

# *Exhortation to Resolve upon Bodhi*

by Great Master Hsing An

with Commentary by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua and the Late Elder Master  
Hui Seng

Continued from issue #173

ESSAY:

WHAT IS CAUSING THE PROPER DHARMA TO REMAIN LONG IN THE WORLD? IT IS THAT OUR WORLD HONORED ONE, FOR OUR SAKES, CULTIVATED THE BODHI WAY FOR MEASURELESS KALPAS. HE COULD PRACTICE WHAT WAS DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE, AND COULD ENDURE WHAT WAS DIFFICULT TO ENDURE. WHEN HIS CAUSES WERE PERFECT AND HIS RESULTS WERE FULL, HE ACCOMPLISHED BUDDHAHOOD. AFTER ACCOMPLISHING BUDDHAHOOD, HE FINISHED TRANSFORMING THOSE WITH AFFINITIES, AND THEN ENTERED NIRVANA.

THE PROPER DHARMA AND DHARMA IMAGE AGES HAVE BOTH ALREADY ENDED. NOW ONLY THE DHARMA ENDING AGE EXISTS; THERE ARE TEACHINGS BUT NO ADHERENTS. NO ONE CAN DISCRIMINATE DEVIANT FROM PROPER; NO ONE CAN DISTINGUISH RIGHT FROM WRONG. WE COMPETE AND STRUGGLE AMONG OURSELVES AND WITH OTHERS. WE RUN AFTER PROFIT AND FAME. LOOK AROUND; THE FERMENT SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

NO ONE KNOWS WHO THE BUDDHA IS, WHAT THE MEANING OF THE DHARMA IS, OR WHAT THE SANGHA IS. THE DECAY HAS REACHED SUCH AN EXTENT THAT ONE CAN SCARCELY BEAR TO SPEAK OF IT. EVERY TIME I CONSIDER IT, MY TEARS FALL BY THEMSELVES.

I AM A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA, YET I CANNOT REPAY KINDNESS. INSIDE, I DO NOT BENEFIT MYSELF; OUTSIDE, I CANNOT BENEFIT OTHERS. WHILE ALIVE, I HAVE NOT BENEFITTED THE WORLD, AFTER MY DEATH, I SHALL BE OF NO BENEFIT TO POSTERITY. ALTHOUGH HEAVEN IS HIGH, IT CANNOT COVER ME. ALTHOUGH THE EARTH IS VAST, IT CANNOT BEAR ME. IF MY OWN OFFENSES ARE NOT EXTREMELY HEAVY, THEN WHOSE ARE? THEREFORE, MY PAIN IS UNBEARABLE. I HAVE NO RECOURSE, SO I MUST IMMEDIATELY FORGET BASENESS AND QUICKLY BRING FORTH THE GREAT RESOLVE. ALTHOUGH I CANNOT REVERSE THE FATE OF THE DHARMA'S END AT THIS PRESENT TIME, I CERTAINLY MUST PLAN TO PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE PROPER DHARMA THROUGHOUT THE FUTURE.

THEREFORE GOOD FRIENDS, GATHER TOGETHER AT THE WAY PLACE, PERFORM THE *karmavacana*, AND ESTABLISH DHARMA ASSEMBLIES. BRING FORTH FORTY-EIGHT VOWS; IN VOW AFTER VOW, SAVE LIVING BEINGS. MAKE A DEEP RESOLVE FOR A HUNDRED THOUSAND KALPAS; IN THOUGHT AFTER THOUGHT, RESOLVE TO BE A

BUDDHA.

FROM THIS DAY, TO THE END OF FUTURE KALPAS, AT THE END OF YOUR LIFE, VOW TO RETURN TO THE PEACE OF THE PURE LAND, ASCEND TO THE NINE GRADES OF LOTUSES, AND THEN COME BACK TO THE SAHA. MAKE THE BUDDHA'S SUN SHINE GLORIOUSLY ONCE MORE. OPEN THE DHARMA'S GATE AGAIN. LET THE SANGHA'S OCEAN BE CLEAR AND PURE IN THIS WORLD. THE PEOPLE OF THE EASTERN REALM WILL BE TAUGHT AND THE COMING OF THE KALPA'S TURNING CAN BE PROLONGED. THE PROPER DHARMA WILL DWELL LONG. THIS IS MY MEAGER BUT GENUINE RESOLVE THAT I PAINSTAKINGLY STRIVE TO CARRY OUT.

