

Bright Star Luminous Cloud

The Life of a Simple Monk



by Fu Zhiying



雲日
水月

BRIGHT STAR
LUMINOUS CLOUD

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Promote the
Dharma
through culture



Foster talents through



education

世界佛教美術辭典

基本資料搜集及篩選

1. 條目名稱挑選、收錄
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入電腦匯整相關條目參考資料
(印出單一條目彙總表)

進出撰寫

進行圖片篩選
(彩色圖片)

入撰寫

圖

及體例



Benefit society



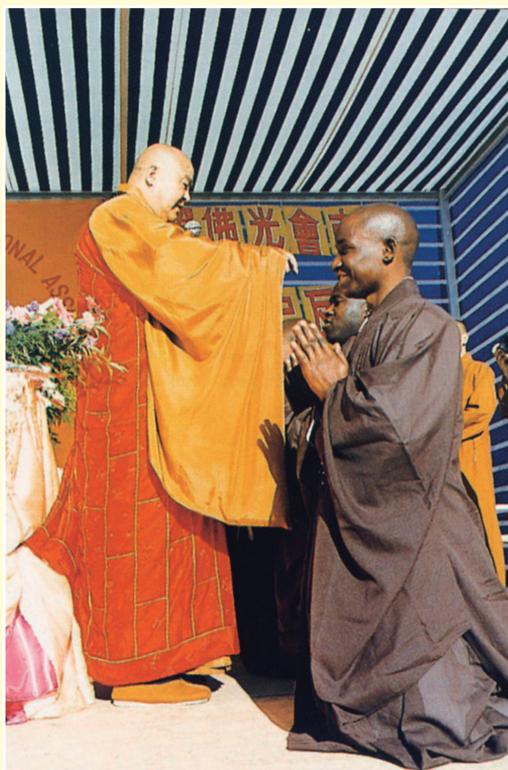
through charity



*Purify the
Human
mind through
cultivation*



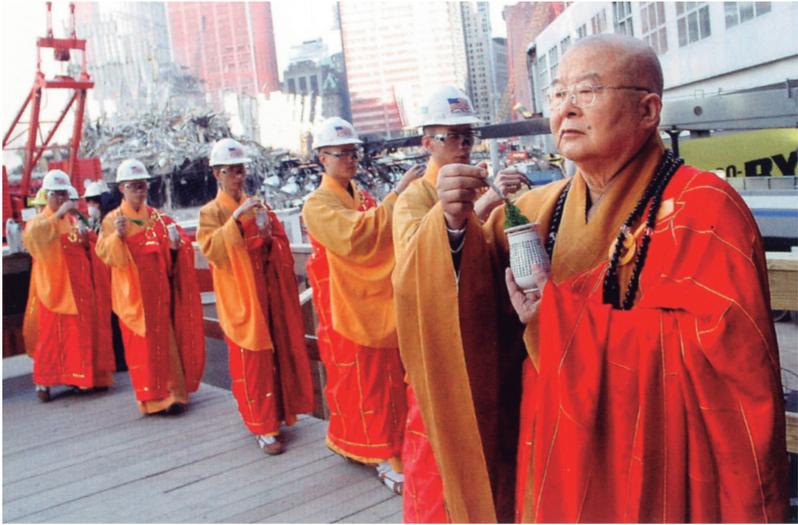




Ordains the first-ever Buddhist monastics
in Africa, 1994.



Venerable Master Hsing Yun leading disciples in walking meditation.



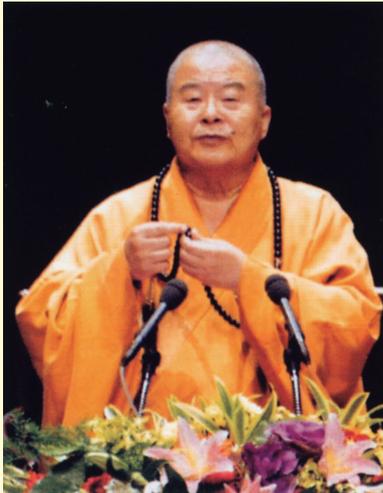
Conducting a chanting service for victims at New York's World Trade Center site after the September 11 attack, 2001.



The abbot of the Dhammakaya Foundation in Thailand escorts Hsing Yun for a tour of the grounds, 1994.

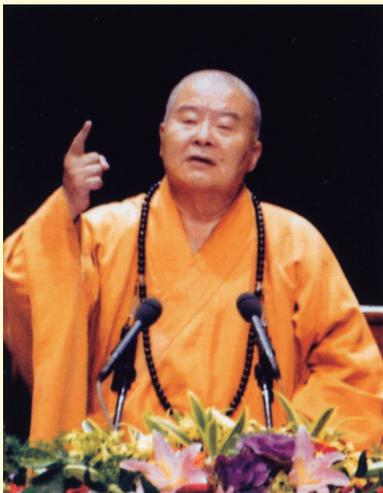
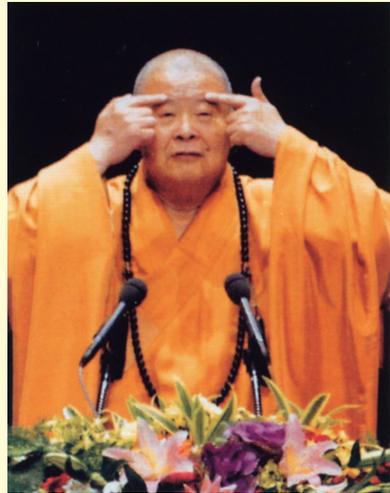


A historical meeting between two religions-the Master greeted by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II at Vatican City.



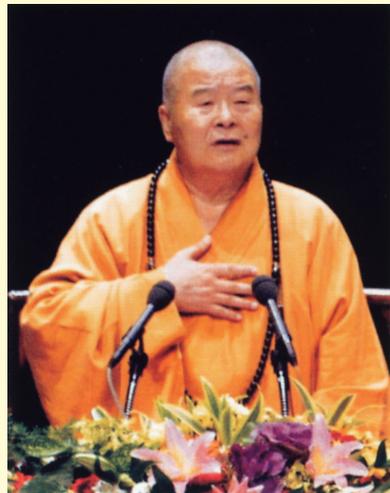
The twelve links of dependent origination are like rosary beads that have been threaded together.

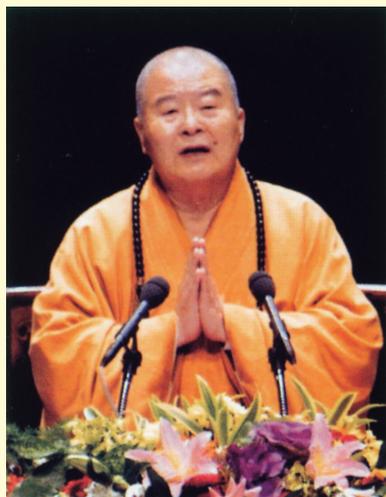
Eyebrows! They may seem useless, but are actually extremely useful.



A straightforward mind means the essence of Chan expressed with one finger.

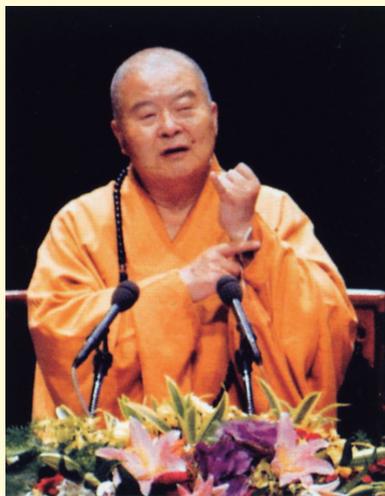
Ask yourself if you have a clear conscience.





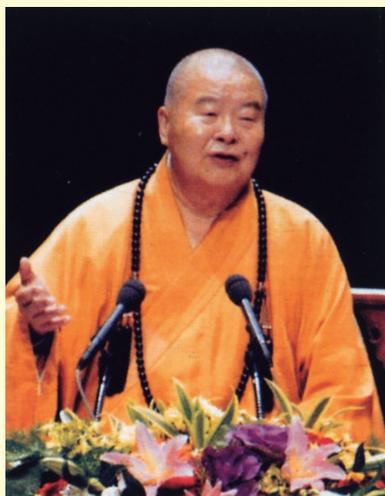
Joining palms harmonizes the ten dharma worlds within one heart.

Your pinky maybe the smallest, but it is the closest to the Buddha when you join palms.



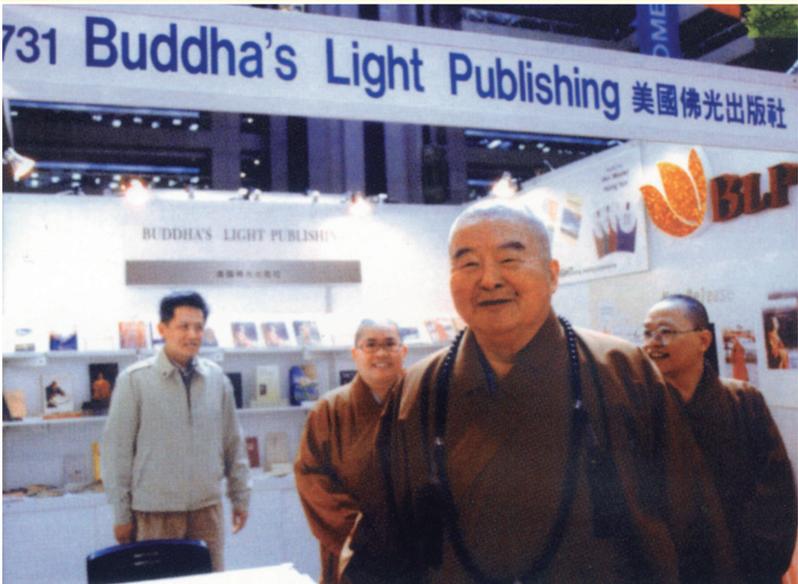
Patience is the greatest strength.

Doesn't the whole universe belong to us!





A magnificent view of Hsi Lai Temple, U.S.A



Buddha's Light Publishing exhibits books in languages other than Chinese at the Taipei International Book Exhibition held at Taipei World Trade Center (February 1, 2002).

Bright Star, Luminous Cloud

The Life of a Simple Monk

Introduction

This biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun, originally written in Chinese by Fu Chi-Ying and translated into English by Robert H. Smitheram Ph. D., will be of great interest to anyone interested in learning about the Buddha, his teachings and how they are relevant to today's society. You can learn about the Buddha by reading about the influence of the Buddha in the Master's life; you can learn about the Buddha's teachings by observing how they are lived out in the life of Venerable Master Hsing Yun and you can learn their significance to today's society by seeing how Venerable Master Hsing Yun has applied them in his work of teaching the Dharma to the world.

As he moved from novice to fully ordained monk Venerable Master Hsing Yun never stopped being a simple monk who wanted to share the Dharma. He began to focus on the modernization and expansion of Buddhism with the objective of taking Buddhism from the mountain top back into the city and from the monasteries back into large and small temples throughout Taiwan that would be frequented by busy people going about earning a daily living.

He started with a small, ill-kept temple in Ilan, in Northern Taiwan, and later built Fo Guang Shan, a huge, beautiful, efficiently run and exquisitely maintained monastery in Kaohsiung, in the Southern part of Taiwan. Fo Guang Shan is the hub of the Venerable Master's Dharma wheel from which has grown temples on all five

continents, where all are welcomed to share in the Dharma joy that the Master and his disciples so abundantly provide.

In keeping with his philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism, Venerable Master Hsing Yun's temples are built to be more than places where one goes to pay homage to the Buddhas. He believes that temples should contain libraries, art galleries, museums, dining halls, information centers and conference rooms. His temples are offerings to the communities in which they are located as well as offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Visit any of the temples founded by Venerable Master Hsing Yun in Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, or South America and devotees and disciples of Venerable Master Hsing Yun will welcome you with the greatest of respect, which is how the Venerable Master himself would welcome you.

Louvenia Ortega, Assistant Editor
Buddha's Light Publishing



***A Forerunner in the "Blue Ocean Strategy,"
The Pioneer in "Humanistic Buddhism"***

I. "Strategy" and "Model"

It was twelve years ago that the first biography of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Handing Down the Light*, appeared in print, an event which set a magnificent record for the publishing world. That story of Hsing Yun's teaching the Dharma for the benefit of human beings as told by Fu Zhiying warmed the hearts of millions of readers at home and abroad.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of Fo Guang Shan's founding, as well as the Venerable Master's own 80th birthday, and so Fu Zhiying has exerted her writing skills once more to author *Bright Star, Luminous Cloud: Life of a Simple Monk*, a book which records the Venerable Master's lifetime mission both in terms of the broadness of its vision and the exactness of its details.

This biography thus represents an even more moving and continued record of the "Four Great Objectives" as promoted by the Venerable Master Hsing Yun since the earliest beginnings of Fo Guang Shan: to propagate the Dharma through culture, to foster talent through education, to benefit society through charity, and to purify the human mind through cultivation. As my academic background lies in the field of economics and management, I would like to pose a question in terms with which I am familiar: What "economic strategy" and what "business model" has the

Venerable Master Hsing Yun employed in creating these globe-spanning "business ventures" as a part of Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA)?

More specifically, I would ask:

- * How was Hsing Yun able to transform the ideas of Buddhism into principles that everyone could approach?
- * How was Hsing Yun then able to transform these principles into a specific model to be followed?
- * How was Hsing Yun further able to manage such a huge organization with such consummate order?
- * Then again, how was Hsing Yun able to accomplish Fo Guang Shan's generational succession, turning over his abbot's position to his successor at the age of fifty-eight? And furthermore, how was he able to create an even greater, open space for Buddhism even after he had relinquished his office?
- * Finally, how was Hsing Yun also able to apply the power of his aspirations, his spiritual connections, and his virtuous conduct, to seemingly "out of nothing" have Buddhism radiate outwards from just one spot, one place, and one country, and spread around the globe?

II. The Blue Ocean Strategy of Value Innovation

The books *Blue Ocean Strategy* and *Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of Hsing Yun*, published by Commonwealth Publishing Company in August of last year, supply the key answer, and their publication immediately garnered the attention and affirmation of various groups in society.

The "blue ocean" in the title of the first book is not a political slogan, but rather a metaphor for the sense of limitless opportunity, suggesting the vastness that stretches from horizon to horizon of the blue oceans. It is just such a place that awaits the appearance of ambitious seafarers who seek their fortunes on the open sea.

As the book *Blue Ocean Strategy* points out, no enterprise can maintain its dominance forever, but there is a strategy that can defeat this fate by "going beyond the red sea of bloody competition and the zero-sum game to create an uncontested market space and exploit the business opportunities of the blue ocean."

Thus, the "blue ocean strategy" essentially means a break from the malignant nature of traditional competition by stimulating the enterprise (or organization) to seek out a totally new imaginative space and direction for development. Enterprises should no longer stick to one set market, nor fight from a besieged stronghold, much less keep a stranglehold on its old markets and old products; rather, enterprises should courageously establish alternative areas of operation, seeking out other markets and other life-giving resources. It is here in these newly created environments attained through value innovation that enterprises can truly demonstrate their unique qualities. In formulating a "blue ocean strategy," one must employ the "four actions framework": (1) Which factors that are considered customary by others in the field can be "eliminated"? (2) Which factors that are unnecessary can be "reduced"? (3) Which

factors can be "raised" above the standard of others in the field? And (4) Which factors can be "created" that are not offered by others in the same field? (1) and (2) economize on cost and expand demand; while (3) and (4) emphasize "differentiation" and "new value" as a way of increasing one's value.

In fact, Humanistic Buddhism has expanded by quietly employing these "blue ocean" strategies over a long period of time. With Hsing Yun personally setting the example, Fo Guang Shan has:

- * always endeavored to develop "new markets" in the area of religion;
- * not competed with other religions, making the issue of "competition" irrelevant;
- * created a new demand for its followers and society, seeking to maintain its leading position;
- * simultaneously kept both the faith of its followers and the trust of society;
- * standardized its training of personnel and its operational system.

III. The Hsing Yun Model

Upon reading *Bright Star, Luminous Cloud*, you will discover that in promoting Humanistic Buddhism, Hsing Yun's intentions, methods, and effectiveness not only match the "blue ocean strategy," they even surpass it. It is precisely this form of promotion and its methods that come to represent the "Hsing Yun model" that is so widely admired around the world today.

This is why *Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of*

Hsing Yun is both a religious version and a Chinese language version of the "blue ocean strategy," but more accurately stated, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun has been a pioneer and leader in the "blue ocean strategy" for half a century.

In my comments to the book *Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of Hsing Yun*, I have cited many examples of such evidence as noted by its author the Ven. Man Yi:

- * The language Hsing Yun uses to explain the Buddhist teachings is oriented in the human condition. The Buddhist teachings he gives are not dogmatic, nor do they contain any mystical discussion of metaphysics, neither do they popularize supernatural powers or miracles. He just begins with the human point of view in a practical and sincere way, so that through his instructions, people can obtain insight and comfort.
- * Hsing Yun excels at drawing upon analogies for Buddhist teachings, and he often employs stories and contemporary issues as a way of explaining its profound ideas, so that people understand easily and generate faith in Buddhism.
- * Hsing Yun explanations on the Buddhist teaching have a clear line of reasoning that is coherent from beginning to end. He speaks of what is essential in succinct terms, for he neither digresses from the main topic nor argues verbosely.
- * Hsing Yun employs both wit and humor in his teachings, and it often happens that his command of the material leads to a difficult question being answered in a single

sentence.

- * Hsing Yun is consistent in word and deed and his word can be trusted, for he has always kept his promises throughout his life. The instructions he gives on Buddhist teachings are all derived from his own personal experience, which is why his words can be so convincing.
- * In speaking, Hsing Yun is all-encompassing, objective, and pertinent, covering every aspect of an issue, which is why he can always please his audiences.
- * As a person, Hsing Yun is compassionate and generous. From a young age, he had learned to "speak kindly of others," and so he never rashly criticizes or scolds other people, always giving others the benefit of the doubt. His understanding and generous nature invariably gives others the impression of being bathed in a spring breeze, and people who have had contact with him never fail to enjoy his presence or to be moved by his sincerity.
- * Hsing Yun has championed the idea "improving income through new Buddhist enterprises" by combining faith with business enterprise. This enables the population of Buddhist believers to gradually become more "youthful" and "knowledgeable," marking a dramatic change in the impression of Buddhism most people have had in the past.
- * Hsing Yun was the first to instill a dynamic atmosphere by inaugurating "multi-faceted" activities, which propelled the flourishing development of various activities involving public and private organizations. In particular, by relying upon these activities, he was able to fully employ the teaching function in which "the activity itself preaches the message," enabling Buddhists to become

engaged with society and thereby foster an atmosphere of goodness throughout society. But not only that, Hsing Yun has even extended this effort internationally, enabling people of all Five Continents to become acquainted with Chinese culture because of Fo Guang Shan.

IV. Rising Above, Going Beyond, and Transcending

To sum it up, the Venerable Master has courageously brought reform to the bad practices of traditional Buddhism, and this had enabled Buddhism to break free of its old-fashioned backwardness; so that it now "advances with the times" to become something different from the others and more relevant to people's lives, seeing what others cannot see and doing what they cannot do or dare not do. This is precisely "value innovation" as articulated in the "blue ocean strategy." It is these methods that increase Humanistic Buddhism's competitiveness and distinctiveness, and they also represent the greatest force that can bring upward movement to a Taiwan society caught in a downward spiral.

The source of these methods is to be found in Hsing Yun himself, and I continually ask myself: What abilities does this religious leader possess that has enabled him to become the pioneer in "Humanistic Buddhism" and a forerunner in the "blue ocean strategy"? I have observed that Hsing Yun is endowed with six abilities:

- 1.) outstanding perception
- 2.) keen insight

- 3.) powerful persuasiveness
- 4.) unswerving implementation
- 5.) tremendous expansiveness
- 6.) selfless vitality

These six leading abilities correspond perfectly with the understanding I had of Hsing Yun ten years ago. At that time, my description of him was:

- * A decisive religious reformer who practices what he preaches.
- * A compassionate originator who popularizes Buddhist ideals.
- * A caring educator who promotes knowledge.

Hsing Yun's achievements cannot be credited to chance, his sense of "mission" is not merely a religious one, nor can his influence be limited to Taiwan alone. Indeed, Hsing Yun's contributions have already risen above religion, gone beyond Taiwan, and transcended time and space.

He belongs to the entire Chinese community both at home and abroad, and he also belongs to the whole of humanity.

In 1949, a twenty-three year-old monk from Mainland China named "Wu Che" came to Taiwan without a penny to his name or any knowledge of the Taiwanese dialect. However, his mind was focussed and his purpose was clear, and after expending a half century of effort, he

has developed this all-pervasive realm of Humanistic Buddhism. "I walk alone among a thousand mountains,/ My shadow pervades the Four Seas!/" Perhaps this in part gives us a portrait of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun in miniature. In 2006 he reached the age of eighty, and that young monk of twelve in Yangzhou long ago now forms a part of "the bright star and luminous cloud of a simple life."

Like the clarity of a bright star;
Like the grace of a luminous cloud;
Like such simple glory;
And the perfection of life.

Gao Xijun, Honorary Professor at the University of Wisconsin
Taipei, March 1, 2006

Chapter

One

A Rare Moment in Time

Amid the chaos of civil war in 1949, the forty-eighth generation lineage-holder of the Linji School of Chan Buddhism crosses the sea, bringing the lamp of Buddhist learning to Taiwan. A penniless stranger unable to speak the local dialect, suffering hunger and cold, is jailed, attacked and rejected; yet with commitment and patience, he never wavers from his mission to revive Chinese Buddhism.

History is a river; culture is a boat. Shaped by material civilization and imprinted with the traces of spirit, such boats have carried generations of great heroes and charismatic individuals.

There is one river of history that traces its source to India. Spanning a vast course of some 2,554 years, this river has at times surged forth with exuberant power, and has drained away in a quiet whimper during other periods. Eighty years ago, a small sailboat was quietly launched into this river; and forty years ago, that same boat was approaching the port of great opportunity. Though forty years or even eighty years is but a short moment on this river of history some 2,554 years long, this small sailboat exhibits a dynamic and majestic force that has carried its burdens through the test of time. Connected with history and aware of the future, this sailboat has transformed itself into a great ship, that rides the waves swiftly with full confidence towards the "other shore," embracing the morning sunlight of this new century.

The calendar now turns to the year 2006, and the mood is one filled with an excited feeling of joy, as each one of the millions of Fo Guang Shan members await with bated anticipation: this is that rare moment in time, the year that will witness the fortieth anniversary of Fo Guang Shan, as well as the eightieth birthday of its founder, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

Life's Three Forms of Immortality

When seen in terms of its internal conditions, the development of any organization is absolutely and intimately connected with the

character of its leader. Although the founder of Fo Guang Shan, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, has time and time again humbly referred to himself as a simple monk, and yet the test of time has already made his position in history a matter beyond any doubt.

Born into a poor family in China's northern Jiangsu Province, his ordination as a monk at the age of twelve could indeed be the result of causes and conditions in previous lives. Having withstood the rigorous trials of the monastic life, he developed a solid foundation in Buddhist learning and formed a character of steadfast compassion. Then amid the chaos of civil war in 1949, this forty-eighth generation lineage-holder of the Linji School of Chan Buddhism crossed the sea, bringing the lamp of Buddhist learning to Taiwan. As a penniless stranger unable to speak the local dialect, he suffered hunger and cold, was jailed, rejected and attacked ... yet with commitment and patience, he never wavered from his mission to revive Chinese Buddhism. For the next twelve years, he resided at the Lei Yin Temple in Ilan, Taiwan, where he began building a reputation. Upon founding Fo Guang Shan, he took on the arduous and difficult task of developing a new approach, which brought the core tradition of Buddhist practice to flourish in Taiwan, thus continuing the life of Buddhism. He later developed this into the Buddha's Light Order, global and all encompassing in nature. All of these developments and activities reflect his merit and wisdom; his broad connections for a positive future; as well as the depth and openness of his heart; his foresight; his commitment to Buddhism as a way of life; his profound and sincere concern for society, the nation, and humanity.... These unique qualities appear so vividly again and again over the course of Hsing Yun's so far eighty some year journey through life.

The ancients speak of the "three forms of immortality," and perhaps this concept can be applied here to explain the Hsing Yun's life.

The Legacy of Accomplishments

In its broadest sense, Fo Guang Shan is a Buddhist organization that fuses modernity with tradition, and is headquartered at Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. The composition of its membership is represented by the Seven Groups of Disciples: monks (bhiksu), nuns (bhiksuni), novice monks (shramanera), novice nuns (shramanerika), male lay practitioners (upasaka), female lay practitioners (upasika), and female learners (shiksamana). The number of its constituent organizations at present totals more than four hundred worldwide.

These constituent organizations specialize in various orders of activity. Fo Guang Shan's order of monasteries, temples, and branch temples is represented by the series of nearly two hundred Dharma centers (not including the Fo Guang Yuan missions) it has established in thirty-three countries and regions around the world. Among these, seventy-four are located in Taiwan, while one hundred and sixteen are situated in other countries. Total membership worldwide exceeds two million. The cultural sphere is represented by sixteen Buddhist colleges (that have trained more the twelve hundred monastics over the past forty years, comparing favorable to the twelve hundred and fifty monastics of the Buddha's time, and worthy of its standing as the most highly qualified and internationally oriented monastic community in the history of Buddhism); as well as seventeen libraries, nine art galleries, four universities, two senior high schools (with both academic and vocational tracks), two primary/junior high schools, four kindergartens (with nursery schools), eight adult community colleges, and one university for lay practitioners, in addition to the Buddhist City College and the Shrimala Buddhist Women's College as well as over fifty Chinese schools abroad. There are also such culture oriented institutions as the Merit Times, Buddha's Light Television, Fo Guang Publishing House, Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Gandha Samudra Culture Company, the Editorial Board of

the Buddhist Canon, and the Digital Buddhist Canon, which concentrate on Buddhist academic research and scriptural texts selection on one hand, and promote the mass popularization of Buddhism by using modern technology and the pervasive power of modern media on the other.

In the area of charity, Fo Guang Shan has instituted various charitable organizations that care for and support individuals at all stages of life, from birth to death. There are volunteer services, headed by members of the monastic community, that provide medical care, emergency care, and disaster relief inside and outside of Taiwan, as well as orphanages, convalescent retreats for seniors, housing for seniors, and mortuary gardens.

What is even more significant is that Hsing Yun established the Buddha's Light International Association in 1991, which has at present more than one hundred seventy chapters and over a thousand sub-chapters in over one hundred seventy countries and regions around the world, while total membership is approaching two million. Over the past fifteen years, BLIA has been bringing together groups from all levels of society, including business leaders, leading members of the cultural and educational profession, as well as academics, to develop a spirit of equality among the monastic and lay communities and expand the power of Buddhist followers, thereby changing the stereotype of Buddhism as something passive and outmoded. With its impressive scale, its vast influence, and its sensitivity to a broad range of issues, BLIA works hand in hand with the monastic community, like the two wheels of a cart or the two wings of a bird, and together they march down the broad avenue of propagating the Buddha's teachings (Dharma).

