

The Bodhi Mirror



Shramaneri Heng Jieh

沙彌尼恒潔

Shramaneri Heng Jieh (恒潔 "Constantly Pure": Dharma name Gwo Bai, 果白 "Fruit of Pristineness") was born in Singapore. Her parents were very kind to her. The family was of Fukienese descent. After graduating from high school, she entered Jyan Min School of Chinese Medicine, since she always had an interest in Chinese medicine. Upon graduation, she furthered her studies by completing a three-year training course in the School of Medicine, Sya Men University, China, and obtained a Certificate in Internal Medicine. Education was also one of her concerns, and so upon returning to Singapore, she received further training in teaching young children, at the College of Education.

Shramaneri Heng Jieh was not born in a Buddhist family per se. Her mother would go to the temple to light incense and bow during Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's Feast Days. However, Heng Jieh herself never got to hear the names of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas until after completing her high school education. Since she received a Western, scientific education in high school, she was even less inclined to believe in the existence of the spiritual realm. She used to claim that she was afraid of neither heaven nor earth. However, an incident happened that instilled awe and respect in her heart for the Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. Shramaneri Heng Jieh relates the incident: "This occurred during my last year in high school. It was the nineteenth day of the ninth lunar month, my mother, following her usual custom, went to light incense at the local temple. I went along with her. It was the first time I had seen the image of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva. My mother told me to bow, however I refused. I said, 'Unless Gwan Yin lets me see her in person, I will not bow!'

"Although I refused to bow, as I stepped out of the temple, I could not help reciting the name 'Homage to the Thousand-Handed and Thousand-Eyed Gwan Yin Bodhisattva' underneath my breath. This continued for three days. Then, something happened while I was asleep. It was as if some powerful force pulled me up to empty space. We were traveling at a great speed; the wind kept on whizzing by my ears. I was plunged down to earth again. And then the force lifted me up into space a second time, and then let me down. Up and down I went, for a full three times. The experience was terrifying and anguishing. At that moment I recalled my claim of disbelieving the existence of the spiritual realm. Immediately I blurted out these words, 'Yes, I do believe that there are ghosts and spirits!' Right away I woke up. Tears were streaming down my face. Automatically I put my palms together and spoke to empty space, 'I am very grateful for Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's guidance.' Immediately, two dots of light appeared on the wall, and in a flash, disappeared.

"Three days after this experience, I had another state when I fell asleep. I entered a monastery. An attractive woman with upright features came towards me, holding a pan of gold in her hands. She stopped before me, by a round table, and sat down. I knelt before her and waited for instructions. She told me, 'You should from now on come often to temples.'

Thereafter I went often to monasteries, and brought home Buddhist Sutras to study. The first Sutra I read was the *Sutra Of The Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva*. I began reciting the *Heart Sutra* and the *Great Compassion Mantra*, and later also the *Vajra Sutra*. Half a year later, I entered The Buddhist Academy for Women in Singapore. Those were the cause and conditions that led to my study of Buddhism.

"The idea of leaving the home-life occurred to me after my graduation from high school. At first, my father objected violently. He was afraid that I could not handle the suffering. However, after many years of 'polishing and grinding,' my father's attitude relaxed. In the beginning of September, 1988, I entered the Sangha and Laity Training Program at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Shortly thereafter, two days before Earth Store Bodhisattva's holy day, the Venerable Master compassionately allowed me to leave the home-life. That was the fulfillment of my wish."

In the beginning, Shramanerika Heng Jieh contributed her medical knowledge by helping at the Health Clinic of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Now she is devoting her efforts to propagating the Buddhadharma. She says, "I realize that I should start from the precepts. If someone has awesome deportment and acts as a good model, he or she will naturally inspire others to bring forth faith and the Bodhi resolve. Since I have obtained many responses from Gwan Yin Bodhisattva and Earth Bodhisattva, I resolve to follow the compassion and vows of those Bodhisattvas in my practice."