這也是受到當地的地理、文化、教育、民俗、風情等影響所致，就如出產木材之地，人民使用的桌椅等傢俱，必定大都是木製的；出產石頭之地，則多數是石材用物。此乃「就地取材」，是受環境影響的關係，不是好或不好的問題。

現在講到用「本土化」來發展佛教，因為佛教不是用來做為一個國家侵略他人文化的工具，而是要同體共生，共同發展，共存共榮。所以佛光會奉行人間佛教，只要在人間，都要發展當地的佛教。就等於美國有五十一州，除了有中央法制外，另外各州有各州的州法；中國三十六行省，也有自治區、特區、少數民族區。因此我們傳播佛教的人，傳承期要儘量發心落實本土，在很多的不同中，如米穀果蔬都有不同的品種，讓佛教在各地也有不同的特色，除了根本教義不變以外，都應該隨順當地風俗民情的需要，容許和歌頌他們的存在。

今年（二〇〇四）三月，國際佛光會與大陸佛教界攜手合辦的「海峽兩岸以及中華佛教音樂展演會」，由兩岸漢傳、藏傳、南傳佛教，八大名寺百餘位僧人在台灣國父紀念館、美國洛杉磯柯達劇院、加拿大英女皇劇院聯合演出佛教梵唄，大家雖然來自不同地方，但是在一起各有梵音嘹亮，才更加美妙。

也就是說，佛教雖有大乘、小乘、南傳、北傳、藏傳等不同，彼此各有特色。特色不要改變；甚至各自的語言、唱腔不同，服裝顏色也不同。儘管不同，但是在同一個佛教下發展，唯有「本土化」才能更深耕，才能更擴大，才能更發展。

有鑑於此，二〇〇一年四月十九日在南非約堡杉騰飯店會議中心舉行「國際佛光會第三屆第一次理事會議」時，我曾在會中提出「四化」的主張，即：「佛法人間化」、「生活書香化」、「僧信平等化」、「寺院本土化」。所謂「寺院本土化」，就是凡佛光山的信徒和佛光會的會員，在世界共創的數百間寺院道場與弘法事業，不為某一人所有，此乃大家的共財；然而佛光人有一心願，即在二十年、三十年之間，將使世界各地的寺院予以「本土化」。

當時我告訴大家，假如現在佛光山海外的分別院，西來寺是由美籍的出家人當住持，南天寺、中天寺由澳洲籍的出家人當住持，南華寺由非洲籍的出家人當住持，其他的各個地方都是由當地的人住持；如果佛光山現在把佛教發展到這個程度，那將是一個怎麼樣的盛況呢？

所以我希望從現在起，二十年到五十年間，讓我們輔導當地本土的出家人來負責本土的道場，如此佛法必定能更加快速的發展。尤其目前在佛光山佛學院受教育的學生，各國弟子都有，未來希望更擴大種族的吸收，使其都能成為佛光人，將來組織寺院，發展佛光普照，使佛法真正流傳於三千世界。我想，這也是最好的「行佛」之實踐。

### 第三、用新事業增廣淨財

人生在世，必須要有正當的事業，透過勤奮經營，使得衣食豐足，生活安定，然後才能從事種種的善事，此即所謂「衣食足，然後禮樂興」也。

衣食住行不但是一般人日常生活中不可或缺的要件，即使成了覺行圓滿的佛陀，也離不開衣食住行的生活。因此，修學佛法不一定要以窮苦為清高，佛教鼓勵在家信眾可以聚財營生，可以擁有正當的資用生活，甚至可以榮華富貴。如《大寶積經》說「在家菩薩如法集聚錢財，非不如法」，只要「平直正求」，而且有了財富以後要「給事父母妻子，給施親友、眷屬、知識，然後施法」。

意思是說，在家營生，要積聚有道，要合乎八正道的正業與正命，如《雜阿含經》說：「營生之業者，田種行商賈，牧牛羊興息，邸舍以求利。」只要能將本求利，勤勞賺取，無論是農牧收成，或是經商貿易、企業經營、投資生息所得等等，都是佛教所認可的經濟營生。

佛教所謂的「正業」，是指正當的職業；「正命」，就是正當的經濟生活和謀生方式。據《瑜伽師地論》卷二十九：「如法追求衣服、飲食，乃至什物，遠離一切起邪命法，是名正命。」正常而合理的經濟生活是生存的基本要素，舉凡不會危害社會大眾的土農工商等職業，佛教認為都可以從事。佛教主張應該存財於百姓，百姓富足了，國家才能強盛，佛教有了淨財也才能興隆，因此合理的經濟生活是佛教所認可的。

然而遺憾的是，過去一些弘法的大德法師們，常常用出家人的修行標準來要求在家信眾。譬如談到金錢，就說：「黃金是毒蛇，好可怕哦！」談到夫妻，則是「不是冤家不聚頭」；講到兒女，都是一群討債鬼；論及世間，凡事都是苦空無常。這種度化的方式可以說完全悖離人性，不契合眾生的根機，難怪有一些不懂佛法的人，一聽到要他信仰佛教，莫不避之唯恐不及。

其實，過去一般人都以為佛教講四大皆空，應該只重視精神生活，而不重視物質生活。但是根據《阿彌陀經》之說，極樂世界不但「思衣得衣」、「思食得食」，而且黃金鋪地，宮殿樓閣皆為七寶所成，另有七重欄楯、七重羅網、七重行樹，皆是四寶，周匝圍繞；四邊階道，亦以金、銀、琉璃、玻璃等寶合成，所有菩薩莫不寶冠頂戴，瓔珞披身，可以說極盡莊嚴堂皇，富貴無比。

不過，長久以來有一點令人疑惑不解的是，許多佛教徒輕視當前的福樂財富，而把希望寄託在琉璃淨土或極樂世界；今生貧窮不要緊，只願未來能生到他方世界，享受福樂財富。因此不少佛教徒以苦行為修行，以貧窮為有道，在此理念之下，也使得佛教的傳播受到很多的障礙。

記得多年前有一次在歐洲各國參觀博物館，看到天主教的教堂都是金碧輝煌，他們講究富有，極力發展事業。反觀三、四十年前的台灣，舉凡教堂、銀行都建在十字路口、三角窗、大街小巷的出入口等精華地段；但是如果你要到某一間寺院訪問，只要走到無路的陋巷，環境衛生最差的地方，寺院道場就到了。

事實上，人間化的佛教，主張今生就可以擁有無限的福樂財富，佛教不是叫人不要錢財、不可以享樂；佛教要我們獲得淨財越多越好，享受禪悅越妙越好。即使世間上的福樂財富有限，我們也可以體會佛法裡的法喜，探索信仰裡的財富，享受心裡的世界，擁有全面的人間，這才是建設真正福樂財富的人間。

再說，佛教最初從印度傳到中國、韓國、日本等地，之所以能在當地社會普遍被接受，其中一個很重要的原因，是因為佛教能重視資生利眾的事業，正確解決民生的問題。佛教寺院不僅是傳法、辦道的地方，往往是結合宗教、文化、藝術、教育的文化中心，並與農業生產、商業經濟以及社會福利事業相聯繫，具有多種社會功能。

甚至自古寺院建築，朱簷碧瓦，雕樑畫棟，堂宇宏美；亭台樓閣、廊院相接，重重疊疊，幽遠深邃，因此有謂「佛門淨土」。佛門其實就是一個清淨莊嚴的世界，一個安樂富有的世界。佛教雖然主張淡泊物質，反對過分耽迷於物質享受，但在普通社會裡，適度的擁有物質文明的享受是合乎道德的；佛教雖然不太重視資用生活，但是世間還是要藉物質來表達莊嚴。一個寺廟裡，大雄寶殿的巍峨堂皇，往往能行不言之教化；佛像的雕繪嚴麗，總是能令人生起景仰向道之心。西方極樂世界也因為黃金鋪地，七寶樓閣，富麗堂皇，眾生皆欣然往生其國。

因此，佛教雖然講究個人的生活要簡單樸素，但對大眾則建廣單，接納十方大眾掛單。正如杜甫的〈草堂詩〉說：「安得廣廈千萬間，庇蔭天下寒士俱歡顏。」佛教雖然主張出家人可以清茶淡飯，所謂「三衣一鉢」、「衣單二斤半」、「頭陀十八物」，但對廣大的佛教徒要給予新的求生觀念。因為「巧婦難為無米之炊」、「貧賤夫妻百事哀」，一個在家修行

的人不能沒有錢財，否則如何孝養父母？如何安頓家庭的生活？何況修行辦道、布施救濟，都需要錢財作為助緣資糧。即使是國家社會的各項發展，也需要豐實的國庫作為後盾。而佛教本身必須提供弘法利生、醫療慈善、教育文化等服務來淨化社會，造福人群，如果沒有淨財，又怎能成辦這些佛教事業呢？因此，佛教不排斥錢財，只要是來路明白、用途正當的「淨財」、「善財」、「聖財」，都是佛教所容許的。