But Hsing Yun has always maintained the principle of devoting himself completely to Buddhism. There can be a multifaceted creativity as to how one transmits and spreads the teachings, but the spirit of the Dharma remains firm and immobile.

The Legacy of Words

There is no denying that Fo Guang Shan's undertakings in the area of broadcasting and publishing have made it the acknowledged leader in this area among all Buddhist groups. Spanning forty years of time, these media activities have continued uninterrupted, while spatially they have reached all over the world, overcoming the barrier of race, language, and culture. Hsing Yun himself has always enjoyed literature and the arts, and was able to write and edit even as a young man; he is as well a first-rate planner. Over the last fifty years, the fruits of his literary labors have produced a rich feast: his written works comprise more than two hundred categories, totaling more than five hundred volumes. His writings have been adapted for the stage, television, and the cinema; and as the internationalization of Buddhism has advanced overseas, his works have also been translated into more than twenty languages (an international translation center has been established at Hsi Lai Temple in the United States).

Undaunted by the criticism from some of the Buddhist community, he inaugurated a new trend towards a more popular style for lectures in Buddhism, and has moved the traditional Buddhist activities of scripture teachings out of the monastery and temple and into national auditoriums and onto international stages. Over the past fifty years, the holding of Buddhist lectures, teaching sessions, and grand Dharma assemblies has exceeded 4,500 in number, while total attendance at all of these activities has reached well over ten million people.

In recent years, he has promoted Buddhist chanting, art, calligraphy, and the "Sounds of the Human World Music" to bring Humanistic Buddhism to every corner of society, thereby expounding the Dharma through music and art deep within the hearts of human beings to cleanse the spirit.

Jeanne Li, the former president of the China Youth Corps, has stated her belief, that anyone who becomes connected with Hsing Yun through television or printed media, or by attending talks at

auditoriums, Dharma centers and temples, will have the same kind of feeling: that through his speeches or printed words, Hsing Yun appears like a brilliant light of loving-kindness shining on us all; that as an other-worldly monk, he undertakes the tasks of this secular world; and with compassion a, he preaches Buddhist principles for the liberation of all beings, bringing harmony to society by removing negativity and encouraging good works.

She still recalls that once Hsing Yun was invited to give a special talk at the weekly meeting for her colleagues of the China Youth Corps. On that occasion, he related an episode in which the famous poet Su Shi (Dongpo, 1037-1101 CE) tried to challenge Chan Master Foyin (1032-1098 CE) concerning a seated image of the Bodhisattva Guanyin reciting the Buddhist scriptures. Su Shi quipped, "She is the Guanyin Bodhisattva, so why does she need to recite the scripture about herself?" As Hsing Yun explained, Foyin responded immediately: "It is better to help oneself than to seek help from others," a point which greatly benefited all those attending his talk. In teaching and explaining the Dharma, Hsing Yun often draws upon all manner of fascinating and lively material with such adroitness, for he possesses that miraculous ability to open minds with his brilliant humor.

The Legacy of Moral Character

The Venerable Master Hsing Yun's attitude toward preaching the Dharma for the liberation of beings can be characterized by his apprehension for Buddhism, his practice of the Dharma, his insightful perception over handling matters, and his vow of compassion for all beings. Given the scope of his Buddhist teaching activities, the model of a founding teacher he upholds for this generation, and the position he holds in the hearts of his followers worldwide, there can be no more better title than the "Venerable Master."

This "Venerable Master" plays a pivotal role with respect

to past heritage and future development. The founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni Buddha, lived in this world for eighty years, while this year Hsing Yun will also be more than eighty. The Buddha preached the Dharma for forty-nine years, while Hsing Yun's teaching career encompasses more than fifty years. The Buddha transmitted the Dharma to the five regions of India, while Hsing Yun has transmitted the Buddha's teachings to six continents of the world. Trained in the orthodox monastic tradition, Hsing Yun has received transmissions from both the Vinaya and Chan traditions, as well as from the traditions of his Order. He transmitted the grand Dharma tradition of Mainland China to Taiwan, and from Taiwan, he has propagated it to nurture the world. Hsing Yun teaches all Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism (Tiantai, Flower Adornment [Huayan], Dharma Character [Faxiang], Three-Treatise [Sanlun], Chan, Pure Land, Vinaya, and Esoteric), having mastered and integrated all their complexities. He has raised the banner of Humanistic Buddhism and has returned to the Buddha's original intention. In this, he both retains the fundamental values of Buddhism, and keeps current with the times, bringing Buddhism to an even higher level of development and creating an eternal sense of value for Buddhism. In speaking of his dedication to education, and the revival he has brought to Buddhism, no other person is more deserving of a place in the history books.

Hsing Yun has become a model for his times, going from the individual to the group, and from the group to the universe, and then from the universe to the ages. He has integrated within himself all the schools of Buddhism, is tolerant of popular folk beliefs, and remains respectful of other religions, while constantly broadening and elevating the horizons of his mind. In 1996, the famous scholar and best-selling author Yu Qiuyu visited Taiwan, creating a whirlwind of popular interest in him at the time. Yu Qiuyu was giving speeches everywhere, but he made it a point to reserve time for a visit to Fo Guang

Shan and a meeting with Hsing Yun. Yu Qiuyu found the interview to be a deeply moving experience, later remarking that only one word could encompass his impression of the Venerable Master--great! Great in stature, great in qualifications, great in ideals, and great in the strength of his personality and his capacity of his heart, for he treats all with compassion and embraces the whole world.

The famous scholar Chai Sung-lin has given his analysis of the unique qualities of Hsing Yun's character so worthy of respect.

Firstly, Hsing Yun is a revolutionary who has courageously set about freeing Buddhism from its outmoded ways through constant innovation.

Secondly, he possesses an extraordinarily rich appreciation of democratic ideals. At the age of fifty-eight, Hsing Yun relinquished his position of abbot, demonstrating how, of all the religious organizations, Fo Guang Shan is perhaps the only one that chose a successor through democratic means.

Thirdly, he is greatly endowed with humanistic spirit, something that humanity has been sorely lacking since the advent of the 20th century. What is meant by humanistic spirit here encompasses the following special characteristics:

1.) The language he uses to express his feelings and communicate his ideas: Why are there misunderstandings and even enmity produced whenever anyone speaks nowadays? The main reasons for this include the coarseness of one's language, the poorness of one's vocabulary, the lack of clarity in one's meaning, and the crudity of one's phrasing. Now Hsing Yun possesses a rich vocabulary, with which he expresses himself with precision, while his diction is refined and easily understood.

2.) The broad scope of his loving concern: He is lovingly concerned about not only human beings, but also animals and plants, all living beings, and the great earth with its mountains and rivers.

3.) His close appreciation of his own culture and his respect

towards different cultures: In recent years, Fo Guang Shan's process of internationalization has focused on local adaptation. It is hard to find another world religious leader like Hsing Yun, given the openness of his intellectual judgment and the profundity of his concentration.

4.) A modern sense that is not attached to the familiar, but willingly accepts and learns what is unfamiliar: Hsing Yun does not confine himself to the limits of his own qualities, but is able to consider things from the perspective of others. For example, he is a Buddhist and yet is able to maintain cordial relations with other religions--his friendship with Paul Cardinal Shan Kuo-hsi, S.J., and Cardinal Sin of the Catholic Church is one example of this; though being from mainland China, most of his followers are from Taiwan; and though a male, he has always given positive support to women, sparing no effort on their behalves.

His old friend of many years Bo Yang has said, "I greatly admire and respect the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, because he is a monastic that is most unlike a monastic, an eminent monk that is most unlike an eminent monk. Buddhism speaks of 'obstruction,' but in fact, maintaining a friendship with a monastic or an eminent monk is a most frightening prospect to me, because they appear to me like some 'Buddhist obstruction;' their exalted position makes it impossible for me to see their compassion. Though a Christian, I am still quite happy to be friends with the Venerable Master Hsing Yun."

Hsing Yun is the eternal spiritual leader of Fo Guang Shan, and as if holding a bond with all living beings, he leads the millions of Fo Guang Shan members around the world down the path towards a Humanistic Pure Land.

Doing One's Duty the Best One Can

He was once asked whether he considered himself a success. He answered: "I do not consider myself successful, for only

by attaining Buddhahood can one be considered successful."

He was once asked, looking back over his eighty some years, whether all his life's dreams had been realized, or were there some things he still wished to achieve.

He answered: "Actually, I have never deliberately planned out what I should do. I have spent my life doing what I can in response to the needs of living beings as circumstances permit. When the conditions are present, one cannot help but act; but if the conditions are absent, nothing will succeed. As for my own role, I simply do my duty the best I can within the given conditions.

He was once asked, what he hoped history would say about him in the end.

He answered: "Just consider me an ordinary monk! I am just a very ordinary monk; just a monastic, that's all!"

He was once asked what kind of life he would choose for himself if he could live his life over again.

He answered: "The greatest happiness of my life is being a monk. I only hope that in my next life I can still be a monk, and even continue being a monk with every rebirth.

An Unassailable Position in History

With respect to Hsing Yun's position in history, the historian Tang Tekang thinks that there is an unavoidable sense of incompatibility, as Buddhism tries to adapt its old dogma and unchanging organizational structures developed over the past thousand years in both the Mahayana and Theravada schools, to a post-WWII era marked by the powerful rise of science and democracy on one hand, and the new life-style based on the market economy on the other. Given that reform and openness have already become worldwide trends, it is a matter of current historical inevitability that Buddhism should become modernized and catch up with current trends by opening to the world in sync with the appearance of this Asian century.

Considering what has happened in this world as a teacher of culture and history, Hsing Yun has guided the appearance of this new form of Buddhism, and we know that he has indeed become the founder of a new Buddhism for a new era.

The veteran journalist Lu Keng feels that a modernized Buddhism has not only arisen on Taiwan, but is now spreading out into the world, particularly towards the Western civilization established through Christianity. This will have profound implications for Chinese culture and world culture; "my friend Tang Tekang has called Hsing Yun the Martin Luther of Chinese Buddhism. In my mind, Hsing Yun has not only been a reformer, but also a true founder."

The reform and innovation Hsing Yun has brought to Buddhism over the decades has changed most people's negative impression of Buddhism. This is not something merely limited to the propagation of the correct teachings, but it has exerted a profound influence on Taiwan in terms of the harmony among racial groups, cultural innovation, and spiritual uplifting; it has also made considerable contributions to society as a whole. Owing to its theoretical foundations in ideas and thought, and the concrete applicability of its methods of practice, Hsing Yun's Humanistic Buddhism has finally enabled Buddhism to develop with great vitality in this modern era, blossoming forth on Taiwan in a dazzling array. As it becomes internationalized, it will proliferate with exuberant growth around the globe.

The cultural commentator Lin Ku-fang has said: "The greater expansion of knowledge often brings with it ever more and newer unknown territories; and with the advances of civilization, we conversely see more clearly that there can be no substitute for religion."

Rightly so, as the times become more turbulent, the more we need the stabilizing power of the Dharma; as nations become more chaotic, the more we need the purity of the Dharma; the more life becomes sad and painful, the more we need the joy of the Dharma; the darker the society becomes, the more we need the light of the

Dharma. As the world moves towards global development in the 21st century, humanity too is facing a tremendous challenge: social structures, life styles, models of conduct, and even moral concepts are being constantly deconstructed and reorganized, while the human spirit is now suffering an unprecedented attack. How can we bring about harmonious coexistence, mutual respect, and co-prosperity between nations, between humanity and the natural environment, and even between all sentient and non-sentient beings?

We must look to this eighty some year old Buddhist master for our answer.

Chapter

Two

*A Little Seed of Buddhahood
Descends into the Human World*

Fo Guang Shan is indeed the Pure Land, a Heaven on earth; and we must rely upon the Venerable Master to be our guide, in hopes that everyone will achieve enlightenment. Everyone has been so kind to me, but this old woman has nothing to give to you in return, so I can only offer my son as a gift to everyone.

--Madam Li-Liu Yuying

Situated roughly six miles from the city of Yangzhou, Jiangdu is the hometown of the religious heavyweight for our generation, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun. He was born in a blue-tiled household near the western side of the Xiannu Temple on the 22nd day of the seventh lunar month in 1927.

The common people for miles around Jiangdu make their living by farming, but in this Li family, the family patriarch Li Chengbao would often busy himself going from place to place with a small business, in order to make ends meet; he was also an excellent cook, who could put on a fine spread when asked to do so by relatives from time to time. The matriarch of the household was Li Yuying (nee Liu), a typical farming housewife, who would shoulder all the responsibilities for the various household chores and caring for the children whenever her husband was out and about. The Li family already had a son and daughter when Hsing Yun was born and given the name Guoshen, and with the addition of a younger brother several years later, made for a family of six. Since he was the second son born to the family, his mother nicknamed him "Second Lord."

All in all, it was a quite ordinary family for the period, and his three brothers and one sister would grow up, marry, have children, and grow old in the fullness of their time. All except for Guoshen that is, for not only was his life going to be quite exceptional, there were even some "unusual portents" that surrounded the occurrence of his birth. Before she passed away, Madam Li-Liu Yuying was once interviewed by reporters at the Yuhua Vihara in Nanjing. At the time, she was in robust health with a sprightly wit for her age. Speaking in her

thick Yangzhou accent with her grandson serving as "translator," she vividly recalled an incident relating to her second son:

When I was about to give birth to your Venerable Master, I once dreamed of a small golden figure rummaging about my bed. He didn't say anything, but I asked him, "Hey, what are you looking for?!"

Off to the side there was a white-haired old man who said: "He is looking for ears of grain!"

"There is only dried hay under my bed, how could there be any ears of grain?" I replied. But as soon as I had finished speaking, that little golden figure pulled out a single ear of grain. The white-haired man continued: "This ear of grain (dao, a pun on the word for 'way' or 'path') will surely bear fruit."

We also learn from Madam Li's stories that when the chubby baby was born, he had "one side of his face red and the other pale," while two slender red lines appeared on the middle of the upper lip, just below the nose. Reports of how "a little monster had been born to Li Chengbao's family" immediately became the topic of gossip throughout the neighborhood. So as to spare their neighbors and relatives any shock, his mother kept him locked inside with a length of rope most of the time. Fortunately, these unusual birthmarks on his face slowly disappeared around the age of two or three.

Naturally, Hsing Yun has heard these mythic-sounding tales on many occasions, though he himself retains no recollection at all about such incidents. While his mother relished telling these stories to others, he sat and listened with a smile, simply acting as a good son should, neither dismissive nor troubled by it.

Innately Hardworking and Compassionate

Speaking of his natural affinity for hard-work and perseverance, Hsing Yun once mentioned during a talk that he was already trying to do chores even at the age of five or six whenever the adults were out. On his own initiative, he would sweep the living quarters both inside and out, including picking up old leaves and clearing out the gutters; he would even clean all the ashes from the stove. He was also in the habit of getting up early in the morning with a bamboo basket on his shoulder to collect cow manure on the roads (to be used as fuel). He would exchange what he had collected for a few coins so as to lighten the economic burden shouldered by his parents.

Regarding his natural tendency of forming affinities with others through compassion, his elder sister Suhua can bear witness. Among his siblings, Hsing Yun has always shared a close and harmonious relationship with his sister three years his senior. Despite the many years of separation, more time apart than together, her words would always reveal the warm and loving affection between brother and sister, whenever she spoke about their childhood together. "From an early age he was different from us other kids," she recalled, for he never quarreled or fought with his playmates. At around three years of age, he still could not carry the candy jar, and so he would drag it into the courtyard and call out to all the neighbor kids to come and have some candy. Everyone was laughing at the Li family for raising such a "foolish child," who only knew how to give things away to others.

As she related each childhood story, Hsing Yun's elder sister could appreciate that her little brother's joining the monastic order was perhaps something predetermined from a past life. She remembers one night late in winter as the family told stories while sitting around the brazier. The adults were discussing the hardships of human life and the main character of their story was an old gentleman with a white beard, who lived in the mountains and suffered from

poverty, sickness, and hunger.... Before the story was finished, they realized that little Hsing Yun had disappeared; he was actually hiding under the table crying for the old gentleman! The adults tried to tell him that the story was made up, but he would not believe it; nor would he eat his dinner, insisting that the meal be given to the old gentleman to eat. The family could not change his mind, and so all they could do was take him to see his maternal grandfather and give him the meal to eat, and only then the boy returned home, his mind now at peace.

There was also another incident that dealt with her brother's fondness for animals that left a profound impression upon his older sister.. At the age of five, he saw a group of little chicks huddled together and shivering, having been drenched by the rain. He there-upon carried them back one by one and placed them by the burning stove to dry. There was one little chick that became so frightened that it jumped into the fire. The boy hurriedly rescued it from the flames, but nearly half of the chick's lower beak had been burned away. From then on, the boy nursed this little chick with great care. Fearing that the chick would be unable to eat any grains of rice without its lower beak, he especially dug a little hole in the ground and filled it with rice grains as a way of feeding the chick. Later on, this chick became healthy and strong, growing into a mature hen that could lay eggs.

Then came the year that she knew her brother would be returning to celebrate their mother's birthday. Suhua brought her two sons and a daughter all the way to Nanjing by train from her husband's house at Liuzhou in Guangxi province, sitting for some forty-eight hours on third-class seats so that the family could celebrate this reunion. Sitting in the Yuhua Vihara that her brother had built for their mother's retirement, she made fun of herself for being a simple peasant old woman from the countryside, but amid the wrinkles one could still see faintly the delicate beauty she had been in her prime. Having visited Hsi Lai Temple in the United States and Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan, she knew that her younger brother was now a man of great

importance and influence, but in her heart he forever would remain that sweet, ten year-old kid brother, whose dimpled cheeks would appear whenever he smiled.

An Egalitarian Gentleness of Heart

On the subject of his childhood feelings, the gentle softness of Hsing Yun's moon-shaped face becomes all the more pronounced: "I began caring more and more about animals from an early age. I remember how villagers would say that dogs can only eat one meal per day, but imagining how I would feel in their place, I could not bear them going hungry. Thus, it often happened during meals that I would come up with some excuse to carry my bowl out into the courtyard, where I would share my food with the dog. It was a time of war and famine, so sometimes there was no avoiding a scolding when the family found out; there is nothing for people to eat, how could one be feeding the dog, they would say. But I felt differently, people do not always need to eat, but a dog must be fed, because a dog cannot speak up and say it is hungry!"

When I was nine years old, a little pigeon I had been personally feeding flew away. For days I looked for its return but it never did. I was worried that without any care, the pigeon would suffer and be hungry. I was completely beside myself with sadness, and jumped into the river to end my life. I don't know whether it was because it was not my time to die, or that I had always excelled at swimming from an early age, but in any event, I was able to follow the current and float all the way to the other shore.

Some years ago, I founded the Tzu Ai Kindergarten, and raised monkeys and birds there as a way of instilling loving hearts in the children. The owner of the pet shop repeatedly warned me not to give the monkey water to drink, otherwise it would grow too quickly and not be so cute anymore. But

when I thought about the discomfort of being thirsty, I couldn't bear it so I gave the monkey water to drink every day. Indeed, it didn't take long for the monkey to grow to more than half a person's height; and when it got a little bigger, I could see how miserable it was being locked up in the cage all day, and so I released it back into the mountain forest.

The Image of Grandmother's Devotion to the Buddha

In Hsing Yun's own mind, the many stories of "gallant heroes" coming from the lips of his mother and elder sister are hardly worth mentioning; rather, it was his maternal grandmother Madam Wang, an illiterate woman who could easily recite the *Diamond Sutra* by heart and who had been a vegetarian for more than half a century, that lingers as an unforgettable memory of his childhood years. "Even now, if I close my eyes, the image of my grandmother's sincere devotion to the Buddha, even the deep lines upon her face, still appears so clearly in my mind's eye," Hsing Yun says, revealing the true depths of his feelings for her.

During a seminar on Buddhist studies, Hsing Yun gave the following remembrance of his grandmother, and how it related to the deep religious influence he himself received as a boy of only three or four years of age, just as he began to learn something about the ways of the world: "My maternal grandmother became a vegetarian at the early age of eighteen. Every morning she would get out of bed early to do her morning chanting, and though she couldn't read a single character, she could recite such Buddhist texts as the *Amitabha Sutra* and the *Diamond Sutra* by heart. Both my sister and I were influenced by her from an early age, and when I was three or four years old, I would compete with my sister in keeping the vegetarian vows. At the time I was an ignorant child who did not understand the principles behind Chinese Buddhism's emphasis on vegetarianism; all I cared about was making my grandma happy!"

It was also owing to his grandmother's devout religious faith, that a young Hsing Yun would often tag along when his sister accompanied their grandmother on visits to nearby temples to worship the Buddha. Whenever she did so, his grandmother would never fail to bring home some offerings from the Buddha altar for the children to eat, giving them a connection to the Buddha. It was also under her influence that Buddhist monastics were occasionally received at home. At a time when the horrors of war were a frequent occurrence and chaos abounded everywhere, to see how these monastics carried themselves with such a calm dignity in their elegant robes, and how they were honored and respected by the common people, gave rise to a spontaneous thought in the boy's mind: "how wonderful it is to be a monk!" By the age of ten or so, a certain monk was willing to accept him as a disciple, but before his formal induction, the boy suddenly asked, "Can my mother come along?" "No!" "Can my grandma come along?" "No!" "My sister?" The answer was still "no!" At that moment, he began to hesitate and acted a bit childishly, "then I won't go either!" Thinking about it later on, Hsing Yun felt his mischievousness on that occasion was a good thing, because later on he found out that the temple was a wealthy one, and if he had gone there, he might have possibly become a "dandy" in the Buddhist community.

Owing to her hardworking frugality, her compassion, and the pure nobility of her character, the one person Hsing Yun admired the most and cared about the most was his grandmother. After becoming a monk, he once returned home for a visit at the age of twenty, and spent some time talking with his grandmother under a tree. She was doing some needlepoint as she spoke about what would happen when she passed away, for she hoped that her grandson who was now a monk would handle all the arrangements. Unfortunately, that was the last time grandmother and grandson were ever together. When his grandmother did pass away, Hsing Yun was in Taiwan and all communication with Mainland China was cut off. So there was no way he could have kept his promise regarding the handling of her funeral. Yet

this matter still leaves him with a lingering sense of regret, given his deep affection for her; while his loving gesture of regularly sending money back to the village to support his three maternal uncles, as well as the care and support he has offered to the decedents of his grandmother, represent but a small portion of the love and kindness he received from her.

A Mother's Instructions on Wisdom

Though lacking an impressive family heritage of wealth and position, Hsing Yun is grateful that he inherited his father's peaceful honesty, while taking from his mother her gallant and upright character, in addition to the kind and gentle influence of his maternal grandmother, which have given him an endless source of wisdom throughout his life.

For generations, the Li family has lived in northern Jiangsu province, where the land is poor, the economy is depressed, and jobs are scarce. Poor families in which "the wind does the sweeping and the moon serves as a lamp" account for a large number of households. It seems that for almost everyone, the trades that employ physical labor represent the general way people make their living, while education is but the monopoly of children from a small number of gentry families. To this were added the various warlord cliques that fought amongst themselves, bringing misery to the people. With so many mouths to feed, the Li family of six was already in straightened circumstances, and had no money at all for sending their children to school for a regular education. However, his mother who was semi-literate herself did teach him how to read, giving him as well his first instructions on wisdom.

Known to all his followers as "granny," his mother suffered from poor health in her younger days, and was often bedridden. As a way of relieving his mother's boredom, Hsing Yun would often sit beside her bed and read popular Yangzhou folk tales known as "Seven

Character Meter," stories based on myths, knight errantry, and history that were composed of seven-character sentences. She would correct any mistake he made in pronunciation, and as time went on, Hsing Yun came to recognize many characters. This also developed within him an abiding interest in historical literature, as well as instilling into him the ideals of loyalty and honor. Though events have passed and times have changed over the many years, he still remembers the names and characteristics of the one hundred and eight heroes of Liangshanbo, as recorded in the classic novel the Water Margin that he learned so well as a child, and he can recite them one by one with great familiarity.

A Mother's Embrace, A Child's Heaven

From the day that he parted from his family at the age of twelve to join the Buddhist monastic order, Hsing Yun has dedicated his loving affection to the multitudes of living beings, and yet has never turned his back on the deepest instinct for love between parents and children, particularly his filial piety to his mother. During that period when all communication between Mainland China and Taiwan was cut off and there was no way of learning whether his mother was alive or dead, he would never celebrate his birthday, because one's birthday is the day a mother suffers excruciating pain in giving birth. On that day every year, he would always rise early in the morning, offer incense, and chant quietly alone in front of the Buddha, dedicating the merit of his practice to the continued happiness and longevity of his mother. Hsing Yun learned his mother was alive and doing well after the Venerable Tzu Chuang of Hsi Lai Temple in the United States was able to contact her through a roundabout process, and only then did he hold a grand Dharma celebration to especially commemorate his sixtieth birthday. A thousand members of the monastic and lay communities who had also turned sixty that year were invited to attend, in the recognition that "all parents in the world are our par-

ents, all people the same age as us are our brothers and sisters." In this way, the Buddhist spirit of filial piety was developed to its utmost expression.

In those days, when communication between Taiwan and the Mainland had not yet been restored, trying to enter Mainland China to visit relatives was harder than getting into Heaven. Instead, his mother was brought to a third country by a circuitous route, which meant that their first meeting took place at the airport in Tokyo. There was still a sense of unease despite being abroad, the fear being that their get together might be under some secret surveillance. As recalled by the Venerable Tzu Jung, who had gone along to meet the flight that day, Hsing Yun's mother was accompanied by his younger brother Guomin and his wife. Together, they met in silence, and in silence they left the airport and got into the car in silence. There were neither hugs nor any crying. Hsing Yun was struck by the power of time: his mother looked different, and they could barely understand each other when they did speak. Perhaps time had worn down her appearance, and distance had brought a sense of indifference; but this mother and son were indeed lucky, for they still had a chance to make up for all that had been lost.

Hsing Yun then made arrangements to bring his mother for a reunion in the United States, where mother and son spent the Lunar New Year together at Hsi Lai Temple, making it the first time they were able to celebrate the occasion together since he joined the monastic order. His mother told him that past Lunar New Year celebrations always included two packets of lucky money being set aside for him at home, a practice she had maintained for decades. His mother's thoughtfulness and perseverance left him deeply moved. Several years later, he brought his mother to live for a while at Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan. Pointing to the thousands of people there at the temple, his mother asked incredulously: "They all have to answer to you? " "That's right, and I'm the only one that has to answer to you," he

answered mischievously.

In the spring of his mother's ninety-fourth year, he took off from Kaohsiung on his roundabout journey to his mother's birthday party back home, and all along the way he carried the birthday cake, birthday peach-shaped buns, longevity noodles, and fresh flowers. The Li family had prospered to become a large clan, as all the children and grandchildren came together from various other locations. During the birthday party that night, more than twenty people squeezed into his mother's little room, as each one in turn kowtowed and wished her a happy birthday. For a time, the joyous sounds of laughter made for quite a fun occasion. His mother was particularly happy, and started chattering away, as she related one by one all the events that had passed these many years. With his move to Taiwan, mother and son had been separated for more than forty years: he on one side of the straits missing her, and his mother on the other side longing for him. His mother stroked her son's hand and whispered softly, "I cried my eyes out thinking of you!"

