

# *News From the Dharma Realm*

## *Questions and Answers at a Society of Friends Center*

*The following is a sample of questions posed to the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua and his impromptu answers during lectures at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Center for study and Contemplation; and the Philadelphia Buddhist Association, Pennsylvania, in March, 1989.*

1) QUESTION: HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR ECOLOGY AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT?

ANSWER: People should model themselves after the earth. The earth produces the myriad things: animals, plants and the teeming creatures. The earth, on the other hand, models itself after heaven. It is said, "Heaven covers me from above, while the earth sustains me from below." Recently a section of ozone has been destroyed in the Arctic Circle, and there is incredible heat all around that area. That is a case in point of humans destroying the ecological equilibrium and the protective function of heaven and earth.

Heaven goes on to model itself after nature. Here, "nature" means the intrinsic truth that underlies all phenomena. As the eternal life-force, it is neither increased nor decreased. You could call it the Buddhanature, which is found equally and pervasively among all living beings. It's not the case that Buddhas are intrinsically higher than living beings. Rather, it's a question of whether one has wisdom or not. The Buddha has returned to the source and recovered his original nature; living beings are covered over by desire and so have lost touch with their original wisdom. The ultimate way to rescue the environment is to return to a state of innocence and truth, and by not engaging in fighting, selfishness, avarice and deceit.

2) QUESTION: DO ALL RELIGIONS SHARE SIMILAR TENETS?

ANSWER: Yes, all religions share similar truths. You see that I wear Buddhist robes, yet actually I do the work of all religions. Not only am I not opposed to other religions, I believe in and honor them. All people have the same fundamental nature. People from all countries and races share an identical source of wisdom. However, just as there are the different flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, pungent and salty, so too, people have different preferences and choose different religions to suit their own propensities and needs.

3) QUESTION: IS HUMAN NATURE GOOD, EVIL, OR NEUTRAL?

ANSWER: Let's take the analogy of a seed. Basically, the seed is a good seed. After we plant it in the soil, it may sprout or it may shrivel up, or it may sprout but bear no fruit. People are like that, too. Their nature is fundamentally wholesome. However, it varies due to external influences and environmental conditioning.

"When it draws near to rouge, it becomes red;  
When it draws near to ink, it turns black."

If children are brought up near virtuous adults, they are very likely to become virtuous people. If they are reared among thieves, they themselves will turn out to be unruly. People's nature is basically good. This intrinsic wholesome nature can be called the Buddhanature, or one's heaven-given nature. But environmental conditions come to bear, and according to the quality of their experiences, people will turn out either good or bad. Nowadays, children have a terrible teacher at home. Is it their parents? No. Their siblings? No. Then who is this terrible teacher? It's the T.V.! The T.V. teaches children how to kill, set fires, abuse drugs, rob, and cheat. We have paid so much attention to material progress that we have almost completely overlooked the basics of personality development.

4) QUESTION: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TRUE WISDOM AND WORLDLY INTELLIGENCE?

ANSWER: Lao Dz said in the Dao De Jing: "When the Great Path is abolished, humaneness and righteousness come forth. When there is great wisdom, great deceit also arises." People possessing wisdom pursue a proper path. They don't take side-paths or devious ways. Those lacking wisdom may be very clever and crafty. They scheme for their own advantage at the expense of harming others. Moreover, they are skilled in argument and rationalization, and so they make something sound good when in fact it is unprincipled. For example, in this country there are those who are interested in making big money even if it means harming the citizens. These crafty people present convincing arguments for what they want to do, and make it all sound very good and proper.

5) QUESTION: WHAT IS FILIALITY?

ANSWER: In brief, it means repaying our parents' kindness. We want to show our respect to our parents, elders and teachers, for raising and educating us. Filial respect is the root of all virtue. It is the foundation for being human.

6) QUESTION: IF CHILDREN ARE NOT FILIAL, SHOULD THEIR PARENTS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR TEACHING THEM ABOUT FILIAL RESPECT?

ANSWER: Parents should not demand that their children be filial. Instead, they should act as good examples for their children. If you yourself can become a good model, your children will learn from your conduct and naturally become filial and respectful.

7) QUESTION: IS THERE ANY MERIT TO RECITING "HOMAGE TO THE WONDERFUL DHARMA FLOWER SUTRA"? WHAT MERIT AND VIRTUE DOES THE T'IENTAI SCHOOL HAVE AND HOW DOES IT APPLY TO OUR DAY AND AGE?