在佛教裡常常講「發心」，若照佛教的發心來說，發增上生心的在家居士，在社會上營求功名富貴，並且過著妻子兒女的倫常生活，這是佛法所允許的。如《維摩經》裡，維摩居士在世間奉行佛道，他和世俗的人一樣，開商店、做生意、種田耕地、賺錢營生，但是金銀財寶在他手中，一點也沒有妨礙，他身帶金錢，到各種不同的場所隨緣度化眾生，使得這個世界成為淨化的人間淨土。

在佛教教團中，本來就包括僧信二眾，維摩居士以在家優婆塞的身分經營事業，獲取利益，這是說明治生事業與佛法並不相違背，因為有充分的經濟能力，才有辦法推動佛教的法輪。

我們看現在的社會，集團有集團的事業，個人也有個人的跨國公司，甚至黨派有黨產、教會有教產，這就是企業化。企業化不是只為賺錢，要有組織、任用人才、為人服務、拓展管理方法。佛教徒為了光大佛法，遠紹如來家業，常有一句話說：「弘法是家務，利生為事業。」出世的佛教雖然不以營利為弘法事業的目標，卻不能因此否定佛教事業的成就和貢獻，因為人間佛教是「以出世的精神，做入世的事業」，特別注重信徒現生的幸福安樂。因此佛光山一向本著「非佛不做」的原則，發展文化、教育、慈善等佛化事業。因為我們認為，雖然過去的佛教重視道業、學業，不重視事業，但是山林比丘可以透過閉關修行，用道業的成就來受人供養；人間比丘則應該透過說法著作，用宣揚來教化、推廣佛教。

除此之外，佛教還需要有在家信眾從事佛光事業，例如設立滴水坊、文物流通處、素食館、交通旅遊、顧問公司等，藉以發展結緣的事業，提昇服務的品質。或是開辦工廠、農場、電力公司、自來水廠、百貨公司、大飯店等民生所需的事業，以及保險、報紙、電台、電視台，乃至安養院、育幼院、兒童之家、幼稚園、托兒所等。甚至將來佛教有辦法，也可以發展電腦、網路，讓全球共享佛法與資訊。

另外，過去寺院培養山林，給人休憩，現在佛教也可以發展園林觀光之無煙函工業。現在的時代，「受益者付費」的觀念已經普受社會人士所認同，一般參觀博物館、風景名勝等都要付費買門票，這在全世界早已成為慣例。未來佛教設立的文物陳列館、園林景觀也可以酌收維護費，只是信徒如果是到寺院禮佛參拜則不可以收費，因為信徒自然會添油香，兩者要有所分別，這個問題目前在大陸、韓國、日本等地，都有檢討的必要。

現在佛教辦學校、醫院，也如過去的寺院收租一樣。過去寺院都是用田產、房屋來收取租金，現在也可以開設大旅社、會議室，一樣可以收租金。甚至可以開銀行，為信徒貸款，如過去寺院也開設當鋪，並非沒有先例。

在古代經濟活動尚未發達之際，寺院經常以暫時閒置的善款、餘糧來幫助信徒周轉、救急，例如北魏的僧祇粟與僧祇戶，幫助政府解決了人民的飢餓；南北朝的寺庫、唐代三階教的無盡藏院、宋代的「長生庫」、元代的「解典庫」等金融機構，資貸財物，供人民周轉之需。以及歷代所從事的油坊、磨坊、碾米坊、當舖、旅店、製硯、製墨、紡織、印刷、藥局、義塾、書院、養老、濟貧、賑飢、慈幼、醫療、漏澤園（公墓）、義塚、浴室、道路橋樑維修等等，都是繁榮經濟、便民利國的福利事業。

經濟是民生命脈之所繫，佛教的經濟來源，在過去印度佛陀時代提倡供養制度，傳到中國以後，歷代禪門提倡農林生產，到了近代太虛大師又再提倡工禪合一，現在則有基金制度；未來，以原始佛教的供養制度，結合農禪、工禪生產而發展出適合現代的經濟制度，例如：果菜園林、房租田佃、生產事業、佛書出版、書畫流通、佛像法物、法會油香、經懺佛事、餐飲素食、推廣社教、弘法贊助、參觀門票、慈善服務、安單靜養、互助標會、護法委員等，則為時代發展的必然趨勢。

總之，佛教對錢財的看法是「非善非惡」，佛教並不完全否定錢財，黃金是毒蛇，黃金也是弘法修道的資糧，是一切佛化事業的基礎。佛學院、禪堂、念佛堂、學校、醫院、電台、雜誌社等，都需要金錢才能推動。所以，金錢並不完全是毒蛇，佛經所謂「淨財」、「善財」、「聖財」，只要能善用金錢來弘法利生，其功德比裝窮學道更大，更有意義，更有智慧。是以佛教應該重新估定經濟的價值，只要是合於正業、正命的淨財，應是多多益善；只要能對國家民生、對社會大眾、對經濟利益、對幸福快樂生活有所增益的事業，佛教徒都應該去做。因為有錢並不可恥，貧窮才會招來罪惡。

未來，希望佛光會員都能發心從事佛教的新事業來增廣淨財，藉此建設莊嚴堂皇的人間淨土，這才符合人間佛教的思想。

#### 第四、用大願力行佛所行

我們做任何事情，一定要先訂定目標，有了目標才有努力的方向，有了方向，做事才能著力。訂定目標就是「立志」，在佛教稱為「發心立願」。

在社會上，一個人將來的事業成就有多大，就看他童年的志願如何？在佛教裡，一個修行者的功行有多深，也看他的願力大小。根據佛經所載，所有佛菩薩都是靠願力而成就，沒有一位佛菩薩不是由發願所成。如《無量壽經》卷上記載阿彌陀佛四十八大願、《悲華經》

卷七所說釋迦牟尼佛五百大願、《彌勒菩薩所問本願經》所載彌勒奉行十善願、《藥師如來本願功德經》中藥師如來為滅除眾生病苦而發十二大願等。乃至文殊菩薩十八大願、普賢菩薩十大願、觀音菩薩十大願、地藏菩薩發願「地獄不空、誓不成佛」等，都是諸佛菩薩的偉大行願。

此外，古來多少高僧大德為「正法能久住，眾生得離苦」而發下宏願。譬如：玄奘大師「寧向西天一步死，不回東土一步生」，終於完成西域取經的大願；鑑真大師「為大事也，何惜生命」，終於將佛法弘傳於日本；乃至近代慈航法師的「我今發心，不為自求，人天福報，聲聞緣覺，乃至權乘，諸位菩薩，唯依最上乘，發菩提心，願與法界眾生，一時同得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提」，都是後世佛子學習的典範。

發心立願是學佛的根本，發心立願可以堅定信心與毅力，可以增長菩提心、提昇信仰，使我們的道德、人格臻於至善。因此我們每日要不斷發願，把發願當成是一種修行的功課。例如：我願意孝順父母，和睦鄰里；我願意奉獻自己，造福社會；我願意犧牲小我，成就大眾；我願意促進世界和平，人民安樂。乃至我願意當一座橋，讓大眾通行；我願意是一棵大樹，供人乘涼；我願意是一滴小水滴，滋潤眾生；我願意當大地，乘載一切眾生；我願意如日月，給人光明；我願意如和風，吹拂人心開意解。甚至我願意從善如流，我願意與人為善，我願意如花朵般給人歡喜，我願意如山水般給人欣賞，我願意如甘泉般解人饑渴……。

立願如同時鐘上繫了發條，汽車加足了汽油，能產生前進的動力；又如船隻裝了羅盤，學生訂了功課表，有了前進的目標。學佛首重發心立願，《勸發菩提心文》說：「入道要門，發心為首；修行急務，立願居先。願立則眾生可度，心發則佛道堪成。」《大智度論》卷七說：「作福無願，無所標立；願為導御，能有所成。譬如銷金，隨師而作，金無定也。」「莊嚴佛國事大，獨行功德難以成就，須藉願力方能達成。如牛力雖能挽車，亦須御者方有所至。」

此外，《大集經》說：「發願能摧伏煩惱魔軍。」《發菩提心經論·誓願品》說：「菩薩發心，先建至誠，立決定誓，立誓之人，終不放逸、懈怠、緩慢。」由此可見，入道之由，莫不行願，因為「果」雖然是由「行」所招感，但是如果沒有「願」力，即使是行，也無法到達所期望的目的，所以發心立願是成就一切事業的重要助緣與動力。

一般學佛的人，經常勸人要發心、要立願。其實，發心立願不是佛教徒的專利，社會上任何一個人都應該發心立願。發心，才能把事情做好；立願，做事才有目標。發心立願就像開採能源一樣，心裡的能源是每個人取之不盡，用之不竭的最大財富。《勸發菩提心文》說：「金剛非堅，願力最堅；虛空非大，心王最大。」一個人的心量有多大，成就便有多大；願力有多堅，力量就有多強。心發則佛道堪成，所以，學佛一定要發心立願，發心立願才會有成就。

