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# EXHORTATION TO BRING FORTH THE BODHI MIND

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By GREAT MASTER HSING AN  
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## ESSAY:

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS OF OUR PARENTS' KINDNESS? ALAS! MY PARENTS! THEY BORE ME WITH MUCH TOIL. AFTER TEN MONTHS IN THE WOMB, I SPENT THREE YEARS AT THE BREAST. THEY DRIED MY BOTTOM, CHANGED MY DIAPERS, SWALLOWED BITTERNESS AND FED ME SWEETNESS. ONLY THEN WAS I ABLE TO MATURE INTO A PERSON.

THEY EXPRESSED THEIR HOPES THAT I MIGHT GLORIFY AND CARRY ON THE FAMILY NAME AND CONTINUE TO MAKE RITUAL OFFERINGS TO THE ANCESTORS. SINCE LEAVING HOME, HOWEVER, I HAVE SHAMELESSLY ADOPTED THE NAME OF SHAKYA'S DISCIPLE, AND DARE TO ASSUME THE TITLE OF SHRAMANA. THUS, I AM FURTHER UNABLE TO OFFER DELICACIES TO MY PARENTS AND TO SWEEP THE ANCESTRAL GRAVES. WHILE THEY LIVE, I CANNOT TAKE CARE OF THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS; AFTER THEY DEPART, I CANNOT GUIDE THEIR SOULS. THUS, IN THE MUNDANE WORLD, I HAVE GREATLY INJURED THEM, AND IN TRANSCENDENTAL MATTERS, I CAN OFFER NO REAL BENEFITS. CAUSING THEM LOSS IN BOTH CASES IS A HEAVY OFFENSE THAT IS HARD TO ESCAPE.

## COMMENTARY:

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS OF OUR PARENTS' KINDNESS? This is the second cause and condition--to be mindful of the heavy debt one has from one's parents' kindness. ALAS! MY PARENTS! THEY BORE ME WITH MUCH TOIL. *THE BOOK OF POETRY*, one of the Five Classics of ancient Zhung Gwo says,

Alas, my poor parents went through so much toil to bear me.  
How can I repay their kindness, so vast as the boundless sky?

AFTER TEN MONTHS IN THE WOMB, I SPENT THREE YEARS AT THE BREAST. THEY DRIED MY BOTTOM, CHANGED MY DIAPERS, SWALLOWED BITTERNESS AND FED ME SWEETNESS. ONLY THEN WAS I ABLE TO MATURE INTO A PERSON. A mother must constantly watch over her young child. She makes sure he doesn't go hungry, stays out of danger, and is kept dry and comfortable. She takes on the bitterness and gives away all the sweet things to the child. Only with such care can one mature into an adult.

THEY EXPRESSED THEIR HOPES THAT I MIGHT GLORIFY AND CARRY ON THE FAMILY NAME, AND CONTINUE TO MAKE RITUAL OFFERINGS TO THE ANCESTORS. Our parents only hope that we will grow up and become adults, and then will carry on the family name, be successful, and have some accomplishment. Then they hope that we will make offerings to them after their death. But what have we done so far?

SINCE LEAVING HOME, HOWEVER, I HAVE SHAMELESSLY ADOPTED THE NAME OF SHAKYA'S DISCIPLE AND DARE TO ASSUME THE TITLE OF SHRAMANA. Great Master Hsing An says, "Well, I shouldn't even be called a disciple of Shakya, but I am. I also have the title of 'Shramana,' but do I really deserve it?" "Shramana" is the name given to left-home people, and it means to "diligently cultivate precepts, samadhi, and wisdom, and to put to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity." He humbly means that he is now a left-home person. THUS I AM FURTHER UNABLE TO OFFER DELICACIES TO MY PARENTS AND TO SWEEP THE ANCESTRAL GRAVES. Left-home people don't make offerings to their parents; we don't give them food and drink, nor do we perform the duties of caring for their graves. On the first of the fourth lunar month, and on the fifteenth of the second lunar month, one should sweep the ancestral graves and make sure they don't get overgrown with wild brush. But we have left home and no longer do these things.

WHILE THEY LIVE, I CANNOT TAKE CARE OF THEIR PHYSICAL NEEDS; AFTER THEY DEPART, I CANNOT GUIDE THEIR SOULS. THUS, IN THE MUNDANE WORLD, I HAVE GREATLY INJURED THEM, AND IN TRANSCENDENTAL MATTERS, I CAN OFFER NO REAL BENEFITS. While they live, I don't nurture them, and when they die, I can't guide their souls across. I've harmed and failed them; CAUSING THEM LOSS IN BOTH CASES IS A HEAVY OFFENSE THAT IS HARD TO ESCAPE, and difficult to avoid.

