

# The Future of North American Buddhism: An Appeal to Expand Humanistic Buddhism Study beyond Chinese Custom and Culture

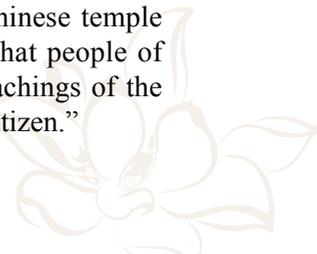


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Thank you for this opportunity to share my experiences and thoughts about Humanistic Buddhism practices in the West and to make an appeal for diligent study that will result in a further embrace of those not of Asian background who come to our temples seeking solace, acceptance and a spiritual home.

This is a humbling experience, to be among noted historians and scholars attending this, the 7<sup>th</sup> Symposium on Humanistic Buddhism. I told myself that I can either be intimidated, wonder what of value I would have to contribute, or just “go forth” and share my experiences, thoughts and conclusions. Plus, I have the audacity to request that you study the needs of the West, thereby giving direction to Fo Guang Shan local temples and their Chinese communities. Therefore, I will share my personal observations and what I think can be done to further the efforts being made. Please consider this a “front line” view as I see Westerners seeking a path, sometimes finding it, sometimes wandering away, and sometimes discouraged from remaining.

First, how I got here. I am not Asian nor am I at the beginning or even midway of life’s journey. I have been diligently, but at times ineptly, practicing “the Way—my way.” I came via my husband who was a “Man for All Seasons” who treated all people, all animals, every rock and blade of grass, as a sacred gift. We entered the doors of Guang Ming Temple in Orlando, Florida, the Christmas week of 2008. We had the honor of taking refuge and the Five Precepts under Venerable Master Hsing Yun in 2009 on the occasion of his last journey to the United States. Before his death, my husband Fletcher taught at the temple, embraced, with words and open arms, all who wanted to learn about Buddhism, to seek self-understanding, and/or seek refuge from current and historical pain. He was a former Christian minister, thereby familiar with the innermost heartaches and demons of fellow beings.

He, too, was a “white guy,” never had the opportunity to travel beyond the western hemisphere because of health constraints, but

he adopted the Buddhist philosophy and his temple brothers and sisters. And they adopted him. The temple community respected, loved, learned from him, and supported him through his end-of-this-life's journey.

I would like to think this a common experience, pervasive throughout Buddhism, throughout North America, throughout Fo Guang Shan (FGS). But many challenges lie ahead if we are to practice Humanistic Buddhism for all humans, to counter our ethnocentricities, our traditions, our culture, our narrow view of propriety and purpose, and to instead, open our arms to the many hearts and minds wanting very much to enter the arms of the Buddha.

What gets in our way? Why have we been, as one prominent FGS monastic told me, “talking about Localization for 30 years but making little progress?”

If Humanistic Buddhism is for all humans, we need to do better... in our understanding, in our outreach, in our acculturation. I speak to you, the assembled scholars and researchers, social scientists, lay and monastic alike. I implore you to widen your study with the goal of greater propagation of Buddhism and Venerable Master Hsing Yun's vision of a compassionate universe.

### **Four Core Points of Localization**

The Venerable Master gave us a clear outline to meet the needs of people regardless of their country or culture: the Four Core Points of Localization. Every time I teach aspiring as well as experienced Dharma teachers, both monastic and lay, I show a slide that lists these four points.

1. Localization of Language: learning the local language, translating books
2. Localization of Custom and Culture: Respect the local customs and culture, do as the natives do
3. Localization of Habits and Way of Life: Follow the local way of life, getting along with local people

#### 4. Localization of Education: Respecting local education, realizing oneness and coexistence

It is all we need to guide our actions. But we need the reminder, lest we forget to meet needs of those in the prevailing local culture.

And, as challenges go, we often agree with these Localization tenets, then walk away, reverting to what is comfortable, convenient and conventional.