發願也如讀書，要不斷升級，剛開始只發小小的願不妨，但漸漸的要發大願，要讓願力不斷昇華。例如，我發願在這一生中，能誦多少經，能念多少佛，能為眾生做多少善事，能傳播佛法度多少眾生；我發願一生做道場的護法，做眾生的馬牛，做家庭的保母，做社會的明燈。能夠發願「行佛」，確實「行佛所行」，更是了不起。

談到「行佛」，曹仲植先生是台灣「生命線」的創始人，她的夫人是個虔誠的佛教徒。四十年前，她在「普門精舍」皈依佛教，對我所提倡的人間佛教思想極為推崇，所以她時常鼓勵曹居士親近佛教，聽經聞法。向來沒有信仰的曹居士原本十分為難，但由於深愛太太，也就勉強陪她出入佛教寺院。

有一次法會結束，曹夫人拉著先生的手，走到我面前，說道：「師父！請您度我的先生信仰佛教，教他拜佛。」

只見曹居士一臉尷尬的表情，我連忙打圓場道：「曹先生不必拜佛，行佛就好了。」

曹居士一聽，高興極了，此後逢人便說：「星雲大師講的，我不必拜佛，我是行佛的。」

此後，曹居士從事社會慈善公益活動，不遺餘力，例如他創辦台灣「生命線」，援助無依無助的人走向光明之路；成立曹氏基金會獎助清寒學生，捐助殘障人士輪椅數十萬部；每年災害，捐助千百萬元賑災。此外，對於佛光山、美國西來寺、法國巴黎道場的建寺工作及國際佛光會的弘法活動，他也發心資助；在印度、錫蘭等佛教聖地，他設中、英、梵文銅牌，介紹佛教史蹟。

當別人讚美他善名遠播時，他總是說：「念經不如聽經，聽經不如講經，講經不如實踐。我只是『行佛』而已。」

「行佛」就是依照佛陀的教法去實踐奉行。平時我們稱呼學佛的人為「行者」，就是要去「修行」佛法，要如佛陀所說、所行去做，所以真正的修行人，是要「行佛」，而不只是「學佛」而已。

在佛教的經典裡，每部經都是以「如是我聞」為開頭，最後則以「信受奉行」作為結束；能夠信受奉行佛法，就是行佛。所以佛弟子應以「行佛」為修持的標準，例如：

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| 1.慈悲喜捨是行佛 | 9.慚愧感恩是行佛  |
| 2.救苦救難是行佛 | 10.吃虧委屈是行佛 |
| 3.奉獻服務是行佛 | 11.忍耐接受是行佛 |
| 4.義行仁道是行佛 | 12.四不壞信是行佛 |
| 5.端正身心是行佛 | 13.與時俱進是行佛 |

- |           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| 6.生活密行是行佛 | 14.胸懷法界是行佛 |
| 7.尊重包容是行佛 | 15.同體共生是行佛 |
| 8.與人為善是行佛 | 16.佛化人間是行佛 |

經云：「心、佛、眾生三無差別。」佛陀是已經證悟成佛的眾生，眾生是未修證的佛陀；佛陀是「所作已辦，不受後有」，眾生是「所作未辦，流轉生死」。因此，如果我們能「行佛所行」、「學佛所學」，則必定可以離苦得樂，解脫自在。

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修學佛法，需要「解行並重」，不重慧解，盲修瞎練容易走火入魔；但是光在慧解上著力，在修持上沒有實證的功夫，所謂慧解也只是知識，和研究哲學差不多，不能獲得宗教裡的真正利益。學佛的人，必須「解行並重」，解是信佛、行就是行佛。有了慧解，才能自覺；透過行佛，才能覺他。我們既然信佛，又再發心修持，就要在生活裡每日受用佛法。例如嘴邊常掛著讚美別人的言詞，就是奉行佛法言語布施；常體會出人我之間的因緣關係，就會悟出眾生原是一體不可分的；勤勞服務，看起來是為別人，其實是為自己的；感恩恭敬，看起來是對人的，其實是自己受益的。

中國自明清以來，佛教大德們都非常理解佛法，談玄說妙，差不多都能把佛法說得頭頭是道。遺憾的是大都沒有實證的功夫。一個對於宗教沒有實際體驗的人，其言行難免不會走樣。比方說，念佛，你曾有過一心不亂的境界嗎？參禪，你曾有過心境合一的時際嗎？禮拜，你感到莊嚴的人格昇華嗎？誦經，你對佛法有大信心，生大尊敬嗎？除了這些形式的修持外，你對橫逆境界有大忍耐，能不生退心嗎？你對芸芸眾生能慈悲喜捨，毫不憚客嗎？在五欲之前，能去除貪念；在氣憤之時，能去除瞋心嗎？可以說多少會講佛法的人，自己就是不能實踐佛法。所謂「說到一丈，不如行到一尺」，由此愈發突顯「自覺」與「行佛」的重要。

自覺是自我開發，覺他是行佛之行；能夠「自覺」與「行佛」，必然「心中有佛」，而時時與佛同在。如果一個人「心中有佛」，眼裡看到的必定都是佛的世界，耳朵聽到的必定都是佛的音聲，鼻中嗅到的必定都是佛的氣息，口裡所說的必定都是佛的語言，身體所做的必定都是佛的事情；如果人人如此，這就是一個佛的世界，家庭怎能不幸福安樂呢？治安怎能不安全良好呢？國家怎能不富強康樂呢？

所以，讓我們每一個人從今天開始，都自我期許「我是佛」吧！

### *Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way*

## **Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way**

10<sup>th</sup> BLIA General Conference  
Kaohsiung, Taiwan  
September 2004

Ven. Master Hsing Yun

Greetings Distinguished Guests and Members of BLIA!

Today is the Tenth General Conference since the inauguration of the Buddha's Light International Association. This is also the third such conference being held in Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan. I would like to thank each and every one of you for taking the time and making the effort in attending this conference.

I have been a monastic for sixty-six years, of which fifty five years have been spent on the introduction and propagation of Buddhism. Last year during the release of my photobiography "Cloud and Water," someone asked me what the meaning of "Cloud and Water" is. Around the same time, someone else enquired why do I have to rush across the five continents so frequently? To these questions, I would answer, "White clouds flutter to and fro across the sky and rivers criss-cross the land unceasingly. Travelling monastics are like cloud and water, delivering them to the boundary of this world and eventually beyond the universe." I concluded by saying that "Cloud and Water" in essence demonstrates the practice of the "Buddha's Way."

During the past decades, I have observed the rapid growth of Buddhism in Taiwan and other parts of the world. Accompanying the increasing number of devotees each year, people of diverse social backgrounds have actively participated in the propagation of Buddhism. Indeed we should applaud this continual trend. However, throughout the years, I am also aware that Buddhist practice seems to have stagnated on aspects of "Believing," "Worshipping" and "Praying" to the Buddha. Many of our devotees have failed to see the need to apply the teachings of Buddha to our lives, which appears to be the main cause for the decline of Buddhism in the past. For example, Buddhism teaches us to be

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compassionate, but how many Buddhists really practice compassion? Buddhism requires us to be generous, yet how many Buddhists are prepared to give joyously? Buddhism advocates prajñā wisdom, but how many Buddhists can be regarded as enlightened persons possessing true wisdom? If practicing devotees do not observe the Dharma, it is no wonder that the quality of cultivation in the Buddhist fraternity is deteriorating.

In order to advance the quality of Buddhist belief, I have recently advocated the practice of the “Buddha’s Way” and designated 2004 as the “BLIA Year of Practicing the Buddha’s Way.” I hope that all of us can diligently apply our daily lives according to the His teachings. For example:

*The Buddha taught us to be compassionate, thus we must avoid hurting or killing living beings.*

*The Buddha taught us to possess forbearance, thus we must refrain from being hateful or angry.*

*The Buddha taught us to establish good relationships with others, thus we must not be selfish or uncaring.*

Only through the persistent adaptation of our lives in our faith and to lead our lives according to the Dharma can we begin to become self-enlightened and self-aware of how the Buddha led his own life. Only then can we appreciate the true meaning of the Dharma and its benefits to mankind. This year’s keynote speech is titled “Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha’s Way” and includes four main topics that I hope you can adopt as goals for your future cultivations.

### **1. Personal Sublimation through Self-awareness**

Since our birth, we have gone through various phases of receiving instruction and education. Up to a certain age, our parents at home would give us the necessary instructions. When we grow up and go to school, we are taught by our teachers. Finally when we start working, we will receive further education from the interaction with society. However I consider the most important form of education as one that is gained from maintaining constant self-awareness.