ESSAY:

AS I CONTEMPLATE IT THUS, I MUST ALWAYS CULTIVATE THE BUDDHA'S WAY THROUGH A HUNDRED KALPAS AND IN A THOUSAND LIVES, THROUGHOUT THE TEN DIRECTIONS AND THE THREE PERIODS OF TIME, UNIVERSALLY SAVING LIVING BEINGS. FOR NOT ONLY THIS LIFE'S PARENTS, BUT FOR MY PARENTS IN EVERY LIFE WILL I RESCUE AND SAVE ALL BEINGS SO THAT NOT ONLY ONE PERSON'S PARENTS, BUT EVERYONE'S PARENTS CAN

BE TAKEN ACROSS. THIS IS THE SECOND CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

COMMENTARY:

AS I CONTEMPLATE IT THUS, I MUST ALWAYS CULTIVATE THE BUDDHA'S WAY THROUGH A HUNDRED KALPAS AND IN A THOUSAND LIVES, THROUGHOUT THE TEN DIRECTIONS AND THE THREE PERIODS OF TIME, UNIVERSALLY SAVING LIVING BEINGS. One considers cultivating constantly throughout the ten directions (north, south, east, and west, northwest, northeast, southwest, southeast, and above and below), and reflects about saving living beings in the **p**ast, present, and future--the three periods of time. Only then can we repay the debt we owe our parents.

FOR NOT ONLY THIS LIFE'S PARENTS, BUT FOR MY PARENTS IN EVERY LIFE WILL I RESCUE AND SAVE ALL BEINGS SO THAT **NOT** ONLY ONE PERSON'S PARENTS, BUT EVERYONE'S PARENTS CAN BE TAKEN ACROSS. I will save not only my own parents, but also the parents of every single person, so that all can attain liberation. **One** person's cultivation can benefit others. As it is said,

When a person accomplished the Way,  
Nine generations of ancestors are born in the heavens.

When all beings can benefit from one person's cultivation, then the merit and virtue from that transference will be great indeed! THIS IS THE SECOND CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

ESSAY:

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS OF MY TEACHERS' AND ELDERS' KINDNESS? ALTHOUGH MY PARENTS GAVE BIRTH TO AND NURTURED ME, I WOULD KNOW NOTHING OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IF IT WERE NOT FOR MY SECULAR TEACHERS AND ELDERS. AND IF NOT FOR MY WORLD TRANSCENDING TEACHERS AND ELDERS, I WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA. ONE WHO KNOWS NOTHING OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SAME AS AN ANIMAL. ONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA IS NOT DIFFERENT FROM A COMMON PERSON. NOW WE ROUGHLY KNOW OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SUPERFICIALLY UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA.

COMMENTARY:

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS OF MY TEACHERS' AND ELDERS' KINDNESS? Why do we say that we should be mindful of repaying the kindness of our teachers and elders?

Repaying the kindness of our parents was previously discussed; they gave birth to our physical bodies, and so we are deeply indebted to them. Now we are going to learn of the kindness of our teachers and elders.

Teachers are models of holding the rules. Under them, one studies the rules and regulations. A teacher is lofty and surpasses the common lot.

ALTHOUGH MY PARENTS GAVE BIRTH TO AND NURTURED ME, I WOULD KNOW NOTHING OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IF IT WERE NOT FOR MY SECULAR TEACHERS AND ELDERS. They teach and transform by imparting knowledge to me. "Propriety" refers to the requirement of courtesy and of respect. "Righteousness" means to have integrity, patriotism, and a public spirit, like that of General Kuan Ti Kung of the Three Kingdoms period. His "magnificent, righteous loyalty was as vast as the sky." He knew he must always protect his emperor, Liu Pei. He couldn't be bribed or made a tool of by others. Although General Tsao Tsao tried to trick him into deserting to the other side, he never compromised his principles.

If you greet people by respectfully making a half-bow, and showing them deference, they will certainly not scold you in return. People might scold if you are rude and impolite to them.

People might scold you anyway--some people even scold left-home people like myself. But I don't get angry and say, "You've scolded me; well then, I'll make you fall into the unspaced hells!" Instead think, "I'll take them across to Buddhahood. If they don't reach Buddhahood, I won't either."

Propriety and righteousness must be understood by people in the world. We must not fail to understand propriety and know of righteousness. We must never neglect to do righteous deeds; we must do things properly, exactly, and correctly! In this way one can be righteous. One can also be righteous by helping others, even if doing so means taking a personal loss. Help others instead of being selfish.

Secular teachers instruct one in all aspects of propriety. They teach us to be polite and to avoid scolding others. We differ from animals because of our propriety. If you are not respectful towards others, you are acting no different from animals. But even animals respond cordially to one another--how, then, may we humans fail to be polite? Propriety is one of the Eight Virtues:

1. Filial piety
2. Fraternal respect
3. Loyalty
4. Trustworthiness
5. Propriety
6. Righteousness
7. Virtue
8. Sense of shame

We should be respectful and righteous to others. Were it not for our secular teachers, we wouldn't understand the meaning of how to behave as people.