ANSWER: Reciting "Homage to the Wonderful Dharma Flower Sutra" is better than not reciting anything at all — wouldn't you agree? But it would be much better if you could recite the text of the Sutra. That way you would get to understand the meaning of the Sutra. As to the T'ien Tai School, since I did not found the school I don't really know the extent of its merit and virtue, but it's probably as profuse as the number of sand grains in the Ganges River.

8) QUESTION: THERE'S A PASSAGE IN THE SIXTH PATRIARCH SUTRA, Chapter 3, "DOUBTS AND QUESTIONS" that goes like this:

"If the person of the East merely purifies his mind, he is without offenses. Even though one may be of the West, if his mind is impure he is at fault. The person of the East commits offenses and recites the Buddha's name, seeking rebirth in the West. If the person in the West commits offenses and recites the Buddha's name, in what country does he seek rebirth? BASED UPON THIS QUOTE SOME PEOPLE ARGUE THAT THE SIXTH PATRIARCH DISCOURAGED PEOPLE FROM RECITING THE BUDDHA'S NAME. IS THAT A CORRECT INTERPRETATION OF THE SUTRA'S MEANING?"



*The Ven. Master Hua and Professor Men yi-Ping were invited to host a symposium on 'Buddhism and Ethics, at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Center for Study and Contemplation near Philadelphia, from March 5 to 9, 1989. There were two public lectures, "Renewal of Virure" and "Virure in Action," as well as workshops on Chan meditation, and a seminar on the common bonds found in the teachings of Buddhism, Confucianism and Christianity.*

ANSWER: No, The Sixth Patriarch was telling people not to seek outside for answers. He wasn't putting down the Dharma door of reciting the Buddha's name. In fact, true recitation of the Buddha's name is just true Ch'an sitting. And true Ch'an sitting is just recitation of the Buddha's name. Someone who insists that a certain method is right or wrong hasn't yet understood the meaning of either Ch'an or the Pure Land. An ancient master said, "If one practices both Ch'an and the Pure Land, one is like a tiger with horns.

In this life one is a teacher of people, and in the future one will become a Buddha and a Patriarch."

Actually, Ch'an and the Pure Land can be practiced simultaneously. The two go hand in hand, and do not impede one another at all. If you recite the Buddha's name in motion, you can meditate in stillness. If you meditate in motion, you can recite the Buddha's name in stillness. Movement and stillness are one and non-dual. Both Ch'an and Pure Land are methods taught by the Buddha. To insist that one method is right while another is wrong is the same as slandering the Buddha. The Sixth Patriarch made his statement to break the attachments of the people of his time. He wasn't saying that one method was right or that the other was wrong. In general, if you are without attachments, any Dharma door is right. But if you have attachments, then all Dharma doors are incorrect.

## *In the Eastern Pure Land the Lotus Flower Opens and the Proper Dharma Buddhist Academy Perpetuates the Buddha's Wisdom: History of Eastern Purity Monastery*

*This is the first of a series of articles about Dharma Realm Buddhist Association's most recently established branch monastery, Eastern purity Monastery(東淨寺) in Hualien, Republic of China.*



*Eastern Purity Monastery:*

Eastern Purity Monastery, located at Hwa Gang Mountain in Hualien, was established in the fourth year of the Republic when faithful Buddhists amassed funds to combine the two monasteries located on this site—Eastern Plateau Monastery and Pure Light Monastery into one, which they named Eastern Purity (東淨寺).

After that, many years passed and by the thirty-fourth year of the Republic, the monastery had aged and fallen into disrepair. That year, Great Master Pu Chin (Universal Reverence) came from Yueh Mei Mountain in Chiling and became Abbot. He worked at renovating the Monastery as well as widely propagating the Dharma. Those of the fourfold assembly gathered in great numbers and in the thirty-fifth year of the Republic, the Hualien Branch of the Buddhist Association was formed and Master Pu Chin was named its first President. Because during the ensuing two years (from the thirty-sixth through the thirty-eighth years of the Republic) the Master was kept extremely busy with traveling and teaching and transforming living beings, he gave over his duties in administrating the Monastery to a layman named Tseng Pu Syin, who was a graduate of Japan's Dug Jing Jyu Je University. Mr. Tseng was a lay disciple of Elder Master De Lin (Forest of Virtue) of Yueh Mei Mountain. Shortly after he assumed his position, Hualien had a major earthquake and the monastery was demolished. Many people died during that earthquake. The former superintendent of the Monastery went about collecting offerings and prepared to rebuild the Monastery. At that time many laypeople and virtuous supporters exerted

their utmost efforts in helping him. The Abbot Pu Chin returned from his far-reaching travels, and after many years, the Monastery was rebuilt in an even finer version.