### ***Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way***

Self-awareness is essentially a form of self education. According to the Buddhist sutras, we must be reliant on ourselves and the Dharma, but never depend on external influence. Similarly, we should teach ourselves to maintain alertness at all times so that we can assimilate and derive global understanding of all events around us. This is what I mean by self education.

One of the key methods in Buddhist cultivation is based on the proper use a self-aware mind. When the Buddha began his teachings, his intention was to lead us into a realm of awareness so that we are awakened to the Buddha's insight and wisdom. Through this awareness, we can strive to become equals to the Buddha. Prince Siddhārtha became the Buddha because he had realized the truth of life in the universe (self-awareness). With perfect compassion, he then proceeded to teach all being about this truth thus helping others to achieve enlightenment (enlighten others). Therefore, he is truly an enlightened person who possesses the quality of self-awareness, the ability to enlighten others, and complete enlightenment. The Buddha was named Śākyamuni because he wanted us to follow his lead. He wanted us to understand that the way to Buddhahood is by awakening to the real purpose of our own existence. A person cannot achieve complete enlightenment unless he possesses self-awareness and capable of enlightening others.

Education through self-awareness seems to originate from western societies. Under their system, young students are taught to think, identify and solve problems by themselves. The teachers are there to inspire and guide the students on carrying out research and completing assignments. The teachers would very often encourage their students to conduct their own lessons in class. Contrary to this, the Chinese teaching method continues to rely on an unhealthy force-fed approach. The teachers would stand in front of a class and teach without allowing the students to speak or interact. The students are contained and restrained, thereby gradually lose their instinct to self education.

By self education I mean the ability to be self demanding, self learned, self enriching and self reflecting without relying on others' assistance. Successful self education is dependent on the constant questioning, awareness, motivating and understanding of the self. We can indeed discover our own self through self contemplation.

There are many ways to educate ourselves in Buddhism. These can be achieved through repentance, admission of wrongdoing, reflection, meditative thinking and self

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contemplation. Sometimes we can learn by listening, thinking and taking action. Sometimes we can learn by consulting and seeking advice from others. Sometimes we can learn through meditative thoughts. Sometimes we can learn through spontaneous understanding. There are those who are unable to study and learn alone. If you resolve to provide assistance, you will improve your own skills by teaching others. This is self education.

Self-education is most effective if we rely on ourself at all times. Let me tell you a story from the Ch'an Koan. A long time ago, Master Dao Chien and his good friend Master ZonYuan travelled together on a study tour. They had journeyed long distances and Master ZongYuan was finding the trip extremely difficult and tiring. On many occasions, Master ZongYuan complained and demanded to end the journey. Master Dao Chien comforted him and said, "We have decided on this study tour. It is a shame to abandon our quest now since we have already covered so much ground. Will you continue if I promise to help you with whatever you ask of me? However, there are five tasks that I will not be cable to do for you." Master Dao Chien asked, "What are these five tasks?" Dao Chien replied, "Putting on clothes, eating meals, urinating, defecating and walking." In a way Dao Chien was suggesting that each person has to resolve his own basic necessities if he hopes to accomplish anything.

We can achieve success only if we rely on our own faith, awareness and enlightenment. There is always a limitation on how much assistance others can provide. Asking others to consume our meals cannot satisfy our hunger. We cannot reach our destination by asking others to walk on our behalf. We cannot transfer our suffering to others if we are sick. When we are tired, others' resting will not rejuvenate our waning strength. Therefore we have to rely on our own cultivation and practice to achieve liberation and enlightenment. Master Zhao Zhou once said, "Even for such a simple task as going to the toilet, you have to do it on your own. Therefore how can you ask someone else to be responsible for your effort in becoming a Buddha?" We cannot be successful unless we can establish our expectation and determine the direction of our own cultivation.

The importance of self-awareness can be demonstrated from an extract of the *Record of the Mirror of Orthodoxy* (*Zongjing lu*), "Only the person who drinks can tell whether the water is hot or cold. Without regaining their eyesight, the blind cannot truly appreciate the true form of an elephant." More than two and a half thousand years ago, the Buddha

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attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. The first words spoken by him were, “All sentient beings possess true Buddha nature!” Through his words, we know that all beings possess the potential to becoming Buddhas. Therefore men are equal to the Buddha but for the loss of their awareness, their suffering in the cycle of rebirth is prolonged. Our cultivation will help us to discover and become aware of our true nature once more.

Awareness is to observe, discover and reacquire, which is different from invention. Invention involves the creation of a new item or knowledge. To reacquire or discover is to become aware of an existing matter or phenomenon. For example, the famous British scientist Newton discovered earth’s gravitational force. This is a function of awareness. Even if Newton’s discovery did not happen, gravitational force still exists on this earth. When the Buddha attained enlightenment, he was only becoming aware of the truth of the law of Dependant Origination, but he did not create such a law.

Therefore, in the *Samyuktāgama*, the Buddha taught that “It does not matter whether or not there are Buddhas in the worlds, Dharma is always existent and can be found in every corner of the universe. For those striving to attain enlightenment, they can do so through their own awareness of the Dharma.”

Mankind has been living on earth for millenniums, but why is it that no one ever discovered gravitational force before Newton? I believe that it is because Newton had a unique ability to observe. In Buddhist terms, Newton possessed a very high level of awareness, which is very important to the development of personal wisdom. Buddhism places a strong emphasis on the advancement of individual awareness; because only through progressive elevation of awareness can we develop and enhance our wisdom, which leads to the understanding and appreciation of nirvāṇa.

A Pratyekabuddha is in the state of one of the four enlightened realms within the Ten Dharma Realms. Pratyekabuddhas existed before the birth of the Buddha and attained enlightenment without teachers, assistance from others or knowledge of the Dharma. Through his observation of the Twelve *pratītya-samutpāda* (twelve links of Dependant Origination), he became aware of the meaning of Life. Mahā-kāśyapa, leader of the Buddha’s disciples once said proudly, “I can still attain enlightenment and become a sage without even meeting with Śākyamuni Buddha.”

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In deed Mahā-kāśyapa possessed an extremely high level of awareness. When the Buddha gave a sermon on the Vulture Peak, He tested the audience by holding up a flower without uttering a word. With the exception of Mahā-kāśyapa, not one single person from the audience was able to comprehend the Buddha's intention. On the other hand, Mahā-kāśyapa was able to establish a simultaneous bond with the Buddha, and returned with a smile from the bottom of his heart. The Buddha announced "Here is the Tathāgata's Dharma-eye, profound Nirvanic mind, formless reality, profound and mystical Dharma, wordless doctrine, and the special transmission outside the orthodox teaching; now I transmit it to you Mahā-kāśyapa as my successor." At that moment, the Ch'an School in Buddhism was established through this rapport between the teacher and the student. This is another display of self-awareness.

In China, the Ch'an School always advocates "enlightenment through awareness." All problems are to be solved by personally contemplation without disclosing the answers to others. Once Master Zhi Xian was stumped by his colleague Master Ling Yu when he was asked, "What was your responsibility before you were born?" When he asked for further explanation, Master Ling Yu answered, "This is my understanding and I need to say no more. Even if I provide additional clarification, I do not see how this can benefit you." Master Zhi Xian then returned to the monastery, looked into every book in the library, and tried to formulate an appropriate response without success. At the end of the day, he sighed and said, "You cannot satiate your hunger by reciting the word 'eat' or looking at the drawing of a cake." He then burned all his books and vowed, "From now on, I will not waste my time studying and researching on the sutras. I will be better off conducting myself as an ordinary monk."

After bidding his leave with Master Ling Yu, he travelled to the tomb of Grand Master Hui Zhong and continued his practice. One day, whilst clearing overgrown weeds, his scythe hit some rubble on the ground. The reverberating sound suddenly provided him with the elusive answer and he found himself awakened to the truth. He recited the verse, "The sound of one strike overcomes the barrier of my past knowledge. I shall no longer rely on theoretical cultivations. In an instant I am awakened to the age old Truth. Realization comes without trace and does not rely on the display of external etiquette. Words uttered by the enlightened ones are words of complete wisdom." Had Master Ling Yu

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decided to provide further explanation and clarification in the very beginning, Zhi Xian would not have been able to attain sudden enlightenment. Grand Master Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of the Ch'an School said, "Profound insight cannot be taught. It is always close to you and revealed through contemplation." If you do not recognize your own nature, you will not improve yourself no matter how hard you try to learn from others. It goes without saying that "Prized treasures are never given. They are found within your mind and inherent in your nature."

