

Bodhi Stand

compiled by Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih



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*The mind made straight, why toil following rules?
The practice sure, of what use is dhyana meditation?
Filial deeds support the father and mother.*

Thus begins the Sixth Patriarch's compassionate verse of exhortation to laypeople. Kuo Sun started out right, steeped in the hard-working spiritual environment which his parents provided him, but later on, he forgot their kindness.

"I drifted away from the church. I did many upside down things in the name of 'searching for ultimate truth.' I told people I believed in the 'Brotherhood of all humankind,' but actually just sought personal gain. My relations with my parents were often stormy during this time. We communicated best by letter, though I often failed to heed their good advice."

*Deference: the honored and the lowly in accord with each other.
Patience: no rumors of the evils of the crowd.*

Finally, Kuo Sun got tired of "doing nothing," and decided to "re-enter the world." He began to work in a classroom for physically handicapped children and was inspired to return to college, where he graduated and received his teaching credential. More suffering ensued as he experienced an unsuccessful marriage, but gradually his life began to grow simpler as he "returned to the land," seeking truth through self-sufficiency. Another difficult lesson was learned as the "family" didn't work out on the land.

*If drilling wood can spin smoke into fire,
A red-petalled lotus can surely spring from mud.
Good medicine is bitter to the taste.
Words hard against the ear, must be good advice.
Correcting failings gives birth to wisdom.
Guarded errors expose a petty mind.*

Kuo Sun and his wife and first child moved out of that situation and lived a year in Eastern Washington before Kuo Sun first came to hear of the City of 10,000 Buddhas. It was at a Sunday meditation group that he learned there was a place where the teachings of the Venerable Master were heard daily as he expounded on the Mahayana Sutras and explained the Dharma. Kuo Sun was excited to find out about a community where people practiced a vigorous spiritual life. He began studying the publications of the Buddhist Text Translation Society and longed for a chance to go to the City.

"Then in the summer of 1980 my wife and I came down to Ukiah to visit a friend and tour the City. I was also able to attend a lecture by the Venerable Abbot during that initial visit. We talked to Kuo Ts'an, principal of Instilling Virtue School, for a long time and then returned to our home in Washington.

I came down for the Earth Store Bodhisattva Session a month later. It struck a special chord within me. I returned home with a copy of the *Sixth Patriarch's Sutra* and the AWAKENING tape. We talked of moving, but the conditions were not right yet.

I headed south again in December for the Amitabha Buddha Session. During that session I took refuge and then rejoined my family for the New Year Holiday with an excited contentment about what I had been experiencing. The Buddha's and the Abbot's teachings were penetrating my fears, defenses, and confusion. We discussed moving again, but decided it best to wait until summer. In the meantime I read the *Sixth Patriarch's Sutra*, listened to AWAKENING, and talked of the City of 10,000 Buddhas.

Suddenly in the middle of January all the obstacles fell away and we knew it was time to move. We decided on a Friday night and on the following Wednesday were on our way to Ukiah. We enrolled the children at Instilling Virtue School and several weeks later were extremely fortunate to be able to move on the grounds and live right in the City! A dream come true!

*Persist daily in just, benevolent deeds.
Charity is not the means to attain the Way.
Search out Bodhi only in the mind.*

*Why toil outside in search of the profound?
Just as you hear these words, so practice:
Heaven then appears, right before your eyes.*

Dividing his time between the Buddhist Council for Refugee Rescue and Resettlement and Instilling Virtue School, Kuo Sun makes good use of his grounding in education to help teach young people and those thrown into a new environment how to live better lives in accord with Dharma. He comments:

"Attending the lectures of the Venerable Abbot, studying the Sutras, sitting in meditation, bowing to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and holding their names provide a continuing support to keep us on the right path. I realize now that my confusion arose when I ceased to be filial to my parents and broke the five precepts, these five rules are the most important guide to follow. The mind can become clear by being diligent in study, vigorous in practice, and steadfast to the rules. My previous "pursuit of truth" was mostly just lazy false thinking. Working to become a human being is extremely hard! It would be impossible to do without true principles to follow, such as those laid down in the Sutras, and without the compassion and guidance of a Good Knowing Advisor."