In the forty-third year of the Republic, \$200,000 in funds was collected for the building of a Stupa. It took ten years to complete the two-phased building project. When finished in the fifty-second year of the Republic, the Stupa stood more than thirty feet high with ten tiers that were lit day and night. The light emanated forth with a radiance like that of a transparent crystal stupa. It is truly a sight rarely seen in the Republic of China or anywhere.

After Dharma Master Shau Hwei ( Perpetuating Wisdom 紹慧 ) took up duties as Superintendent of the Monastery, she rebuilt the entire monastic complex with the help of faithful donors. When completed, the Buddhahall, made entirely of marble inside and out, was lustrous and magnificent. The Abbot, involved in research and writing, passed the administration of the Monastery on to Dharma Master Shau Hwei. When the Abbot retired at fifty-four, years of age, Dharma Master Hwei became Abbot.

Dharma Master Shau Hwei, while continuing to build up the Monastery, also maintained her own cultivation. In addition, she hosted a precept transmission, offered aid and support to the handicapped, the poor, orphans, widows, and so forth. She was active in various kinds of rescue and care; she took on heavy responsibilities and carried out many duties. She came to be well-respected by those within Buddhism and by the non-Buddhist community as well.

## *History of Eastern Purity Monastery*

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### *The Conditions that Led to Offering the Monastery*

It is night. In that big marble hall can be seen a solitary left-home person silently bowing with great sincerity. The night is still and although she is silently bowing, her mind is not at rest. "What am I going to do? Who shall I give the responsibility to? The traditional monastic policy is that the Abbotship should be transmitted from teacher to disciple. But my disciples... There are some laypeople, of course, but only two or three left-home disciples and they are too young. They can't take the suffering and have chosen to live in small, pure abodes. Besides, they do not have the qualifications needed to be Abbot.

"Although a certain large monastery wants to take this monastery as a branch, that is not really what I want to see happen. It should go to someone who is like the Monastery itself; stable, solid, and magnificent. The one who takes it should be honest and reliable; one who reveres the Buddha's precepts. He should be a cultivator. Only in that way can the Dharma be propagated to help the world and the lamp of the Buddha be perpetuated. If I offer this monastery to an inappropriate person or group, then I will be making a serious mistake in cause and effect and will cause living beings to become even more lost and confused. If I were to do that, how could I face the generations of Patriarchs? How could I face the sincere laity?"

When she thought of the laity, there was a knot in her heart. Such a wholesome group of devotees. They could never stand to see their teacher, Master Hwei, short of help. They have extended their every effort to attend the daily recitations and Dharma assemblies and to share in the work of maintaining the Monastery, even to the point of setting aside their family obligations during the New Year in order to come to the Monastery and help. She should respond to their dedication by guiding them up another flight of stairs—helping them progress on the path toward Buddhahood. But although she had been a left-home person for more than thirty years, she had never studied anywhere else, except for two years training under the Venerable Master Tse Hang. And once her kind teacher passed away, she was very much alone. When she was young, the Second World War was in progress and she was from a poor farm family. What opportunity was there for such a child to receive an education? She felt her wisdom and talents were insufficient. She wished a lofty Sanghan with greater wisdom and virtuous practice could lead her and the disciples to progress further.

She had put thirty years into planning and constructing the Monastery to bring it to what it is today: a viable Way-place. But here it was, such a big place with no cultivators in it. What was the use of having such a big place, anyway?

"Wei Tou Bodhisattva," she thought, as she silently bowed, "I did my part and built the Monastery. Saving beings is your responsibility. I'm not going to pay any attention. Why don't you lead some people to shave their hair and leave the home-life? You wear golden shoes; you should save people. I'm going to put a pair of scissors under your feet. Hurry up and cross some people over!"



*Divine Light Stupa at Eastern Purity Monastery*

Day and night, Dharma Master Shau Hwei was troubled by her concern for the future of the monastery, even to the point that she expressed her frustration in a silent struggle with the Venerable Dharma Protector Wei Tou Bodhisattva.