I am reminded that the FGS mission is to “bring convenience,” but not to necessarily experience it ourselves. Out of our biases and busy-ness, we put his vision aside. Sometimes we do not see clearly, we become so absorbed in our beliefs, thoughts, and ever-expanding “to do” list, that we clutter our time and mind with activities that do not allow us to follow his admonishments to “bring the Dharma waters forth,” to bring them to the Westerners who are seeking a way, the Way.

In my past ten years worshiping, learning, teaching, counseling, and wandering around the Fo Guang Shan community, I have seen great strides toward attempting to create a multicultural and racially diverse Dharma family. I have also seen the struggles that occur when we try to understand one another, accept one another, and figure out this “oneness thing.” Monastic, Chinese lay, Western lay, acculturated Chinese, come to me often, lamenting how difficult it is to move forward. And, sadly, some of our communities are complacent. Or they try really hard, are confronted with failures and setbacks, so retreat again to the familiar, their/our “convenience.” They revert to the established Chinese way. And the Westerners, discouraged and disheartened, walk away.

The North American people who became interested in Buddhism until recently were primarily white, professional and with middle to upper incomes. Some had drifted away from their family religions of Christianity and Judaism. Or they were looking for a more rational approach to thinking about their mind and their

purpose. Buddhism appeared to be a perfect fit.

However, the primary focus of practice was stress relief and mindfulness. They seldom approached Buddhism as a “religion” per se. It was more self-focused...what we might refer to as “ego.”

For some, a bad experience in a religious community causes people to go searching. This is why many people left their religion and came to Buddhism. And why, sometimes people, Chinese as well as Western, leave our temples to go to another temple or faith.

And now, with social unrest on an upswing, younger people... not just those writing the requisite paper for a Comparative Religion course, are entering our doors.

### **Three Foci for Bringing Buddhism to the Westerners**

I believe that Fo Guang Shan’s mission of bringing “confidence, hope, joy, and ease” to people through Humanistic Buddhism practices can be beneficial to America, and especially to American Buddhists whose effort has been mostly on mindfulness development. How can this be accomplished?

I see three main foci for bringing Humanistic Buddhism to the Westerners:

1. Focus beyond self: Humanistic Buddhism teaches us to look outward to serving people beyond self and family, to see all sentient beings, and the earth upon which we depend, as our responsibility.

2. Focus beyond mindfulness: Humanistic Buddhism teaches the Western community interested in meditation and mindfulness that this is just the beginning.

- without study, one will not understand the Buddha’s teachings (right view)
- without practice, one will not purify the mind (right meditative contemplation)
- without ethical behaviors, one will not be compassionate to all (right morality)

### 3. Focus on being part of a global community:

In his article “Transcending,” Venerable Master tells us we must transcend, among other things, our cultural and national identities and prejudices, even our historical ways of doing things. The teaching of compassion and loving-kindness would be a positive influence on these new Western Buddhists, especially in the current political and societal upheaval in our country, in other countries.

### **Actualizing the Four Core Points of Localization in North American Temples**

If Fo Guang Shan is to help the West embrace Humanistic Buddhism we must return to the Four Core Points of Localization and make them a reality. I will tell you what I am seeing—and where there is room for growth if we are to realize a bright future for westerners who are seeking a spiritual home.

There is also room for scholarly inquiry to understand why the task is difficult (assessment of what is) and, more importantly, how the task can be accomplished (what can be).

True, much has been written about the difficulty of localizing Chinese Buddhism, from short “op-eds” to Master’s theses to scholarly reviews. The findings and appeals are the same. They report that culture gets in the way of unity. So why, we might ask, travel this road again?

I believe that as each decade passes our societies change. As each generation begets a younger, and now more assimilated cohort of Chinese Americans, it is worth our while to look again at ourselves and how we can become closer to realizing the Venerable Master’s vision to embrace Humanistic Buddhism in the context of local culture. I fear if we do not continue to revisit, look anew at old difficulties, examine current practices, we will inadvertently become irrelevant to the younger Chinese population and not become relevant to temple newcomers.