In front of his disciples and closest relatives, this dignified monk fed his mother a bit of birthday cake with his own hand, a simple, smiling gesture towards his mother that transformed the decades of painful longing and all the unexpressed feelings of separation. At that moment, this great monk honored by people in the tens of thousands, was no more than a son trying to please his dear mother. On the eve of his departure, his mother was unable to sleep that whole night; and when she saw her son early the next day, she said after long, thoughtful pause: "Jinjue (the Dharma name he took upon entering the monastic order), there is so much I want to tell you, but seeing you now I don't know what to say." Hsing Yun quickly consoled his mother, "In Taiwan my audiences number in the tens of thousands, but coming here to Nanjing, I have become your audience." When his own birthday came that same year, Hsing Yun noted in his diary, "To still be able to call for my mother at the age of seventy, is indeed a great blessing."

A Peaceful Passing

On the 31st of May, 1996, upon learning that his mother was critically ill in Whittier Hospital, Hsing Yun immediately bought a ticket on China Airlines for a direct flight to Los Angeles. He made the following notes in his diary: "My heart felt so heavy during the entire flight, as if the weight of a great, hundred-ton rock were pressing down on it, while the smiling face of my dear mother constantly appeared in my mind. A powerful wish surged from my heart; mother, please wait for me! Deep in my mind I was continually calling out this way, but I finally was able to sooth these turbulent feelings by reciting the Buddha's name. It usually takes ten hours and forty minutes to arrive at the destination by this route, but today it took twelve hours. As soon as I arrived in Los Angeles, I rushed directly over to Whittier Hospital, but by then my mother had already been sent to Rose Hills [Memorial Park and Cemetery]. All I could do was go there to pay my last respects."

Facing all the disciples and family members who had hurriedly arrived from various places, Hsing Yun had to overcome his profound grief and sadness. The people who had been looking after his mother reported that she was a kind and frugal individual; she was always thinking of other people and rarely bothered others for anything. His mother thought about him a lot, but she always kept these feelings of loving concern close to her heart, so as not to worry him. Barely twenty minutes before she passed away, she still left instructions with the Venerable Tzu Chuang, the abbess of Hsi Lai Temple who was attending at her side: "Thank you for reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name on my behalf; I am leaving now, so please, under no circumstances are you to let 'Second Lord' know, thus sparing him any distress; because he should busy himself with the problems of all sentient beings, and not trouble himself on my account." They also said that over the past year or so, she had been living in a small house near Hsi Lai Temple and had not changed at all from the simple lifestyle

she had maintained in the past. Upon hearing this, Hsing Yun decided to follow his mother's final instructions by keeping everything simple and quiet. He then dictated the following obituary notice to solemnly inform all those concerned:

Hsing Yun solemnly informs all those concerned:
My mother, Madam Li-Liu Yuying, peacefully passed away at 4:30 am, on the 30th of May 1996, at Whittier Hospital in Los Angeles, USA, amid the sounds of the chanting of the Amitabha Buddha's name. She was ninety-five years old. Many of her children and grandchildren, as well as my disciples were by her side. Her body was then transferred to Rose Hills that same day.

In accordance with her wishes, no formal condolences, no funerary contributions of money, and no gifts of flowers, incense, or other kind, will be accepted.

Four days later, his mother was cremated at Rose Hills in the United States. Hsing Yun recalled his feelings and impressions at the time:

Amid the sounds of those assembled there chanting scripture and reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name, I lightly pressed the green button. With a burst of fire, a puff of wind, and a flash of light, I bid eternal farewell to my mother. Back then, my mother was twenty-five when she gave birth to my body; and now seventy years later, I have seen to the cremation of her body. Mother was like a ship that slowly carried me into this human world, while I am like a space shuttle, that carries her instantaneously to another realm in space and time. Amid the fiery lights, she sits solidly on sacred lotus flowers, in the green light of green color, the yellow light of yellow color, the red light of red color, and the white light of white color. I think to

myself quietly, between this mundane world and the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, there remains the unchanging bond between mother and son, for whether here on earth or there in the Pure Land, she remains eternally my dear mother. As the Venerable Hsin Ting held the urn containing my mother's cremated remains, while I held the portrait of my mother, we returned to Fo Guang Shan; and after I held a commemorative Dharma service on her behalf, images of my mother's life on earth appear in my mind all the more clear and distinct.

Offering a Son as a Gift to Everyone

The life of Hsing Yun's mother spanned the Qing Dynasty, the Revolution of 1911, the establishment of the Republic of China the following year, the unification of the country with the Northern Expedition, the Sino-Japanese War, the stand-off between the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party, the Cultural Revolution, as well as the thawing in relations between Taiwan and Mainland China, and the increasing levels of contact across the straits. Although she was semi-literate, she was like a living treasury of historical information, for having lived through nearly all of that turbulent century, what she said and how she acted fully demonstrated an understanding of life that was an inspiration to others.

Once she was taking a stroll accompanied by her son about the grounds of Hsi Lai Temple. The morning air was a little damp, giving one a slight feeling of coolness. When they reached the leftward slope down to the main gate of the temple, Hsing Yun took out a key to unlock the back door, and said to his mother, "We'll take this backdoor route today, for the way back will be shorter." Picking up on this, she said, "Main gate or backdoor, it doesn't matter. In human life, the best people are most-honored guests being welcomed at the front door; the mediocre people are treated the way they treat others; the worst [least moral] people are not given any chance at all. Where is the shortcut in that? " This single observation reveals the reality of

human life. Upon reaching the main Buddha hall, her son said, "I will light some incense for you as an offering." His mother replied, "That's not necessary; why on earth would the Buddha want my incense or my flowers; what the Buddha wants is the sincere hearts of us ordinary beings."

There was that other time when his mother was listening to her son's teachings on the *Diamond Sutra*, in which it speaks of how "the sentient beings should not cling to any notion of a self, of living beings and of lifespan." After her son had stepped down from the podium, she presented a matter-of-fact criticism of his teachings as being too profound: "If there's no notion of self and others, how can anyone practice the Dharma? " Upon hearing his mother's comment, Hsing Yun was dumbfounded. Indeed, there can be no finer explanation of why he has endeavored to promote Humanistic Buddhism than his mother's insistence upon the "notion of self and others."

As for herself, she felt that the best thing she ever did in her life was allowing her son to join the monastic order--her contribution to Buddhism. Following the development of her son's Buddhist mission, her presence crossed over the Taiwan Straits with him and has even been felt all around the world. Twenty years earlier, she came to stay for a while at Fo Guang Shan, and one day there happened to be a large conference of devotees. Her son asked her if she was willing to meet with them and say a few words. At first there was the real concern that the old country woman had never seen such a large gathering and would perhaps be so scared with stage fright. But unexpectedly, she stood facing the large crowd of more than twenty thousand people and spoke in a clear and confident voice: "Fo Guang Shan is indeed, a Heaven on earth; we must rely upon the Venerable Master to be our guide, in hopes that everyone will achieve enlightenment. Everyone has been so kind to me, but this old woman has nothing to give to you in return, so I can only offer my son as a gift to everyone." Her deeply compelling talk sparked thunderous applause from

the audience of devotees.

Afterwards, Hsing Yun privately teased his mother: "How could you give me away to others; don't you want me anymore?" And his mother replied with equal seriousness and humor: "So many people need you, how dare I keep you for myself. You are not a son of mine, but of everyone's." Indeed, in that moment sixty years ago, when she had tearfully assented to Hsing Yun's joining the monastic order, her most beloved son, her "Second Lord " as she called him, had already been offered to all living beings.



Chapter
Three



Leaving the Family to
Enter Qixia

"Rightly it's three whacks, wrongly it's still three whacks," it was through this kind of toughening process that Hsing Yun developed a profound sense of religious integrity. He said, "When I was young, I was able to submit in the face of something unreasonable, so how could I not be accepting when I come upon what is reasonable in the future? I could put up with what was hard-hearted, so why wouldn't I welcome a kinder and more upright society?"

Hsing Yun was indeed a part of that generation suffering in such turbulent times. In particular, there were the frequent and numerous atrocities of the Japanese invasion, of which the Nanjing Massacre of 1937 was the most violent and bloody. Like terrible floods and beasts of prey, the viciousness that annihilates human nature reared its ugly head for all to see, casting common citizens by the hundreds of thousands into terror-stricken years of devastation. Not only was Hsing Yun's family unavoidably caught up in the conflagration, but they even became direct victims of the Nanjing Massacre.

Mother and Son Seek His Father, the Latent Ties to Buddhism

Despite the increasing chaos of war, Hsing Yun's father was forced to undertake risky business trips in order to make ends meet. After being gone for two years, there was suddenly nothing more heard from him, and it was not known if he was alive or dead. The Li family had lost its main breadwinner, plunging the whole family into abject desolation. At the age of twelve, his mother took him along to Nanjing to make inquiries as to his father's whereabouts. Late in the fading year, the road ahead stretched far into the distance and a frail young woman hand-in-hand with a young boy whose steps had never taken him outside of his hometown began their journey into an uncertain future.

In seeking a father, he found the Buddha instead, and this

journey was to completely change Hsing Yun's destiny. Many years later, Hsing Yun revealed the following story, the stuff of legends:

At the time, Wang Jingwei had betrayed the country and had formed the Peace Army, which was then in the process of expanding. En route to Nanjing, these troops happened to be drilling together and I, an extremely curious little boy off to see what all the noise was about. As I watched in complete fascination, there suddenly appeared behind me a monk from the monastery on Mt. Qixia ('cloud dwelling mountain'), who was in charge of receiving guests. Perhaps he thought I was kind of cute with my square chubby face and big ears, and he asked me casually if I was interested in joining the monastic order and becoming a monk. I responded intuitively without even raising my head: "Yes, I am!" Shortly after that, the Abbot Zhikai of Qixia Monastery sent someone to find me, asking: "I have heard you want to join the monastic order and become a monk; now I will be your master!"

As one could imagine, when his mother heard that Hsing Yun wanted to join the monastic order and become a monk, it was like a bolt of lightning out of the blue, for there was no way she was going to part with him. She herself realized that she was a frail woman trying to survive in violent times: she had already lost her husband, and now she was about to lose her son. How could she explain it all to the relatives back home? However, the young Hsing Yun insisted on keeping the promise he had already made--how could he go back on his word for no good reason? So he earnestly begged his mother to let him fulfill his wish. After all this struggling, his mother finally nodded her assent with tears in her eyes. A half a century later when mother and son were reunited, Hsing Yun once asked his mother why she permitted the boy he was then to join the monastic order. This is

how she answered: "I felt that you were a promising child, but our family was poor. We did not have the ability to give you any opportunity for education. If you were able to make progress in your Buddhist studies, then perhaps you would be better off than staying with me."

Two of them left home, but only one returned. His mother bid him her forlorn goodbyes, while he ascended Mt. Qixia. As for his father, no news of him was ever discovered; even his body was never found. Local villagers guess that he probably perished in the Nanjing Massacre. Although his impression of his father was already quite vague at the time, when he returned to his hometown for the first time ten years later, he made it a point to restore the family's ancestral shrine, so that he could formally install memorial tablets for his maternal grandmother Madam Liu, and his lost father, Li Chengbao. He also left instructions that family members should burn incense and offer prayers at set times.

Life in the Monastery under Material Poverty

Leaving his mother to join the monastic order was something quite unexpected. Neither had his family put up any funds for preparing monastic robes and celebrating his tonsure, nor had his elders spent any money on a vegetarian feast to honor his teacher. On top of it all, Hsing Yun was young, so he could not participate in repentance ceremonies and prayer services for the dead which would have provided some income. Instead, every stitch of clothing and every bowl of rice had to come from the temple stores. The ancients have described economic poverty as "a beggarly account of empty purses;" Hsing Yun was without even the "empty purses." In his book, the *Hundred Saying Series*, he tells a particularly harsh but vivid story: After coming to the monastery, he wanted to send a letter home to tell his mother that all was well, but a year had passed and he still had not sent it because he was unable to earn enough money to pay for the

postage.

There is seemingly only one word to describe his life at Qixia Monastery: penniless. For his clothing, he had to pick through the clothing and socks of the monks who had passed away as a way of replacing worn clothing or missing socks. Since it was difficult to find a pair of matching socks, he recalls that his left sock never matched his right. Even his shoes would have holes in them, and when the soles were worn through, he would make do by lining them with simple cardboard. Although he never complained to his family, his mother and siblings in faraway Jiangdu could not help but worry about him. There is no need to mention the many trips his mother made to visit him, but even his brothers Guohua and Guomin each made their own trips to Qixia, where they stayed for several days. They helped the monastery by doing odd jobs on one hand, but also wanted to take care of their brother on the other hand. On one occasion, his sister Suhua had heard that her brother's shoes were all worn out. She became quite anxious, and took the trouble of learning how to make monk's shoes from a nun who lived some two miles away. Because she did not know his exact shoe size, she sewed him two pairs, one slightly larger and another pair slightly smaller, which she begged someone to take to him. She only learned many years later that upon seeing how two other novices were wearing shoes worse than his, he actually gave them the shoes his sister had made, one pair for each, while he continued wearing his worn ones.

As for his living quarters, one hundred and ten monks lived in a single dormitory with one long bed; tall or short, fat or skinny, they slept shoulder to shoulder. Even the simple act of turning over was no easy task. Upon rising in the morning, several dozen people would wash up using a single bucket of water: each person was limited to "two and a half steps" (soaking the towel was the first step, washing the face and soaking it again was the second step, and wringing the towel dry was the final half step. Of course the towel was per-

petually dirty). By then, the bucket of water had become as brown as mud; still, it was carried away and used to flush the latrine.

As for meals, it was a case of the proverbial more mouths to feed than food to eat. Hsing Yun remembers that during his time at Qixia Monastery, there were altogether more than four hundred monks from all over China. The gruel served at the morning and evening meals was nearly "as thin as water," while the pickled turnips served with the gruel were often crawling with maggots. Due to the monastery's poor resources, cooked rice was only served twice a month; even that was cooked with other grains mixed in. When eating at the refectory, one had to recite the meal prayer, while smelling the reeking odor given off by the food. All one could do was close one's eyes, hold the breath, and gulp it down. The bowl of soup was so clear you could see the bottom of the bowl; if you had used it to wash your clothes, there would be no oily stains. The soup often contained a layer of insects floating on top, while snails and earthworms would have dropped to the bottom. What passed for a side dish were the bean curd dregs. This came from the leftover bean curd from the meals served to guests, that was then taken outside to dry. As it dried, sparrows would swoop down to eat their share, and after having eaten their fill, they always remembered to leave behind a souvenir, their droppings.

With inadequate nutrition and poor sanitary conditions, a child that needs to develop and grow will easily fall prey to illness, but in that environment, being sick was an extravagance none could afford. On one occasion Hsing Yun suffered from skin ulcers that made his body smell horribly. It was particularly painful when he changed his clothes, because the blood oozing from the abscesses would stick to his clothes, so it felt like his skin was peeling off in layers. When sick, he did not dare inform his teachers, while others in the monastery could not be bothered to meddle in others' affairs, and so he never went down the mountain to seek medical treatment.

On another occasion he contracted malaria and was tormented with alternating bouts of chills and fever, which made his life painful and miserable. But as a member of the monastic community, Hsing Yun worked and rested collectively with several hundred other people. Despite being so sick, he still participated in the morning and evening services like everyone else. Having struggled on for half a month, he himself realized that perhaps he would not survive this time. News of his illness finally reached the ears of his teacher, who had someone take him a half bowl of pickled salted vegetables, which appeared like a life-saving bowl of celestial ambrosia to heal both his body and soul. Hsing Yun gulped down the pickled vegetables with tears welling up in his eyes, vowing that very moment to devote his body and mind to Buddhism for as long as he lived, as repayment for his teacher's kindness. Now if you were to visit the Museum of Fo Guang Shan history today, sharp-eyed individuals might be able to spot an old chipped bowl filled halfway with salty vegetables quite dry and wrinkled, that sits there as silent testimony to that particular incident. Naturally, this half-bowl of salted vegetables is not that one of years ago, but symbolically it reminds us of what Hsing Yun is trying to say indirectly: it is his hoped that the disciples of Fo Guang Shan will take the opportunity to deeply appreciate the meaning of history and the power of profound inspiration.

An Unseen and Unheard World

Those years were a time of warfare and strife, and people were hard pressed to make a living. Donations to the monastery were meager at best, while material privations cannot be expressed in words. Then there was the strict training in spiritual matters that went way beyond what most people could possibly bear. As time has passed and places have changed, the emotions of his heart are not disturbed when Hsing Yun mentions these incidents from the past; but those listening to his account would find themselves deeply touched.

He recalls that when he first entered Qixia Monastery, he was nothing more than a twelve-year-old boy. Most of the time he went to sleep around ten o'clock at night, only to rise at three o'clock the next morning. Attending the morning and evening services, he would fall asleep on the floor during a single prostration. Upon finding him lying there, his teacher would use his foot to tap him on the head, and the boy would hurriedly get up. He once knelt with joined palms in the open terrace listening to a Dharma talk, kneeling there for some three to four hours. In the end, tiny little rocks had embedded themselves into the skin of his knees and his shoulders were so stiff he had lost any sensation in them. When he received full ordination at the age of fifteen, he got a taste of what happens "when the kind-hearted is faced with the hard-hearted, and the reasonable is treated with the unreasonable:"

I remember when the preceptor asked me whether I had killed any living beings; I answered, "No!" Suddenly, a large willow branch hit me on the head. "Am I to understand that you haven't killed any mosquitoes or ants?" I quickly changed my answer: "Yes, I have." Suddenly, that willow branch struck me again, because killing living beings is a transgression. The preceptor then asked me whether my master had told me to come for the ordination. I answered, "I came on my own." The willow branch struck my head for a third time. "Your master didn't tell you to come, so you decide things all on your own; that deserves punishment." I naturally accepted the reprimand in all humility, answering instead, "It was my master who told me to come." "So if he hadn't tell you to come, you wouldn't have done so?" Then I was hit a fourth time.

During the fifty-three days of the ordination period, the

innately curious and eager to learn boy had to put up with quite a bit of suffering and pain. From time to time, he would hear the sound of water or echoes from the mountain, and could not help raising his head to look for its source. When the leading master saw that, he would immediately strike the boy with a bamboo cane: "What are you listening to? Close your ears! Young as you are what sounds belong to you?" After the punishment, Hsing Yun quickly focused his mind, and no matter if leaves rustled like crashing waves or rain tapped on the eaves, he would hear none of that. The bamboo cane then immediately came again: "Open your ears and listen! What sound does not belong to you?" At other times, he would receive another whack from the cane for peeking at what was happening on the ordination platform: "Your eyes are wandering! Can you see anything that belongs to you?" Upon exiting the hall, he suddenly saw how the wind blew across the grass and how the geese soared through the clouds. He immediately caught himself and closed his eyes so as not to see, but that bamboo cane was not going to let him off: "Open your eyes and look around! Does what you see not belong to you?"

By the time that willow branch had beaten away all pride and obstinacy, his attachment to self had been transformed into a state of non-self. "Rightly it's three whacks, wrongly it's still three whacks," it was through this kind of toughening process that Hsing Yun developed a profound sense of religious integrity. He said, "When I was young, I was able to submit in the face of something unreasonable, so how could I not be accepting when I come upon what is reasonable in the future? I could put up with what was hard-hearted, so why wouldn't I welcome a kinder and more upright society?" Such an experience built up capital for his later practice of cultivation and the work of spreading the Dharma. It also was to form his character over the ensuing decades, an emotional temperament that "found peace in every encounter, lived life as it came, enjoyed freedom to the heart's content, and felt joy in the success of others."

One Master and One Disciple, the Tempering of Steel

Hsing Yun's entry into the monastic order at such a young age had broken with accepted precedent, and so in order to forestall any idle talk, the training his teacher gave him was one of iron discipline instead of a kindly education. During the six years he stayed at Qixia, his master only gave him two sets of clothes. Each year during the winter holidays of the lunar New Year, Hsing Yun would watch as his classmates returned home for the holidays in high spirits, while his requests to return home for a reunion with his family over New Year were never approved by his teacher. During the course of his studies, he was reprimanded by a certain instructor, and his master knew that he probably had been wronged, so Hsing Yun was asked to come and see him. After inquiring into the recent conditions of his life, the master raised a cup of tea and said, "You think that by telling me you have no money, I would just give it to you. Let me tell you clearly, if I gave you all the money I could save from not drinking tea, you could still not spend it all. But I wouldn't give it to you anyway. You may not understand right now the point of this, but someday in the future you will come to appreciate my meaning."

With his kind and generous disposition, Hsing Yun was able to humbly accept the guidance of his teachers, regardless of how easy or difficult it was to receive. Indeed, in the fullness of time, with all its tests and trials, he came to appreciate the true sense of affection behind the harsh treatment. Not allowing him to return home without good reason was done out of a concern for his monastic vows taken at such a tender age. For although the roots of goodness were there, the seductive powers of the external world could easily have weakened his commitment to the path. Allowing him to experience privation and poverty was done to train him how to be strong and resolved in the face of adversity, so he would not become obsessed with material things nor develop the habit of spending money to buy things.

During a talk he gave on one occasion, Hsing Yun expressed his deep sense of gratitude towards all his teachers at Qixia. In his view, the teachers there had taken a piece of coarse, raw metal and refined it in the crucible to make a pure, adamantine substance. They had instilled within him an excellent power to adapt, one that "could do with as well as without; could be well-fed or starved; could put up with heat and cold; could work early or late; could do with more or less; could either advance or retreat; could handle happiness and suffering; and could become great and humble:"

In my mind, my teacher was truly great, not only with respect to his clear understanding and strict teachings, but also because of his generous spirit and capacity for broadmindedness. From Mainland China to Taiwan, and from Dharma retreat centers to sister temples and monasteries, I have met quite a few teachers in my time who took in disciples in order that they would serve for their retirement, inherit their temples, bring in resources to their temples, or advance their reputations. But my great teacher sent me all around to study and practice hard, ensuring that I would be tempered and trained by the masses.

Chapter
Four



*Taking on Responsibility for
Buddhism's Rise or Fall*



What most people heard were the volleys of gunfire and the hail of bullets, but what I heard were the cries for help coming from all suffering beings; what most people saw were the corpses strewn about the countryside, but what I saw with my own eyes was the fate of Buddhism hanging in the future's balance.

--The Venerable Hsing Yun

The six years Hsing Yun spent at Qixia established his belief in a lifelong commitment to Buddhism. When he left Qixia to enter Jiaoshan Buddhist College in 1945, he had already matured from a child into an outstanding young Buddhist monk with a courageous spirit.

Entering the Great Buddhist Institution of Higher Learning

Jiaoshan Buddhist College was one of the most prestigious institutions in the Buddhist world, both in terms of the qualifications of its faculty and the intelligence of its student body. Its chancellor in those days, the Venerable Xuefan, was an acknowledged leader in the Buddhist world. During his days at Jiaoshan, Hsing Yun studied early Buddhism from Venerable Zhifeng, while other instructors such as Venerable Shengpu and Prof. Xue Jianyuan taught him Chinese literature, geography, history, and biology. In particular, his studies with Venerable Yuanzhan, who taught him the *Zhuangzi* and the *Treatise on the Treasury of the Abhidharma*, proved to be very beneficial, for it was through this master's guidance that Hsing Yun slowly began to appreciate the joys of reading.

Those years spent there represented the embryonic beginnings of his way of thinking: "Jiaoshan Buddhist College is situated on the Yangzi River, and everyday after the evening meal, I liked to go outside the campus to stroll along the beach for at least a couple of miles or so. Looking at the river as it flowed beyond the horizon, my thoughts were like the endless procession of waves that would

come from afar to break on shore; while the ideas that came and went in my head were like sailboats heading home at dusk, as they cruised into the harbor of my mind"

Upon completing his studies at Jiaoshan Buddhist College, Hsing Yun went on to study at other monasteries, from the Vinaya School at Qixia, to the ordination hall at Mt. Baohua, and then on to the meditation halls of Jiangtian Monastery at Jinshan and Tianning Monastery in Changzhou. With his solid education in the Vinaya [monastic regulations and precepts], the teachings on the Buddhist scriptures, and Chan practice, he realized how the spirit of Mahayana Buddhism lays equal stress upon study and practice. This was something like receiving a complete training in the three armed services of army, navy, and air force. With that, his basic training was solidly done, and his qualifications were complete.

During his study tour, he would often walk alone and on foot for hundreds of Chinese li [one li is almost a third of a mile.] Traveling day and night, he would pass through cities and towns, as well as villages and hamlets. There is an old Chinese saying, "Better to be a dog in peaceful times, than a human being in wartime;" and during his travels, he would see how his compatriots suffered hardship and privation. Besides the indignation that stemmed from the sense of justice he had from childhood, Buddhism had also imbued within him a heart of compassion that empathized with the sufferings of others. Many years later, Hsing Yun would describe to his disciples how he felt during that time: "What most people heard were the volleys of gunfire and the hail of bullets, but what I heard were the cries for help coming from all suffering beings; what most people saw were the corpses strewn about the countryside, but what I saw with my own eyes was the fate of Buddhism hanging in the future's balance."

A Page from the History of Buddhism

Four hundred years after its transmission to China during the reign of the Han Emperor Ming (r. 57-75 CE), Buddhism in China enjoyed a period of vibrant development and exerted profound cultural and political influence during the Sui and Tang periods (581-907 CE). Besides its literary and artistic impact on Chinese culture, Buddhism played an integral role in developing welfare programs throughout Chinese society, including economic relief and healthcare for the impoverished.

However, after the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368 CE), the ruling class began to downplay Buddhism's role, forcing Buddhism to loosen its ties with the intellectual class, and maintain a separate existence. The founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368-1398), had been a novice in his youth and was once a monk; he understood the profound power of influence that Buddhism could wield. Fearing that religion would become a hotbed of rebellion, upon ascending the throne Zhu Yuanzhang enacted both hard and soft policies towards religion, and Buddhism in particular. He turned over remote, mountainous areas for Buddhist temples, ordering all members of the monastic order to relocate there to carry on their spiritual cultivation. This forced Buddhism to sever all ties with society, making it impossible for Buddhism to maintain any connection with the masses. Thus, it was transformed from a positive force engaged with the secular world, into a conservative and reclusive religion that renounced the secular world. Thus, the decline of Buddhism was already evident.

At this point, Buddhism had already become a "cold" religion, and except for its funerary rites of salvation, most people did not know how Buddhism related to them. In addition, the overall quality of the monastic order declined and the monastic spirit was not evident, all of which further degraded Buddhist development. From then on, Chinese intelligentsia broke off relations with Buddhist monks and Daoist priests, who were then put down as the dregs of

society. If any monastic were to become enthusiastic about secular affairs, or if their reputations rivaled that of the upper class, they would be attacked for being overly secular; and as we shall see, the Venerable Master Taixu was one who suffered greatly from this. For the majority of people, such ideas became their fixed impression of Buddhism, something that still persists to this very day.