IF NOT FOR MY WORLD TRANSCENDING TEACHERS AND ELDERS, I WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA--If you wish to cultivate the Way, you definitely must find a Bright Eyed Good and Wise Advisor. What are the requisites of a Good and Wise Advisor? First, he must not be greedy for wealth. Second, he is not greedy for forms (**sex**), or third, for fame. Fourth, he is not selfish. Use this checklist; does he direct others to do things for his own advantage? Does he always plot to widen the scope of his own name and fame, and to promote his position? A real Bright Eyed Good and Wise Advisor never would do anything to benefit **himself** or to get name and fame; instead, everything that he does is to help and benefit others. If you don't find a Bright Eyed Good and Wise Advisor, you will not understand the Buddhadharma, and then how can you transcend this world? Most essential to cultivating the Way is to take a personal loss and benefit others, something that worldly people don't wish to do.

ONE WHO KNOWS NOTHING OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THE SAME AS AN ANIMAL. Most animals do not understand propriety. There are some, like the crow that returns to care for its parents, and like the goat-kid that kneels respectfully to drink the mother goat's milk. These animals are filial, but a person who doesn't understand propriety is like an unfilial animal.

ONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND THE BUDDHADHARMA IS NO DIFFERENT FROM A COMMON PERSON. If you cultivate but don't understand the Buddhadharma, then how do you differ from an ordinary worldly person? You don't.

NOW WE ROUGHLY KNOW OF PROPRIETY AND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. "We," says Great Master Hsing An, refers to all the left-home people and all Buddhists. To "roughly know of" is to get the general idea in very plain and simple terms, to get a smattering of propriety. AND SUPERFICIALLY UNDERSTAND a small part of the Buddhadharma.

ESSAY:

THE **KASHAYA** SASH COVERS OUR BODIES, THE CATAGORIES OF PRECEPTS SATURATE OUR PERSON. WE OBTAIN THESE THROUGH THE WEIGHTY KINDNESS OF TEACHERS AND ELDERS.

IF WE SEEK A SMALL FRUITION, WE CAN BENEFIT ONLY OURSELVES. BUT OUR AIM IN THE GREAT VEHICLE IS TO UNIVERSALLY VOW TO BENEFIT ALL PEOPLE. IN THAT WAY, WE CAN BENEFIT BOTH WORLDLY AND WORLD TRANSCENDING TEACHERS AND ELDERS ALIKE.

THIS IS THE THIRD CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

COMMENTARY:

THE *KASHAYA* SASH COVERS OUR BODIES. The "Kashaya" is worn by left-home people. So it says,

One now receives the kashaya sash as a result of seeds for Bodhi that one planted in the past.

To leave home is not an easy matter. Without good roots, you can't do it at all or if you are able to do it, you will soon retreat. We should vow to enter the Way as a virgin youth in life after life. We want to produce such a firm Bodhi Resolve. Cultivation is very easy for those who have entered the Way as a virgin youth. On the other hand, cultivation is very hard for those who are not virgin youths. Of course they, too, can cultivate, but only with difficulty.

THE CATEGORIES OF PRECEPTS SATURATE OUR PERSONS. "The categories of precepts" are the Five, the *Eight*, the Ten Major and Forty-eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts, the two hundred and fifty Bhikshu Precepts, and the three hundred and forty-eight Bhikshuni Precepts. By taking and upholding these precepts, we obtain great benefits. So it says,

When *living* beings receive the Buddhas' precepts, they immediately enter the Buddhas' position.

*BRAHMA NET SUTRA*

One receives the Vajra Brightness Jeweled Precept Substance.

WE OBTAIN THESE THROUGH THE WEIGHTY KINDNESS OF TEACHERS AND ELDERS. Because of their intense kindness, we obtain the kashaya sash and the categories of precepts. And after we have obtained such rare treasures, IF WE SEEK A SMALL FRUITION, WE CAN BENEFIT ONLY OURSELVES. If we don't cultivate the Great Vehicle Dharmas, but cultivate only the Small Vehicle Dharmas, then we can only become enlightened to the fruition of Arhatship. This is good. However, it benefits only oneself not others, enlightens oneself not others, and saves oneself not others.

BUT OUR AIM IN THE GREAT VEHICLE is to UNIVERSALLY VOW TO BENEFIT ALL PEOPLE. IN THIS WAY, WE CAN BENEFIT BOTH SECULAR AND WORLD TRANSCENDING TEACHERS AND ELDER ALIKE.

THIS IS THE THIRD CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.

*-to be continued*