

# *News From The Dharma Realm*

## *Proposal 5*

*That the role of the laity in Buddhism be reformed.*

Submitted by: Upasaka Kuo Chou Rounds, A.B. Harvard University; Dean of Students, DRBU;

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Discussion: In this Dharma Ending Age, it is not only the Sangha that must make a wholesome revolution in Buddhism so that the banner of the Proper Dharma can be raised again in the world, the laity, too, in its supporting role, must join wholeheartedly in this revolution to rescue Buddhism from decline and the world from destruction.

For a large and vigorous laity to once again assume its proper role in Buddhism would itself be a major step towards reform. What is the proper role of the laity, upasakas and upasikas? Briefly, it is to support and protect members of the Sangha in their work of cultivating the Way; to assist the Sangha in their work of propagating the Dharma, especially in their work of translating, publishing, and disseminating the Sutras and Shastras; to assist in the creation and continuation of Way-places, Buddhist educational institutions, and programs of social benefit; to hold the five precepts of non-violence, honesty, chastity, truthfulness, and temperance in their personal lives, including abstinence from meat and tobacco; to receive and hold the 10 major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts; and to set a firm example of giving, morality, patience, vigor, concentration, wisdom, and filiality when living at home and working in society.

The proper role of the laity is straightforward enough; but it has been deeply abused. On their own initiative, separately from the Sangha, lay people have established putative Way-places and have set themselves up as masters of the Dharma, sitting in the high seat and taking disciples, and broadcasting false and deviant doctrines in the name of Buddhism. Or they have established vacation houses masquerading as country monasteries, sometimes installing members of the Sangha in them only to treat them as servants. Or they have translated Sutras and Shastras on their own, putting on a false front of scholarly or professional authority while adding to the changeless Sutras their own opinions in the spurious name of clarity, or omitting entire sections of a Sutra text on the fatuous grounds that these sections would be unacceptable to Western readers, who would find them to be superstitious. With these mangled translations, uncertified by any virtuous member of the Sangha, these false lay scholars, who in many cases have never once bowed to the Buddha and who even scorn the very religion they are using to seek fame and profit, have abused and fooled their students and the general reading public, who in opening their books are seeking the true wisdom of the Thus Come Ones.

These abuses are all attempts by lay people, who are sometimes not even real Buddhists, to usurp the role of the Sangha and to degrade and destroy the Dharma. They are in open violation of the teachings of the Tripitaka and are expressly forbidden in the Bodhisattva precepts, specifically the 47th precept. Before these abuses take even deeper hold, especially in the West, where an ignorant public does not know the difference between the deviant and the proper, it is proposed that the Council of assembled virtuous members of the Sangha establish the following expedients:

1) that training programs for the laity be established at Buddhist centers and educational institutions to provide an organized curriculum in Buddhist practice, Sutra study, and the precepts;

2) that the World Buddhist Sangha Council promulgate guidelines for involvement of the laity in Buddhist affairs; that it monitor the public activities of the laity, particularly the establishment of spurious Way-places and the unauthorized taking of disciples; and that it use its influence to prevent these abuses and to eradicate them when they do occur;

3) that a World Buddhist translation certification board be established (see Proposal 6) to review and certify all new translations of the Tripitaka to insure their accuracy, completeness, and accordance with the Buddha's true meaning; to speak out against translations which are not so certified, and do not meet these criteria; and to publish and keep current a list of translations which have already appeared, specifying by name which are acceptable and which are not.