By the establishment of the republic in 1912, some people who had received a smattering of Western education were shouting for the downfall of Confucianism, and in their blindness they attacked Buddhism as well. To the eyes of young intellectuals, clay images of the bodhisattvas and rural monks were simply "feudalistic," "backward," and an amalgam of all things "superstitious." Many "New Youth" would sneer at Buddhist and Daoist worship and shake their heads, their only concern being to get away from such things as fast as they could. Even the government circulated the idea of "destroying temples to establish schools," as part of its credo for saving the country. During the period of warlords, the "Christian general" Feng Yuxiang (1882-1948) went so far as to order the elimination of Buddhism, with the result that the Buddhist religion in the Henan region was practically wiped out; he killed or expelled members of the monastic order. Other examples include the proposal by the provincial government of Zhejiang to expel the monastic order, and the suggestion put forward by then Interior Minister Xue Dubi (1892-1973) to turn temples into schools.

Master Taixu Fails on the Verge of Success

At this critical time for the fate of Buddhism, the new Buddhist youth, so patriotic and concerned about their faith, discovered a teacher from the older generation who could serve as their leader; someone who could fire up hope for Buddhism. This individual was the Venerable Master Taixu (1889-1947). When Hsing Yun was studying at Jiaoshan, many of his teachers had received teachings

from Master Taixu, and he himself had read Taixu's articles and books, which indirectly led him to connect with Taixu's proposals. At the time, Taixu made the following plea: "Whether the nation rises or falls is the responsibility of each citizen; whether Buddhism rises or falls is the responsibility of each monastic," which completely energized the young Buddhist students. Taixu proposed that the passive Buddhism that escapes from the world, should be redirected along the road of active engagement with the secular world; to this end, he pushed forward the revolution in Buddhist organization, the revolution in Buddhist property, and the revolution in Buddhist principles.

His revolution of Buddhist organization demanded that the scattered monastic community be re-organized and re-trained, so that every monk could serve as a Buddhist missionary and a Dharma teacher, while every nun would be able to teach school and serve as a nurse. This would elevate the quality and work ability of the clergy. The revolution in Buddhist principles meant discarding outmoded and antiquated interpretations on one hand, and affirming the value of human life on the other. He encouraged an enjoyment of human life that was based upon appropriate ideas and attitudes, so that Buddhist discourse was no longer mired in the fatalistic view of "life is nothing more than suffering." His revolution in Buddhist property meant an end to the attitude that one lives off religion. Instead, Taixu led the way to a sense of self-sufficiency through one's own labor and moral conduct, while temple property itself was to be commonly held by the Buddhist order as whole, and no longer the private property of abbots. Master Taixu also contributed to a new trend in education with the founding of the Minnan Buddhist College in 1918. Unfortunately, the school was operating with buildings borrowed from the monastery, so when both sides could not agree the school was closed. Later on, there were those who established a series of other Buddhist colleges, but there was never any consistency to these efforts.

Senior monks of the older generation considered Taixu's proposal quite heretical, and castigated him in their speeches and writings. But such actions only served to rally support for Taixu from the younger monastic community that hailed him as the savior of Buddhism in China. Hsing Yun too understood that Buddhism was facing a dead-end, and in his enthusiasm and love for the faith, he was constantly thinking about how Buddhism could be reformed, thereby giving it a new vitality. "Don't think about what Buddhism can do for me, think about what I can do for Buddhism!" This thought that lingered in his mind for so long, was a perfect match to Taixu's proposals. In 1946, Hsing Yun passed up his chance to return home for a visit in order to attend Master Taixu's "Training Class for Staff Members of the Chinese Buddhist Association," in which Taixu himself gave instruction.

Sadly, the conditions of time, place, and human support were against Taixu, for before the common people had a chance to recover their lives after Japan surrendered, civil war erupted between the Nationalist and Communist forces. Taixu himself passed away the following year in 1947, and his calls for Buddhist reform were thus silenced. Before he died, Taixu once commented in a regretful tone: "My life's work at reform is a history of failure." At a later date, Hsing Yun would bring the lamp of Buddhism to Taiwan, where it went on to take its place in the world. Master Taixu would probably never have imagined during his life, that all his reform ideals regarding the Buddhist organization, its property and principles, would actually be further developed and expanded upon by a bright member of the younger generation, an individual who only met Taixu on that one occasion.

Stepping forward to Try and Save Buddhism

Hu Shi (1891-1962) once said, "China's bitter lot for suffering was due to its poverty on one hand and its ignorance on the other."

It was only by the end of 1947 that Hsing Yun was able to return to Dajue Temple on Mt. Baita in Yixing, the seat of his Buddhist lineage. Dajue Temple is located half-way up Mt. Baita in beautiful surroundings. The front and back halls each contain two courtyards, with side halls to the east and west. One to two hundred hectares of hilly land lie behind the monastery, while vast agricultural fields lie in front. Monastery property amounts to some fifty acres, that included several dozen ponds for storing water. At the time, the area was infested with bandits due to the chaos of the Sino-Japanese War and the civil war. This meant that Mt. Baita was constantly being attacked by bandits and despoiled by government troops, and for a time, no one dared live there.

Hsing Yun was ordered to return to his lineage seat to put the temple's administration in good working order. The western hall was then used to establish a public primary school, while the eastern hall housed the twenty staff members who fed themselves through their own labor at farming. Hsing Yun took advantage of the lunar New Year's holidays to personally visit the homes of his flock and present them with the customary spring couplets and kitchen god images, as his way of connecting with local concerns. Seeing how this young monk conducted himself with such industry, a follower of Dajue Temple, who happened to be the director of education for Yixing, invited Hsing Yun to serve as the principal of Baita Primary School. This invitation was exactly what Hsing Yun was looking for, because he believed that the country's salvation and Buddhism's restoration must begin with both education and economics, requiring the establishment of schools on one hand, and the setting up of farms on the other. This represented his earliest wish and he hoped to realize them both at his home temple.

Although the young Hsing Yun had never received a formal, modern education, he immediately wrote to his classmates in Nanjing and requested help in gathering teaching materials, and through read-

ing and doing research, he developed his own teaching methodology. The school was set to open in one month, so besides hiring local instructors, Hsing Yun himself would teach classes in Chinese and civics. His efforts won the respect of the local community, making quite a stir in the area. His mood at that time was: "Since I'm going to do it, I must achieve some result!"

The chaos of those days was really something that no human effort could withstand. It became impossible to implement the administration of the Baita Primary School, while all the plans for setting up farms died on the drawing board. In the end, Hsing Yun had to bid farewell to his beloved Dajue Temple and return to Nanjing to pursue other opportunities. Upon the recommendation of his teacher, he and a few of his classmates took over the administration of Huazang Temple in Nanjing. They drafted plans for the temple's monastic organization, and instituted a new regimen for life there, making vigorous efforts to stem the tide of decline at this late juncture. Unfortunately, nothing happens overnight and the conservative forces within the temple stubbornly resisted, resulting in constant conflict. But then the Nationalist's stunning defeat at the Battle of Xubang and the fall of Nanjing had taken place. The number of wounded soldiers kept on increasing, while the common people drifted about as refugees, everyone living in terror. This attempt at reform died an early death, for just as young monastics like Hsing Yun were making the first steps, they were hindered at every turn by the smoke of war that filled the skies.

A Monastic Relief Team is Formed

In 1949, the civil war took a precipitous turn, and under the influence of Master Leguan, a group of monastics formed a series of monastic relief teams to care for the injured and dead, as a way of serving living beings. One of Hsing Yun's like-minded cohorts turned out to be his close classmate, the Venerable Zhiyong, who sent out a

call to six hundred monastics to form a medical relief team heading for Taiwan. But after two months of preparation, the constant delays made it impossible for the teams to embark on their trip. Agreeing that they did not want to perish together, the decision was quickly made that Zhiyong would defend the faith on Mainland China, while Hsing Yun would undertake the dangerous task of leading the monastic relief team to Taiwan.

With sadness upon parting, Hsing Yun had no time at all to inform his family regarding his decision to leave for Taiwan. All he could do was to go to Mt. Qixia and seek his teacher Zhikai's advice on whether to leave or stay. Upon hearing that his disciple was willing to spread the Dharma to Taiwan, a delighted Master Zhikai gave his immediate approval. The night before his departure, his teacher arranged a sumptuous meal in the refectory as way of sending off his beloved disciple, but as the two men sat there in front of the meal, neither had the heart to lift his chopsticks. They looked at each other silently as tears welled up in their eyes.

After bidding his teacher farewell, Hsing Yun learned that a steamer in Shanghai would be leaving for Taiwan. He spent that night traveling the road to the Chan temple at Tianning Monastery in Changzhou. In the dark of the night he awoke the soundly sleeping monks with a shake and invited any willing young monastic to leave with him for Taiwan and start over. Years later, one of Hsing Yun's disciples was surprised upon hearing him tell this tale, and asked: "You were waking them up in the middle of the night; did you really know them all?" Without any hesitation, Hsing Yun replied: "I didn't know a single one of them. We young monks were eager to help others from a sense of justice, so I didn't expect anyone would refuse me."

The swift current of those turbulent years could easily carry away any individual, and there were quite a few young monastics who returned to the laity or joined the army in those days. Yet the

trials of such times can also make one more resolute. Hsing Yun had made a vow to preserve the Dharma lineage, and so he did his utmost to keep his promise. When the monastic relief team was preparing to leave, it numbered more than one hundred people, but when it arrived in Shanghai to board the steamer, there were only some seventy people left, including such masters as Yin Hai, Haolin, Hongzi, and Jinghai.

An uncertain journey would carry Hsing Yun across the open sea, enabling him to bring the lamp of Chinese Buddhism to this other shore as a separate transmission. This ensured that the life of wisdom would continue, marking a new page in the history of Chinese Buddhism. The springtime of youth comes only once to a life, but without hesitation, Hsing Yun now entered an era of unavoidable turmoil, and proceeded down his path in search of ideals.

Chapter
Five

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central floral or scrollwork motif in a light gray color, set against a dark gray background. The pattern is symmetrical and features intricate, swirling lines.

*Taiwan – This Land and
This Person*

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central floral or scrollwork motif in a light gray color, set against a white background. The pattern is symmetrical and features intricate, swirling lines.

As the Confucian *Analecets* state, "It is the man who broadens the way, and not the way that broadens the man. " Despite all the personal hardship and reversals he encountered in his environment, Hsing Yun proved himself to be a true graduate of a famous Buddhist college, someone imbued with an orthodox Buddhist education. The dynamic force of his vow that "the fate of Buddhism depends upon me," ensured that nothing would stand in his way, and so his reputation slowly grew among his generation of monastics from Mainland China.

That year there were a million people who followed in the footsteps of those that had gone before, crossing the straits to this beautiful island--Taiwan. A young Hsing Yun was just one such person among this mass of people. But a few months ago, Taiwan for him was nothing but the name of a distant place on the map, a remote, deserted land with a humidity that causes diseases as described in ancient texts. He knew absolutely nothing about this little island, but he had heard all kinds of rumors, that many senior officials and rich businessmen had come here to live it up, while the poor could find no place to sleep; even sleeping on the street for the night, it was said, would cost you three hundred thousand in old Taiwan dollars.

The Unique Feelings of a Solitary Monk

Just like the many other passengers on the steamer who left China in a hurry, he arrived in Taiwan without much luggage. His only possession, a small knapsack, had been lost in the confusion of war; his only long robe he had given to a fellow monastic, the Venerable Zhuyun (1919-1987), so all he had was the shirt on his back. He dared not even wear his one and only pair of monastic sandals, because he saw how most of the local people went barefoot, and how they would stare at his feet in astonishment as he walked in his sandals. All he could do was quickly take them off and walk around barefoot, in keeping with the local custom.

By this time only forty or so people remained on his team. As

head of the group, Hsing Yun engaged in repeated contacts with the training commander in Tainan, Gen. Sun Li-jen (1899-1990), on their behalf, and put forth their request to participate in the army's relief effort. General Sun instructed them to report to the army base at Hsuting for military training. Hsing Yun explained at once that they were all monks and had not come to enroll in the army, but rather to bring medical relief to the wounded and dying. General Sun replied: "Even though you are a monastic relief team, you must still have a basic understanding of front-line military procedures for your own safety." And that was that, and so the team of about forty monastics received military training from some now forgotten regiment.

Upon leaving the army camp at Hsuting, Hsing Yun remembered that a friend, the Venerable Datong, had been put in charge of Baojue Temple in Taichung for some time. He had once written to Hsing Yun in Mainland China to invite him to come to Taiwan and assist in establishing a Buddhist college for three thousand students. Hsing Yun thought he might as well go visit him and stay there temporarily. After much hardship, he arrived at Baojue Temple, only to learn that Datong had fled to Hong Kong some time ago because he was unjustly suspected of being a communist spy. The abbot tactfully made it clear that Hsing Yun could not stay there either. Fortunately, Datong's sister, who had joined the monastic order as the Venerable Juedao, learned that a classmate of her brother's had come, and so she made a special request on Hsing Yun's behalf, allowing him to stay at Baojue Temple for about a week.

He then planned to go to Mt. Guanyin near Taipei, and the twenty-three-year-old Hsing Yun did make it to Taipei from Taichung in only two days, but going on to Mt. Guanyin proved to be impossible. All he could do was go to Shipu Temple on Nanchang Rd. and seek temporary monastic lodging. Instead, he was yelled at by a few senior monks from the Mainland: "What gives you the qualifications to come running here to Taiwan?" There was nothing he could do but

move on to Shandao Temple, but the people there either said, "There's no room; we're already full;" or they said, "we do not accept venerables from Mainland China for monastic lodging." By that time, evening had set in with pouring rain. Runoff from the rain had pooled up to his knees as he staggered down the road. He even slipped once, completely soaking his clothes. Racked with hunger and cold, all he could do was curl up under a bell and spend the night like that.

The next day he went to Mt. Yuemei to see if he could locate an old classmate, but being a stranger in this land unable to understand the local dialect, it took him some time before he got directions to the temple. By the time he arrived, it was already past one o'clock in the afternoon, and his empty stomach was rumbling with hunger. Some Buddhist teacher was just then teaching a class of students from Mainland China and politely refused his request to stay. Fortunately, some of the young students asked him whether he had eaten or not. Somewhat embarrassed, Hsing Yun replied, "I don't know to which meal you are referring; not a grain of rice nor a drop of water have I had since noon yesterday!" When his classmate saw him, he said without hesitation, "Hurry now to the kitchen and get something to eat!" But at the same time, someone else spoke, "I have been instructed to say that we cannot take care of ourselves, so you will have to seek help someplace else!" Yet another rebuff, and Hsing Yun realized that he could not stay there. Just as he was about to leave, his classmate called out to him, asking him to wait. His classmate grabbed his own wallet and went off to buy rice, which he then used to prepare a bowl of porridge. When Hsing Yun picked up the bowl, his hands wouldn't stop shaking from hunger, but still, he had to take his leave after finishing the porridge and thanking his friend.

Such incidents are quite understandable given the times. People then were uneasy and economic conditions were very poor. Everyone was worried that communist spies might be trying to sneak in, bringing calamity on themselves. It seemed that the clay statues

of bodhisattvas not able to wade across a river were in trouble themselves, so how could they set about saving others. Later on, Hsing Yun went to Chungli to see the Venerable Cihang, but by that time, Cihang had already gone to Mt. Shitou. Upon the recommendation of the Venerable Zhidao, Hsing Yun went to visit the Venerable Miaoguo. The two of them hit it off every well. Miaoguo was extremely warm and sincere, treating Hsing Yun with attentive care. He also whispered in Hsing Yun's ear, "Stay here and rest easy; others can leave, but on no account should you do so."

Given a Place to Stay, Resolved to Work Diligently

Finally upon arriving at Yuanguang Temple in Chungli, Hsing Yun had found a place to stay through the compassion of the Venerable Miaoguo. With gratitude in his heart, Hsing Yun asked Miaoguo to give him a lot of heavy jobs to do, resolving to work diligently. Everyday, he drew six hundred buckets of water from a well so deep that its bottom could not be seen. Only in this way was enough water provided for the use of the eighty residents of the entire temple. Then again every morning, he went out to buy vegetables, always dragging the squeaky handcart through the moonlit light of pre-dawn along fifteen miles of dirt road to the market. Wind brushed lightly against the tree branches as peace and quiet reigned over the land. Only the distant sounds of barking dogs could be heard from time to time, just as dawn broke into the clear sky. He recited the sacred name of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara [Guanyin], as the clip-clap sounds of his wooden clogs served as accompaniment. Arriving at the market, the vegetable sellers were still fast asleep! Going from stall to stall he woke them up, and bought enough oil, salt, rice, fuel, and a day's worth of vegetables, and then back he went along the dirt road to the temple. Since the temple was short of young manpower, not only did Hsing Yun cook and serve the meals, he also swept the courtyard. He even used his finger nails to scratch off the dirty filth that

coated the latrine, because there were no cleaning implements. He saw to the wrapping of the corpse when anyone at the temple passed on, and he was also the one who helped carry the dead for burial.

Everyday, he would study the local dialect along with everyone else, which enabled him to fit in with everyone; and when the time came for the abbot to give teachings, he would serve as the impromptu interpreter, enabling people from all parts of China to share in the joy of receiving the Dharma. Over the course of his two years at Yuanguang Temple, Hsing Yun gained the full respect and confidence of the Venerable Miaoguo, and made a good impression on many others, which helped to shorten the distance between him and the Buddhist followers of Taiwan. He still remembers how a certain kind-hearted old bodhisattva (referring to older believers with genuine devotion to Buddhism) would always cook a bowl of noodles on the side to feed his hungry stomach: "She would always hold the bowl of hot noodles in her hands all covered with wrinkles, and as she passed it through the window to me, droops of broth would land on the windowsill, while clouds of steam would waft by. I was moved in such an inexpressible way."

Owing to his sincere treatment of others, his industrious work, and his spirit of self-sacrifice, Hsing Yun slowly won the trust of the temple's believers. Miaoguo would also take him along when he preached the Dharma at outside locations. Senior members of the Buddhist community in Taiwan came to appreciate his abilities, and even Miaoguo considered turning the temple over to Hsing Yun's administration. However, Hsing Yun noticed how his colleagues would return from conducting Buddhist services with many donations of various kinds, and this gave him a warning instead. If he were to continue like this, he would certainly live a comfortable life, but he would not have contributed anything towards the orthodox faith in Buddhism on Taiwan, and so he said his good-byes and left.

Early Forays into Culture and Education

During his time at Yuanguang Temple, Hsing Yun would not neglect his reading and writing, when he could spare time from his hard work. On one occasion, he received twenty dollars for helping with a Buddhist service, and he immediately went out and bought pen and paper. The joy of that moment remains a vivid memory to this day. It was also during this period, that he stayed at Fayun Temple in Miaoli to look after the forest, and as he lay on the grass he began writing his book, *Singing in Silence*. Upon returning to Yuanguang, he would sit at his desk and work on his writing from time to time after finishing his chores. There were some monastics and members of the laity who thought he was neglecting his duties by wasting his time like that. An old woman who often helped around the temple tried to dissuade him in all earnestness: "Venerable master, you should be working, otherwise you will have nothing to eat!"

After leaving Yuanguang Temple, he started out composing radio scripts for the Broadcasting Corporation of China, and then published articles in many newspapers and magazines, such as *Free Youth*, *Kan Zhan Daily*, *Jue-Sheng Monthly*. For a time, Hsing Yun became known as "the star of Buddhist literary art." On one occasion, some of his literary friends tried to persuade him to return to secular life and become the uncrowned king of critical commentary on current affairs. But after all, none of that had anything to do with the work of restoring Buddhism, and so he tactfully refused. On another occasion, he accepted an offer from the Dharma Master Dongchu (1908-1977) to serve as a volunteer editor of *Life Monthly*, a job that was to occupy him for six long years. The distribution and mailings for the magazine were done all on his own. Full of enthusiasm, he wearied himself over writing articles and setting the type during the day, while in the evenings he wracked his brains over editing and polishing articles. Since he had no money to take the bus, he would even walk on foot from Tali Road in Taipei City all the way to the printers

at Wanhua train station.

After this, the Venerable Daxing established the "Taiwan Buddhist Training Institute" in Hsinchu, and Hsing Yun was hired to serve as the dean of education. At the same time, the local police station had him conduct special classes for learning Mandarin Chinese for the general public. Each day the people attending the class were growing in numbers, and he actually packed to capacity one of the large classrooms at the institute. Thus, the police began to regard him with a new sense of esteem.

Preaching the Dharma under Extremely Harsh Conditions

Buddhists began building temples in Taiwan with the support of Zheng Jing (1642-1681), the son of the Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong, known to the West as Koxinga, and this trend continued to grow during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). During the Japanese occupation (1895-1945), Taiwan Buddhism fell under the influence of Japanese Buddhism, which did not maintain a strict monastic discipline and permitted the Buddhist clergy to marry. Many Taiwanese monastics followed suit, by marrying and breaking with the vegetarian discipline. This led to confusion between secular and monastic life, so that people in general came to lack a true understanding of what Buddhism really meant.

The material poverty and the hardship of life during this last period represented an accurate portrayal of what life was like for most people when Taiwan was returned to Chinese control. The greatest dream for the majority of people was nothing more than a peaceful family life with no worries over adequate food or clothing. What set Hsing Yun apart from most people was the constancy of his religious zeal. Personal happiness was not enough, for he never forgot about restoring Buddhism in Taiwan. This would enable ever larger numbers of people to connect with the Dharma, one that represented the correct understanding and the correct view. But for a Taiwan of more

than fifty years ago, that was by far something easier said than done.

What is more, the educational level of Taiwan's monastics in those days was usually quite low. In general, they were only able to chant the scripture during funeral services, so such things as preaching the Dharma and missionary work were seemingly beyond the realm of possibility. Buddhism was stuck with being a "funerary religion," for it played no role in society or the lives of the masses, while intellectuals who studied Buddhism were about as rare as hen's teeth. Besides, there was the presence of Catholic and Protestant Christianity from the West, resulting from America's powerful involvement in Taiwan's affairs during the post-war period. With their well-heeled financial power, the Western creeds were able to extend their influence into cities and towns. Some years earlier, Chiang Kai-shek and his wife became devout Christians, and quite a few high officials and prominent businessmen in political and business circles followed suit. Thus, people in society came to esteem the belief in Christianity, while Buddhism was dismissed as some antiquated custom.

Skillfully Adapting to the Larger Environment

It must also be recalled that this was a period of tension and fear, both politically and militarily. Not only were people from Mainland China viewed with fear and suspicion, but the security forces tended to react excessively, which meant that innocent monastics were often caught up in the confusion. Every so often a handful of Buddhist monastics would be taken in for interrogation. There was little possibility for preaching the Dharma and missionary work, when even one's every action was completely restricted. In this hopeless situation, many monastics went their separate ways, and Buddhists converted to other religions in droves as a way of facilitating their employment and making their families safe.

According to Hsing Yun's recollection, he was imprisoned three times in his life. The first two times occurred when he was serving as principal of the Baita Primary School. After he arrived in Taiwan, he and the Venerable Cihang, along with dozens of other monastics from Mainland China, were arrested and thrown in prison, because of a rumor that was going around that three hundred monastics had been secretly sent to Taiwan to engage in infiltration and subversion. His imprisonment lasted twenty-three days, in which he was not only unable to lie down and rest, but was even bound and restrained, and treated brutally. Fortunately, Gen. Sun Li-jen's wife and Buddhist practitioner, Chang Ching-yang, vouched for the monastics, while another Buddhist follower Wu Ching-hsiung made all kinds of arrangements, which finally secured their release from prison.

As the Confucian *Analects* state, "It is the man who broadens the way, not the way that broadens the man." Despite all the personal hardship and reversals he encountered in his environment, Hsing Yun proved himself to be a true graduate of a famous Buddhist college, someone imbued with an orthodox Buddhist education. The dynamic force of his vow that "the fate of Buddhism depends upon me," ensured that nothing would stand in his way, and so his reputation slowly grew among his generation of monastics from Mainland China. Standing firm with each step and treasuring each and every connection, Hsing Yun strode into Taiwan society and the community of believers. His understanding of this land and its people came to quietly outline in his mind a broader perspective on the future.

Chapter
Six

A decorative background pattern in a dark grey color, featuring symmetrical, ornate scrollwork and floral motifs that frame the chapter title.

Ilan, the Source of It All

A decorative background pattern in a light grey color, featuring a central, symmetrical, ornate scrollwork and floral motif that frames the chapter title.

An outsider-monk formed a close bond of deep and enduring affection with the simple and honest folk in this mountainous town. "Arriving no one is there to greet me; departing no one is there to say goodbye. That's the feel of home." No matter where he roams around the world, his heart is forever tied to Ilan.

"Over the course of my calling to preach the Dharma, Ilan stands out as an important base of operations. One could say that without Ilan's Leiyin Temple, there would be no Fo Guang Shan; and without Fo Guang Shan, there would be none of the nearly two hundred branch temples that have been established around the globe, nor would there be the nearly one million practitioners and staff that make up Fo Guang Shan. Furthermore, almost all the earliest disciples of Fo Guang Shan were people from Ilan. Ilan is the source of Humanistic Buddhism. Trees have their roots and rivers their springs, and looking back on it all, Hsing Yun did indeed establish Ilan as the root and spring of Fo Guang Shan.

Feelings for Ilan Held Fast

To preach the Dharma and promote Buddhist teachings on such a barren soil for Buddhism as Taiwan of a half century ago required not only fortuitous circumstances and courage, but also wisdom and stamina. The fortuitous circumstances appeared in 1952, when such Buddhist practitioners as Li Juehe, Zhang Huishui, Lin Songnian, Lin Changqing, and Ma Teng joined in the activities of the Chinese Buddhist Association; they met with Hsing Yun who had just come to Taiwan for three years and invited him to preach the Dharma in Ilan.

These Buddhist practitioners had actually been north to the capital on many occasions, hoping that they would be able to invite a Dharma teacher to take up residence in their hometown and give teachings. However, the frontier area of Ilan was still an undeveloped rural town, and there were only two ways of getting there: one was a

winding highway that imperiled one's life at practically every turn, and the other was by train. From Taipei, one took a four to five hour ride on a coal-fired train that went through more than twenty tunnels. Passengers always ended up enveloped in black soot that collected on their faces, hands, and in their nostrils. On top of that, the economic conditions of the Ilan area were rather tough. The teachers they had invited before had all given up, not a single one was willing to stick it out.

Having listened for a while to their sincere plea, the kind and enthusiastic Hsing Yun made his first visit to Ilan during the spring of the following year. He gave a teaching on the "*Chapter on the Universal Gate of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara*" [in the Lotus Sutra] that went on for twenty days; the venue for this teaching was Leiyin Temple. This was followed by a series of visits, and the response from the practitioners there was very good. Hsing Yun decided that he would come and stay, and from then on there was never again any mention of the word "leave."