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

COMMENTARY:

What is called causing the Proper Dharma to dwell long? It is easily done: just truly and decisively cultivate. Enter deeply through one door. Honestly and reliably practice your Dharma door. Don't seek for fame, do not be greedy for benefits, and don't be greedy for offerings from people. If people do make offerings, however, then accept them. However, do not do things to influence people to make offerings to you.

If all left-home people can uphold the precept prohibiting the handling of money, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If all left-home people can refrain from lying down to sleep, but rest in a sitting posture, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If all left-home people can eat one meal a day at noon, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If all left-home people always wear their precept sashes, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If all left-home people can be pure and strict about the precepts and the Vinaya, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. The Proper Dharma's existence, therefore, relies on each individual to personally take the actual steps of cultivation according to the teachings of the Buddha. Consequently, the people here at The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas refrain from being greedy and from seeking for fame. We emphasize upholding the precepts and Vinaya purely, and respectfully practicing pure eating. We want to bring forth the great Bodhi Resolve.

IT IS THAT OUR WORLD HONORED ONE, FOR OUR SAKES CULTIVATED THE BODHI WAY FOR MEASURELESS KALPAS. Our Buddha, Shakyamuni, from measureless kalpas until now, for the sake of all living beings, cultivated the great Bodhi Way. HE COULD PRACTICE WHAT WAS DIFFICULT TO PRACTICE, doing what others couldn't do, AND COULD ENDURE WHAT OTHERS COULD NOT ENDURE. WHEN HIS CAUSES WERE PERFECT AND HIS RESULTS WERE FULL, when his causes and conditions had ripened, HE ACCOMPLISHED BUDDHAHOOD. Because he "cultivated blessings and wisdom for three great asamkheyas, and developed the marks and characteristics for a hundred kalpas," his causes were perfect and his results were full. And then he accomplished Buddhahood. AFTER ACCOMPLISHING BUDDHAHOOD, HE FINISHED TRANSFORMING THOSE WITH AFFINITIES. He finished teaching and transforming living beings, and then wished to enter extinction because he had finished all he had to do.

If the people at the time had requested the Buddha not to enter Nirvana, then perhaps he might have

not entered Nirvana even to this day, and we might have the chance to see him. When the Patriarch Nan Yao Hui Ssu was alive, he said that he would not enter Nirvana if eighteen disciples would bow the *DHARMA FLOWER REPENTANCE* in the six periods of the day and night. But no one resolved to bow, so he entered Nirvana while seated upright and properly.

"Nirvana" is Sanskrit. "Nir" means "unproduced." "Vana" means "not destroyed." It is the state of no production and no extinction, where there is permanence, bliss, true self, and purity--the four virtues of Nirvana.

THE PROPER DHARMA AND DHARMA-IMAGE AGES HAVE BOTH ALREADY ENDED. The Proper Dharma Age of the Buddhadharm, when the Buddha is in the world, lasts for 500 years, the Dharma Image for 1000 years, during which time people make Buddha images and build temples--they are attached to the appearance of the Dharma--and NOW ONLY THE DHARMA ENDING AGE EXISTS. Some people say it lasts for 1,000 years, others say 10,000 years. But no matter how long it is, we are presently in it, as both the Proper Dharma and Dharma Image Ages have gone.

The Dharma Ending Age arrives when nobody cultivates. So if you can bring forth the great resolve to cultivate and to cause the Proper Dharma to dwell in the world, then the Dharma Ending Age can be turned into the Proper Dharma Age. My vow-power, therefore, is to cause the Proper Dharma to flourish wherever I go. I will not permit the existence of the Dharma Ending Age. I use all my strength and do all I can to propagate the Buddhadharm.