Throughout our lives, we needed parental caring, instruction from our teachers, support from society, and assistance from our mentors and encouragement from our friends. However most important of all, we must rely on our own self-awareness. We must not lose our awareness and become totally dependent on others. Let us consider the blood that flows within our body. It provides natural nutrients to ensure health and our well-being. It is far better than any injection of vitamins or supplements that provide limited benefits. When we take refuge in the Triple Gem, we are really referring to the Intrinsic Triple Gem. We are seeking to discover and understand ourself. Man's true nature is originally pure and unspoilt, but it loses its purity in a single ignorant thought and ends up with prolonged suffering in the bitter sea of rebirth. To rediscover ourself, we must place our faith and devotion to Buddhism. We must detach ourself from our polluted facade. We must understand and assess our current disposition with frankness, all of which cannot be attained by relying on others. We must depend on our own awareness to achieve our goals.

Awareness is the wisdom pre-requisite to the attainment of profound nirvāṇa. Very often we have said that we are resolved to develop the Bodhi mind and we want to practice the ways of the Bodhisattvas. But do we truly understand the meaning of becoming a Bodhisattva? Chapter 4 of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śastra* states, "One who has self-awareness and enlightens others is a true Bodhisattva." If this merit is carried out to its fullness, then we are on the path to Buddhahood. The essential merits required to becoming a Buddha are derived from the practice of self-awareness, enlightening others and complete enlightenment. In other words, in the process of our cultivation, we shall use our awareness to guide our lives and to rely on this awareness to complete our journey to enlightenment. Based on our Bodhi mind and cultivation of the Bodhisattva path, we can travel on the road of awareness and enlightenment.

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It is not difficult to develop our awareness if we are alert, and it will be relatively easy to identify examples of awareness and enlightenment. According to Confucius, “Each person should reflect three times on his daily deeds.” This is similar to Buddhism’s “From hence forth I repent each and every one of my wrong deeds.” They are the implementations of self-awareness. Master Pu Jue of the Sung dynasty once said, “If practitioners divert their criticism of other to themselves, their cultivation will improve immensely. It does not matter if you are happy or angry, peaceful or excited, every moment is the right moment to appraise yourself.” Every error committed needs to be identified and put right by the application of a self-aware mind. Scholar Liang Qi Chao once said, “I shall not be deterred from declaring war on yesterday’s ‘me’.” This is not unlike a famous Confucian saying, “Life is in a constant state of rejuvenation. Yesterday was rejuvenated. Every day is rejuvenated and tomorrow will be rejuvenated.” One of the preconditions of Buddhist monastic life is “to diligently cultivate precepts, concentration and wisdom; and to extinguish greed, anger and ignorance.” Therefore we can overcome greed, anger and ignorance if we are constantly aware of our dedication to precepts, concentration and wisdom. Such is the means and ways to improve our cultivated lives.

Self-awareness is a path taking us to ultimate liberation. To be able to say, “I know,” “I realise” or “I understand” is worth more than a thousand lectures conducted by others. We must never refrain from exercising our awareness and simply relying on others to solve our problem. *The Sūtra of Bequeathed Teachings* says, “The fault is not with the instructor if the learner refuses to follow the teaching. The responsibility is not with the doctor who prescribed the right medication if the patient chooses not to take it.” Likewise, the *Diamond Sutra* expounds that “All forms are delusive and false” and “Those who seek me by form and plead to me in sound are perverted in their ways and cannot perceive the presence of the Tathāgata.” You will deviate from the Path if you are attached to external influence. Only with proper recognition of your self-awareness can you reach the Buddha within your mind and discover your true nature. From this point forward, I hope that all members of the BLIA can utilize their awareness to elevate their intrinsic quality. At the same time, you should regularly study the sūtras and attend sermons. By contemplating what you have learned and heard, you will gain wisdom. You should continue to apply yourself diligently to the understanding and application of Buddha’s teachings. Your wisdom will advance to the next level by the practical implementation of your self-awareness,

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thus assuring your enlightenment.

### **2. Local Adaptation of Buddhism Development**

In line with the rapid progress made in information communication and modern transportation, the whole world is advancing towards globalization in many areas. We are witnessing the transformation of this world into a “Global Village.” However, the subject of “local adaptation” has never ceased to play a vital role in the history of this world. A good example is the recent heated debate that took place in the Taiwanese political arena.

In reality, Buddhism recognizes that there are thirty three levels of heavens. The Samsara is also comprised of three realms, namely, the six heavens of the Desire Realm, the eighteen heavens of the Form Realm and the six heavens of the Formless Realm. We can also find from the Buddhist Canon that there are Eastern and Western Purelands. It is an indisputable fact that we have in this world many different countries and ethnic races. The deepest imbued fear of these countries and races is the possibility of being invaded and conquered; and ultimately the loss of their cultures.

I was on a world propagation tour some time ago and was invited to give a lecture at the Connel University in the United States. After the lecture, Professor John McRay said to me, “You are welcome to propagate the Dharma in the USA. But it seems that you have repeatedly tried to impose your Chinese culture on the Americans; as if you are trying to subjugate the American culture.” When I heard what he said, it became apparent to me that I have been insensitive to their local cultures. I was reminded that the purpose of my visit is to contribute and serve, just as Buddhist devotees make offerings of flower to the Bodhisattvas. Therefore we must respect the cultures of other countries and societies; and to accept the unique characteristics of these cultures. We learn from the sutras that the Eastern Pureland has its own characteristics which are different from the special features of the Western Pureland. Similarly, there are differences between practicing in secluded monasteries and practicing Humanistic Buddhism in society. To be able to share and co-exist irrespective of different cultures will ensure a more colourful and attractive world.

Buddhism was first transmitted from India into China. In the beginning Indian monks travelled to China for the sole purpose of translating sūtras into the Chinese language. The responsibility of building monasteries and temples rested with the Chinese monastics.

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That is why Buddhism in China flourished with Chinese cultures. On the other hand, if these Indian monastics like Kāśyapamātaṅga, Gobharana decided to reside permanently in China and participated in temple building and Dharma propagation, Buddhism in China would have retained a lot more of Indian influence. Have you ever wondered why when the first Patriarch of the Ch'an School, Master Bodhidharma, appointed Master Hui Ke as the second Patriarch instead of choosing someone of Indian descent? It is because Master Bodhidharma was aware of the importance of ensuring his teachings could be adapted locally. Similarly, many years ago I have transferred the Abbotship of Fo Guang Shan to Venerable Hsin Ping because he was a native born Taiwanese. That is an example of my objective of local adaptation.

The local adaptation that I am advocating is benevolent, friendly, harmonious and enhancing. It does not involve rejection or denial. For example, when participating in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Day parades, I had noticed that most Chinese Americans despite having lived in the US for many years still regarded themselves as Chinese first and American second. Therefore, I would like to encourage our BLIA members, when taking part in the 4<sup>th</sup> July Day parade to proclaim publicly that "I am American." Since we have chosen to live in the United States, we should recognize ourselves as part of the new home. It would not be right to segregate ourselves in another country.

It is natural to expect an exchange of cultures. However, if we think carefully, we would not like to find a United States of America or the Japanese Empire embedded in the middle of the Republic of China. I would suggest that all aspiring immigrants, no matter where you are going, you should be prepared to settle down and embrace wholeheartedly your new country. You should adapt to the local environment, cultures and way of life. You should never try to purposefully cling onto your old background and customs and create tiny enclaves within another nation.

In the past, no matter where they went or what they did; Chinese immigrants always carried with them the desire and slogan of "To popularize and preserve the Chinese cultures." This is patently wrong because each place has its own unique culture and history. Europe has its own European culture. America has its own American culture. Australia has its own Australian culture. It is of most importance that we must respect these local cultures. It may be acceptable to introduce Chinese and other cultures into

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another country. But we must never attempt to use our Chinese culture to subjugate or replace other's cultures. For members who came from different parts of the world, successful propagation of Buddhism is dependent on how well we can adapt our works to the local needs and cultures.

In the course of propagating Buddhism that started almost twenty five hundred years ago, the fundamental nature, principles, rules and instructions of the Dharma have never changed. However when Buddhism was transmitted to China, Japan and Korea, it became Northern Buddhism. When Buddhism was transmitted to Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand, it became Southern Buddhism. Similarly when it was transmitted to Xinjiang, Tibet and Mongolia, it became Esoteric Buddhism. Each of these forms of Buddhism has evolved into its current state through the gradual influence of the local climates, geographic conditions, customs, needs and traditions. It is a clear example of conforming to and complying with the local environments. A catholic priest, Father Ding Song Jun once said to me, "If you were born in the West, you would probably be ordained as a priest. If I was raised in the East, I might be a Buddhist monk now." For example, in a country with abundant timber, you will find that the people will use a lot of timber furniture. Similarly in a land with a large supply of stone quarries, you will find popular use of stone products. Therefore it is clear adaptation of the most appropriate conditions and resources. It has nothing to do with being right or wrong.