Change is difficult for everyone. Often when we espouse

change we back away when we have to change. “Let the other guy change.” If we accept a basic tenet of Buddhism that everything changes, and if we take to heart the Venerable Master’s vision of ever-evolving ways to propagate Buddhism, we will welcome the challenge, we will meet the challenge, enduring the pain that is indeed part of progress.

The following review of Venerable Master’s Four Core Points of Localization and my proposed Localization Opportunities were presented at a Dharma Teachers’ Symposium last April (2019.) Venerable Miao Guang asked that I share them with you to acquaint you with how I see the challenges and opportunities of establishing Humanistic Buddhism in the West for Westerners.

Therefore, I will review each of the Four Core Points, share what I have observed and offer suggestions for addressing them. Later I will pose questions for field research that can help us go forward.

### **I. Localization of Language:**

It is difficult to build relationships and meet people’s needs when there are language barriers. It is also an impediment for the Chinese members who rely on their new country for social and governmental support and economic livelihood. How do we help them navigate the society and access services if we cannot advocate for them?

Please join me on a journey of looking at the possibilities before us. This is the first of **Eight Localization Opportunities** I propose that can meet human needs of an expanded temple universe.

#### **Opportunity #1: Teach Local Languages to Monastics and Lay Members**

In a Localization meeting of monastics at FGS in 2018, language was discussed. It was agreed that monastics must learn the local

language. The yet unanswered questions are “where,” “when” and “how.”

Language proficiency must be a priority, seen as an integral part of spiritual practice. “Teaching Local Language to Monastic and Lay Members” is therefore a responsibility.

It can be done! We have done this at Guang Ming Temple. Venerable Chueh Yen and Venerable Chueh Miaw and I set aside 1½ hours every Wednesday for class. We used a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Workbook. It is advanced enough to not be boring. It creates discussions about culture at the same time that we are learning the difference between an adjective and adverb, and how to write a compound sentence. We also go on “field trips” to local museums, bird sanctuaries, restaurants and markets—all as a way to practice language and learn culture.

It works! Venerable Chueh Miaw tells me she is more comfortable in the English Meditation Class and Venerable Chueh Yen now gives Dharma Instrument Classes in English. (I wish I could strike the guiding bell as well as she can explain, in English how to do it!) Both Chinese and non-Chinese members have noticed the change and have complimented the venerables on their progress. And they have become role models for the temple community.

Every temple has someone who speaks English. With dedication and the encouragement of temple leadership, English can be conquered. Venerable Chueh Fan’s support was instrumental in making this happen, reminding them, encouraging them, complimenting them.

Many North American monastics are fluent in English. Others are trying to use more English. Still, some temples remain comfortable in speaking Chinese only. But, even if only a handful of westerners, or Chinese whose primary language is English, attend, we must create a welcoming multi-lingual family.

Language fluency also helps the Chinese members with their being “at home” in their nation of residence. When I visit an Asian

country, it is so hard to feel confident when the complex characters are on the billboard, or on the ticketing machine at the car parking lot. How confusing then for Asian people to see a string of foreign letters. This leads to isolation and despair, and after they left their homeland, coming to a new country with hope for belonging!

As much as the Chinese community attempts to hold on, remain separate from the larger culture, it will be detrimental. Younger Chinese people who are working in English-speaking companies, going to English-speaking schools, whose social group is English-speaking, tell me that they feel less and less comfortable in Chinese-only temples. They want to identify with their Chinese culture, but not by shedding their American identity. It is difficult when their primary language (English) is discouraged. They are inter-relating, inter-dating, inter-marrying. And we will lose them if we cling too strongly to heritage at the expense of forward progress.