During the Dharma Ending Age, the Dharma has reached its final point. It reaches its leaves and branches and is no longer at the roots. THERE ARE TEACHINGS BUT NO ADHERENTS. The teachings exist, but no one truly cultivates them. NO ONE CAN DISCRIMINATE DEVIANT FROM PROPER. In this age, people will say that you are false if you are true, and say that you are true if you are false. They say you are deviant if you are proper, and proper if you are actually deviant. No one knows who is right and who is wrong. What can we do? We need the Dharma-Selecting Eye. If someone is proper, he isn't greedy for fame or for benefits. He has no greed and no selfishness. But even if we are sensitive to these qualities in people, making a clear judgement is still not easy. Because according to the deviant knowledge and views of the people in the Dharma Ending Age, right is considered wrong. If you are wrong, people think you are right and say, "He's really great!" People "mistake fish eyes for pearls." Such is the Dharma's end; no one recognizes the Proper Dharma even when it appears right before his face. But if you cheat people, they are ecstatic; try to speak the true and genuine Dharma to them and they frown and scold you. "You really don't understand the present times. You are extremely old fashioned." When you encourage them not to have desires and to not carry on as most people do, they don't believe you.

NO ONE CAN DISTINGUISH RIGHT FROM WRONG. What is right? No one knows. What is wrong? No one knows. This situation is extremely pitiful. WE COMPETE AND STRUGGLE AMONG OURSELVES AND WITH OTHERS. But everyone does know about competing. People can compete in building temples, and strive to outdo the temples built by others. But when the extravagant temples are finished, there is no one who uses them. They sit empty. Because nobody competes to do the best he can at cultivation. So the money given by the faithful donors to erect the temples has been wasted, and as a result, people have made offenses and will fall into the hells. "If the cause ground is not true, then the result will be distorted." Such is the Dharma Ending Age: everyone is destroying the Dharma and the Sangha.

How is the Sangha community being destroyed? Monks originally lived together; nowadays the lay-

people set up their own teacher in a small dwelling of his own. The monks all live by themselves and receive the personal offerings made to them by their own disciples. The monks don't live together in a harmonious community. The Sanghan just sits in his own small dwelling all day long; who knows what he is up to? He has everything he wants, because his disciples are making personal offerings, and so he becomes muddled and confused and fails to cultivate. He might decide to eat meat and drink wine and play around--who's to know? And because he has broken the precepts, he will fall into the hells. What merit and virtue has the lay-person accrued from this? The left-home people should live together in large Way Places. There they can work together at cultivating the Way, and spur each other on. But if one person lives alone, he can easily fall prey to laziness and laxity, and then fall.

WE RUN AFTER PROFIT AND FAME. LOOK AROUND; THE FERMENT SPREADS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. Open your eyes and look--it's everywhere.

NO ONE KNOWS WHO THE BUDDHA IS. Everyone knows only greed for offerings. WHAT THE MEANING OF THE DHARMA IS ultimately--no one knows--OR WHAT THE SANGHA IS. What is the "Sangha?" A Sangha is a group of four or more monks living together and cultivating. "Sangha" means a "Harmonious group." No one fights. Everyone respects one another, and works together. One person living alone in a small dwelling cannot be called a Sanghan.

THE DECAY HAS REACHED SUCH AN EXTENT THAT no one knows what the Triple Jewel is. Moreover, some lay-people want to invent the "Quadruple Jewel," and then tell others to make offerings to them. Those certain lay-people want to usurp the offerings of the Triple Jewel. This is a clear sign of the Dharma Ending Age. What will then follow will be the "Quintuple Jewel", the "Sextuple Jewel," or perhaps even the "Octad Jewel." ONE CAN SCARCELY BEAR TO SPEAK OF IT. We cannot bear to even speak of the Dharma's end. EVERY TIME I CONSIDER IT---every time I think of it, says Great Master Hsing An, "MY TEARS FALL BY THEMSELVES"-- he cries automatically.