Our discussion today is about local adaptation to promote Buddhism. Buddhism is not a tool to overcome the cultures of other countries. Its goal is to promote unity, co-existence, co-operation, mutual survival and achievement. The BLIA is an organization advancing the principle of Humanistic Buddhism. Wherever we are in this world, we have the duty to develop Buddhism in the area. However, we must always be aware of the different characteristics of the area, and realistically adapting ourselves to the local requirements. So long as the principles of the Dharma are not altered, we should emphasize and promote the retention of the local cultures and needs. Both the United States and China are large countries. We know that the United States has a Federal Government system; it is also governed by 51 different states governments. Similarly, China has a central government that oversees 36 provincial governments, Self Administrative Zones, Special Economic Zones and Minority Ethnic Zones. They are all good examples of exercising the principle of local adaptation.

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In March 2004, the BLIA and Buddhist Communities in China co-organized the “Chines Buddhist Musical Concert.” The performances were held at the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taiwan, Los Angeles Kodak Theatre and Royal Canadian Opera House. The programmes were performed by over one hundred samgha of the Māhāyana, Esoteric and Theravāda orders coming from eight famous temples from both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The performers might come from different backgrounds, but this only enhanced and emphasised their individuality. The chanting was both clear and wonderful.

The above demonstrates that Buddhism may exist in many forms such as North, South and Esoteric schools. It must be recognized that these different forms of Buddhism all possess their own special features and characteristics. But it is unnecessary to change these characteristics even though they may differ in language, music and apparels. To be successful in the international development of Buddhism, we must ensure the rigorous implementation of the principle of local adaptation.

During the 3rd BLIA Directors Conference held in Johannesburg South Africa in 19 April 2001, I had proposed the “Four Transformations” in the agenda. They are as follows:

- (1)“To humanize Buddhism”
- (2)“To culturally improve our lives”
- (3)“To install equality in the monastic and lay societies” and,
- (4)“To promote local adaptation of monastic establishments”

When I proposed “local adaptation of monastic establishments,” I am referring to the hundreds of temples and Buddhist centres founded and operated by Fo Guang Shan and BLIA. Their ownerships belong to the community and not by individuals. In fact I ask all BLIA members to make a common vow, aiming to implement adaptation of all these establishments to local cultures and conditions in the next twenty to thirty years time.

At the conference, I had suggested to the audience to visualize what a spectacular achievement for Buddhism it will be if we are able to install to all of the overseas temples abbots or abbess of native origin. Imagine we have an American Abbot at the Hsi Lai Temple, Australian Abbess at the Nan Tien and Chung Tien Temples and African Abbot at the Nan Hua Temple.

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It is my sincerest wish, in the coming twenty to fifty years, to be able to assist and guide the native monastics to become responsible for the management and administration of these overseas establishments. Nowadays the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College is regularly receiving many applications from overseas. I hope that BLIA can attract more members of all ethnic backgrounds so that light of the Buddha and his teachings can be found in every corner of the world. I believe that this is the best way of how to conduct ourselves in the "Ways of the Buddha."

#### **3.Improved Income from New Buddhist Enterprises**

We need either a legitimate job or business to be able to lead a proper life. Our wealth, comfort and stability are the result of daily hard work, which allow us to be able to perform good and benevolent tasks for others. One cannot be expected to carry out significant charitable deeds if he himself is poor and starving.

It is essential to satisfy our daily needs for clothing, food, lodging and transportation. Even if you are a perfectly enlightened Buddha, your daily livelihood is what needs to keep you alive in this world. In your Buddhist cultivation, it is not necessary to maintain a poverty-stricken and austere lifestyle. In fact, Buddhism encourages its devotees to be prosperous by being successful businesspersons or industrious employees. According to the *Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*, "Lay Devotees can amass wealth legitimately. It does not contravene the Dharma." By being well off and self sufficient, we will be able to provide for our families, help our relatives and friends in need; and support the propagation of Buddhism.

Putting it another way, we must conduct our lives by right action and right livelihood according to the Eightfold Noble Path. The *Samyuktāgama* indicates that Buddhism acknowledges that proper livelihood can be made from taking part in various lawful professions such as farming, herding, trading or investing.

In Buddhism, right action is to conduct oneself in a correct manner. To have a right livelihood is to depend on some appropriate profession, business or employment for your livelihood. According to the *Yogacārabhūmi*, "Right livelihood can be defined as the pursuit of clothing, food and miscellaneous items by proper means." Buddhism does not discourage the cumulation of wealth by its devotees. A country grows stronger because its

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people are well fed and affluent. Likewise, propagation of Buddhism will become more successful if its devotees' economic status is thriving and prosperous. Therefore, so long as your action does not harm other members of society, there is nothing wrong with your involvement in successful economic ventures.

It is regrettable that in the past, a number of patriarchs and sages had set some very harsh standards for their followers. They suggested that "Wealth is a horrible thing, it is like a serpent." Others would suggest that "Couples married because they were enemies in their past lives." They would even refer to children as debt collectors from the past. According to them, everything in this world relates to pain and suffering. They are not aware that their method of teaching is contrary to normal human nature; and their method of salvation will never appeal to the spiritual needs of the people. It is no wonder that they could never attract new devotees to Buddhism.

In the past, Buddhism has been misconstrued as advocating emptiness in our spiritual lives, relegating our physical needs as of secondary importance. However, according to the *Amitabha Sūtra* to reside in the Western Pureland to have your every wish granted. Its land and buildings are well endowed with gold and other treasured objects. Everywhere you go, you will meet up with Bodhisattvas wearing jewelled crowns and well adorned robes. It is indeed a grand and majestic world.

What I do not understand is that, up until now, there are many devotees maintaining the notion that you have to lead an austere life to become a good Buddhist. With this idea in their minds, they are prepared to be impoverished in this life in exchange for the possibility of leading a better life after death. This kind of thinking had created unsurmountable obstacles in the propagation of Buddhism in the past.

Many years ago on my visit to a number of European museums, I remember seeing many Catholic Churches. They are all majestic and glittering building, a clear demonstration of the Church's power and wealth in the world. Similarly churches and banks in Taiwan usually occupy the best locations in towns and cities. On reflection, a few decades ago, Buddhist temples could only be found at the end of some dirty and obscure laneways.

In principle, Humanistic Buddhism advocates that we should have good living and lead a comfortable life without feeling guilty. Buddhism does not require its devotees to be poor or refrain from enjoying proper pleasures. It encourages us to earn our living by

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proper means. It encourages us to enjoy as much spiritual and physical pleasures as we can. Even though there are limitations to physical wealth and enjoyment, nevertheless we are in a better position to appreciate the Dharma joy with the help of these limited achievements. Without being hampered by material hardships, we are in a better position to harvest both spiritual and physical wealth in our lifetime.

Buddhism was transmitted from India into China, Korea and Japanese many centuries ago. One of the main reasons why it is so popularly accepted is that it strongly emphasized the need to assist the economic livelihood of its devotees. Functions of Buddhist institutions are not limited to teaching and preaching, they are also used as religious, cultural, arts and education centres. These functions are usually associated with other community functions such farming productions, general economies and social welfares.

Traditionally monastic buildings are built to a very high standard of graceful and palatial features. Their constructions of grand halls, pavilions, landscape gardens and imposing courtyards have earned them a reputation of being the “Buddhist Pureland.” In effect, Buddhist Pureland is the description applied to a pure, tranquil and sublime world. It is a world of peace and tranquillity. Although Buddhism discourages excessive physical indulgence, it also recognizes the benefit of reasonable and appropriate physical wealth and pleasure. Buddhism may not place an absolute importance in wealth accumulation, but we must accept the fact that money is needed for the purchase and installation of adornments for the temples. People usually visit and pray in the temples because they are magnificent and grand. People usually will not pay respect to the Buddha images unless they are gracefully decorated. We devotees have vowed to be reborn in the Western Pureland because we are told about its golden ground, jewelled pavilions and majestic buildings.

Buddhism may place merits on the ability to lead a plain and simple life, however it has to have sufficient infrastructures and facilities to accommodate the public and its devotees. A famous Chinese Poet Du Fu once wrote in one of his poems, “To build many houses so that the masses can be happily sheltered from the cold.” The monastics are required to lead a simple life owning only the bare essentials in clothing and other personal possessions. On the other hand, lay devotees should be provided with a fresh approach to their view of life. “Even a clever housewife cannot provide boiled rice from an empty pot” and “A poor

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couple finds no pleasure in life.” These approximate interpretations of old Chinese proverbs stress the fact that personal cultivation will not progress smoothly unless you are financially sufficient. Without money, you will not be able to care for your parents. Without money, you cannot provide for your family. Without money you will not be able to financially support the temple and carry out charitable deeds. Therefore it is not unreasonable to say that every aspect in our lives evolves around money. A country needs to have a plentiful treasury before it can implement its policies and programmes. To be able to provide spiritual needs, medical, charitable, educational and cultural services, Buddhist establishments require a substantial input of properly acquired wealth. Therefore, Buddhism does not reject assets which are obtained through proper means which are needed to purify and benefit the society.

