

News From The Dharma Realm

FORTHCOMING: THE PROPER DHARMA SEAL

*A NEWSPAPER OF THE
SINO-AMERICAN BUDDHIST ASSOC.*

*INTRODUCING: THE EDITORIAL COMMITTEE BASED
ON THE WISDOM OF EQUALITY*

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As the years go by, your experiences in life accumulate; have you noticed any patterns emerging? With each thought-moment's passing, there are additions to your mind's storehouse; do you detect the traces lingering? Investigation will reveal that the patterns and traces of human existence are bound up in dualities. The self-nature achieves liberation in the mean between the extremes--also called the Middle Way.

People, by definition, are a mixture of blessings and offenses, of good and bad. Born of dualities into a world filled with opposites, they struggle with the continual fluctuations of their minds which tend to perpetuate a pattern of reaction to opposites and extremes.

Yet there have been many people through the long reaches of time who have determined to quiet their minds and free their souls from the unrest of uncountable "highs" and "lows." Their path goes unnoticed by most because it is forged through the middle. It is forged deliberately but unobtrusively. Such people have gone beyond the normal limits to human existence to attain transcendental fruitions. Their attainments happen quietly, and such beings will never say of themselves that they have attained anything unusual, for inherent in their achievement is a freedom from confusion about such distinctions.

People who are not yet rid of such confusion, can still find the Middle Way, and they can make the same journey to liberation. Those who have blazed the trail are invariably endowed with all-encompassing compassion. Thus they devise innumerable skillful methods to help other people to find the mean between the extremes, to remain steadfast on that ground, and to return to the Wisdom of Equality.

The Wisdom of Equality is one of the Four Wisdoms of a Buddha, a fully enlightened being. Great Master Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, defined it as "the mind free from disease." The disease is attachment to self and dharmas (things), which manifests in jealousy, obstructiveness, insolence, conceit, deviant views, greed, hatred, and stupidity. The Great Master also gave us a method for revealing and returning to the equality of the self-nature. He said:

While explaining dharmas, do not separate from the self-nature. Should someone suddenly ask you about a dharma, answer him with its opposite. If you always answer with the

opposite, the two extremes will cancel each other out and nothing will remain, since each depends on the other for its existence.

Suppose someone asks, "What is darkness?" You should answer, "Brightness is the cause and darkness is the condition. When there is no brightness, there is darkness. Brightness reveals darkness, and darkness reveals brightness." Since opposites are interdependent, the principle of the Middle Way is established.

In THE PROPER DHARMA SEAL, the new newspaper to be published by the Sino-American Buddhist Association, the editors will strive to bring the Four Wisdoms of a Buddha to bear on discussions of matters of great concern in the world. The perspective of each of the Four Wisdoms will be the special responsibility of an editorial committee. The Committee for the Wisdom of Equality intends to cultivate the principle of the Middle Way in its contributions to the content of THE PROPER DHARMA SEAL. Experiencing the mean between the extremes does away with contention, prejudices, injustices, and misconceptions. However, such cultivation must go beyond mere words. The Sixth Patriarch also cautioned, "If your speech is good, but your mind is not, then concentration and wisdom are both useless because they are not equal."

Therefore the work of this committee starts on the mind-ground. When the mind is free from disease, a clarity of judgment emerges, and verbal expression is naturally honest. When we are not thinking of good and not thinking of evil, what *do* we perceive? According to those who abide in that equality of mind and nature, we perceive the truth, goodness, and wisdom of our own natures, which are beyond the duality of true and false. That innate goodness is not relative to evil. That wisdom is not subject to comparison with stupidity. That is because attainment of this kind of wisdom is achieved through the relinquishing of attachment to self and dharmas. The absolute purity of the self-nature lies beyond the duality of self and other--beyond the bounds of all dualities--and therefore the self-nature can perceive clearly the complexities of the dual existence we are immersed in. With such wisdom one can remain in the mundane world without falling prey to the taints of interacting with its innumerable opposites.

Wishing to follow the Middle Way that leads to the attainment of wisdom, the members of the Editorial Committee based on the Wisdom of Equality try to adhere in their thoughts, words, and deeds to the five guidelines of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas: no fighting, no greed, no seeking, no selfishness, and no pursuit of self-benefit. These five principles naturally bring about a lessening of the view of self. The committee members will apply them to their editorial contributions. They will take care to bring into balance all the discussions of issues in THE PROPER DHARMA SEAL, to render them fair, just, and impartial, and to keep them from ever being misleading. Thus the committee will contribute the decisiveness and solidity of the broad middle path to the combined attributes of the other three committees which form the editorial staff of THE PROPER DHARMA SEAL.

The members of the Editorial Committee based on the Wisdom of Equality are:

Editor: Bhikshuni Heng Ch'ih, Assist. Ed: Bhikshunis
Heng Hsien and Heng Tsai, Editorial Staff: Bhikshunis

Heng Jieh, Chai, Wen, Liang, Chia, and Cheng, and
Upasikas Yau-sen Epstein and Chen Pao-chi.