

Instructional Talk for the New Year, 1988

by the Venerable Master Hua



The solar New Year has already passed--today is the third day of the first month; yet the lunar New Year has not yet come. Right now we're in the period when, every year, people go through two New Years, and so age by two years. That means we'll all live to be two hundred. Therefore, I wish all of you, "Happy Solar New Year! Happy Lunar New Year! Happy Not- Yet-Come New Year! Happy Already-Past New Year!"

As to the solar New Year, the year 1988 has two eights, which has the same sound as *ba ba jye jye*, which means "stuttering and stammering," indicating that it will not be at all easy to go through this year. That being the case, should we simply not go through it then? We still have to see it through. The Lunar New Year is that of the Dragon. Some dragons are good and some are evil. The good dragons protect people, whereas evil dragons harm them. They are poisonous dragons.

How can you subdue the poisonous dragons? I'll tell you a method: just don't get angry. If you don't have a temper, if during this year you don't get mad, then no matter how poisonous the dragons are, they won't harm you. But what will happen as soon as you get angry? The poisonous dragons' venomous energy will be spewed all over you, and if you don't get cancer, you may come down with AIDS--the "love- to-death disease". There isn't a "love one's country disease" though. And so, watch out for the poisonous dragons.

The good dragons, those who pour down sweet dew, are kind and protective. If you are someone who recites the Buddha's name, cultivates the Way, does good deeds, or has good roots, they will protect you. If you are someone who commits the ten evil deeds instead of being wholesome, they won't harm you, but then they won't protect you either.

And so, this is the Year of the Dragon. Dragons can make themselves large or small. Sometimes they let you see them, and sometimes they don't. How do they operate? Consider, for example, gambling. Poisonous dragons constantly urge you to gamble, but good dragons tell you not to go gambling. They take two different sides, but the poisonous dragons use the method of confusing people. They say, "If you gamble, you can win money." The good dragons tell you, "If you gamble, even if you win, the money isn't yours." However, people just believe what the poisonous dragons say, and don't give credence to what the good dragons tell them.

Therefore, this year it would be best not to be greedy for unexpected wealth. Don't drink liquor to excess, and don't get angry. As soon as you get angry, you form a "Corporation Limited" with the poisonous dragons. If you don't get angry, you'll form a "Corporation Limited" with the good dragons. If you're able to run that corporation, that company, you can make money. But if you're unable to run it, you'll lose your investment.

You may ask, "What is meant by being able or not being able to run it?" Don't ask me. If I could run it, I wouldn't still be here telling you how to make money. But since I can't do it, I'm just telling you the way to do it. If you insist on asking me how to make money--don't ask me. If you're out to make money, go ask someone who has the skill to teach people how to get rich, how to create hundreds of hundred-dollar bills from a one hundred-dollar bill. I don't have that talent. And even if I did, I wouldn't teach it to you. If I had that ability, I'd already be getting rich myself--why would I teach you? Do you understand?

Don't be so greedy. People who believe in the Buddha should stop having thoughts of fighting and of greed. If you believe in the Buddha, but are still greedy for unexpected wealth, if you still want to run into a wind-fall--you're simply dreaming. Confucius said:¹

Riches and honor are what people desire, but if one cannot achieve it in the proper way, one should not dwell in them. Poverty and low station are what people dislike, but if one cannot achieve it in the proper way, one should not reject them.

¹子曰：「富與貴，是人之所欲也；不以其道得之，不處也。貧與賤，是人之所惡也，不以其道得之，不去也。」

Consequently, if you accord with the Dharma, with the Law, then whatever you do will be fine. But if you do not comply with the Law--for example, if you deal on the black market, smuggle drugs and harm humankind--then even if you make money, it's not okay. You should very honestly and reliably go about what you do. If you earn more, use more; if you earn less, use less. Don't be so insatiably greedy. Don't always be thinking of winning at the horse races, winning at the lottery, and all such schemes. That's just day-dreaming. I'll tell you:

It is like the bean-curd maker purchasing bottom land by a river. Whatever he earns from the soymilk gets taken away by the water. Whatever does not come in a good way will also leave easily.²

If the way it came is not bright, the way it goes will not be bright, either. Therefore, if you base yourself on humaneness, righteousness, and Way-virtue in your actions, then wherever you go, you won't be wrong. Don't swindle people. Be honest and reliable. Do more merit and virtue, and create fewer offenses.

This year being the Year of the Dragon, the changes and transformations will be very great. Some inconceivable events could happen. I hope all of you--should I say this?--won't travel too much. Don't for no good reason waste money. This is important. Only travel if it is for some vital reason. Why do I say that? I don't know about this year, but just looking at last

year, I see that there were more ship wrecks, plane crashes, train derailments, bus accidents, auto collisions, and people smashing into people than one can know. And when those problems arose, more people died than can be known. Whether there will be such problems this year, I DON'T KNOW.

²*This is a saying from Manchuria in China. Bean-curd manufacture was a way to make quick, easy money, particularly from the by-products such as soybean milk. The money comes in from the watery product, but whatever is established on the bottom-land is washed away by the overflowing of the river--also liquid. The point is that the way the money comes in is the way it will leave.*



REPENTANCE BEFORE THE TEN THOUSAND BUDDHAS

APRIL 30 to MAY 23, 1988

By bowing to the Buddhas, those beings of ultimate wisdom and compassion, and very sincerely repenting of the confused things we have done in the past, we can eradicate our karmic hindrances and realize the genuine happiness which is inherent to our own nature.