“To Resolve” is a frequently used term in Buddhism. A lay devotee may determine to strive for fame and fortune in society; and start a family life. This resolve is acceptable by Buddhism. According to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*, Vimalakīrti observed the Dharma diligently. At the same time he was a successful businessman involved in trading, farming and other businesses. Possession of money and wealth did not appear to hamper his devotion. In fact he made good use of his wealth to deliver others from sufferings. With the help of money, he was able to transform the world into a land of purity.

The duality of the Buddhist community ensures the complimentary existence of the monastic and layman groups. Master Vimalakīrti had been successful both as a layman and a Buddhist devotee. Clearly there is no conflict in making a comfortable living and at the same time cultivate your faith. It also demonstrates that possession of sufficient financial support is a prerequisite to the turning of the Dharma Wheel.

In this modern society, we can observe that financial groups have their group assets, individuals have their personal assets, political parties have their party assets, and religious groups have their own assets. During the undertaking of an enterprise, we should not regard profit as the only consideration. There is also a need to put in place a robust organizational structure, skilful use of human resources, and clear managerial and developmental strategies. As Buddhist practitioners, we should regard the propagation of Buddhism as our lifetime objective so that “Dharma propagation is my family goal and benefiting others is my career.” Profit making may not be the primary objective in the propaga-

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tion by the monastics. But this does not mean that we have to reject the significance and contribution made by a profitable Buddhist enterprise. We know that Humanistic Buddhism is the “Application of spiritual belief in our daily lives.” It is especially focused on ensuring the happiness of the devotees. Therefore with its active development and implementation of cultural, educational and charitable activities, Fo Guang Shan is acting according to the principle of “Following the Buddha’s Path.” In the past, Buddhism placed great emphasis on Dharma learning and cultivation; and have neglected the necessity of business acumen. However I consider both matters of equal importance. Whereas the “forest” monastics can continue to improve their practice in seclusion, the “Humanistic” monastics can promote and propagate Buddhism through public speeches and publication of books and literatures.

Moreover, lay devotees can assist with the development of BLIA ventures by participating in running of BLIA teahouses, cultural shops, vegetarian restaurants, tourist agencies and other consultancies. All of the above establishments allow us to create new and genial relationships with the general public. To help improve the quality of life, we may also be involved in setting up factories, farms, power and utilities, department stores, hotels, insurance firms, newspapers, radio and television stations. With the arrival of global information technology, there is also a need to further develop electronic and Internet access to Buddhism.

In the past, temples and monasteries provided landscaped areas for visitors’ relaxation. We can perhaps expand this concept and develop tourist areas promoting Buddhist themes. Nowadays, the “user pay” concept is an accepted fact of the society. It is obligatory to pay entry fees when visiting museums and landmark areas. Therefore it would not be unreasonable to place a realistic upkeep fee for entry into future Buddhist museums, exhibitions and theme parks. However, visitation to temples for Dharma services and praying must remain free to all. Of course, the devotees may on their own accord make the appropriate donations to the temples. Currently there is no clear demarcation between entry fee and donation in China, Korea and Japan, and I can see that there is an urgent need to review these situations.

Today, you are expected to pay when attending Buddhist schools and hospitals. This is no different from the past when charges are levied on temple owned farm lands and houses.

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Historically temples had owned and operated moneylenders, setting the precedence for the establishment of banking facilities by the temple for the convenience of the devotees.

In older days when organized economy was still in its infancy, the temples would often release its funds to help relieve financial difficulties of their devotees. There are recorded examples during the various dynasties where the temples provided invaluable assistance to the governments to relieve famines and other disasters. It also recorded that throughout the ages; Buddhist temples were involved in activities relating to food production, accommodation, stationary products, education, charities, medications, hospitals, disaster reliefs, funeral services, bathhouses and infrastructure constructions. All these activities were considered invaluable to the national prosperity and benevolence to the population.

Economy is the life blood of people's livelihood. In India during the time of Sakyamuni Buddha, the monastic income was derived from a system of alms giving. When Buddhism was transmitted to China, succeeding generations of the Ch'an School promoted farming and forestry production. More recently Master Tai Xu advocated the combined working of Ch'an and manufacturing industries. Nowadays we are seeing the setting up of organized foundation funds. What I envisage for the future is an amalgamation of the ancient alms system, farming, industrial and modern economic enterprises. Orchards and vegetable gardens, timber forests, rental housing and farm land, factory productions, Buddhist publishers, Buddhist arts and crafts, regular service donations, special and funeral services, café and vegetarian food outlets, promotion of social activities, sponsorship of Dharma propagation, entry fees to special events or exhibitions, charitable services, meditation and accommodation, cooperative funds, and special support committees are all inevitable trends of modern day economic development by Buddhist society.

In summary, Buddhism recognizes wealth as a neutral commodity; it is neither good nor bad. Buddhism does not totally negate the benefit of material wealth. Money may be a serpent, but it can be turned into good use to sustain the propagation and cultivation of the Dharma. It should be regarded as the basic necessity for the development of Buddhism. Buddhist colleges, meditation and recitation halls, schools, hospitals, radio and television stations and magazine publishing all require money for their operations. Therefore money is not necessarily a serpent. According to the sutras, there are "clean wealth," "good riches" and "saintly treasures." As long as it can be put into proper use to promote the

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Dharma and benefit other beings, it is more meritorious than trying to practice under the pretence of austerity. Well used wealth is in fact more meaningful and wise. As a result it is necessary to re-evaluate the importance of economic development in Buddhism. As long as the principle of right action and right livelihood is adhered to, I can see no problem in trying to be profitable in our enterprises. I believe every devotee should not feel ashamed just because we are wealthy; so long as the money is used for our personal happiness; and for the benefit of the people, society and nation. On the other hand, poverty will often attract foulness and crime.

From now on, I hope that members of the BLIA should resolve to engage themselves in new and successful Buddhist ventures to enhance our economic standings. This will allow better opportunities to implement the ideals of Humanistic Buddhism of establishing a stately and dignified Pureland in this mundane world.

#### **4.Dedicate Our Vows in the Practice of the Buddha's Way**

Before we start any task, we must set ourselves a goal. Once a goal is set, we will be able to identify a direction in which we can apply our energy and effort. To set a goal is to “make a resolution” or in Buddhist terms “to resolve and make a vow.”

Normally, the level of personal achievement in society is determined by our childhood aspirations. In Buddhism the level of our cultivation achievable by a devotee is determined by the intensity of his vows. According to all the sutras, all the Bodhisattvas achieved enlightenment through the power of their vows. There is not one single Bodhisattva who was enlightened without first making great vows. *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* refers to the forty eight great vows made by Amitabha Buddha. Chapter 7 of *Karuṇapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* refers to the five hundred great vows of the Śākyamuni Buddha. The ten good vows practised by Maitreya Bodhisattva is transcribed in the *Maitreyapariprcchā*. *Bhagavān-bhaiṣajyaguru-vaidūryaprabhasya pūrvapraṇidhāna-viśeṣa-vistara* also records that the Medicine Buddha made the twelve great vows to eradicate sickness and sufferings of all beings. There are many other examples such as the eighteen great vows of Mañjuśri Bodhisattva, the eighteen great vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the ten great vows of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and the great vow undertaken by Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva to liberate all beings from hell before considering becoming a Buddha. The above is just a

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few illustrations of the great vows undertaken and carried out by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

Throughout history, many monastics, sages and virtuous lay persons had vowed to “Perpetuate the Dharma existence and to liberate all beings from sufferings.” Master Xuan Zang successfully completed his vow of travelling to India and returning with the sutras after vowing to “Rather die by taking a single step towards the West than returning to the East empty handed.” Master Jian Zhen delivered the Dharma to Japan as a result of his vow of “Death is of insignificance when compared against a Great Mission.” More recently Venerable Tzu Hang said “I vow resolutely to learn and follow the most supreme teachings, not for my own enlightenment to be a Bodhisattva or even a Buddha, but to allow all the being in the Dharma realm to be enlightened with complete wisdom.” They are all role models that Buddhist devotees should follow.

To resolve to a great vow is fundamental to becoming a good Buddhist. Our resolve will strengthen our confidence and determination. It can intensify our bodhi mind and elevate our faith. It will enhance our morality and integrity. Therefore we should resolve to take appropriate vows as part of our daily practice. For example, I vow to care for my parents and to be cordial with my neighbours. I vow to offer my service for the society. I vow to sacrifice myself for the good of the community. I vow to promote World peace so that all people can live in harmony. I vow to a bridge so that people can safely cross the stream. I vow to be a tree offering coolness in the summer heat. I vow to be a drop of water to nourishing the parched land. I vow to be the sun and moon shedding lights on everyone. I vow to be a breeze giving comfort to all beings. I vow to be kind and considerate so that each of us can be carefree. I vow to be a flower bringing beauty to the world. I vow to be the rivers and the mountains providing landscapes for admiration. I vow to be a cool fresh stream to quench the thirsty travellers .....

