

# *Don't just Stand on the Sides and Watch!*

*-Dharma Talk by Venerable Abbot Hua August 4, 1982*

The Sangha members in the Bodhimanda attend the seven-day sessions in order to seek what is basically unable to be sought and to find what basically cannot be found. Being able to encounter these supreme and wonderful seven-day sessions, everyone certainly must always be attentive to them and realize their importance. People shouldn't ever become lax or lazy at any time. From limitless kalpas past until now, that's been the problem. People are always trying to be lazy and to steal some time to rest. It has by now become a fierce habit. In this lifetime, having encountered the supreme and wonderful conditions which make it possible to meet up with the Proper Dharma, some people still feel it is not as good as taking a rest. Taking a rest seems like the most wonderful thing to do. But in fact, that notion is wrong. The reason people have such thoughts is just because from measureless kalpas until now, they have been casual to the point that they are now stuck with a deeply engrained habit. Although they initially bring forth the Bodhi mind, they still continue to try to find ways to be lazy. Someone who has truly brought forth the Bodhi mind and who has been able to encounter the opportunity to practice the Proper Dharma in a pure Way-place, would be willing not to eat, not to wear clothes, not to sleep, but would not be willing not to attend the sessions. Even though these three--food, clothing, and shelter--are essential to life and health, are what people cannot separate from, still, one who is truly resolved on Bodhi can separate from all of them for the sake of an opportunity to encounter these sessions.

Left-home people should have that kind of resolve and so should lay people. Lay people cannot just say, "It is the job of left-home people to cultivate. But I am a lay person, so I can just stand on the sides and watch." To be a layperson who stands idly by while the Sangha diligently works is not appropriate behavior. Lay people have not yet encountered the opportunity to leave the home-life, so they should be even more diligent than left-home people. That's the right attitude to have. A layperson shouldn't think, "I live as a house-holder, so I can be sloppy. It doesn't matter." One cannot be that way.

During any session, the degree of people's sincerity is evident in the manner in which they conduct themselves. If they are not sincere, then no matter what they do, it will be just as if they were following along with the crowd. Just standing there to answer the roll call is not evidence of any true skill. You should bring forth great shame and try hard to change your faults and reform yourself so you become a new person. That is the correct way to be. You shouldn't always rationalize for yourself. Don't always act as your own defense attorney, saying, "I haven't left home yet, so I don't need to be as diligent as left-home people." Since you haven't yet left the home life, you should be even more diligent. There's no such thing as obtaining anything good without working for it. There's also no such principle as accomplishing Buddhahood without cultivating.

Now that you have encountered a session, you should take part in it and attend. This opportunity is so rare! From beginningless time until now you have not been able to meet such Dharma. As it's said:

One meets it face to face  
And loses it at an arm's length.

But now in this life, since you have met up with such an opportunity, you should stop floundering in the bitter sea of suffering. Turn your head and reach the other shore. You should quickly do what has to be done.

*-to be continued*