

Water-Mirror Turning Back the Tide of Destiny

*In Memory of the Elder Layman Li Bing-Nan,
Honorary Chancellor of Dharma Realm Buddhist University*

Essays and Verses by Venerable Master Hua

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THE ELDER LAYMAN BING NAN (炳南) WAS A NATIVE OF THE CITY OF JINAN(濟南市), SHANDUNG PROVINCE(山東省). FROM HIS YOUTH HE WAS COACHED IN THE CONFUCIAN TRADITION, AND GAINED A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE MINDDHARMA OF THE CONFUCIAN TEACHINGS. AS HE WAS GROWING UP, HE STUDIED BUDDHISM. HE DREW NEAR TO AND SUPPORTED THE "DRAGONS AND ELEPHANTS" WITHIN THE DOOR OF DHARMA, SUCH AS THE GREATLY VIRTUOUS MASTERS YIN GWANG (印光), TAI SYU (太虛), SYU YUN (虛雲), AND SO FORTH. THE LAYMAN INVESTIGATED, READ AND RECITED, RECEIVED AND UPHELD, WROTE OUT, AND LECTURED ON THE SUTRAS, PERSONALLY PUTTING THOSE TEACHINGS INTO PRACTICE. OPERATING FROM A LITERARY BASIS, HE SET FORTH THE ESOTERIC MEANING OF BUDDHISM. EVERYTHING HE WROTE WAS TRUE AND ACTUAL; EVERY ONE OF HIS WORDS MESHEDED WITH PRINCIPLE. HE WAS AN UPASAKA OF PROPER BELIEF.

LATER HE FOLLOWED MR KUNG DE-CHENG (孔德成 78TH GENERATIONAL DESCENDANT FROM THE CONFUCIAN FAMILY LINE) TO TAIWAN AND SPECIALIZED IN THE STUDY OF THE FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA. HE WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN CAUSING BUDDHISM TO FLOURISH. HE TAUGHT BUDDHISM TO UNCOUNTABLY MANY UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, AND ALSO ESTABLISHED BUDDHIST LOTUS SOCIETIES, SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS, LIBRARIES, AND OTHER HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS.

MANIFESTING A SLIGHT ILLNESS AT THE END AND LYING DOWN IN AN AUSPICIOUS POSTURE, HE PASSED AWAY ON APRIL 13, 1986 AT THE AGE OF NINETY-SEVEN YEARS. HE DESERVES TO BE CALLED A LAYMAN OF INFLEXIBLE VIRTUE OF THIS DHARMA-ENDING AGE.

A VERSE IN PRAISE SAYS:

*A STURDY CANDLE IN A STRONG GALE,
TRUE GOLD IN A RAGING FIRE,
UNDERGOING A HUNDRED SMELTINGS BUT NEVER DISSIPATED:
SUCH IS THE VAJRA DHARMA BODY.
LIKE A PURE BREEZE AND THE BRIGHT MOON,
HE WAS UNBLEMISHED BY EVEN THE SLIGHTEST TRACE OF
DEFILEMENT.
HE ROAMED IN THE SAMADHI OF PLAYFULNESS:
IT WAS JUST THIS WAY.*

ANOTHER VERSE SAYS:

*PERSONALLY ACTING AS A MODEL, HE TRANSFORMED THE
MASSES.
HONESTLY RECITING THE BUDDHA'S NAME, HE ASCENDED TO
THE LOTUS OF THE NINTH GRADE
HE ELUCIDATED THE PRINCIPLE OF THE DHARMA REALM AS
SET FORTH IN THE FLOWER ADORNMENT SUTRA.
OPENING UP THE WISDOM-MINE, THE BUDDHA-NATURE WAS
MADE BRIGHT.
WITH FAITH, VOWS, AND HOLDING THE BUDDHA'S NAME, HE
RETURNED TO THE PURE LAND.
DILIGENTLY HE CULTIVATED THE WONDERFUL DHARMA AND
ENTERED THE LOTUS-CITY.
AT NINETY-SEVEN HE WAS BORN IN THE LAND OF PEACE AND
REPOSE.
BODHISATTVA RETINUES INCREASE DAY BY DAY.*

Dharma Realm Buddhist University invited leaders from six countries throughout the five continents to be our honorary chancellors. There were five laypeople and five left-home people acting as honorary chancellors. Li Bing-nan was one of the five laymen. We have written this essay in his memory. He was an elder layman of senior standing who was a native of the city of Jinan in Shandong Province. In his youth he studied many of the classics of the Confucian teaching, through which he gained a deep understanding. The essence of the teaching is learning how to be an upright and superior person, and help society. Since he was grounded in this kind of education, he was a very good person.