## *Proposal 6*

*That an INTERNATIONAL REVIEW COMMISSION of Buddhist related writings be established.*

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Shramanerika Heng Duan, Graduate Student, DRBU  
Bhikshuni Heng Ho, Student, DRBU  
Shramanerika Heng Liang, Student, DRBU  
Upasaka Kuo Chou Rounds, A.B. Harvard; Dean of Students, DRBU

Discussion: At this time, much literature steeped in deviant knowledge and deviant views is being sold under the name of Buddhism. Many people not familiar with Buddhist history and doctrine are being misled into believing that such writings are in accord with the teachings of the Buddha and mistakenly believe that these writings point the way to Proper Enlightenment. This is an alarming situation, and countless unsuspecting people are being led into the hells. Therefore it is proposed that an International Review Commission be established whose members are fully ordained members of the Sangha

who possess thorough and profound understanding of Buddhist doctrine to 1) review all Buddhist literature and affix their seal of certification to those works that pass their examination; 2) publish a periodical of critiques on Buddhist literature and Buddhist related literature, and 3) make recommendations with respect to the media.

-Sr. Heng Liang.

Discussion: The development of children's thoughts is very important. Programs broadcast by television networks have a very bad effect on them. Therefore we should start with this generation to create a TV media fit for children to watch; short dramas, talk shows, and so forth using simple and clear words to express the principle of cause and effect and other true principles of Buddhism. The media must be reformed if people are to have proper thought.

-Bhikshuni Heng Ho

Discussion: All Buddhist journals should publish articles which are able to awaken people and cause them to move towards the good. These articles should show respect for the Triple Jewel. People serving as editors for Buddhist media should be replete with the Dharma Selecting Eye, and should not publish articles which slander the Sangha.

-Shramaneriika Heng Duan

Discussion: Now that we are on the brink of the Dharma Ending Age, sexual desire and deviant speech are overflowing throughout the world. In some Buddhist magazines we can occasionally discover improper thought. Since Buddhist publications, newspapers, journals, and magazines are the main media for propagating the thoughts of Buddhism today, if they contain within them even the smallest bit of deviant knowledge and perverted views, then the result will cause people to become prejudiced and to look down on, or at least misunderstand, Buddhism.

For example, a paragraph from THE SOUND OF THE SEA TIDE magazine, Series 62, July, page 27, says:

"...I wanted to leave the home-life, so I shaved my head, but the guest prefect, Dharma Master Shu Sheng, exhorted me and said, 'Layman, you don't want to leave the home-life. It's better to be half a monk in the temple, for then you neither have to hear nor ask for any thing, and you can let yourself be free and at ease. It's really wonderful! Otherwise, after you leave home and take some partial responsibilities, you have to do that which you don't want to do. You have to ask, even if you don't want to ask. Like me, being guest prefect, sending out and receiving guests just like prostitute. Not to mention applying effort in cultivation, it is impossible for me to get even a half-day of leisure time. So I exhort you, Layman, it is better not to leave the home-life.'"

Let us think about it. How can we allow this kind of article to be published in a Buddhist magazine? Therefore I suggest that all media editors should have the Dharma Selecting Eye, and exercise proper knowledge and views when choosing articles for publication.

Published material within Buddhism should be proper, otherwise articles such as the one above will destroy the Sangha Jewel and blind the eyes of gods and people. It is statements like this that cause people to have disrespectful thoughts about the Sangha, and to bring forth deviant knowledge and deviant views with respect to the Buddhadharma. The purpose of publishing Buddhist magazines is not to make money and become famous, nor should the Buddhist media be used to attack other religions, or as a tool to propagate the deviant knowledge and views of outside paths.

Buddhist publications should be used to disseminate the Buddha's Mind Seal Dharma, the Tripitaka, and the Twelve Divisions of the Canon. Finding a way to stop articles which contain deviant knowledge and views from circulating throughout the world is the responsibility of us who are disciples of the Buddha. We should shoulder this responsibility together, and not just look on without raising a finger.

-Shramanerika Heng Tsai

Further Discussion and Proposal Summary: It is proposed that an INTERNATIONAL REVIEW COMMISSION be established to review and certify all new translations and writings of a Buddhist origin to insure that they are accurate, complete, and in accord with the Buddha's true meaning; to speak out against translations and writings which are not so certified; and to publish and keep current a list of translations and publications which have already appeared, specifying by name which are acceptable and which are not.

-Upasaka Kuo Chou Rounds.