### **Opportunity #2: Institute an English (or “Chinglish”) Chanting Service**

Another Localization of Language opportunity is to “Institute an English, (or ‘Chinglish’—a combination of English and Chinese) Chanting Service.” Some temples are attempting this. This takes practice, trial-and-error, regroup and rewrite. What works in the beginning might not work later. That does not mean there is not a “need” for ritual. It simply means it is time to try a new way, that the current way is not meeting the need of many new members.

What I have observed is that the English services are a product of monastic planning. Perhaps a more successful way to do this is for the Monastic and English speakers to have a conversation, plan and co-create, thereby allowing a blend of cultures and familiar practice methods. Visits to western churches, synagogues, and yes, even some “Americanized” Buddhist congregations, can

be enlightening and give ideas to the planners. Standardization can be a goal, but not at the expense of addressing the interests of local people. We must make certain we know whose “needs” we are meeting. North American communities are as varied as our geography. Many approaches are necessary. “One size does NOT fit all!”

Something about Americans—we are not terribly hierarchical, we like to work alongside the monastics, as truly equal wings of the Dharma bird. And a joint project is more likely to have a positive response because communication is open and straightforward.

An example of joint planning recently occurred at Xiang Yun Temple in Austin. We were studying the *Great Realizations: A Commentary on the Eight Realizations of a Bodhisattva Sutra* and posited that it would make sense to chant it on Sunday. It worked! The words and message are clear. There is not the confusion of the usually chanted *Heart Sutra*’s message for newcomers (“... in emptiness there is no form, feeling, ...no eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body or mind...”) Instead, we chanted the *Sutra of the Eight Realizations of Great Beings*: “the world is impermanent,” “desire brings suffering,” “poverty creates hatred and anger,” etc. The clarity of the message rang true to participants. Venerable Jue Ji is thinking that she will now use this sutra in the English chanting service. The understandable message can convey Buddhist belief in a more comprehensible form.

Should not learning a nation’s official language be a priority with sufficient time allotted to achieve basic proficiency?

## II. Localization of Custom and Culture

The second of the Four Core Points of Localization is “Localization of Custom and Culture.” Our temples do an excellent job celebrating the usual Chinese holidays and perform Dharma functions and special ceremonies beautifully. This is good and

should continue. However, temples should welcome local culture.

Holidays, such as Veteran's Day, when we honor all of our soldiers, past and currently serving, should be mentioned. Ethnic Chinese Americans also serve in our military. Independence Day, President's Day, deserve special mention. And what is Spring without an Easter basket or Valentine's Day without red hearts and chocolate? Thanksgiving Day, the fourth Thursday of November, is the most special holiday of the year for US Americans—even greater than Christmas, because it is a day for families to gather and is inclusive of all religions and ethnicities. I liken it to Chinese New Year and Moon Festival where families and friends travel long distances to celebrate.

One might think that these quintessentially American festivities are not “Buddhist enough,” that such celebrations do not belong at a temple. But they are part of our culture, of our lives. All races and religions celebrate them in America. Why not the FGS Buddhists?

It is important to put national and regional holidays on the temple calendar. Various studies tell us that many Chinese who have lived in the US for decades, do not know the significance of historical, local and national events and therefore have not yet embraced their current home. I find this to be true. And Venerable Master has also commented on this problem, admonishing the Chinese community to adopt the customs of their new country. I don't know why there is such a reluctance. I wonder if the foreignness of our language structure is much to blame, perhaps an even greater obstacle than ethnicity.

Some temples do embrace the local customs. Case in point: Fo Guang Shan St. Louis Buddhist Center, under the directorship of Venerable Jue Huang, has participated in the Independence Day (what we often refer to a “4<sup>th</sup> of July”) parades. They have even won First Prize for their parade float! When I visited the temple, I had the occasion to talk to a non-Chinese neighbor. He says,

“I look out for ‘my nuns.’” By being part of the community, the temple enjoys the caring of an elderly man and his big old dog who stroll through the property on their daily walks.