Geographically, Ilan is a triangular-shaped delta; one side faces the Pacific Ocean, while the other end is blocked off with mountains that prevent access to the northwestern plain. The area has remained insular for centuries, and the local customs are somewhat simple and inflexible. Hsing Yun's "first intimate contact" with Ilan went like this: He had set out from Taipei early that morning, and when he arrived at Leiyin Temple it was past noon. As soon as he stepped through the dilapidated temple gate, he saw that the main courtyard was now occupied by three military families of squatters. The Buddha hall was there, but the cushions for worship were not, for they had probably been taken for pillows. The clothes and shoes of these three families were scattered about, while outside the hall stood a coal stove with smoke still lingering over the embers. In the corner was an old nun, the Abbess Miao zhuan, who just happened to be chanting scripture to remove misfortune for someone. Hsing Yun kept

his calm and quietly waited. After some period of time, the abbess finished reciting the scriptures and came out to ask: "Are you the venerable who has come to teach?" "Yes," Hsing Yun answered. He barely uttered the word before she suddenly left, and it was only a half hour later that someone brought out a half-cup of cold tea for him.

Leiyin Temple occupied roughly eighteen hundred square feet, and at the time it was considered Ilan's largest temple. However, for the first half year, Hsing Yun slept under the altar in the main shrine, then the temple's faithful cleared out a small, windowless room beside the main hall for him to live in. The ceiling was low, and given the tallness of his stature, he could not lift his head upon entering the room. Besides a broken-down bamboo bed, the room contained only an old sewing machine. Each time he went to sleep, he had to be very careful, for he dared not turn over once he laid down on the bed, lest the squeaking of the bamboo disturb the other people. Many years later he still recalls: "When I picked up that chair discarded from the prison where I was teaching the Dharma I was overjoyed. From then on, every night after everyone had gone to bed, I would drag the electric light hung in front of the Buddha image over to the door of my quarters, where I would read and write with the sewing machine serving as my desk. No amount of waving could dispel the mosquitoes that would buzz around, keeping me company until dawn."

Testing One's Wisdom and Perseverance

These material hardships are hardly worth mentioning, for what really bothered him was how the entire range of Buddhist development was constrained. It was a very cool season for Taiwanese Buddhism in those days, and Hsing Yun would encounter all kinds of difficulties with his work of preaching the Dharma. Due to the fifty years of Japanese rule on Taiwan, people were not only restricted as to how they conducted their lives, but they were also deprived of

educational opportunities and lacked a correct conceptualization of religion. In addition, Ilan has always been a conservative small town; its people were rather sensitive when coming into contact with people, events, and things coming from the outside. There were even those who made coarse provocations, or secretly made trouble behind his back, testing Hsing Yun's wisdom and perseverance.

In those days, Hsing Yun exuded courage, and was enthusiastic and bright. As each of the several dangers he encountered was overcome, his reputation would spread farther. The community was greatly impressed with his youthful maturity, his dignified bearing, and the breadth of his learning. People in Ilan who did not know his name called him "the teacher of Beimen." Beimen was the closest bus stop to the temple. His first group of devoted followers in Ilan are by now old grannies in their eighties or nineties, but they still remember what he looked like when young. With a wide grin revealing all their gold teeth, they would say, "He was so endearing!"

Young girls as well were very curious about this tall and handsome young monastic from Mainland China. Shigu Hsiao Pihsia, a celibate lay disciple who has been following Hsing Yun for nearly fifty years, still remembers how one time he went to the local telephone exchange where she worked (there were few automatic phone systems at that time) to make a phone call. All the twenty or so operators, including her supervisor, came out to see him. Thus, for a time there was no one on the job to operate the switchboard, and all communication in and out of Ilan was suddenly shut down. Later on, more than eighty percent of the staff at the Ilan Telephone Company from the director on down, all took Triple Gem refuge with Hsing Yun and became his followers.

First Tentative Step towards Humanistic Buddhism

Having come to Ilan, Hsing Yun no longer worried about his material needs, but he still was not satisfied. He weighed the situation

and observed the environment, and drafted a development strategy for Buddhism that covered a few stages, the first of these being the establishment of a Nian Fo Hui recitation center. In the 1950s the percentage of illiterate people among the populace was relatively high. To recite the name of the Buddha for rebirth in the Pure Land turned out to be the most convenient form of practice for them. Therefore, he began to organize a joint practice in recitation of the Amitabha Buddha's name among the male and female members of the laity. In another sense, this practice could serve as a way of expanding public education, enabling illiterate people to have the opportunity to pick up the scriptures and chant character by character and sentence by sentence.

The number of followers was increasing daily following the formation of the Nian Fo Hui; regular teachings on the Buddhist scriptures were beginning to be held on a regular basis. When information about these activities were announced, two followers would hold up a wooden sign, upon which was written the words in large print, "Please heed the sutras." Another follower would walk along striking a hand-drum, giving the announcement in a loud voice, thus attracting people's attention. The Buddha recitation center marks the "birth" of Ilan Buddhism, and the locals all knew about it. Even today, the sign on the bus stop for Beimen still reads Nian Fo Hui.

The second step was to tap the power of Buddhist young people. Hsing Yun tapped into the needs of young people who love to sing and make friends by establishing the first Buddhist choir in all of Taiwan. He himself wrote the lyrics, while he asked Yang Yung-po, a teacher at Ilan High School, to compose the melody. When the young people came, it was Hsing Yun who personally set out the chairs and poured the tea. In order to ensure that the young students would get something concrete from this activity, Hsing Yun also set up a Chinese literature and writing class. His solid background in Chinese literature and writing enabled him to correct their papers

with earnest efficiency, something that pleased these budding intellectuals. One of his first generation of disciples, the Venerable Tzu Hui, reputed to be "a gifted woman scholar of the Buddhist community," spoke candidly: "My first contact with the Master was not because I wanted to study about Buddhism, rather I wanted to learn how to write."

In order for Buddhism to make this breakthrough, Hsing Yun came up with novel approaches and did away with conservative ways of missionary work, so that he could guide his young students. His rich creativity and dynamic vibrancy was able to attract droves of young people through these modernized forms of liberating beings. In fact, he himself was not much older than they were, and he would often take charge of a group of young people as they went from town to town on bicycles, preaching the Dharma. Upon the successful conclusion of each missionary campaign, they would pass through the open fields in the moonlight. Master and students loved to sing together, their voices deeply imbued with a warm tenderness, while their spirits were as pure and bright as the pale moon above. Hsing Yun was inspired by such fortunate occurrences, and so he penned a description of that scene and those feelings, and asked someone to set it to music. This then was how " Song of the Dharma Preacher," sung for generations at Fo Guang Shan, later came to be.

Ensuring that Compassion and Goodness Take Root Early

Going a step further, Hsing Yun also spread the seeds of Buddhism among the younger generation. Not only did he organize student groups at the junior and senior high school levels, he also instituted after-school study sessions for underprivileged kids, in which he asked his followers who taught at school to volunteer their time as tutors in such subjects as English, mathematics, physics, and chemistry. In terms of moral character and academic study, these children unreservedly proved that "children of the Dharma never go

astray." Each of these students endeavored to get ahead, thereby changing the opinion many parents held regarding Buddhism.

The educator and best-selling author on Chan studies, Cheng Shih-yen, was one of the children helped by this tutorial program. Cheng admired Hsing Yun's understanding of youth psychology, in that he devised various activities to attract students with meticulous care. At the same time, Hsing Yun was extraordinarily warm and sincere, and would often pat them on the shoulders and sit down with them for a chat. Hsing Yun would give others a warm feeling deep in the heart, so it was no wonder that everyone loved to run over and see him after class. Many high school students considered their participation in the student organization a great honor. Several years later, Fo Guang Shan held an international symposium on Chan studies, and Hsing Yun met with Cheng Shih-yen who had been invited to attend. He still remembered this student from his tutorial program, and spoke from the heart: "Oh, look how this willow seed planted without a second thought has grown into such a shady tree. I am really happy to see you!"

When viewed from the perspective of modern marketing, Hsing Yun has effectively employed the principles of market segmentation early on, and excels at developing "consumer behavior." His idea is that Buddhism should take root in a person as early as possible, so compassion and goodness in the individual can be formed from a tender age. This is why he inaugurated classes for primary and pre-school children, and later expanded these into "weekend schools," which often held competitions in such things as painting, arts and crafts, calligraphy, and writing. In this way, the seeds of the aspiration for enlightenment were sown in the hearts of the children.

Hsing Yun touched the hearts of believers in general through his sincerity and his earnest service. He came to Ilan all alone, and had to take on many tasks though still a young man. He found himself occupied with a whole host of activities: It was he that conducted the

seven-day chanting services; it was he that set up the lecture hall; he cooked the vegetarian meals, and he served them as well; and of course it was he that played the Dharma instruments. He even had to deal with the pet monkey being raised at the kindergarten sponsored by Lei Yin Temple, for whenever the monkey ran off, someone would yell, "Master, the monkey's gotten away; go get it!" Hsing Yun would immediately set aside what he was doing, and quickly go off and catch the monkey.

Ilan is My Home

Hsing Yun was full of enthusiasm when it came to spreading Buddhism, but would still find time during his hard work to serve as chief editor of Life magazine. Every month he would use his own money to buy several hundred copies, which he gave to people. After starting the biweekly *Awakening the World*, he went out on his own to drum up subscribers. Upon receiving any income from his articles published in other magazines, he would spend it all on buying silver chains with the auspicious Buddhist sign known as the *srivatsalaksana*. He would give these to his young students, in hopes they would wear it as a symbol of honor in the Buddhist faith. Furthermore, each and every notebook and pencil used by the young students and pre-school children, were also purchased with money he made from his hard work at writing.

After several years of plowing and tilling, Hsing Yun finally had a chance to bring in the harvest. In 1958, he decided to hold a nighttime lantern parade for the Buddha's birthday, which falls on the eighth day of the 4th lunar month. Each district supplied a float for the parade, which toured around the forty-eight districts in Ilan. At the time, the entire population of Ilan was only fifty thousand people, and yet the number of people participating in the parade was more than thirty thousand. Thousands of homes were emptied and people lined the streets to watch. This bold move was a totally new experience for

the local populace, while the Buddhist followers understood the meaning of unity through action for the first time. This enabled the once disorganized laity to get a taste of force concentration, which would become the foundation for the later work of preaching the Dharma.

Over the course of his twelve year residency in Ilan, an outsider-monk formed a close bond of deep and enduring affection with the simple and honest folk in this mountainous town. "Arriving no one is there to greet me; departing no one is there to say goodbye. That's the feel of home." Ilan also embraced Hsing Yun with deep devotion. His first generation of Fo Guang Shan disciples were nearly all from Ilan, and together they treasure the fifty years of shared devotion and joy of the Buddhist path. These include the bhikhus Hsin Ping, Hui Lung, and Hui Chuan, as well as the bhikunis Tzu Chuang, Tzu Chia, Tzu Hui, and Tzu Jung, who together constitute the key nucleus of the Fo Guang Shan network today. It is no wonder that many people have considered Ilan to be Hsing Yun's "great military academy," while this batch of disciples have all become his "top generals."

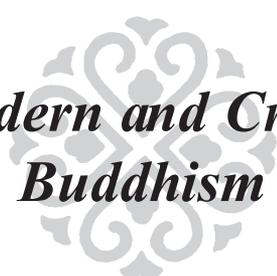
The Cradle of Modern Buddhism

Under Hsing Yun's leadership with Ilan as its center, the scope of missionary work radiated outward as an ever-widening circle. This included the series of Dharma preaching and missionary activities that toured the entire island of Taiwan in support of the Publishing Committee for the Buddhist Tripitaka, as a way of publicizing the Great Tripitaka [Buddhist Canon]. At the conclusion of every talk he gave, Hsing Yun always led the audience in a prayer while facing the august image of the Buddha. Quietly, he made a fervent vow in his heart, that as long as living beings need the Dharma and no matter where they were, he would be willing to go there and bring the Dharma no matter what it took. It was such a vow that

generated Fo Guang Shan's glorious efforts at spreading the Dharma. However, just as drinking water makes us grateful for the spring, one can say that Ilan represents the beginning of vitality for Modern Buddhism.



Chapter
Seven



*A Modern and Creative
Buddhism*

Hsing Yun has always gauged his innovations with pinpoint accuracy. His ideas are neither halfhearted nor extravagant, while his actions are marked with fearlessness and patience. Without missing a beat, he keeps tabs on the pulse of the times.

Throughout the centuries, Buddhism has always had individuals endowed with more "modern" ways of thinking, who enabled Buddhism to manifest a flowering brilliance over the ages. With all the changes over the centuries and despite the ravages of anti-Buddhist persecutions, Buddhism still stands unwavering and unshakable. However, except for Master Taixu who made "open the monastery gate and enter society" his rallying cry, it seems no one else in China since the republic was founded [in 1912], has discussed the issue of Buddhism's modernization, much less undertaken any action. That is, not until Hsing Yun drew up his plans and put them into action, brushing aside the dead weight of history to make his magnificent and grand contribution to Buddhism's modernization.

The Collected Speeches of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun (Vol. II) includes "*Buddhism's Modernization*" (a speech given in 1982 to the Seminar on Chinese Studies for the provincial government of Taiwan that was held at Fo Guang Shan):

Buddhism is moving towards modernization, this being a necessary course of action. From its beginnings, Buddhism was a religion that focused on the human condition. This is a truth shared by all Five Vehicles of the Dharma [the human, heaven, sravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva vehicles], which not only represents the standard of spiritual practice followed by the monastic community, but also constitutes a guide for life shared by the Seven Groups of Disciples [monks (bhiksu), nuns (bhiksuni),

novice monks (shramanera), novice nuns (shramanerika), male lay practitioners (upasaka), and female lay practitioners (upasika), and female Dharma learners (shiksamana)]. Buddhism must adapt to the needs of each era and apply its most wondrous skillful means to manifest the Buddha's spirit of compassion throughout society. That is, it must become "modernized" in each and every age.

At the same time, he put forward the principles for modernizing Buddhism:

- * A modernized Buddhism is rational, not heretical.
- * A modernized Buddhism is practical, not imaginary
- * A modernized Buddhism is for this world, not a future world.
- * A modernized Buddhism is correct belief, not superstition.
- * A modernized Buddhism is progressive, not conservative.

Being the "First" in Buddhism

During the past fifty years of spreading the Dharma, Hsing Yun has set the records in at least the following aspects:

Culture: Publication of Fo Guang Tripitaka, Fo Guang Buddhist Dictionary, Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, and many other kinds of publications; setting up art museums, libraries, and holding Buddhist musical concerts and lectures combined with Buddhist music.

Education: Founding of the first university that waives any tuition, various community colleges open to the public, and the first American university founded by Chinese accredited by WASC (The Western Association of Schools and Colleges), University of the West (formerly Hsi Lai University) in the United States

Activities for the Laity: Summer camps for different ages, youth associations, Buddhist wedding organization, and many study groups.

Dharma service: Buddha recitation center, the first Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony held in the West, Joint Dharma Service of the Three Traditions of Chan, Pure Land and Tantric Buddhism, etc.

Others: The first Buddhist musical record, the first Buddhist lecture hall, the first newspaper issued by a Buddhist organization—Merit Times, and the first Buddhist NGO in the United Nations.

Taking the Pulse of the Times

Through a careful analysis of the Buddhist modernization that Hsing Yun has advocated and so earnestly put into practice, we can see his extraordinary vision. One example is the modernized venue for spreading the Dharma that with thoughtful consideration provides a diverse way for the public to approach the Dharma.

In the past, attending Buddhist teachings required a visit to a temple or monastery that were often situated in remote locations with poor transportation. This held people back from attending and even Dharma teachers were reluctant to make the trip. Even if they made it to the temple or monastery, the building and facilities would fail to meet the needs of the audience. Having done their best to attend on one or two occasions, there were many people who found excuses to avoid attending any further teachings. Fifty years ago when he first arrived in Ilan, Hsing Yun was already aware of this problem, and so he established the very first auditorium for Taiwan's Buddhist community. Over the many years that followed, Dharma Services were held at Leiyin Temple on Wednesdays and Saturdays. At the conclusion of the Dharma Services, various programs would always be arranged, including theme-oriented talks given by current well-known Buddhist teachers who were invited to speak. For example, such Buddhist masters as the 9th Lcan-skyia Khutuktu (Yeshe Dorje, 1891-1957), the Venerable Yinshun (1906-2005), the Venerable Yanpei (1917-1996), the Venerable Dongchu, and the Venerable

Zhuyun, had all been honored guests invited by Hsing Yun to speak.

After the establishment of Fo Guang Shan, Hsing Yun made the following proposal regarding the function of a Buddhist temple or monastery: "Tradition and modernity are to be harmonized; religious property is to be jointly owned by the monastic and lay communities; practice and understanding through wisdom are of equal importance; and religion and art are to be combined." This is why the construction of Fo Guang Shan and other branch temples include such things as auditoriums, conference rooms, classrooms, lounge areas, newspaper reading rooms, and libraries, as well as art galleries and tea rooms. What Hsing Yun means by modernization, is that the traditional responsibility for preaching the Dharma should not be relegated solely to the main Buddha Shrine (where Buddhist practitioners only concern themselves with worshiping the Buddha), rather, lecture halls, conference rooms, and classrooms should be charged with the duty of offering Dharma instruction. In this way, a balance is made between the sacred and the secular; a connection is formed between the monastery and the society; and the monastic and lay communities augment and support one another. In 1954, Hsing Yun went beyond the confines of the temple to inaugurate a new trend by organizing groups that would tour the island to publicize the publication of the Buddhist Tripitaka (Chinese Buddhist canonical texts). Hsing Yun led his followers on a forty-four-day missionary campaign around Taiwan that preached the meaning of the Buddhist Tripitaka. This constituted one of the new undertakings for the Buddhist world on Taiwan, one that reached as far as the distant island of Jibei beyond Penghu Islands (also known as the Pescadores).

Hsing Yun recalls that during his residency at Ilan, everyday there would be some young people who showed up at the temple or came to Dharma talks, and they would ask him: "What can young people do in Buddhism?" Henceforth, Hsing Yun would often carry out missionary work with these young people as they rode on bicycles,

bringing their paper-made props to open squares in surrounding villages. There they would adopt a popular style for explaining the Dharma, while they performed shadow puppet plays and showed slides as visual aids, so that they could attract more people to the Dharma talks. There was no greater encouragement for these young people than to be led by such a young Venerable. This proved that Buddhism was no longer the Buddhism of old folks, but also the Buddhism of young people.

The schoolteacher Lin Ching-chih (Tzu En) recalls his experience of following the Master around the countryside during such a campaign:

If the area of our missionary work was not too far from Ilan, we would bicycle there instead of walking. Being so young those many years ago, the Master would lead thirty or so of us young people as we hastened over to the venue for the Dharma talk through the beauty of the open countryside accompanied by a gentle evening breeze. On his bicycle, the Master would be out in front or bringing up the rear. When a bicycle broke down or we had to ascend a steep hill, we had to dismount and push our bicycles. When typhoons struck and the rain poured down, it was like "being bathed in Dharma rain." On our return trip, everyone would be singing in loud voices " Song of the Dharma Preacher" written by the Master, as we groped our way through the dark back to Leiyin Temple.

If our destination was a long way off, then we would take the train. In those days, train service was quite infrequent and so we would have to scramble to get on board in time. Later on, all the station masters and workers on the Ilan line were deeply touched by our enthusiasm, and would usually wait until all of us had boarded before the train would leave the station.

The degree of popularity for these missionary events can be gauged by the actual activities staged by the local populace. A few days before the event, people would go through the neighborhoods banging a gong to remind everyone to come and attend: "our Buddhism is coming!" On the day of the Dharma talk, even the images of the gods and their spirit mediums would be invited to parade as part of a welcoming ceremony. On one occasion in the little town of Yuli in Hualien County, the Dharma talk drew a crowd as large as five thousand people. Whether under a big tree, in a small theatre, or out on the threshing ground, Hsing Yun would lead his young crew in setting up the microphone, dragging the power cords, hanging the lights, putting up posters, arranging the seats, and ushering in the audience. The young missionaries would present their message in both Mandarin and Taiwanese, as based on a text Hsing Yun helped them prepare and correct, which excited the passionate exuberance of the crowd.

Proficient in the Use of Broadcast Media

The modernization of the medium for Dharma teaching advances with the times, generating new developments. Originally, Buddhism was a kind of reticent religion from the East, and it continued to evolve over the several millennia since its introduction to China from India. Yet it has never really expanded its influence by making a big show, nor has it ever emphasized publicity. But as the times have changed, technological innovation has ensured that political, economic, and social conditions are no longer what they once were. The old style religious experience and sentiment can no longer keep up with what the crowds of devotees are seeking. What kind of method can connect traditional Buddhist principles with brand-new constructs of life? Who can offer Buddhist followers insight into dependent origination without just harping about karmic retribution? Hsing Yun has discovered that the profundity of Buddhism does not

lie with the abstractness of its ideas, but rather with the difficulty in keeping its message in step with the times. It is not that the road is so perilous, but that liberation must be delivered by adapting to changing conditions.

Speaking of the modernization of the medium for Dharma teaching, Master Taixu early in the last century employed a blackboard as a visual aid during his Dharma teachings, but even that only won him ridicule as a "bizarre monk." This clearly demonstrates how opposing the conservative forces of the Buddhist community demands so much courage and wisdom. Besides his duty-bound sense of mission regarding the future of Buddhism, Hsing Yun came to Taiwan just as he began his adult life, and thus had the creative and imaginative powers that only the youth possess. Through his efforts at writing and submitting his stories, through his work as editor for newspapers and magazines and producing literary exhibits, Hsing Yun already had some idea of the explosive influence that lies inexpressibly hidden within the modern broadcast medium; and so he tried pursuing it further.

Looking back on it all, Hsing Yun was most likely the first monastic to employ instructional aids when giving Dharma teachings and carrying on his missionary activities. He still remembers clearly what those audiences were like some fifty years ago: at first there were those who came out of curiosity, to see what all the commotion was about; and if they did not stand far away with arms folded, then they would be hiding behind others while stealing a peek. In order to attract these people, Hsing Yun would arrange a choral performance first, and during the singing, he would hang a cloth upon which the lyrics of the songs were written. At this point, people had to move in closer in order to read what was written on the cloth, and as they did so, a slide presentation accompanied by music would then bring them in further. Only then did the formal program begin with the banging of a gong. The result was that those groups of people watching from

a distance, were slowly brought closer, and since the program itself was interesting and lively, they ended up staying.

Hsing Yun in those days was brimming with enthusiasm, and never bothered himself with all the hardship and difficulties involved. There was one year he led a group of young people on a missionary tour around the island. At that time, their most precious piece of equipment was a tape recorder. The route from Pingtung to Taitung was a rocky and rough road, and Hsing Yun was concerned that his precious machine might get broken on a bad bump, so he kept it safe in his lap, never putting it down during the entire journey of a dozen hours or so. Having stepped out of the car, he wanted to kneel and pray before the Buddha, but he found it impossible to bend his legs. The doctor diagnosed it as a case of rheumatism and recommended that both legs be amputated. While being kept busy, Hsing Yun forgot all about what the doctor had said, and both of his legs completely recovered on their own. Some of his other innovations include: the Buddhist Youth Choir he organized in Ilan, that performed from villages and towns all the way to major radio stations, as well as the "*Voice of Buddhism*," a regularly scheduled program on the Minpen Radio Station that guided Buddhist youth. This was followed by the "*Sound of Awakening the World*," the "*Gate of Faith*," the "*Wondrous use of Chan*," and the "*Wisdom of Life*" radio programs. From then on, these programs were carried on radio waves across rivers and mountains, and directly into the hearts of their listeners.

In 1957, Hsing Yun cut the first-ever Buddhist records, a set of six ten-inch records that were filled with the recordings of some twenty Buddhist songs. A set of these six records can still be seen in the Museum of Fo Guang Shan History today, for they represent a masterpiece unprecedented in the history of Buddhism, as well as marking a watershed in its development. This set of records created a sensation even before these records were published. People from all around Taiwan vied with one another in making advance purchases,

while orders also flew in from Southeast Asia. At that time, the person invited to compose the music, Wu Juche, was a teacher at Taipei Polytechnic and had never met Hsing Yun. But his conversations with Hsing Yun convinced him that this monastic's ideas were refreshingly new and richly creative, and so he too came to identify with the notion that this ancient Buddhism must advance by becoming more popular and life-oriented, and so he undertook the project with unre-served zeal.

Some dozen years ago, karaoke and karaoke television (KTV) began to be widely adopted in Taiwan, and Hsing Yun's creativity immediately made the connection: what if the Buddhist chanting service performed at mornings and evenings could be practiced using karaoke. Buddhism would certainly be able to quickly reach into every household. This was followed by the expansion into a series of other media platforms, including CD, VCD, DVD, and even computers, cell phones, and PDAs. As the medium for preaching the Dharma become richer and more varied, Fo Guang Shan took some good advice and further established the Oracle Records Co. Ltd and the "Gandha Samudra Culture Company" that produce and distribute Buddhist audio-visual products. These product lines include Buddhist chanting in Sanskrit, music for Buddhist festivals, sacred songs of Buddhism, Buddhist-oriented performance music, as well as special collections of cross-over music, and so on. Modernized music composition and performance along with a high-quality professional team, ensured that many music lovers will keep listening. Moreover, such music can reach beyond the world of Buddhist followers, to attract many white-collar workers in metropolitan areas as well as droves of young people, who will listen while driving, riding public transportation, or reading. This then becomes for them a kind of spiritual music that purifies the mundane vulgarity of a busy life.

Appearing Digitally, Influencing the Masses

Towards the end of the last century, a large-scale public opinion poll was conducted in the United States, asking individuals to vote on the most influential events of the last one hundred years. When the results were tabulated, the item "universal television access in all households" was the sixth highest vote-getter. As recalled by the former general manager of Taiwan Television, Shih Yung-kuei, Hsing Yun ought to be considered the first Dharma teacher to appear on the small screen in the history of television in Taiwan. "The Venerable Master Hsing Yun's Buddhist Lectures" dispelled the impression in most people's minds about how old monks would give dull Dharma talks with their eyes closed, for Hsing Yun was animated and lively. For a period of time, Taiwan Television, China Television, and Chinese Television were all running Hsing Yun's program series, with a degree of popularity that outshone popular entertainers. The televised series also marked the first time in the history of television on Taiwan that the same person was appearing on all three networks with the same kind of program being broadcast during the same time slot. Even so, there was no concern about competition among the networks, nor were the excellent viewer ratings affected in any way. In 1989, Buddha's Light Television (BLTV) was established under the leadership of Hsing Yun, and with that, Fo Guang Shan's work of televised Dharma teachings was made all the more dynamic and proficient. Standing out from the pack of electronic media so aggressively criticized by society, BLTV has won the support of the viewing public, owing to its fresh content and excellent production values.