I AM A DISCIPLE OF THE BUDDHA, YET CANNOT REPAY the Buddha's KINDNESS. INSIDE--my body, mind, nature, and life--I DO NOT BENEFIT MYSELF; WHILE ALIVE I HAVE NOT BENEFITTED THE WORLD, society, or the country; AFTER DEATH I SHALL BE OF NO BENEFIT TO POSTERITY--the people of later generations. ALTHOUGH HEAVEN IS HIGH, IT CANNOT COVER ME--my offense karma. ALTHOUGH THE EARTH IS VAST, IT CANNOT BEAR ME. My offense karma is so heavy that I should all right through the earth. IF MY OFFENSES ARE NOT EXTREMELY HEAVY, THEN WHOSE ARE? My own offense karma is truly incredible; if I'm not the worst offender, then who is? Nobody else but me. The Great Master Hsing An is instructing the left-home people to "return the light, and to illumine within," and to feel repentant. He is telling us to avoid jealousy or obstructiveness toward others, no matter what. THEREFORE, MY PAIN IS UNBEARABLE. Speaking to this point, I cannot bear the pain. I HAVE NO RECOURSE, no method to avoid the repercussions of my evil karma, SO I MUST IMMEDIATELY FORGET MY BASENESS, forget how vile and ugly I am, and thereupon QUICKLY BRING FORTH THE GREAT RESOLVE, the unsurpassed Bodhi Resolve. "I can't stand to be this way! I am the worst offender, and so I will change and bring forth the Great Bodhi Resolve!"

ALTHOUGH I CANNOT REVERSE THE FATE OF THE DHARMA'S END THIS PRESENT TIME, although I've now brought forth the Bodhi Resolve, I cannot completely turn back the Dharma

Ending Age, but I MUST CERTAINLY PLAN TO PROTECT AND UPHOLD THE PROPER DHARMA THROUGHOUT THE FUTURE. I will certainly vow to protect and uphold the Proper Dharma from now on. Wherever I go, I will protect the Proper Dharma. No matter how much toil or difficulty is involved, no matter who curses me, slanders me, no matter who is jealous of me, or who obstructs me, I will never release this determined resolve.

THEREFORE GOOD FRIENDS, the Master is speaking to all of his good friends here at the Way Place, like at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Here, Buddhists from all over the world can come to cultivate. PERFORM THE *karmavacana*, AND ESTABLISH DHARMA ASSEMBLIES, like the many Dharma assemblies, Buddha recitation and meditation sessions we have at the City here. And then BRING FORTH FORTY-EIGHT VOWS; IN VOW AFTER VOW, SAVE LIVING BEINGS. MAKE A DEEP RESOLVE FOR A HUNDRED THOUSAND KALPAS, a deep resolve that lasts for such a long time. IN THOUGHT AFTER THOUGHT RESOLVE TO BE A BUDDHA. What have we resolved upon? Becoming Buddhas.

FROM THIS DAY, starting today, TO THE END OF FUTURE KALPAS, AT THE END OF EVERY LIFE, VOW TO RETURN TO THE PEACE OF THE PURE LAND, wishing to certainly be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, ASCEND TO THE NINE GRADES OF LOTUSES. The lotus opens and you will see the Buddha. After you become a Buddha, THEN COME BACK TO THE SARA world. MAKE THE BUDDHA'S SUN SHINE GLORIOUSLY ONCE MORE. Cause the Buddha's light, which is like the sun's light, to shine again. OPEN THE DHARMA'S GATE AGAIN. LET THE SANGHA'S OCEAN BE CLEAR AND PURE IN THIS WORLD. Make it clean and free from containing people who don't cultivate. THE PEOPLE OF THE EASTERN REALM WILL BE TAUGHT, they will receive the Buddha's teaching, AND THE COMING OF THE KALPA'S end can even be done away with. THE PROPER DHARMA WILL DWELL LONG, if all people vigorously work at cultivating the Way, and have no selfishness, no seeking for fame and profit, no greed, and no thoughts of desire. Then the Proper Dharma will dwell long. THIS IS MY MEAGER BUT GENUINE RESOLVE THAT I PAINSTAKINGLY STRIVE TO CARRY OUT. Great Master Hsing An humbly says that it is infinitesimal and powerless, yet is genuine and he painstakingly strives for it. THIS IS THE TENTH great CAUSE AND CONDITION FOR BRINGING FORTH THE BODHI RESOLVE.



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