### **Opportunity #3: Create Western Cultural Celebrations**

I encourage temples to create at least two western cultural events a year. This gives the westerners an opportunity to display their culture and gives the multiple ethnicities in the temple an opportunity to work together. The Chinese members learn new celebrations, habits, foods, games. For this to succeed, the Chinese community must be encouraged to participate, not sit on the sidelines. When this separateness occurs, the westerners see it. And it hurts.

Eventually if western cultural events are included, the westerners will feel more comfortable in bringing their traditions into the temple, and the temple will grow in diversity.

### **III. Localization of Habits and Way of Life**

Now we come to Localization Point #3: “Localization of Habits and Way of Life.”

Temple communities will find that the local people are less formal and more demonstrative, Asian as well as Western—and the Latin American even more so. It is important to see that the familiarity is not bad manners, it is who we are. We smile and laugh easily. We hug, we kiss. We make fun of ourselves and others. Our sense of humor is very different. Our bantering demonstrates loving-kindness and friendship, and our understanding of the ironic. Sometimes we are a bit too loud for my taste, but... it is a cultural trait.

Another area of disagreement is clothing. Especially in the warm parts of the country, we wear sleeveless blouses, sandals, things that are cool. Temples, to be accepting of the locals, will have to be more tolerant of these cultural differences. Temples can

have a dress code, but make certain it is explained kindly. Perhaps a shawl or sarong can be loaned for entering the Shrine as I saw done at a Hindu Shrine when visiting Canada recently.

I think of the Buddha and his disciples walking along dusty roads, barefooted. Were they not good people? Weren't they following the culture of the times? Some FGS temples require closed-toe shoes, or socks with no shoes. When I go to Thai temples, I am instructed to not wear foot coverings. It is culture. I encourage temples to look at unnecessary barriers that get in the way of creating an accepting and welcoming environment.

#### **Opportunity #4: Explain Chinese Buddhist Etiquette Respectfully**

Westerners constantly share experiences of being sternly chastised, told they are doing something wrong. It is embarrassing. And it is about culture and custom. Therefore, I encourage adoption of Localization Opportunity #4: Explain Chinese Buddhist Etiquette Respectfully.

If not met at the door of the Main Shrine and escorted, Westerners will usually go up the center aisle. To them, that is being respectful. In a church, one goes up the middle to bow, genuflect and then take their seat. The “disrespectful” who come late, try to sneak in along the side, hopefully not noticed for their tardiness.

Use of language, can convey negativity. If one says it is “disrespectful” to go up the center aisle, the message to the receiver is that they are disrespectful. They came out of respect. They came to learn, to pray, to pay respect ... in their way, in the way their culture taught them. *“It is our Chinese Buddhist custom to ...”* demonstrates respect to both cultures.

Isn't it better to do the wrong thing for the right reason than simply do the right thing only because you don't want someone to find fault? Isn't that the wrong reason for doing something?

Always focus on a person's *intention*.

Many Westerners who belong to less formal congregations relate to clergy—pastors, ministers, rabbis, priests, nuns, in a more informal way. It is not disrespect. It is just our way. Sometimes we will forget to say “Venerable” or “Shifu.” I have clergy colleagues that I call by their first name. And we shake hands, sometimes hug, sometimes kiss. It often depends upon the church, the congregation, or the closeness of the working relationship. We feel close, that we are serving together, that we are equal partners. So, when we forget the honorarium, the proper title, it doesn't mean we don't honor the temple's religious leaders. This, again, has much to do with language. English speakers have difficulty with remembering and pronouncing Chinese names. It is the same for Chinese when they are confronted with English names. A little laughter, a little help and practice is always a good ice breaker as we blend our culture and our languages.

This goes for lay “officials” too. Bee, a Dharma sister at Guang Ming, a lovely woman from Malaysia, asked me what she should call me “because you are a Lay Dharma Lecturer and I want to treat you with respect.” I smiled, and said, “Call me ‘Ina’!” We laughed and hugged. Another cultural difference—we usually use first names and no titles... medical doctors, judges and our PhD-holding college professors, being the universal exception.