From the tape recorders, slide projectors, and screen projectors of its early period; to recording and producing Buddhist music records, radio shows, and TV programs; the publication of Buddhist cassettes and video tapes; and the making of multi-media, electronic audio-visual products, all of these various skillful means have been employed only as a way of influencing the masses, while all of this

technology has been used to deliver a more effective message, thereby providing a wider benefit to all sentient beings. In this, Hsing Yun has ensured that Buddhism's spirit of positive advancement will always keep pace with the current trends of the age. The President of

University of the West, Dr. Lancaster, presented a paper entitled "*Buddhism and the Digital Age*" at the International Conference on Humanistic Buddhism [published in *Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism*, 2003], in which he said:

Methods of contact and transmission that transcend the one-to-one relationship can instantly engage groups of people numbering in the thousands. Development in this area should receive priority given the younger generation's loyal use of the Internet.

On a positive note, there is no other tool more suitable to the practice of Humanistic Buddhism than the Internet, ... because it offers a wonderful opportunity for communication with others on a historically unprecedented scale.

After several years of operation, the global information network for Fo Guang Shan has slowly matured, and more and more people are coming in contact with Fo Guang Shan through the internet. In early 2005, the art of flowers, plants, and rockery exhibit appeared on the website's main page; hundreds of thousands of people came to Fo Guang Shan to attend the exhibit, and a great many of them learned about the exhibit through the Internet. A workshop of life education was held in 2004 in which a total of two hundred people participated; eighty of these had signed up online. In the United States, many people learn information about Hsi Lai Temple through the Internet. By adapting to the needs of the times, the use of this all-pervasive Internet has enabled those interested in Buddhism to quickly and easily connect with Buddhism. The Tienyen Buddhist eCollege was

established in 2004, and offers lively audio-visual based teaching and rich class materials in an interactive environment that stresses both study and practice. Students can begin taking classes at any time; all they have to do is sign up online.

Spend any time getting to know Fo Guang Shan, and one will be surprised at how well the Dharma and technology go together, for on the wings of technology, the Dharma can indeed roam far and wide with such freedom. The more than one thousand followers and staff at Fo Guang Shan have already made it their habit to turn on their computers and go online every morning, reading news about Fo Guang Shan from the global information network. They receive the *Monastery Gate Daily* (internal information posted daily) and reports from every continent, and they can communicate through email with the various branch temples and working units around the world. Internal to Fo Guang Shan is the shared local network "Rulai" that is widely used, ensuring that information is transparent and public, and communication is convenient and timely. Through this effective organization of resources, Fo Guang Shan can work in concert around the world, formulate a shared consensus, and generate a vision for the future.

With the advent of the 21st century, Fo Guang Shan realized that for the Dharma to continue on into the distant future, it must attract the younger generation to Buddhism. If the methods of preaching the Dharma and bringing liberation are unable to keep in step with the times, then no headway can be made with the younger generation and intellectuals, particularly those in advanced countries. Once the number of young people who connect with Buddhism goes into decline, there will be no avoiding the degeneration into a "cold Buddhism" or a "dead Buddhism." The President of the Supervisory Council of Fo Guang Shan, Venerable Hui Chuan, has pointed out that information and network transformations are absolutely critical. Young people born since the 1990s onwards have grown up typing

on the keyboard, a trend that cannot be turned back and that demands understanding and respect. Buddhism should even get ahead of the curve, rather than letting current trends lead it by the nose that would lead to a frantic impatience:

There are those who feel that the computer is incompatible with Buddhism. Why does Buddhism have to move so fast? But if we browse through the Buddhist scriptures, we can see that the computer represents the realm of supernatural powers, where an instant is an eternity. The notion of speed just has to do with the inflexible impression most people have about Buddhism, but speed is something we can control ourselves, while our mental state is something we can adjust on our own. The meaning of modernization is creating broad connections for a positive future and caring for the needs of even more people. This also constitutes a profound extension of the Dharma.

Although there is a certain distance in age between him and young disciples, not only does Hsing Yun not reject or dismiss modern technology, but is even hoping to understand and learn more. If a need arises to add more equipment, he is sure to support it. He has his own personal email account, so that no matter where he travels in the world, others can keep in touch with him in a timely manner. On one occasion, Hsing Yun saw one of his disciples using MSN instant messenger. Out of curiosity, he asked the disciple what he was doing, and the disciple explained to him its function of real-time chatting. Hsing Yun then asked how much it cost, and the disciple replied that everything one needed was included in the original cost of the internet service. Hsing Yun remarked with approval on how such a function would make dealing with matters very convenient. On another occasion, he asked his disciples what they do on the internet, and they

replied that they read the news, bought books, and so on. He then asked how to buy books online, and the disciples explained that one selects the books for purchase and then pays the invoice online by filling in the credit card number; then the books will be mailed out. After thinking a while, Hsing Yun remarked that such an approach was still quite troublesome, for it would be better if the books could come directly from the computer.

From the Buddhist perspective, such technologies represent the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, where all one need do is think about the desired clothing or food and they appear immediately; and technologically speaking, this is completely possible. In Europe and America, there are already businesses that deal in "personalized libraries," in which books can be printed directly from the computer according to the customer's demands. One can see how Fo Guang Shan's dynamic energy, its ability to keep up with the times, and its flexible use of modern technology without becoming its slave, is absolutely related to the enlightened thinking and forward-looking vision of its leader.

Future projects of Fo Guang Shan's information technology center include:

1. Online 7-11 library: The process of digitization will enable students of Buddhism to read, browse, and store Buddhist texts in a more convenient and accessible way.
2. Online distance learning can be applied to all courses at the online Buddhist institute, the satellite Buddhist institute, and the open university for practitioners. Hsing Yun has already carried out many experimental courses at University of the West (formerly Hsi Lai University) in the United States during October of 2004, and March and October of 2005, respectively. In applying distance learning, Hsing Yun is truly serving as a model for all, in that those from eight states in the United States, Canada, and the Taiwan can converse

instantaneously with Hsing Yun at the same time from set locations and with bidirectional interactivity, thus realizing the ideal of the world as our neighborhood.

3. The establishment of a global village website that will combine web pages in such languages as English, Japanese, and Korean, so that people around the world can exchange ideas online.

4. Through online video-casting, important meetings on all continents can be conducted online. This transcends the limitations of space and time, while saving on manpower and financial resources.

The Venerable Hui Chuan concludes:

Information should not be stored away in some database; rather, it should be used with true flexibility. Fo Guang Shan is an internationally oriented organization, and by means of the Internet, we can obtain first-hand information on the first try. This also means that Dharma talks and publicity for our activities can be coordinated globally. In the past, there was more vertical communication between the branch temples and the main center, and much less horizontal communication. Now it's a three-dimensional system in all 360 degrees, and each unit can transform itself by taking the initiative.

Marketing Pioneer

In recent years, marketing has become an extremely popular subject in the business world. One of the most important concepts in marketing is that of "positioning," that is, to market to a clearly defined group of consumers (to carve out market segments from the mass market), and then supply goods and services according to consumer demands. The strategy for all of the advertising and sales pro-

motions are determined based on a certain position. In fact, Hsing Yun was already an accomplished pioneer in this area as early as forty years ago, as the brilliance of his accomplishments has shown.

During his Ilan period, Hsing Yun began using age group positioning in the following manner: children in kindergarten and primary school joined the children's class, the highest recorded attendance of which was two thousand. For students at the junior high level, there were the after-school study sessions. As for young people in high school or above, they could attend the writing classes or join the choir. The Buddhist Youth Group of Kaohsiung was established on the 29th of March 1958, and constituted the earliest Buddhist-oriented youth group in Taiwan. In Taiwan before the 1950s, young people were not active at all in Buddhist temples. However, Hsing Yun felt that Buddhism also belongs to the young, and so he kept on encouraging young people: the Buddha obtained enlightenment at thirty-one; Xuanzhuang (600-664 CE) was twenty-six when he went to India seeking the Dharma; and the Zhaolun written by the scholar-monk Sengzhao (384-414 CE) at thirty-one became an ancient classic.

After Fo Guang Shan was founded, Hsing Yun was willing to take political risks, and so he held a Buddhist summer camp for post-secondary students; and after the Buddha's Light International Association was established, he made the youth group an independent organization, because here too Hsing Yun believes that the future of Buddhism is tied to the young. Several years later, a boy scout troop was formed, which developed rapidly, including a group of boy scouts at the International Buddhist Progress Society, New York. This group registered with the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America to become a charter member of the American council. This was the first troop of boy scouts to be registered by Chinese-Americans in the New York area.

A Place for Everyone: Male, Female, Young, or Old

In another area, Hsing Yun sets a position according to differences in background and interest. After Pumen Temple was completed in Taipei, he inaugurated a whole series of new activities, including the "Bright Light Service," "Paying Gratitude Offering Service," "Women's Dharma Club, and the dual practice of Chan and Pure Land. Among these, the Women's Dharma Club refers to small discussion groups centered on the Dharma. These ten-member groups composed of senior women meeting to talk about the Dharma joy and how husbands and wives should treat each other as well as their personal insights into Buddhist study and the difficulties of life. They can also exchange news and information, help each other to overcome shortcomings, and learn new things. By passing on their experience to one another, the women participating in these groups become outstanding members of the female congregation. Then there is the "Male Volunteers Club" in which the male followers participate. Over the last few years, the members of the Male Volunteers Club have repeatedly demonstrated their sense of duty and strength through such large-scale activities as the series of welcoming celebrations to honor the tooth and bone relics of the Buddha, becoming the model of conduct as Buddhist Male Volunteers.

In response to the on-going trend towards an aging society, Hsing Yun has instructed that the regional, social activity centers plan and set up "senior institutes" specifically for this greying population. The mission statement for these institutes includes:

1. The promotion of filial piety by sending one's parents to school.
2. The increase of new knowledge through receiving new information.
3. The practice of spiritual cultivation through studying Buddhism and accumulating merit.
4. The creation of broad and positive connections by expanding

life's horizons.

Classes have been full since these institutes opened, becoming one of the most popular programs at the social activity centers.

In order to make it easier for devotees to practice together and participate in activities, childcare and Sunday schools have been instituted for Fridays and Saturdays. Not only are these young children cared for and looked after, they are also given opportunities to improve their writing skills, to receive instruction in Buddhism, and develop their moral character. As for the "Vegetarian Meals and Chan Discussion" that was held over forty-nine consecutive days marking the completion of the Taipei Vihara in 1994, it represents the highest upward progression of Hsing Yun's "positioning" strategy. For each day of the event, several dozen special guests from artistic, educational, medical, business, and media circles were invited to come and enjoy together a delicious meal, while discussing the practice of Chan and extending their contact with Buddhism. Clearly, Hsing Yun's approach to liberating living beings is both dynamic and diverse.

Directly Facing Sensitive Issues

The modernization of the content for Dharma teaching means a consistent adaption to the needs of living beings while remaining in accord with the truth and the particulars of circumstance. If you observe how Dharma masters in general teach the scriptures, you would discover that they explain every word and comment on each sentence as they go from scripture to scripture. A teaching on one Buddhist scripture alone often takes several months, or even a year and a half. It is recorded that when the great Tiantai master Zhizhe (538-579 CE) was teaching the *Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Dharma*, his interpretation of just the word "wonderful" in its title went on for a total of ninety days, an event celebrated in history as the koan of "the three-month discussion on the word 'profound'." But in modern society, the majority of people are very busy; they work in

the mornings and have their obligations and second jobs in the evenings. It would be extremely difficult for them to spend several months listening to a complete lecture on a given Buddhist scripture; and yet, if they only catch some snippets of the teaching here and there, they will not understand that much either.

Now Hsing Yun has noticed modern society's preference for deductive analysis and its demand that time be used effectively. Thus, he has designed his content in topical units, in which each topic comprises a given Buddhist principle. The listener is then able to realize the truth of the Dharma in just a few hours. Furthermore, these topics also relate to the work, lifestyle, and psychological makeup of society as a whole. Thus for example, Hsing Yun has given talks on: "How to Enjoy Life in Old Age," "Mind Illness Requires Healing Medicine for the Mind," "Ten of Life's Common Questions," "Life and Faith," "How to Increase Happiness in Life," "How to Eliminate Pressure," "How the Two Sexes can Get Along," and so on.

With the decline in ethical values and the darkening chaos of society that has occurred, especially in most recent years, some issues have emerged that are both unprecedented and relevant to the foundation of human nature, such as "euthanasia," "AIDS," "human cloning," "abortion," and so on. Coming from all directions, these issues touch upon the fragile and sensitive nerves of the religious world. However, in their response to these issues, certain religious leaders either tend to repeat the same-old traditional message, or else they will avoid these issues as much as they can. Hsing Yun, nevertheless, addresses the issues put forward to him in a frank and forthright manner, and has even issued a series of articles and books, such as "The Buddhist View on Euthanasia" and "The Buddhist View on Mental and Physical Illness" in a question and answer format, which explain the Buddhist perspective on these issues.

The Dharma should be Practical

Over the past fifty years, Hsing Yun has ascended the speaker's platform more than a thousand times. His experience has shown him that it is quite easy to give a Buddhist talk nobody understands and yet receives rave reviews, but on the contrary, it is extremely difficult to explain the Dharma in ways that anyone can understand and yet is surprisingly mocked for being too humdrum.

There is a certain phenomena nowadays in which it seems that one can come to something of an understanding when reading the Buddhist scriptures, and yet the explanations of others just leaves one in confusion instead. Because people who explain the Buddhist scriptures are trying to show off their erudite scholarship, their intricately abstruse presentation transforms the originally clear and simple Dharma into something far removed from human life and reality. Thus, it will happen that upon returning from a Dharma talk, someone will ask about how well the Buddhist master spoke. "He was fantastic!" "What was it about?" "Actually, I didn't get it." One does not know whether to laugh or cry. That the Buddhist scriptures are difficult to understand is the view most people have in society, but in fact, the Buddhist scriptures are not so difficult to comprehend; it is just that the essential principles may not always be easily grasped. To merely translate the classical texts of Buddhist scriptures into modern language and yet fail to elucidate the core principles would be useless. To modernize the Dharma means to select those passages from the Buddhist scriptures that are of relevance to how we live our lives, deal with things, and cultivate our minds and bodies, and then to explain them in such a way people can accept and put into practice.

Any explanation of the Dharma should be in accord with the truth and with circumstances. This was the stated requirement as early as the Buddha's time, and yet being in accord with the truth is quite easy, while the hard part is keeping in tune with the conditions of the audience. Keeping in tune has meant that Hsing Yun will employ

materials not limited to the scriptural text when giving his talks. Thus, he will produce lists, analyses, summaries, and citations, for a presentation that includes an explanation of the text's general significance, an interpretation of the Buddhist terminology, a paraphrasing of the text's meaning, and the listing of study questions. Actually, what is most important here is to ensure that the audience can put into practice what they have heard. In this way, the Dharma will have a connection with their lives and with their minds and bodies; that after coming in contact with the Buddhist teachings, they will constantly feel: "Yes, I understand; I get it. I have realized something!" The President of BLIA for Southern Malaysia, Shen Yongan, puts it bluntly:

People like us who have received an English education are very direct. If we can't understand what is explained to us, we won't come and listen. If the talk is done well, we'll say it's good; but if done badly, we'll say it's bad. And we don't like things that are hard to understand. But the content of the Master's talks are very lively with lots of stories, something skillfully done.

When some Buddhist teachers talk about "emptiness," our brains are quite literally emptied out. But the Master's way of doing it is different. He gives us lots of tools and antidotes for solving the problems of life. In the past, the Buddhism of the temple always remained just that; it didn't connect with our lives. Humanistic Buddhism tells us that we are one, and that the Dharma can serve as our guide for daily living. Nor can we abandon our own secular roles when learning Buddhism either; for there must be an inclusive balance between the two.

Many years ago, Hsing Yun accepted an invitation from the Research Council for Sino-Japanese Issues, and spoke on the topic of "Message for the 21st Century" in the main hall of the Japan's

National Diet building. When the presentation was over, a Japanese woman in her fifties gave her impression of the talk. She had heard more than two hundred Dharma talks and been reading Buddhist books for decades, but an appreciation of the profundities of the Dharma had always eluded her. That had been, until Hsing Yun's presentation that day suddenly opened her eyes. Prof. Kawabe Toshitaka spoke of his total astonishment, in that the word "Buddha" was never mentioned in that day's presentation, and yet Hsing Yun was always conveying the importance of spiritual purification and always pointing the way to a cultivation of the profound Dharma. Prof. Kawabe couldn't help expressing his admiration of Hsing Yun for being a living Buddha that one encounters so rarely, one who could perfectly explain the great meaning of the Dharma.

Accurately Mastering the Audience's Psychology

To be sure, the brilliance of Hsing Yun's Dharma talks derive from the effort he puts into crafting his topics, which breaks out of the traditional routines of scriptural explanation by his constant innovation. But in another sense, his brilliance is due to his accurate mastery of the audience's psychology as based upon the kind of audience he is addressing. By presenting his ideas from different angles, Hsing Yun can focus the audience's attention, enabling them to taste the pleasurable profundity of the Dharma. On one occasion, a performance group asked him to give a Dharma talk. Hsing Yun thus began with the Buddhist dances of the heavenly maidens scattering flowers and the flying devas making offerings to the Buddhas, and then went on to discuss Buddhist songs of praise and chanting in Buddhism, further emphasizing how song and dance can also spread the Dharma. Upon hearing this, each member of the group experienced a heartfelt sense of fulfilling joy. On another occasion, the Association for the Literary Arts held a conference at Fo Guang Shan, and Hsing Yun made a presentation entitled "Buddhism and Chinese Literature." He

began by speaking about Buddhism's transmission to China, and then proceeded to discuss how the translation of the Buddhist scriptures had thus added many new words to the lexicon of Chinese literature, and described as well how literary works can manifest Buddhist thinking. When the presentation was finished, all of these visitors from literary circles applauded in approval, showing their admiration of Hsing Yun as "one of their own."

When artists come, he talks about the cave murals at Dunhuang; when athletes come, he talks about Shaolin Kungfu; when farmers come, he relates how monks imported fruits and vegetables from central Asia; when soldiers come, he speaks of national defense and mental defense; when young students come, he talks about the future prospects for young people; and when children come, he talks about Buddhism's "Four Small Things Not To Be Taken Lightly" (that sparks of fire can cause a conflagration, that drops of water can nourish the earth, that little boys can grow up to become Dharma kings, and that little girls can grow up to be queens). Hsing Yun can also discuss Buddhism's scientific perspective with members of the National Science Council; he can discuss Buddhist views concerning wealth with people from the Ministry of Economy; and he can discuss Buddhist architecture with civil engineers. Through these various teaching methods adapted to each audience and circumstance, Hsing Yun ensures that "persons of differing capacities will all gain entry into the Dharma."

The "*Chapter on the Universal Gate of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*" of the *Lotus Sutra* states: "If there be sentient beings of a certain land who would obtain liberation through the Buddha's form, then the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva will appear in the form of a Buddha and preach the Dharma. ... if they would obtain liberation through the form of a minor king, then the bodhisattva will appear in the form of a minor king and preach the Dharma. ... if they would obtain liberation through the form of a child, then the bodhisattva will

appear in the form of a child and preach the Dharma." To adopt the other's perspective and speak about things they understand is what is meant by the Fourth Attractive Quality of a bodhisattva: "congenial harmony."

Hsing Yun obtained his inspiration from the Buddha himself. The Buddha applied the metaphor of music to the lute player tuning his lute, guiding his disciples in how to tune one's own character neither too tightly or too loosely; and he applied the metaphor of tending the cows to the cowherd, instructing his disciples on how to tame the restless body and mind. It could be said that the Buddha was the teacher who excelled most in adapting his message to his students, ensuring that the profound Dharma can be instilled in the mind through such ingenious and skillful means.

Naturally Embracing All by Returning to Original Simplicity

Someone has calculated that one of Hsing Yun's thirty minute talks was interrupted by applause a total of seventy-two times. Although he speaks with a slight accent of his hometown near Yangzhou, Hsing Yun is an imposing figure with the majestic presence of the Dharma. Gesturing as he speaks, he reveals his own unique sense of charisma. He may cite an example to prove a point, or elucidate the principle behind human affairs; he may make clear statements or draw indirect analogies; and he may mention some remote precedent or employ some correlation close at hand. But each and every case is applied just right, thus coaxing a knowing smile from his audience and generating a great deal of persuasive power.

Speaking of the profound efficacy of his Dharma preaching, one of Hsing Yun's disciples once asked, "Master, how come you have so much to say?" Hsing Yun laughingly replied that in fact he has been quite introverted in nature since childhood, and during his ten years of study in the monastic cloisters, he only interacted with

his teachers and classmates; he never saw any strangers, nor did he ever have a chance to speak with outsiders. When he gave his first Dharma talk at Lei Yin Temple, his hands were shaking as he stepped to the speaker's podium. All he could do was grasp the edge of the lectern tightly so that no one would see. After much difficulty he finished his talk, only to discover that his robe was soaked through with sweat. But as the number of Dharma talks increased, he became much bolder and his demeanor improved as well.

His lectures did not draw capacity crowds in the very beginning either. Without the slightest sense of evasion, Hsing Yun related an embarrassing experience in which his entire audience went missing:

It was probably fifty years ago that I was to give a Dharma talk in Ilan. I arrived at the scheduled time and walked up to the podium, only to discover that not a single person had come to attend. At first, I thought I had gotten the wrong date or time, but after some careful thought, I knew there was no mistake. So I stood there at the podium and quietly waited. After waiting a long time, a few people slowly drifted in. Since people had come, I might as well start my talk, but throughout my entire talk, no one else ventured to appear.

Nowadays, the success of his talks is a foregone conclusion, for he is naturally able to shine on stage. His public talks, as well as small-scale presentations or roundtable discussions, are all enthusiastically received on every occasion. It has happened now and then that some group visiting Fo Guang Shan wants to invite Hsing Yun to speak to them. Though he may have just finished class and has no idea what to talk about, by the time he reaches the hall that is only a five minute walk, he has already outlined the talk in his head. Once

the microphone reaches his hand, he speaks with straightforward confidence. His brilliant eloquence is met with unending applause, and everyone is happy.

The more observant among us have perhaps discovered, that in recent years Hsing Yun has been taking the path to original simplicity. Dispensing with special effects and without music or drama, he steps up to the podium a lone individual, and yet he can still project tremendous power that influences everyone. If his disciples were to give the same speech, the effect would be quite different. "Practice makes perfect," is all that he will say, and yet behind that statement is what decades of placing demands on oneself has accomplished.

Decades of constant effort towards improvement have perfected his understanding of things and given him an oceanic wisdom. Listening to one of his talks is better than reading ten years' worth of books. On one occasion he came to the University of the West, and someone asked him whether or not he approved of homosexuality. In a flash, he realized that he could not say he approved, nor could he say he disapproved. So he did not address the issues directly, but told a Chan story instead: A group of people wanted to cross the river, and so the ferryman pulled his boat up on the shore, crushing to death some small fish and shrimp. The first group of passengers crossed over, but there were still many people on the bank waiting for the next trip. Among these were a monk and a licentiate. The licentiate asked the monk, that in crushing to death those small fish and shrimp a moment earlier, who had done wrong, the passengers or the ferryman. The monk replied, "It was your wrongdoing!" The licentiate was not convinced, for how could it have been his wrongdoing. The monk said: "Because you don't mind your own business!" As he uttered these last words, the whole gathering erupted into laughter and thundering applause, for they applauded the story's meaning on one hand, and applauded the wonderful use Hsing Yun had made of it on the other.

Profound Wisdom, Simple Appearance

Looking at Hsing Yun will tell you, that the more profound in wisdom, the simpler in appearance a person appears. The following Questions and Answers deserve to be called classics:

* Question: "I haven't seen you in twenty years; how come you still look so young?"

Answer: "I don't have time to get old."

* Question: "You look so busy; how do you find time to practice?"

Answer: "Being busy is practice."

* Question: "You should take care of yourself and rest more!"

Answer: "I'll naturally get a good rest once I'm in my coffin."

In addition, people have experienced a smile of sudden insight by reading from *Hsing Yun's Dictionary*:

* People who worship the Buddha should not spend money; the people who don't worship the Buddha should pay by offerings of lamp oil and incense.

* People who care for the sick should not have to spend money to see a doctor; the people who don't care for the sick should pay to support hospitals.

* People who recite Amitabha Buddha's name should not spend money; the people who don't recite Amitabha Buddha's name should pay by providing vegetarian meals.

* People who read books should not spend money; the people who don't read books should pay to support the publishers.

* In his article, "*On the True Meaning of Buddhist Democracy, Freedom, and Equality*," Hsing Yun drew the following analogies regarding "taking refuge in the Triple

Gem " and "observing the Five Precepts:

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem:

- * The Buddha is like light; by taking refuge in the Buddha, one is lighting the lamp of one's spirit, thus building one's own electrical power company.
- * The Dharma is like water; by taking refuge in the Dharma, one is storing up the sweet water of Dharma, thus operating one's own water supply company.
- * Then Sangha [monastic community] is like a field; by taking refuge in the Sangha, one is nurturing the fruits and flowers of the aspiration for enlightenment, thus developing one's own piece of fine land.

Observing the Five Precepts:

- * No killing, that is, not violating the life of others; no killing leads to the preservation of life, and so one naturally experiences longevity.
- * No stealing, that is, not violating the property of others; no stealing leads to generosity, and so one naturally experiences wealth.
- * No sexual misconduct, that is, not violating the body or honor of others; no sexual misconduct leads to honor and respect, and so one naturally experiences harmony.
- * No lying, that is, not violating the reputation or trust of others; no lying leads to trustworthiness, and so one naturally enjoys a good reputation.
- * No drugs, that is, not consuming anything that can impair one's judgment; no drugs leads to a normal life, and so one naturally enjoys good health.

There can be no doubt, that teaching the profundity of the Dharma in such simple terms functions as the daily call to religious practice, enabling one to come to a clear realization. Such an approach is something deeply appreciated by intellectuals.

Achieving Universal Recognition in the End

Hsing Yun is both an advocate for combining tradition with modernity and its chief practitioner, just exactly as he states in *Hsing Yun's Diary*:

The world belongs to the brave, for as long as something is beneficial to living beings, one must dare to speak, dare to act, dare to think, and dare to do. It is only in this way that difficulties can be overcome.

After many years of persistent effort, now Hsing Yun has finally achieved universal recognition. Time is the best judge of all, for though he was criticized back then, now his approach has been widely adopted by many Buddhist teachers and temples. The chair of the Malaysian Buddhist Association, the Venerable Chin Ming (1914-1999), also approved of Fo Guang Shan. He told his own followers that the only Dharma center in the world complete in all Three Jewels was Fo Guang Shan, and if given the chance, they would do well to follow Hsing Yun and study with him. For Chin Ming to say this given his position is truly quite rare. Hsing Yun is an innovative Dharma master, and has already cast aside those who attacked him back then, while a new generation of Buddhist practitioners consider his approach to Dharma teaching to be a matter of course, and follow his lead with great devotion: the image of the Buddha has been honored in the national auditorium, while Buddhist bells and drums have resounded through cities and towns. It is only because of his creativity and farsightedness that we today can enjoy a modernized Buddhism that is so active in every corner of society.