To vow is like winding up a clock or filling a car with fuel, providing the energy to move forward. To vow is like a ship’s compass or a student’s daily diary, providing a goal for our lives. To vow is the very first thing we should learn from Buddhism. *The Treatise on the Advancement of Enlightenment* states, “The first and foremost key to Buddhism is to resolve and vow. All beings can be liberated if they are resolute with their vows. Enlightenment is achievable if vows are implemented with determination.” Chapter 7 of the

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*Mahāprajñāpāramita Sāstra* says, “To practice without a vow is an aimless gesture. A vow is your guidance to enlightenment. It is similar to an apprentice who must work under the direction of a master goldsmith to be able to craft the gold into a particular design.” “To propagate Buddhism is a solemn duty which cannot be accomplished without proper resolve. It is like an ox pulling a cart, which will not reach its destiny without a driver.”

In addition, the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* teaches, “Vowing can destroy all evil hindrances.” *The Bodhi Mind Resolve Sastra* says, “Our bodhi resolve must be aroused with the greatest of determination. Once our vows are initiated, we must implement them with due care, diligence and purpose.” From the above, it is clear that the way to the Buddha’s path starts with our vows. It is true that our action or “cause” leads to “effect.” However without a direction or a “vow,” all our actions will be without direction or meaning. Therefore our resolve on vows set up and motivates all our cultivations.

To resolve and to vow is usually associated with Buddhist practices. However, to resolve and to vow is not a Buddhist monopoly. In fact everyone in the society needs to establish goals by vows and determination in order to be able to complete our tasks to the best of our abilities. A resolve or vow is a continual source of energy and asset that are found within ourselves. The *Treatise on the Advancement of Enlightenment* says, “Diamond’s hardness cannot be compared with the strength of our vows. Immensity of the universal is tiny when compared with the consciousness of our mind.” Our achievement is dependent on the vastness within our conscious mind and our strength is derived from the determination of our resolve. Therefore the way to Buddhahood will not be denied to us if we can be resolute with our vows.

Just like attending classes, the quality of our vows will improve with time. Initially we start with a vow of small significance. In time, we will learn to elevate the intensity of our vows. During my life time, I can vow to recite many sutras, to carry out good deeds for the benefit of the people, and make Buddhism known to the people. I can resolve to be a supporter of the temple, to be servants to all beings, a provider to the family and an outstanding example of the society. To be able to resolve to follow the “Buddha’s Way” and to do what the Buddha had done is true wonderful.

When we talk about the “Buddha’s Way,” I remember Mr. Cao Zhong Zhi, the founder of “Life Line.” Mrs. Cao is a devoted Buddhist. Forty years ago, she had taken the refuge

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at Pumen Retreat. She was completely captivated by my concept of Humanistic Pureland. Since then she had constantly persuaded her husband to visit the temples and listen to sermons and preachings. At the time Mr. Cao was not a Buddhist, but followed Mrs. Cao's wishes out of love for his wife.

At the end of a particular service, Mrs. Cao took her husband's hand, walked in front of me and said "Master, will you please enlighten my husband so that he will believe in Buddhism and teach him how to pray to the Buddha?"

At that instance, Mr. Cao was totally embarrassed. To ease the awkward situation, I said "It is not necessary for Mr. Cao to practice the rituals of Buddhism so long as he is conducting himself in the "Buddha's Way.""

Mr. Cao was delighted when he heard what I said. Afterwards, he would say to everyone he met that "Master Hsing Yun advised me that I do not have to perform the customary Buddhist rituals so long as I am applying myself to the "Buddha's Way."

Ever since that meeting, Mr. Cao has untiringly participated in many charitable and benevolent social works. For example, he has founded the "Life Line" in Taiwan helping the destitute and impoverished to a better life. He has established the Cao's Foundation Fund to provide education subsidies to needy students. He has also organised to supply wheel chairs to tens of thousands of handicapped persons. Each year he would donate millions of dollars to disaster appeals. In addition, he is a passionate supporter of Fo Guang Shan and BLIA providing valuable contributions to the establishment of Dharma centres and religious activities. He has also given generously to the setting up of multi-language plaques around sacred sites in India and Sri Lanka commemorating historic Buddhist events.

Many would congratulate him for his good deeds but he would invariably reply "To recite sutras is good, but it is not as good as listening to sermons. To listen to sermons is good, but it is not as beneficial as to preach. However, the best deed of all is to implement Buddha's words. I am merely conducting myself in the Buddha's Way."

To act in the "Buddha's Way" is to follow and implement the teachings of the Buddha. Every day we greet our fellow devotees as "Practitioners." That is we are the practising the Dharma. A true practitioner is one who does not just listens and learns, but to put into

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action what the Buddha had said and done in His life time.

Every sutra always starts with the words “Thus have I heard” and ending with “Faithfully believed and put into practice.” To be able to faithfully believe and put into practice the Dharma is in reality to actively apply ourselves in accordance with the ways of the Buddha. Therefore the fundamental objective of a devotee is to implement the following “Buddha’s Ways”:

- (1)To be compassionate and generous is the Buddha's Way
- (2)To be charitable and benevolent is the Buddha's Way
- (3)To serve the society is the Buddha's Way
- (4)To be moral and ethical is the Buddha's Way
- (5)To preserve personal integrity is the Buddha's Way
- (6)To observe the precepts is the Buddha's Way
- (7)To be respectful and magnanimous is the Buddha's Way
- (8)To carry out good deeds is the Buddha's Way
- (9)To be repentant and grateful is the Buddha's Way
- (10)To tolerate losses and injustice is the Buddha's Way
- (11)To be forbearing and complying is the Buddha's Way
- (12)To believe in the faith is the Buddha's Way
- (13)To progress with the time is the Buddha's Way
- (14)To be an integral part of the Dharma Realm is the Buddha's Way
- (15)To Integrate and co-exist with all beings is the Buddha's Way
- (16)To apply Buddhism to the world is the Buddha's Way

The Buddha once said “the mind, Buddha and all beings are all equals.” The Buddha is an enlightened being. All beings are future Buddhas waiting to be enlightened. The Buddha has completed His enlightenment with no further need to revisit the Samsara. Conversely all beings have yet to achieve their enlightenment and remained in the rebirth

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cycles. If we do what the Buddha did, we can be assured of being released from the sufferings and awaken to the joy of enlightenment.

To be successful in the Buddhist practice, we must be able to place equal importance on the understanding and application of the Dharma. To practice without true understanding will lead you along a path of illusions. However to practice solely on belief and understanding is also insufficient because you are biased towards the theoretical aspect of Buddhism without reaping the full benefit of this great religion. A wise practitioner is able to place equal importance on understanding and physical application of the doctrine. To understand is to have faith and to apply is to practice the “Buddha’s Way.” To understand wisely is to be able to be self-aware. To apply ourselves to the Buddha’s Way is to help others to become awakened. Since we consider ourselves as Buddhists and are resolved to cultivate ourselves, we must make sure that we live our lives according to the Dharma. By appropriate praises to others we are following Buddha’s bidding on generosity of kind speeches. To be constantly conscious of the unique relationships between self and others, we will become aware of the oneness existence of all beings. To serve untiringly helps both the public as well yourself. You are actually benefiting yourself if you are grateful and respectful to others.

Ever since the Ming and Qing dynasties, many devoted practitioners had been able to provide comprehensive knowledge and explanation on the Dharma. They were able to talk about the profound and discuss with great proficiency about spirituality. Unfortunately, not many of these learned persons managed to practically apply their theories to their lives. It is difficult to expect consistency of words and actions if you have not actually experienced what you taught. Take for instance when you are reciting the Buddha’s name, are you able to maintain complete dedication in your recitation? Similarly, when you meditate, have you reached the state of samadhi concentration? When you are praying, are you aware of the improvement of your personal attributes? During chanting, do you derive great admiration and faith in the Dharma? When faced with obstructions in the course of your various practices, do you have the necessary strength and forbearance to overcome these obstacles? Therefore it is more fitting to take a simple step rather than to boast about the distant mile. All of the above illustrates the importance of self-awareness and the “Buddha’s Way.”

### ***Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way***

In closing, I would like to emphasize again that self-awareness is a means of self development whereas enlightenment of others is the way of the Buddha. To have self-awareness and the resolve to practice the “Buddha’s Way” is proof of our co-existence with the Buddha. If a person possesses the Buddha’s Nature, what he sees is Buddha’s world, what he hear is Buddha’s sounds, what he smell is Buddha’s fragrance, what he speak is Buddha’s speeches and what he does is Buddha’s deeds. If everyone possesses these profound qualities, we will be living in a world of Buddhas. How can a family not be blessed and happy? How can a society not be safe and secured? How can a nation not be strong and prosperous?

Finally, from now on, let each of us make a solemn vow and say to ourselves that “***I am a Buddha.***”

(translated by Raymond Lee)