

Bodhi Mirror

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Shramanera Heng Jau

In the *Sutra in Forty-two Sections* the Buddha said:

"It is difficult for one to leave the evil paths and become a human being. Once one does become a human being, it is still difficult to become a man rather than a woman. Once one does become a man, it is still difficult to have the six sense organs complete and perfect. If the six sense organs are complete and perfect, it is still difficult for one to be born in a central country. If one is born in a central country, it is still difficult to be born at the time of a Buddha. If one is born at the time of a Buddha, it is still difficult to encounter the Way. If one does encounter the Way, it is still difficult to have sufficient faith. If one does have sufficient faith, it is still difficult to resolve one's mind on Bodhi. If one does resolve one's mind on Bodhi, it is still difficult to be without cultivation and without attainment."

Having already surmounted more than half of these difficulties, Shramanera Heng Jau finds himself in a time and place which few in the world today have the fortune of ever encountering. As a novice-in-training at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, he is daily steeped in the timelessness of a monastic lifestyle which has survived through ages of glory and purge alike. He is saturated with the Dharma and drawing close to the Buddha. The opportunity he is afforded is rare beyond description.

The Buddhadharma may "hang by a thread", as predicted by Great Master Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, but that single strand is not yet broken. That solitary vein wherein flows the Patriarchs' wisdom-life is not about to be cut off just yet. As the Venerable Abbot told the four-fold assembly recently, "This age does not just mark the demise of Buddhism.

Every religion is in a state of decline. Take Catholicism, for instance. It used to be strong because there was insistence upon adherence to the rules. But then in 1965 the Sisters began to let their hair grow and donned the garb of the laity. From then on, Catholicism went downhill. But although that's the way it is in the world today, and even though the Buddha predicted Buddhism's demise long ago, still, I refuse to acknowledge this inevitability. Without assessing my own strength, without taking stock of what I'm up against, I simply will not allow the disappearance of the Proper Dharma. Despite the fact that I insist upon this, it is a tremendously difficult task to bring to accomplishment. Difficult though it may be, I still want to do it."

With the fortune of finding a Good Teaching like that, what novice could not try his or her best to do a good job of studying and practicing the Way, of propagating the Teachings, and of resolving to gain the skill to rescue others? Shramanera Heng Jau is participating in the intensive training which precludes the 1982 Precept Platform. Besides his work as Director of ESL Training for the Buddhist Council Indochinese Refugee Training Project, he is busy learning the Shramanera Vinaya, the Daily Vinaya, and the Bhikshu and Bodhisattva Precepts. Bowing repentances is another major concern of all novices for if done with true sincerity, it can help surmount some of those remaining difficulties. Faith increases, Bodhi-resolve deepens, and one begins to understand the meaning of being without cultivation and without attainment. Fostering merit, nurturing virtue, and learning to get rid of false thinking and attachments are advantages imperceptibly inherent in the daily life of those who abide in a pure place of practice. Gradually the difficulties diminish as precepts, samadhi, and wisdom grow.