We also will disagree, share thoughts and opinions, perhaps with greater energy and with those of higher position than one of Asian culture might expect. Again, it is our way of reaching consensus. We see disagreement, if managed properly and without rancor or ill feelings, as part of the problem-solving process. We are taught from a young age to dialogue, not shy away, continue to work until a resolution, even if it is to “agree to disagree,” is met.

And the Westerners are learning too, trying to adapt to a new culture within Fo Guang Shan, trying to “fit in.” But we don't do a very good job of always asking for permission or direction. Our

culture is based on what the East might call “ego.” We are more prone to see it as “individuality” or “taking responsibility.”

All cultural ways are good ways... when the time and situation fit the method. Again, it is “intention” and acceptance of one another.

Westerners who come to our temples are curious. They ask a lot of questions. They try to do things correctly. But they, too, are viewing everything through their cultural eyes. Culture is only a surface difference. Inside, we are the same—we all have a Buddha nature screaming to come out, to experience joy for ourselves and compassion for others.

#### **IV. Localization of Education**

Now to the last point—education. Venerable Master Hsing Yun values education and believes that we learn in many ways. This provides a fifth Opportunity for Localization: “Teach in an interactive, less formal, less traditional way.”

In North America, we are taught to ask, ask, ask. We learn by interacting with the teacher and fellow students. All students—the very young, teens, adults, want to participate in learning. They want to know how the knowledge can help them. They like interaction and projects. In fact, when the Guang Ming Temple Young Adults were planning their winter retreat and we asked what they would like in the Dharma classes, their first and adamant response was, “Don’t lecture! We want activities and involvement!”

Americans also know that the teacher does not have all the answers and can sometimes be wrong. Therefore, we believe we can disagree. We can respectfully debate an idea or a conclusion. This is how we learn, how we develop critical thinking, often called “thinking out of the box.” This, we believe, is how we come to a better decision, a deeper understanding.

Our respect for the Buddha and our monastic leaders will at

times be demonstrated by looking at even the most sacred teaching with doubting eyes. And isn't this what the Buddha told us? "Don't believe things just because I say them? Learn for yourself in your own mind?" This is not slandering the teachings. This is making them ours.

When I read *The Guiding Orchids—Masters of Reform and Innovation in the History of Buddhism* written by FGS Venerable Tzu Jung, I saw that great strides in Buddhist propagation occurred when eminent Buddhist leaders challenged old interpretations, old ideas.

#### **Opportunity #5: Teach Interactively in a Less Formal, Less Traditional Way**

Classes at temples must be taught differently if they are to benefit local people. Westerners come to the temple for a different reason. They are not "returning home" with familiar sights, sounds, smells and tastes. They are seekers, wanting to see how Buddhist teachings can benefit their lives. The teacher should not only discuss the Sutra, for example. Link it to the Venerable Master's teaching, link it to contemporary experiences. Therefore, I suggest Localization Opportunity #6: "When teaching, make connections to daily life decisions, choices and moral responsibilities."

#### **Opportunity #6: Make Connections to Daily Life Choices and Moral Responsibilities**

Westerners and the Asians whose education has been in the West, ask: How can Buddhism help me understand me? My relationships? My emotions? My pain? My wish for peace? How do I handle the "tough stuff" of life? Dharma teachers, monastic and lay, can help the students look beyond their current circumstances into their moral character, by widening the teaching methods and encouraging robust discourse.

### **Opportunity # 7: SMILE! And All That Conveys a Warm Welcome**

“*Smile!*” The Venerable Master wrote a Merit Times article on *smiling* that is published in the *Between Ignorance and Enlightenment* series. He reminds us to be aware of our facial expressions. Unfriendly or accusatory looks and harsh directives are off-putting. It makes the new person, entering a “foreign world” feel uneasy and unwanted, and, well, “foreign.”