After he grew up, he gave up Confucianism to study Buddhism. He drew near to and supported "dragons and elephants" within the door of Dharma, that is, lofty members of the Sangha who had great virtue, such as Dharma Masters Yin Gwang, Tai Syu, Syu Yun, and so forth. He protected and went close to them. He investigated sutras, read and recited them. He also accepted and upheld the sutras, accepting them with his mind and putting their principles into practice with his body. Since he had good calligraphy, he wrote out the sutras, and also lectured on the sutras for other people. He stressed personally putting those teachings into practice. He did not expect others to practice, but actually embodied those principles himself. Operating from the literary basis of the Confucian school, he explained the profound meaning of Buddhism.

Literature is a vehicle for explaining the Way, and since the layman had a solid grounding in Confucianism, he was able to understand Buddhism by inference. Everything he wrote was true and actual; it was not false. Every one of his words meshed with Buddhist principle. He was an upasaka of proper belief. He did not have deviant knowledge and views. As a layman who drew near to and served Buddhism, he was endowed with upright views.

Later, when Mainland China's government changed hands, he followed Mr. Kung De-cheng and went to Taiwan. Kung De-cheng was the 78th generational descendent of the Confucian family line, who was responsible for making annual sacrifices to the memory of the sage Confucius. Layman Li specialized in the study of the Flower Adornment Sutra and put a great deal of effort into investigating this sutra. He was instrumental in causing Buddhism to flourish in Taiwan. He taught Buddhism to uncountably many university students, bringing about their accomplishment. He also established Buddhist Lotus Societies, hospitals, schools, libraries, and other humanitarian projects.

On April 13, 1986, manifesting a slight illness at the end, lying down in the auspicious posture with his right hand supporting his right cheek and his left hand resting on his left knee, he passed away. He was

97, three years short of being 100 years old. He deserves to be called a layman of inflexible virtue in this Dharma-ending Age, someone who was very solid and firm. That's my opinion.

A eulogy says:

*A sturdy candle in a strong gale,
Even strong winds couldn't blow out this candle.
True gold in a raging fire,
No matter how he was burned in the raging flames.
Undergoing a hundred smeltings but never dissipated.
This piece of gold never melted, never diminished...
Such is the Vajra Dharma Body.*

The basic substance of the Vajra Dharma Body of the inherent nature never melts.

*Like a light breeze and bright moon,
Not greedy for fame or profit, wealth or sex,
He was unblemished by even the slightest trace of defilement.*

He was not tainted by the least bit of dust.

*He roamed in the samadhi of playfulness,
Roaming playfully at ease; whatever he did was like being in a samadhi of playing at games;
It was just this way.*

That's the way it was--nothing special.

Another verse says:

*Personally acting as a model, he transformed the masses.
This layman set a good example for others.
Honestly reciting the Buddha's name, he ascended to the lotus of the ninth grade.*

If you reliably recite the Buddha's name, you can attain superior grades of rebirth in the nine grades of lotuses.

He elucidated the principle of the Dharma Realm, as set forth in the Flower Adornment Sutra.

He explained the substance and principle of the Dharma Realm, as it was laid out in the Flower Adornment Sutra.

Opening up the wisdom-mine, the Buddha-nature was made bright.

Once the wisdom-mine is excavated, the basic nature of Buddhism is understood.

With faith, vows, and holding the Buddha's name--Amitabha's name--he returned to the Pure Land. Diligently he cultivated the wonderful Dharma and entered the Lotus City.

If you recite the Buddha's name, this wonderful Dharma which Shakyamuni Buddha spoke about without being asked, in the future you will enter the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

At ninety-seven he was born in the land of peace and repose.

The Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Bodhisattva retinues increase day by day.