

The Bodhi Mirror



Introducing Bhikshuni Heng Yi

Bhikshuni Heng Yi (Kuo Li), 69, left the home-life in 1958 in Hong Kong at Western Bliss Monastery. She now lives in Tse Hsing Monastery, Da Yu Mountain, one of the Venerable Master's Way-places. In order to reach the monastery from Hong Kong, one must first take a one-hour ferry ride, then ride a bus for another hour, and finally hike for more than an hour up the mountain. The isolation of the monastery and its scenic location provide a serene environment that is ideal for cultivation.

While Dharma Master Yi was still a lay person, after she took refuge with the Venerable Master, she worked hard for the monastery, cultivating barren ground and planting crops. She gave rise to many afflictions, however, because of the lack of manpower at the monastery and various obstructions. In order to eradicate her karmic obstacles, she wanted to burn her entire body as an offering to the Buddha on Amitabha Buddha's birthday.

The Venerable Master asked her, "So, you want to burn yourself. Aren't you afraid of pain?" She replied that she didn't know. Under the guidance of her good knowing advisor, she did not carry out her plans. Later she read the Sutra of Ten Demonic Obstacles and realized that she was undergoing the "affliction of phenomena" obstacle. Everything is impermanent. As a result, she brought forth the resolve to leave the home-life. She shaved her head on Shakyamuni Buddha's birthday.

Shortly after she left the home-life, the Venerable Master moved to the United States to propagate the Buddhadharma. At that time, only she and a few older Bhikshunis lived in the Hong Kong Way-place. Before leaving for the States, the Venerable Master expressed his concern that they would lose their resolve, because their mind for the Way was not

firm. Dharma Master Heng Yi replied, "Don't worry! We will not retreat!" And in fact, she has not. She has remained at Tse Hsing Monastery for almost forty years, planting vegetables and taking care of temple business.

In the summertime, there are many snakes around the monastery. Although the snakes are not harmful, people are afraid of them and often kill the snakes. Dharma Master Yi says that one snake kept returning, although they chased it away many times and once even took it far away. They didn't know what to do. The Venerable Master instructed them to put the snake in his bowl. Oddly enough, when the snake was in the bowl, it couldn't move. They told the snake that if it kept coming back, they would kick it out of Hong Kong! From then on, the snake did not reappear.

Dharma Master Yi recites the Great Vajra Sutra and the Shurangama Mantra every day. The Great Vajra Sutra comprises six hundred volumes, and she has recited the entire set more than ten times. She only leaves Tse Hsing Monastery to participate in Dharma assemblies, such as the Buddha's Birthday at the Buddhist Lecture Hall in Happy Valley. Despite her age, she carries more than one hundred kilos of supplies with her each time she returns to the monastery from Hong Kong. She carries the supplies on the ferry, and then on the bus, and then up more than one hundred steps as she climbs the mountain to return home. Her hard work and vigorous cultivation have kept her strong and healthy in both body and spirit.