Therefore, we should encourage a warm welcome, a willingness to help. We never know why the person came through the temple doors. It might be curiosity or a recent painful experience for which they are seeking help. They might be looking for spiritual guidance. But if the lay and monastic do not treat everyone with loving-kindness, we might cause more hurt to an already fragile emotional situation. Plus, we should remember: the guest of today just might become the Dharma sibling of tomorrow!

### **Opportunity # 8: Ask Westerners, Don’t Assume!**

Finally, the last Localization Opportunity #8: We must “Ask the Westerners why they come and if we are meeting their needs.” Sometimes temple members focus too much on ourselves, on the temple, on wanting to “tell” instead of “listen.” We do not realize that we are seeing through our personal and cultural experiences. We think we are doing the right thing. If a temple wants to meet needs, genuine interest in the new person is necessary. Again, “ask, don’t tell.”

### **Summary**

Only by blending into the local culture, only by respecting local people as they enter the temple culture, only by leaving the comfort of a familiar language and culture, can we truly know what people need and provide it for them.

We cannot realize our Buddha-nature by staying tied to a

narrow sense of self. We have to reach out. We have to forget about our comfort and instead, go toward those who need comfort. We can do this! The future of Humanistic Buddhism can have a bright future in the Americas.

***If:***

1. We have faith in the rightness of the Buddha's teachings.
2. We follow the Venerable Master's direction.
3. We think of the world as a global village, considering ourselves as one with every person. The Venerable Master calls himself a "global citizen." Should not we follow his lead, identify ourselves in the same manner?
4. Wherever we are, blend with local people and their customs. We can respect our culture and heritage. But what is familiar and comfortable should not limit us.

### **Request for Scholarly Inquiry**

Therefore, I close with an appeal to scholars and researchers who can be instrumental in widening the influence of Humanistic Buddhism in North America to:

1. Expand your scholarly inquiry to the West.
2. Write comparative analyses of Chinese and Western cultures, encouraging the "majority" culture, in this instance the Chinese temple community, to be open to cultural differences and modify practices in order to be more inviting and responsive to local communities.
3. Encourage Fo Guang Shan to expand the practice of Humanistic Buddhism so that the beauty of the Buddha's compassion can reach the minds and hearts of Westerners seeking a spiritual home.
4. Help Fo Guang Shan actualize the Venerable Master's Four Core Points of Localization. Penned by him in 1998, they are yet to be fully realized.

Monastic, Chinese and Western laity, with the help of scholarly

study of our localization practices, can assure a bright future for Fo Guang Shan in the West. Humanistic Buddhism is for all. Therefore, we have an obligation to all. In “Attachment to One’s Views,” Venerable Master reminds us that change is inevitable and to be welcomed:

“The essence of Buddhism lies in its acceptance of the constant changes in the world. If we can view change as a natural and desirable part of life, we will do better in this world. As long as we follow the Truth and are not attached to our views, we will gain wisdom and make constant progress.”

Actualizing the original intent of the Buddha, bringing his message of compassion, loving-kindness, joy, and equanimity to the West, can be accomplished. It requires a concerted effort by all. We must jointly participate in the arduous task of embracing all cultural heritages, reaching out beyond the familiar. It all depends upon our actions, actions based upon faith in Humanistic Buddhism.

The Venerable Master says it best: “Faith in Humanistic Buddhism shall lead to the purification of body and mind. With an open mind, you shall transcend all differences between self and others.” As researchers and scholars, you can help us further the Venerable Master’s vision of “bringing the Dharma waters to the West” ... And not just a drop, not just a trickle, but a robust, flowing stream.



Misunderstanding leads to trouble.  
Misbehavior leads to resentment.  
Dishonesty leads to disapproval.  
Confusion leads to disputes.

—*Humble Table, Wise Fare*