Chapter
Eight

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*A Magnificent Pure Land
for Humanity*

A decorative background for the subtitle, featuring a light grey, ornate, symmetrical pattern with intricate scrollwork and floral motifs, set against a white background.

Since ancient times, whenever people encounter hardship or difficulties, when their hearts are troubled with frustration, pain, sadness, and worry, or they feel helpless and lost, the first thing they think of is seeking help from the Buddhist temple. They come to the temple and pray, which helps them to find peace, encouragement, and safety. Just at that moment the temple gives them aid, they obtain the strength to start over once more.

The early morning air of Southern Taiwan in winter is slightly humid, while the waters of the Kaoping River generate a slow and lingering melody. This is just the time during the month of the Chinese New Year holidays that Fo Guang Shan's devotees from within the country and around the world return in droves to their home of the Dharma, where they celebrate the life of wisdom with joy and happiness. In order to receive them, everyone at Fo Guang Shan had begun making the general preparations three months earlier by doing all the cleaning and sweeping, tidying up the temple halls, and planting flowers and grass. This focuses the heart and mind, as if one were able to experience all the meditative states in which running brooks speak the Dharma and marvelous stones bow in affirmation.

Taking up an entire month, Fo Guang Shan's Lantern Festival of Peace draws in around five hundred thousand people (including tourists from many lands) to the temple complex. The Cloud Dwelling Building has served meals to forty-five hundred people at one sitting, while the highest recorded number of tourists staying overnight in the temple's guesthouses was five thousand people in a single day. Under such conditions, not only was the monks residence made available, but people were also housed at the Pumen High School and the Di Ci Children's Home.

Most Famous Mountains are Occupied by Monks

Since its founding forty years ago, the temple complex at Fo

Guang Shan has grown into a magnificent setting that has won the hearts of both the monastic and lay communities. Here, a humble and remote place has been developed into a monastery for Buddhist practice on an impressive scale, embodying the culmination of efforts in the areas of religion, culture, education, charitable work, and Dharma services. Besides its magnificent buildings and modern facilities, Fo Guang Shan also embodies many innovative ideas and principles in the area of Dharma education and propagation. Fo Guang Shan today has already become the spiritual fortress for Buddhism in Taiwan, as well as an international Buddhist Monastery that cares for all dharma realms. In retrospect, Fo Guang Shan's forty years of development represent a historical testament to Buddhism's arduous progress at overcoming difficulties, as well as portraying the superhuman efforts that have marked the life of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun. Strong walkers are always trying out longer paths, while good swimmers are always seeking out wider seas.

As mentioned before, Hsing Yun had been residing in Ilan since 1952, and had developed deep feelings for the area. It was also during this period that he also accepted an invitation from the devotees to come and preach the Dharma in Kaohsiung, which led to the establishment of the Buddhist Hall of Kaohsiung and the Buddhist Cultural Services Office respectively. However, due to the extreme enthusiasm of the Buddhist followers there, whose welcoming receptions and farewell parties achieved a degree of warmth that exceeded the boiling hot sun of those southern parts, the young Hsing Yun always felt the embarrassment of "being so unworthy, how can such honor be borne?!" This is why he initially did not dare pay frequent visits to Kaohsiung. It was only after he received the support of such people as Hung Ti-li, a member of Kaohsiung's municipal assembly, leading to the establishment of the Shoushan Temple in Shoushan Park, that Hsing Yun began to travel back and forth between Ilan and Kaohsiung on a regular basis.

In comparison to a few years earlier, he now had his own followers and, in any event, he would be living in this alien land regardless of what he chose to do. He could have sat back and enjoyed their support, spending his days in comfort and ease. However, his heart was always beating to a rhythm of "discontentment with home." He was always thinking about how the fortunes of Buddhism could be revitalized, so that the Dharma could play its beneficial role of purifying society and the hearts of human beings on a wider basis. Talking about the great task of restoring Buddhism in all its complexity is quite an easy matter, but Hsing Yun recalled how his great vow from his time at Baita Primary School still remained unfulfilled. Education was the top priority, for it was only by training a new generation of Buddhist teachers that the issue of Buddhism's future could be addressed.

Following his original pure intention, Hsing Yun established the Shoushan Buddhist College within the Shoushan Temple beginning in 1964, which attracted some two dozen young people interested in Buddhism. After its second and third years of operation, the number of students continued to grow and the facilities at Shoushan Temple were stretched beyond capacity. Because there was not enough room, students resorted to carrying on their studies in the ossuary hall in a corner of the temple grounds. In order to improve the study environment and prepare for the later expansion in student enrollment, Hsing Yun made plans to establish a modern monastery in southern Taiwan, one that would bring together the functions of education, culture, and Dharma propagation, copying the scale and structure of the great monasteries of Mainland China. Once this aspiration became known, quite a few followers expressed their enthusiastic support, which resulted in the selection of a five acre parcel of land near Chengching Lake (formally known as "Tapei Lake"), where the present Grand Hotel Kaohsiung is located. In order to buy this parcel of land, the building on Chungshan Road in Kaohsiung owned

jointly by several disciples which housed the Buddhist Cultural Service Office had to be sold, generating a sum of money totaling 1.5 million New Taiwan Dollars.

Perhaps it was due to the causes and conditions from previous lives, or because Hsing Yun's independent character made it inevitable, but in any event, the single comment of his disciple, the Venerable Yi Yen, was to radically and precipitously change everything, just as the right amount of money had been prepared and a contract was to be signed. If it were not for this episode, there would not be the Fo Guang Shan we have today. Yi Yen had said: "Dabei Lake is a tourist resort area, and this will indirectly benefit us quite a bit if we build our temple here. Visitors to this area could easily include a visit to the temple for paying respect to the Buddha as part of their trip. When President Chiang comes to Tapei Lake, so perhaps he too will visit us here." Upon hearing this, Hsing Yun's mind was cast into turmoil. He hoped that the monastery he would establish would attract both Chinese and foreigners who would make a "special trip" to come and practice, rather than relying indirectly on the influence of some tourist attraction to bring in visitors as a side trip; and so it was for this reason, that Hsing Yun decided immediately to pass on that parcel of land. Later on, a firmly confident Hsing Yun did indeed realize his lofty aspiration: Chinese and foreigners do indeed come and visit Fo Guang Shan, attracted by the renown of its reputation. Out of a sense of religious calling, they have been coming in a constant and steady stream to visit and admire. And although the former President Chiang Kai-shek did not have the opportunity to visit the temple complex, his son Chiang Ching-kuo visited Fo Guang Shan on three occasions during his tenure as president of the Executive Yuan and as the President of the nation.

At about the time plans for building a temple at Dabei Lake were abandoned in 1967, an overseas Chinese married couple from Vietnam had borrowed money to purchase nearly thirty acres of land

on a mountain in Kaohsiung County near Tashu Village. They intended to build a school for naval technology, but their plans were brought to an abrupt end because of disagreements with their partners. Since the land on this hilly parcel was poor, unproductive, and covered with bamboo, , no one was willing to take over ownership no matter how hard the couple tried to sell it, suddenly casting the entire family into financially strained circumstances. With the help of others, they sought out Hsing Yun, hoping that he could extend a helping hand and buy the property. They also said that if they could not pay off the debt, the only recourse the couple had was suicide. On one hand, Hsing Yun wanted to act out of a sense of compassion and spare the couple lingering on the edge of death; while on the other hand, he understood how the famous Buddhist monasteries and temples in Mainland China dedicated to the four great bodhisattvas situated on Mt. Emei (the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva), Mt. Wutai (the Manjusri Bodhisattva), Mt. Putuo (the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva), and Mt. Jiuhua (the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva), were all mountain-top locations, as exemplified in the expression "most famous mountains are occupied by monks." Given these circumstances, why not continue this tradition in Taiwan by founding a grand Buddhist monastery on a mountaintop?

A Place to Settle Down and Glorify the Path

With his mind made up, Hsing Yun invited some of his followers to go with him to look at the land and surrounding area. Though these events now lie forty years in the past, he still remembers quite clearly how he hired a touring bus so that he and his followers could travel there and investigate further.

From Kaohsiung to the place known as the "Bamboo Grove" was more than an hour's journey over winding roads. When they arrived at their destination, what greeted them were a few hilltops covered with bamboo as far as the eye could see. The bamboo trunks

were as thick as rice bowls and shot up straight into the sky, while wild grass covered the paths, obscuring any clear sense of how the land was laid out. His followers were stunned; not a single one of them was willing to get out of the bus and accompany him. Instead, they pleaded with him in one voice: "Venerable Master, forget it! Who would want to practice Buddhism in such a wild and remote place. Except for you, no one else would want to come here!" Despite the cool response and criticism, Hsing Yun remained completely unfazed, only saying: "Ok, ok; if none of you are willing to climb the mountain, then I'll go by myself." With that, he plunged into the bamboo grove with bamboo staff in hand and instantly disappeared. There were still many who remained unconvinced but yet they were all moved by his spiritual courage.

They waited for as long as an hour and more, before Hsing Yun appeared once more, his robe stained with red mud and bits of grass, and yet he was smiling as he came down the mountain. "I'm so sorry; sorry to have made you all wait so long!" As he wiped the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief, he hurriedly made his apologies to everyone there.

This parcel of wasteland that nobody wanted is now Fo Guang Shan, a place where the monastic community is settled and the spiritual path is glorified. Later on, Hsing Yun often teases his old followers who had accompanied him on that day: "As for those of you who were unwilling to climb the mountain that day, there's no telling how many times you have already climbed up to Fo Guang Shan over the last few decades!" Most people at the time did not appreciate Hsing Yun's persistent resolve in taking the hard path instead of the easy one, but now they are certain he made the wise choice.

There are those who have asked him why he decided to build his temple in such a remote and out-of-the-way place as Tashu Village. His explanation is deeply meaningful: in northern Taiwan at the time, there were already some impressive Buddhist temples on a

grand scale that were being managed by senior monastics from the so-called "Hubei clique" and the "Taizhou clique." In Taipei, Hsing Yun possessed nary a square-inch of land, so it would have been difficult for him to find his place there. Moreover, with the Buddhist Association of China headquartered there, interpersonal relationships in Taipei tended to be quite complex. All that socializing and attending meetings would have left one exhausted, so there would hardly have been any time to focus on the work of education and Dharma propagation. Therefore, he would rather start all over by shifting his work to this small place cut off from the power and glamor of the big scene, then perhaps he would have the chance to really achieve something.

The Construction Project for Fo Guang Shan

Just like any important national building project, the construction of Fo Guang Shan was carried out in stages. Formal ground breaking and construction began in 1967, and at the time, planning for the entire construction project was divided into five stages (each stage taking five years). The buildings were constructed in the following order:

Stage One: This included the following series of building projects: Dongfang (Eastern) Buddhist College, Great Compassion Shrine, the Treasure Bridge, the image of Maitreya Bodhisattva at the main gate, the Stele Commemorating the Founding of the monastery, the Waters of the Great Ocean (water tower), the Hall of Culture, the Guanyin Release Pool, Dragon Pavilion, and Serene Pavilion.

Stage Two: This included the construction of such major buildings as the main gate, Jue Hua Yuan (Information Center), the Spring Flowing from the West, Non-duality Gate, the Great Compassion Nursery (Da Ci Children's Home), Pilgrims Lodge, the Great Wisdom Shrine (the men's college), Great Welcoming Buddha, the Fo Guang Senior Citizens Home, and the Dajue Monks Residence

(a living quarter for monks).

Stage Three: Main Shrine (Great Hero Shrine), Pure Land Cave, the Pumen High School, Longevity Memorial Park, and the Buddhist Cultural Museum.

Stage Four: Construction continued with the building of the Ksitigarbha Shrine, Bamboo Grove, Samantabhadra Shrine, the Great Compassion Nunnery (a living quarter for nuns), the Devotees Service Center, the Dharma Affairs Communications Office, and the Public Library.

Stage Five: This included the Tathagata Hall, the Golden Buddha Hall, the Jade Buddha Hall, the Devotees Building, the Profound Wisdom Building, the Pilgrim's Path, the Founding Master's Hall, and the Manhsiang Yuan Parking Area. Later on, the Cloud Dwelling Building and the Pagoda of the Seven Precious Jewels were built; also, the original Founding Master's Hall was renovated as Chuan Deng Lou (Dharma Transmission Center)

Work on Fo Guang Shan's building projects has never ceased to this very day. In 2002, the land occupied by an orchard behind the mountain was purchased and set aside for the building of the Buddha Memorial Pagoda that will house the Buddha's tooth relic. Once the Buddha Memorial Pagoda is completed, the area of land occupied by Fo Guang Shan will have doubled, and thus Fo Guang Shan will truly be worthy of its reputation as the largest Buddhist sacred site in all of Taiwan.

In the early years, the undulating topography of the bamboo grove in Tashu Village with its five peaks was a shortcoming. Since it required the leveling of the mountain peaks and the filling in of valleys, it made the development of the area quite difficult. Now it is an asset, for you can look high and low and still not find another place like it, as exemplified by a couplet that Hsing Yun himself penned: "Few in number are places with five-peaked mountains;/ Rare in this world are the seven classes of monastic and lay disciples." When

viewed from a distance or seen up close, the building complex of Fo Guang Shan forms a seamless whole with the natural geography of its surroundings, while its pleasing asymmetry and its undulating levels present an inexhaustible vista. At different elevations and from different viewpoints, and during different seasons and at different times, the complex presents different forms of beauty, while every view from a fan-shaped window is itself a landscape painting. Whether in terms of the impressiveness of the buildings, the vastness of the halls, the sculpting of the Buddha images, the planning of the courtyards, the layout of the shrines, and so on, the construction of Fo Guang Shan has its own unique style that differs from all the rest. Although ordinary materials were used, yet there is a sense of generosity, clarity, brightness, and spaciousness that exactly reflects the character of Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism, as demonstrated by the expression: "Each flower a world, and each leaf a Buddha."

A Guided Tour on Paper

In their millions, the monastics and laities are closely bonded to Fo Guang Shan both day and night. Even the swallows dwelling under the eaves of the Buddhist College contentedly build their nests to raise their young, as they keep company with each batch of students engrossed in their studies. Failing to visit Fo Guang Shan means a lifetime's regret, but even a visit there does not mean one can appreciate all its essential qualities in just one visit. What follows is a guided tour in writing, so that one can take an imaginary trip.

The Great Welcoming Buddha

Pilgrims and visitors to Fo Guang Shan can see from a distance the Great Welcoming Buddha in all its imposing majesty. The image of the Great Buddha is brightly colored gold which sparkles in the sunlight. When you see the Great Buddha, you know you will soon be arriving at Fo Guang Shan, and in this way, it has become the

distinctive marker for the temple complex. Thirty-six meters in height, the image overlooks the Kaoping River as it faces east towards the rising sun, presenting a myriad of different views whether in broad sunlight or under overcast skies. Its right hand is raised in an expression of sending out light, just as a lighthouse on the edge of a great sea guiding ships through the darkness of this Saha world of ours. Its left hand hangs down, like a compassionate mother welcoming and transforming the lives of sentient beings. Around it is a circle of four hundred and eighty welcoming Buddhas, symbolizing that when one Buddha appears in the world, thousands of other Buddhas are there in support.

Construction of the Great Buddha statue began in March of 1974, and was completed with the formal consecration ceremony in November of the following year, which included a three-day Dharma assembly. Hsing Yun's "Consecration Hymn" is as follows: "Taking gravel from the Kaoping,/ And spring water drawn from the west;/ The effort took the combined strength of all the Taiwanese people,/ To build this tallest Great Buddha./" At the center of its base, the devotees or visitors can draw slips of paper containing one of sixty different Buddhist sayings from the "collected instructions of past worthies" (instead of the practice of praying to the gods and drawing lots for divination found in most temples). If pilgrims can apply themselves in appreciating the meaning of these sayings, they will often find some inspiration. In 1991, *Publisher's Weekly* in the United States produced its first special coverage on the publishing industry of Taiwan, and they selected Fo Guang Shan's Great Welcoming Buddha for its cover.

Maitreya Bodhisattva Image

The image of Maitreya Bodhisattva at the main gate has a square face and a rotund belly, and greets visitors with a laughing expression. It is one of the most unique symbols of Fo Guang Shan,

but few know the story behind it. Some thirty years ago, the first Buddhist summer camp for post-secondary students was being conducted at Fo Guang Shan, and one of its participants studying at a public art school, Zhu Chaoji, with other participants, was inspired to sculpt an image of Maitreya Bodhisattva and donate it to Fo Guang Shan. After work on the sculpture was completed, the original plan was to install it beside the Stele Commemorating the Founding of the Monastery. However, when the workers on the crane truck had placed the sculpture at the main gate temporarily as they took their break, they found that they could no longer move the image again with their crane. Later on, another huge crane borrowed from a military contractor in Kaohsiung was also brought in, but when the two cranes positioned on either side tried to lift it, something strange happened: the lifting cables on both cranes broke, and the sculpture still could not be budged an inch. Next, a request was made to the Port Authority of Kaohsiung to borrow the largest truck-crane in all of Kaohsiung, but still it was impossible to move the sculpture at all. Later on, it dawned on people that perhaps the Maitreya Bodhisattva had already selected his own place of installation in order to create positive connections with all people, and so he was left there, where he has remained undisturbed to this very day.

Main Shrine (Great Hero Precious Shrine)

As the largest shrine at Fo Guang Shan, the foundation for the Main Shrine was laid in 1975. Materials for the foundation stones were obtained from India using the five-grain bricks underneath the Vajra-throne where the Buddha preached the Dharma, expressing how the teaching lineage of the Buddha is being maintained as something profoundly meaningful. The open terrace in front of the shrine, the "great path to Buddhahood," can accommodate an assembly of more than thirty thousand people, while all four sides of the open terrace are encircled by corridors of a sumptuous and impressive design. The

height of the Main Shrine is about thirty meters, and enshrined within are images of the Three Precious Buddhas: Sakyamuni Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and Medicine Buddha, each image being about 7.8 meters in height. The interior four walls of the Main Shrine are filled with 14,800 niches containing images of Sakyamuni Buddha, while the hall itself can accommodate more than a thousand people for morning/evening services or other Dharma assemblies. Weighing 3.8 metric tons, the great bell inside the Main Shrine was cast from pure copper in two separate castings, and took a period of two years to complete.

The Main Shrine also contains the world's tallest jeweled pagoda lamps, one situated on either side of the main images. Their purpose is to symbolize the light of the Dharma that shines throughout the human realm, for it is the lamp of wisdom that dispels the darkness of ignorance and brings the hope of peace to the entire world. These jeweled pagoda lamps have a total of seventy-two layers, in which are set 7,200 images of the Buddha.

Construction of the Main Shrine took as long as seven years before it was entirely finished. The completed structure caused a sensation throughout all of Taiwan, even the five-star Taipei Grand Hotel asked for copies of the Main Shrine's blueprints, which were used to help model its construction.

The Buddhist College (The Great Compassion and Great Wisdom Shrines)

Fo Guang Shan follows the tradition of the temple buildings on the Four Great Mountains of Mainland China, these are: the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva [Guanyin] on Mt. Putuo, the Manjusri Bodhisattva on Mt. Wutai, the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva on Mt. Juhua, and the Samantabhadra Bodhisattva on Mt. Emei. Here, the Dharma is propagated by focusing on the Four Immeasurables through the "compassion, wisdom, aspiration, and practice" of these four great

bodhisattvas. The Great Compassion Shrine was completed in 1971, and was the first shrine built at Fo Guang Shan. It is also the place where the Buddhist College students from the women's college meet for their morning and evening services. Distantly facing the Great Compassion Shrine is the Great Wisdom Shrine, the cradle for the persevering effort in support of the men's college. The Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva [Guanyin] is venerated in the former shrine, in hopes that the female disciples will have complete compassion; while the Manjusri Bodhisattva is venerated in the latter, so as to encourage the male students on this path of learning in the perfection of wisdom.

Pilgrims Lodge

As the name implies, Pilgrims Lodge is there for the convenience of the devotees on a pilgrimage to worship the Buddha, so that they will not be distressed over concerns about food and lodging. It is also the earliest service-oriented lodging center for pilgrims at a Buddhist temple. At the time it was built, the building had the best facilities within the entire temple complex. The external appearance of the Pilgrims Lodge is a mixture of Chinese and Indian styles. The lower level of the building not only contains a dining area that can accommodate one thousand people, but there are also two conference rooms that can be used by organizations to hold meetings. The upper levels contain more than one hundred guest rooms, as well as large rooms for shared housing that can accommodate several hundred people.

The vegetarian meals served at Fo Guang Shan dispel the old stereotype that vegetarian food means "eating bitter vegetables" (tasting bad and poor in nutrition), for the food is both pleasing to the eye and to the palate, while the serving dishes and the eating utensils are both refined and aesthetically pleasing. Many people have ended up becoming Buddhists because they have enjoyed such delicious food here. Vegetarian food is not only tasty, but also healthy. It promotes

the ideal of protecting and caring for life, well deserving of its recognition as an excellent prescription for bringing liberation to sentient beings. In the area of services to the devotees, Fo Guang Shan has always emphasized how its functioning enables people to reside at the temple with the ease and comfort they find at home. Food and lodging are basically provided free of charge but free will donations are graciously accepted. Such services do represent a huge expense to the temple, yet at no time over the past several decades have such free services been curtailed due to economic hardship, which indeed has been quite an unusual achievement.

Cloud Dwelling Building

As the name implies, one can view a sea of clouds in the distance from the windows in the morning, as well as the rays of light from the rising sun that dazzle the eyes, like lotus blossoms in a sea of clouds. Such are the vistas that continuously occupy one's gaze. The main building contains a total of eight levels. The basement and sub-basement levels are garages that can accommodate sixty small to medium-sized vehicles. The first floor contains the kitchen and a large dining area that can accommodate four thousand diners. This is where the monastics at the monastery as well as the students of the Buddhist College take their meals. Each day at noon, as signaled by the clapping sound of the wooden block, the assembly join palms and intone Buddha's name; they then enter the dining hall in orderly files, where they quietly take their seats with expressions of deep concentration. Placed in front of each individual are two bowls (soup and rice) and one dish (vegetables), and before eating everyone first recites the Five Contemplations During Meals*, and then recite the meal prayer. During the meal, the diners are like "dragons eating pearls and phoenixes bowing," for no one glances around or makes any sound like talking. The scene of several thousand people keeping absolutely quiet really gives one the experience of a shattering

silence. The students serving in the refectory are well-trained and make their rounds with serving trays in hand, stopping to serve more food depending upon the needs of each person. Each person finishes all the food in front of them to show their "appreciation of such blessings." When the meal ends, everyone departs to the sound of the wooden block, while the people putting away the bowls and chopsticks move about smoothly and quickly. Hardly a few minutes have passed before everything has been cleared away quite cleanly.

The third to sixth floors are the main housing area, which can accommodate several thousand people. The second floor is a wide-open, multi-purpose space, and what people find so delightful (and surprising) is that the entire space contains not a single column. Stand anywhere in the room and every corner of the space is completely visible. Listening to teachings, taking meals, enjoying a restful lodging, worshipping the Buddha, and holding workshops and conferences can be accomplished in this building, sparing one all the weary hardship of running back and forth from place to place.

The Pure Land Cave

Situated beside the Non-duality Gate adjacent to a mountain stream, the Pure Land Cave is U-shaped and is made using the natural mountain stream area and rock cave. Taking nine years to build, the Pure Land Cave began receiving visitors in 1981. The idea behind its construction is to give concrete expression to the abstract descriptions of the beautiful scenery contained within the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, as presented in the *Amitabha Sutra*. This represents a first attempt at combining Buddhism with art, as well as creating an integrated teaching tool. Based upon the building styles of the Yungang, Longmen, and Dunhuang caves from China's Six Dynasties period, the Pure Land Cave contains brightly-colored lights and is richly and majestically adorned.

The exhibition is divided into three parts. The eastern side depicts the grand occasion during which the Buddha spoke the *Amitabha Sutra* to his disciples at the Jetavana Monastery. The assembly included 1,250 people, including such bodhisattvas as Manjusri and Maitreya, as well as the Sixteen Arhats like Sariputra and Maudgalyayana. All of these figures are depicted in a vivid and compelling true-to-life manner. The central crossing corridor is the Cave of the Nine Grades of Rebirth in the Pure Land. Using bas-relief, the walls of this cave depict the story of how the Buddha preached the *Sutra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* to King Bimbisara and his queen. It goes on to detail how rebirth in the Pure Land is divided into nine grades depending on the degree of merit attained from Buddhist practice and recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name. The western section is a representation of the Pure Land itself using an ingenious form of construction, in which sculpture and painting are employed to depict the imposing majesty of the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. The vivid representation of such themes as the Three Noble Ones of the West (Amitabha Buddha, and the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattvas and Mahasthamaprapta Bodhisattva), the four-colored lotus flowers, the avenues lined with bejeweled trees, the Dharma-teaching birds, and the assembly of good believers, and so on, give the visitor a sense of what it would be like to be there, to personally visit this Buddha Land.

The Buddhist Museum

Everyone at the temple worked day and night over a span of nine years in a joint effort to complete this great project, the Buddhist Museum. The half-moon-shaped stairs in front of the main door are known in Buddhism as the "moon altar." The area around the main door imitates how the images of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas were created at Dunhuang, and with reference to the materials of ancient artifacts, the figures were made from a mixture using yellow stone,

glutinous rice, brown sugar, and various special kinds of lime.

The museum contains eighteen rooms, which separately display items pertaining to the history of Buddhism's transmission, the monastic life, the Dharma centers on famous mountains in Mainland China, Buddhism and the royal court, Buddhism and literature, as well as the reliquary chamber of the Buddha's relics, and other rooms containing paintings and calligraphy, ritual items, and other historic artifacts so on. Most of the items were donated to the museum by Buddhist devotees in Taiwan and from abroad, and are extremely precious. Having been systematically collected and put on display, the museum ensures that these cultural objects of Buddhism attain their second life of glory.

Museum of Fo Guang Shan History

The museum mainly displays items that mark Hsing Yun's fifty plus years of preaching the Dharma and the history of Fo Guang Shan since its founding forty years ago, including the Dharma lineage of the order, historical documents relating to Fo Guang Shan's founding, introductions to key individuals involved in the founding, various cultural objects and historical records commemorative in nature, and other publications produced by Fo Guang Shan. All of these materials have been annotated with data, pictures, models, and detailed explanations, which provide true and accurate materials for the Seven Groups of monastic and lay disciples, as well as those interested in researching Fo Guang Shan. The museum is divided into six display areas: cultural publications, educational training, charitable work, Dharma teachings of the Founder Hsing Yun, the Buddha's Light International Association, and the Dharma lineage of the order.

Other buildings include: Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Shrine, the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Shrine, Amitabha Hall, Meditation Hall, Sutra Transcription Hall, Jade Buddha Hall, and Golden Buddha Hall, the Bamboo Grove, the Wall of Wisdom (containing Buddhist sayings

transcribed by a hundred famous calligraphers), the Stele Commemorating the Founding of the Temple, and so on.

The interior design for each of the halls incorporates the best refinements of modern science and technology, in order to carry out their social functions that are multi-purpose in nature. This includes: a first class multi-media audio/visual center, and the Tathagata Hall that can accommodate gatherings of twenty-two hundred people, as well as several fully equipped conference venues where it often happens that three or four conference activities are being conducted at the same time without interfering with one another. The conference rooms are equipped with simultaneous translation facilities that effectively support the conducting of international meetings and conferences. In Hsing Yun's view, only modernized facilities can attract modernized devotees. This is particularly true for such newer buildings as the Cloud Dwelling Building and the Dharma Transmission Building, where total attention has been given to such areas as landscaping, space utilization, vehicle parking, sanitary facilities, safety measures, site traffic planning, and so on. In order to be in compliance with government regulations and the trend towards more user friendly structures during recent years, additional improvements have been made that focus on barrier-free facilities, including special paths for wheelchair use, special lavatory facilities for the elderly and physically impaired, Braille markings on elevators, and lavatories with baby changing stations, making them more friendly and welcoming.

Not only that, service for visitors throughout the temple complex bespeaks of thoughtful consideration. For example, when devotees and visitors become thirsty from walking about, they will find places along their path that offer Fo Guang tea; and when tired, there are trees, pavilions, and visitor areas where they can take a rest. The Pilgrims Lodge offers all the amenities in room and board, while the Devotees Service Center supplies books, newspapers, and magazines free of charge; and there is even a monastic on duty to answer

difficult issues that relate to everyday life or questions that arise while learning about the Buddhist faith.

Simplified Buildings, Multi-Purpose Functions

Buildings do not speak, nor do flowers and grass have anything to say, and yet, if you listen ever so carefully, you will hear the Dharma being spoken everywhere. Many people have the same experience: upon climbing up to Fo Guang Shan after a year's absence, they find it offering them some new appearance, giving them some richly pleasant surprise. This happens because Fo Guang Shan is imbued with a spirit that advances with the times and is forever renewed.

There are a few relatively distinct stages to the evolution of buildings here at Fo Guang Shan--

Forty years ago, the economic environment for all of Taiwan was poor, and housing conditions were simple and crude. In their hearts, people longed for wealth and honor, and what they sought from temple buildings was something that reflected this pursuit of abundant wealth and happiness. This is why the early temple buildings at Fo Guang Shan are so splendid and magnificent, and the Buddha images installed in the large halls in their groups of three, five, or seven, were all covered in gold. On one occasion, a group of professors from a graduate institute of art visited Fo Guang Shan, after which they presented their criticisms, saying that temple buildings lacked any artistic character. Upon due reflection, Hsing Yun gave his patient explanation: "When I first created Fo Guang Shan, I was just a young monk from Mainland China and there wasn't any money. It was enough that what we built looked the part. What the buildings lacked in detail was made up for with color, and so we had bright yellow roofs and bright red columns. We wanted the people to see a new temple with a pretty look, which matched the longing people had in those days for wealth and abundance; otherwise,

nobody would have come."

About twenty years ago, Taiwan's economy began to soar, and the population shifted to the cities. In order to meet the needs of the middle class, Fo Guang Shan began constructing metropolitan branch temples that were located in modern office towers or made their stately appearance in the best commercial districts. In this way, the streams of busy people coming and going could develop a transcending sense of wisdom in which one could experience "a sense of great repose even within a city." This meant that people could enjoy on their own the tranquil Humanistic Pure Land even in the midst of their busy lives. The function of temple buildings of this period slowly became more multi-purpose, while in external appearance there were no more upward curving eaves [common with traditional temple buildings].

With the rapid increase in the number of devotees in recent years, not enough space is available for use. This has brought changes to the whole conception of a branch temple as a separate building; hardware and software infrastructure has also moved towards modernization from its traditional base. Included here is the prediction that "Dharma teaching through visual communication and video streaming" in the 21st century will become the major trend, and so newly built temples will be prepared to incorporate this capability, bringing efficiencies to a higher level. There is also the use of space that incorporates OA [Office Automation] intelligence, that can conserve both manpower and energy resources. On this point Hsing Yun clarifies: "Nowadays the red color of the columns is more subdued, and as for the yellow tile roofs, we will change them out where we can. For newly built structures like the Cloud Dwelling Building, we use simple cement slabs. Why? Because the social and economic conditions have radically changed in terms of their underlying causes and conditions. Fo Guang Shan's Great Buddha Land has become famous both here and abroad, but there have been those who see that the Great

Buddha and the 108 other Buddha images have all been made out of cement, and they criticize us for having a cement culture that has no lasting value! For the time being I won't comment on the mentality behind such statements, but I can tell you that over the forty years I have been at Fo Guang Shan, I only see the image of the Buddha; I don't see any cement. Why do some people only see the cement and not the Buddha?" Such an explanation helps those scholars in their ivory towers not only to comprehend the meaning behind the cement, but to feel deeply moved as well.

As pointed out by the Ven. Man Chou, who is responsible for the actual temple construction, Fo Guang Shan temples in recent years no longer follow the palace style of design, but rather are headed towards a more natural approach. Interior decoration is also being simplified according to the principle of subtraction, in which only one image of the jade Buddha is installed. Such simplicity and conciseness, along with the sedate and harmonious color scheme, is more in keeping with the Chan style. "Since modern society is so glitzy and garish, people experience a lot of restlessness, and so the Buddhist temple should return to a natural tranquility, so that when people walk in, they will experience a sense of airiness and peace." He also emphasizes that in responding to that other world trend towards "green buildings," Fo Guang Shan uses materials that protect the environment and do not cause harm to the human body, and also believes that buildings should form a unity with the surrounding environment, ensuring that they do not appear out of place.

Current trends push us forward, and in recent years, Hsing Yun has also made the epoch-making proposal that "temples are to be educationally oriented." In the ancient past, the Jetavana Monastery was simply a lecture hall, while ancient Buddhist temples in China contained a Dharma hall and a scriptural repository. During the Han and Tang Dynasties, Buddhist temples actually functioned as cultural centers. Writers and poets would often inhabit Buddhist temples and

monasteries, where painting, poetry recitation and composition, and calligraphy were merged with religion, thus elevating the cultural level. Additionally, the Buddhist monasteries and temples also had an educational function. Monastics were well educated and knowledgeable, so that whenever they expounded upon the Dharma, they could meet the scholars and Confucian intellectuals on their level and then the sparks would fly (the most popular incidents being those involving the Buddhist Master Foyin and the poet Su Shi), creating a lively setting for intellectual exchange and discussion. This is why Hsing Yun proposes that modern temples should establish libraries, so that they can become reservoirs of knowledge; temples should have conference rooms so that intellectual discussions and debates can be held; temples should have lecture halls for the propagation of the Dharma; and there should be classrooms to encourage life-long learning. "Only by ensuring that Buddhist temples become educationally oriented can we truly achieve the goals of guiding the human mind and serving society." This is what Hsing Yun firmly believes.

A Hard Day Everyday

Browsing through the history of Fo Guang Shan shows how unimaginable the Dharma is. When it was being built, no one basically had any idea whether there would be any money for it, and yet the projects were completed without anyone being aware of it. The main reason for this was that the devotees from all directions felt that Fo Guang Shan was like their own home, for they had a stake in each brick and every tile. Though they may not have contributed any money, they would join in the group work efforts, participate in the recycle programs, or come and plant flowers and trees, which gave them a sense of belonging and accomplishment. For example, the building funds required for the just completed Fushan Temple in Changhua and the Fengshan Temple currently under construction were all raised from recycling programs and charity selling drives. As

the person in charge of raising funds for the construction of the Fengshan, Temple the Ven. Miao Wu remembers that when construction began on the project, the thought of having to raise so much money left her unable to sleep at night, and she would sit there asking the Buddha what to do. Over the course of four years, she and ten other volunteers pulled together all the small donations bit by bit. They relied upon the recycling of plastic bottles at fifty NT cents per item, old newspaper at four NT dollars per kilo, and copper wire at sixty NT dollars per kilo; they also conducted charity selling drives of small mooncakes at fifteen NT dollars per cake, soy sauce at sixty NT dollars per bottle, "Each and every step left its mark on the temple construction, for with every step made, a lotus flower would grow out of that footstep:"

I kept on encouraging them, so that they would not think that such work garnered little merit. For when they were old, they could bring their grandchildren for a look. They could tell them that even if they accomplished nothing else with their lives, at least they had helped build a temple, and their grandchildren would certainly take pride in such effort.

Merit does not lie in the amount of money, but rather, it lies in one's commitment and participation. At present, the preliminary shape of the Fengshan Temple is already within sight, while quite a few new calluses have appeared on Miao Wu's hands. "In the past, many people believed that the monastics at Fo Guang Shan were the children of rich families with vast resources at their disposal, and that money came easily. However, we put on our robes to ascend the podium to teach the scriptures and expound upon the Dharma, then we take off our robes and are able to get our hands dirty by engaging in hard labor. Although it can't be said we can do everything, but at least people will know that the monastics at Fo Guang Shan are not enjoy-

ing a life of ease and comfort, which is why so many people have been inspired to come and participate in the temple building projects. Only by going down this path myself did I learn to appreciate the hard work of the Venerable Master in building Fo Guang Shan. He has trained so many disciples and helped so many living beings, which is why I treasure Fo Guang Shan all the more." She spoke of her sincere feelings with tears in her eyes.

Such experiences at temple building dispel the idea that only the rich are able to plant fields of merit by constructing temples. It is also important to realize that living an interdependent and mutually beneficial relationship with the earth is an excellent form of education, one that can transform those bad habits that many people fall into once they have a prosperous life. The Ven. Chueh Yuan, the abbess of Nantai Temple, has pointed out how people who were not originally Buddhists became believers later on because of their connection with a temple building project. For example, a certain reader of the free *Merit Times* was greatly moved after reading the newspaper, and upon learning that a temple was to be built in Tainan, he made a special trip to express his wish to give something back.

Certainly, building one's own temple is a huge undertaking, but taking over the management of someone else's temple is an arduous and time consuming task as well, one that is fraught with all kinds of difficulty. But it is also under such unavoidable conditions that an unbreakable bond is formed with certain temples. For example, it so happened that the Yuanfu Temple in Chiayi had gone into foreclosure and was to be auctioned off. Ven. Tzu Hui went to the tax office at Chiayi to personally request a postponement of the auction and was given a half month extension. During that time, she was able to raise the four million NT dollars needed to redeem title to the temple property. However, she only learned after the deal was completed, that the temple contained family residences and a small factory. So she had to put up with expending another sum of money as compensation for

them to move out, before she could save this hundred-year-old temple from the possibility of being destroyed.

When other temples or monasteries have money, they may enlarge the main Buddha hall, while Hsing Yun would use the money to build lecture halls and conference rooms; when other temples have money, they may expand the monastic dormitories, while Hsing Yun would use the money to build classrooms and libraries. The Buddhism of the past would use any money it had to buy land and property, but Hsing Yun would use the money to start magazines, found schools, and support charity work, to the point where even the money for next year and the year after that would have already been spent.

Community Oriented Buddhist Temples

Some people have asked why Fo Guang Shan needs to build so many temples, or what is the function of a Buddhist temple; or instead of building so many temples, why not use the money directly to bring relief to the poor. In fact, the Buddhist temple itself is a charitable enterprise. Since ancient times, whenever people encounter hardship or difficulties, when their hearts are troubled with frustration, pain, sadness, and worry, or they feel helpless and lost, the first thing they think of is seeking help from the Buddhist temple. They come to the temple and pray, which helps them to find peace, encouragement, and safety. Just at that moment, the temple gives them aid, and they obtain the strength to start over once more.

Examples of such incidents are too numerous to mention. There was one middle-aged man who had no religious faith whatsoever, but when his father passed away he went to the temple to make the funeral arrangements. Taking up this onerous task as best he could, he asked the following question in a challenging attitude as soon as he entered the temple: What function does a temple center serve? Hsing Yun did not answer his question directly, but instead

patiently explained to him the Buddhist view of life and death, gently consoling him over the loss of his father. When the funeral ceremony had been conducted with such solemnity and peace and in accordance with the Dharma standards of propriety, Hsing Yun then asked if he could see what function a temple served now. The man answer with heartfelt sincerity, "Yes, I see it now."

One could put it this way, a Buddhist temple or monastery is just the means, while the real goal lies in preaching the Dharma and bringing liberation to living beings. This is all the more true for Fo Guang Shan, which builds temples merely to execute these aims on behalf of others. Once the work is complete, the monastics are reassigned elsewhere, and yet nary a single brick or tile is taken away, for the temple structure is left to the local community to be used for generations. Given his skill at analogies, Hsing Yun once said, that the Buddhist temple is:

*The gathering place for spiritual friends on the path;
It's the filling station on the road of life;
It's the vacation resort for cultivating one's spirit;
It's the place of purity for clearing away all one's afflictions;
It's the department store for purchasing the Jewel of the
Dharma;
It's the study center for compassion, wisdom, aspiration,
and practice;
It's the hospital for healing the spirit;
It's the court of cause and effect that preserves justice in
society;
It's the school of righteousness that stimulates morality and
conscience;
And it's the cultural center that promotes artistic cultivation.*

In the beginning, it was Hsing Yun who did not want to indirectly benefit from the resort area around Chengching Lake, and so he selected Tashu Village as the place for developing his great enterprise. But now, it is Kaohsiung County that indirectly benefits from Fo Guang Shan, being so favored in many ways. For example, land prices have risen, telephone systems have been installed, roads have been paved, the opportunities for employment have increased; and now there is running water, schools, and so on. In order to promote good relations with its neighbors, a fellowship party for the local populace is held during the Chinese New Year every year, in which prizes of small and medium-sized, home appliances and daily necessities are awarded by lottery. It also appears that nearly every community activity for Kaohsiung County are conducted at Fo Guang Shan; examples include the lecture series in parenting education for mothers in the community offered by the social service bureau, activities for seniors, and the collective Buddhist weddings. As far as the local area is concerned, Fo Guang Shan is not only a Buddhist monastery, but it is also a cultural center for the community.

The Ven. Chueh Yuan mentions how originally the area around Nantai Temple was sparsely populated, but after many people learned that Fo Guang Shan would be building a new temple there, businesses opened and dentists moved in, because it was expected that large numbers of people would be coming there. One could say that wherever you find a Fo Guang Shan temple, there you will find a bustling place of activity that spurs the local economy to prosperity. She also pointed out that the local fellowship work of each of Fo Guang Shan's branch temples has been very successful. For example, four years ago under the direction of Hsing Yun, Fo Guang Shan began offering free servings of labah (winter porridge) as a way of connecting with the local community (more than a million bowls are served every year). At first, there were some organizations that were concerned over the religious overtones of the activity, but upon try-

ing the porridge, they experienced a sense of auspicious good will, and so the practice has expanded from one district to now fifty-eight. At the same time, free medical examinations are offered.

Community learning centers were also instituted. For example, in the Nanhua Community of Tainan, the Dharma was brought to the doors of every individual, but the community school itself did not have any classrooms, and classes were held in the lower arcade beneath the district manager's office. Such an unaffected and open attitude attracted a lot of people, including police officers who, while making their rounds, would come and listen in on the classes. When the school first opened, people had to be encouraged to come so as not to disgrace the district manager, but still there were only five people. Later on, the number of people reached over one hundred, and classes were divided into two sections. There was a certain grandmother who was over ninety and had been formally spending her life waiting for three activities: waiting to eat, waiting to sleep, and waiting to get out of bed. After she began attending a class on photography at the community school, she brought some film to a store for processing. At first, the owner of the store thought that she was bringing in film taken by her grandchildren, but when she told him that she had taken the pictures herself, the store owner was very moved and volunteered to develop her photos free of charge from then on. She is now beginning a class in traditional Chinese painting, fully enjoying this springtime that came late in her life.

A Page of Profusion in Buddhist History

Entering Fo Guang Shan after dark, one is presented with a pageantry of color as starlight and a sea of lamps shine in reflected splendor. Visitors and devotees alike pass along the Avenue of Stars over one hundred meters long, and enter the Main Shrine to participate in the Lantern Festival of Peace. At the conclusion of the assembly, the participants file out along the Great Path to Buddhahood, and

looking up they shout for joy, as they admire the brilliant colors of the fireworks display. Despite the large crowds of people, everyone is orderly and agreeable, busy but not chaotic. In the midst of all the excitement, each has their own share of contentment.

The great tree planted forty years ago (it so happens that Fo Guang Shan is located at Tashu ["great tree"] Village), has already grown with luxuriant foliage, and is heavy laden with fruit. These forty years represent perhaps only a small moment in the epic story of Buddhism spanning some twenty-five hundred years, and yet it is a moment of magnificent profusion that continues to impress, telling the story of Buddhism's continuation and rebirth.

Note: * The Five Contemplations During Meals are:

1. Consider where the food comes from and how much effort is involved.
2. Consider whether one's own moral conduct is in any way unworthy of the alms given.
3. Be careful to avoid errors, the chief of these being greed.
4. Accept this food as good medicine so that the physical body may be sustained.
5. Realize that in order to achieve one's Buddhahood one must accept this food.



Chapter
Nine



*Propagating the Dharma in a
Myriad of Countries*

The most important work of "Buddhism's internationalization" since the great Dharma came to the West is gradually succeeding, and the seeds of enlightenment that were sown in the beginning are now slowly sprouting forth, while certain places are even producing tender flowering buds. However, looking towards the future, the visionary and yet practical Hsing Yun knows that there is still a long way to go. If Buddhism is to be integrated into the mainstream culture of each country, and further develop its own sense of presence, there are perhaps yet another one hundred years of persistent cultivation that lie ahead. The top priority for this process is to go from Buddhism's internationalization to "Buddhism's localization."

Two thousand years ago, Buddhism was transmitted to China via Central Asia and the Western Regions, where it took root, sprouted, blossomed, and bore fruit in the soil of that country and in the mind of its people, developing into "Chinese Buddhism" after a four hundred year process. Thereupon, Buddhism branched off into such countries as Japan, Korea, and Vietnam by means of trade and intellectual exchange, to similarly become the main faith of those countries and thereby influence the progress and character of their social development. One could say, that the transmission of Buddhism to China was a cultural event of the greatest magnitude in human history, one that had the longest period of continual development and possessed the greatest degree of vitality and creativity.

Buddhism has never had a concept of territory. Whenever the Buddha spoke the Dharma, no single area or country constituted the focus of his attention. In speaking of place, it was always this land and another land, and even the great thousandfold chiliocosm; in speaking of time, he would talk about the past, present, future, or even infinite incalculable eons; and in discussing living beings, he would speak of all sentient beings who are womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born. After the Buddha entered paranirvana, the true relics of his body were divided among eight countries, where pagodas were built to venerate them, bringing bless-

ings to the common people in their hundreds of thousands. The *Amitabha Sutra* depicts all the good people of the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, who arise and dress early each day to make offerings to the Buddhas of other realms in their tens of trillions with multitudes of marvelous flowers. What this all means, is that Buddhism is a religion with the broadest perspective on the world.

Tracing back from today, the history of Buddhism's transmission to the West barely spans one hundred years. Taking the United States as an example, the real transmission of Buddhism to the American people of non-Asian origins began with the Parliament of the World's Religions held in Chicago during 1893. Another example is the "Buddhistischen Missionsvereins fur Deutschland" ("Society for the Buddhist Mission in Germany"), the first Buddhist organization in Germany that was only founded in Leipzig in 1903.

In Europe and America today, material civilization has reached a high level of development, and yet opposite reactions occur when things reach their limit, thus so many people there find that their body and spirit have reached a dead end. They now turn back and seek aid from an Eastern culture that was previously treated with contempt. The Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) introduced Japanese Zen [Chan Buddhism], while Tibetan and Southeast Asian Buddhism was transmitted to Europe and America during the first half of the 20th century. With their overtones of mystery, such things as "Zen" [Chan], "meditation," and "healing of the mind, body, and spirit" sparked a profound sense of curiosity in Europeans and Americans, and a popular trend began. On the other hand, Chinese Mahayana Buddhism's entry into the West could be said to have gotten a later start. Early in the history of the Republic of China, Master Taixu did set foot on this new continent, but unfortunately, the endeavor was quite short-lived, and it vanished without leaving a trace.

The Sky of the World is Beaming with Buddha's Light [Fo Guang]

Hsing Yun has been guarding this solitary lamp of Buddhism that has been transmitted from Mainland China, one that has been shining ever brighter on Taiwan. This has been no easy feat, but no one could have imagined that in only twenty short years, he could actually establish more than one hundred branch temples around the world (thirty-nine in Asia, twenty-nine in the U.S. and Canada, seven in Central and South America, thirteen in Europe, seven in Africa, and sixteen in Oceania). In terms of their number, the visibility of Fo Guang Shan's various branch temples is extremely high, regardless of whether you circle the globe from east to west or from north to south. In a sense one could say that "the sky of the world is beaming with Buddha's Light [Fo Guang means Buddha's Light in Chinese]." In terms of their influence and importance, they are second to none: Hsi Lai Temple in America's Los Angeles is reputed to be "the largest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere," and "the imperial palace in the West;" Australia's Nan Tien Temple is "the largest Buddhist temple in the Southern Hemisphere;" Nan Hua Temple is "Africa's largest Buddhist temple;" and Templo Zu Lai in Brazil is "the largest Buddhist temple in South America." The languages employed by Fo Guang Shan in its various areas include: Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Thai, German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Hindi, Swedish and Dutch; the religions already present in those areas include: the Catholic Church, Protestant Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism; while the color palette of human groups being guided to liberation include: yellow, white, brown, black, and red. Using a simple calculation, if one were to make a pilgrimage to all of Fo Guang Shan's Dharma centers abroad by staying ten days at each location, including the required time for all the necessary transportation, it would take more than three years to complete the trip.

Following the trend towards regional and global integration, the topic of Buddhist internationalization has been much discussed in recent years. Not only are various Buddhist groups from Taiwan taking active steps to break out of this island enclosure and extend themselves outward, but Buddhists from Japan, Korea, and Mainland China are calling loudly for "going out." In fact, Hsing Yun has long foreseen the internationalization of Buddhism and has been practicing it for many years. In 1957 at the age of thirty, he wrote an article for the biweekly magazine *Awakening the World*, in which he proposed a "global plan for Dharma transmission," suggesting that personnel be trained in English; and he published bilingual Chinese and English editions of Buddhist works as well as an English dictionary of Buddhism as early as 1977. In 1963, Hsing Yun made his first trip abroad as secretary to the Buddhist Visiting Delegation from the Republic of China, in which he came into contact with Buddhist circles in such countries as Thailand, India, Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan. As revealed in his book, *A Journey Abroad*, written in the form of a diary, Hsing Yun was constantly observing and comparing the strong and weak points of Buddhism in these different countries during this eighty-day journey, and he also began to ponder the connections between Buddhism's future and internationalization.

Over the years, his travels to various places have indeed meant "leaving a mark wherever one goes," for each step of his monastic sandals has produced a flower of beautiful causes and conditions. He conducted a refuge ceremony in Malaysia one year. There were four lines of devotees making their offerings to him and it took three hours before all present had filed past. He gave a Dharma talk at the Tung Ku Auditorium that could only accommodate two thousand people, and yet three thousand people surged in, nearly breaking the doors off their hinges. When the chief minister of Penang, Koh Tsu Koon, made his speech, he humorously remarked: "These conditions tonight have strengthened my resolve to build an indoor coliseum

that can accommodate ten thousand people; that way, next time the Venerable Master Hsing Yun comes to preach the Dharma, everyone who wants to will have a chance to attend." On the other hand, the Muslim country of Indonesia had always forbidden Buddhist preaching in public, so his Buddhist followers vowed to maintain a vegetarian diet for three months, and the government finally relented, breaking all precedents to allow Hsing Yun to give a Dharma talk attended by more than a thousand people.

The goal of Buddhist internationalization is not something that can be achieved all at once, nor is Hsing Yun the only one who can claim credit for it. Hsing Yun feels that the smooth progress towards Buddhist internationalization in the past few years resulted from a few contributing factors: 1.) Taiwan lifted the ban on immigration during the mid-1970s; 2.) Large numbers of people from Hong Kong immigrated to the British Commonwealth countries; and 3.) Refugees from the central and southern parts of the Asian peninsula began surging into Europe and America. These waves upon waves of Chinese descendant whose mother religion was Buddhism were in dire need of spiritual comfort. It was only through their support that Buddhism was able to advance in this way.

The Seeds of Eastern Enlightenment are Planted on the American Continent

Hsi Lai Temple is the most significant monument in Fo Guang Shan's process of internationalization. Hsi Lai Temple is located about twenty miles directly east of Los Angeles, and is about a twenty-minute drive from the city of Monterey Park, known as "Little Taipei." In late May, a cool breeze blows gently, as the early dawn of this largest metropolis on the West Coast affectionately greets the traveler. Less than an hour's drive on the freeway from LA's international airport, the land slowly begins to rise, and where the hilly road turns, there appears, amid the shadows of trees on the hill's

crest, a patch of radiant light made up of walls of bright yellow and gleaming golden tiles: the monotonous colors of the hills have suddenly been transformed into something vibrantly bright and beautiful.

After a five-minute drive from the Hacienda Boulevard off ramp, Hsi Lai Temple rises high on the hilltop towards the left. When the car turns left into the temple's entry road, the first thing that greets one's eyes is a rather steep set of stairs, the "staircase to Heaven" that climbs up the hill. Looking up, one can see the majestic main gate, upon which are carved the words "Hsi Lai Temple of Fo Guang Shan," written in Hsing Yun's own hand. He also composed the side couplet to express his expectations regarding Hsi Lai Temple:

The kind heart of the Buddha's light [*foguang*]
pervades all the worlds as numerous as the sands on the
Ganges River; the compassionate vow to come west
[*hsi-lai*] brings liberation to people in their thousands of
billions.

The Buddha's light [*foguang*] of the eastern land
shines throughout the three thousandfold chiliocosm; the
Dharma waters that have come west [*hsi-lai*] flow all
through the five continents.

This Temple was incorporated in America with the name of International Buddhist Progress Society; its Chinese name is "Hsi Lai Temple" [*hsi-lai means "coming West"*], highlighting the meaning of "the Dharma coming West."

Combining the spirit of traditional Buddhism with modern social functionality, Hsi Lai Temple is located in Hacienda Heights. Construction was begun in 1986; and at the ceremony for laying the foundation stone, cement for the foundation was mixed with five-grain bricks that Hsing Yun had brought from India, sand from the

sacred Ganges River, and soil from Fo Guang Shan, indicative of the Dharma tradition's ancient origins and the Dharma water's long-standing development. November 26th, 1988, was an inspiring day, the day that Hsi Lai Temple was formally dedicated amid the invocation of blessings by the more than ten thousand guests from around the world. Pu Ta-chung, a reporter for the *China Times* stationed in Los Angeles commented on the event:

During the Northern and Southern Dynasties period, Bhadra (monk from India, ca. 5th cent. CE) came to China riding a white horse, while in the 19th century during the mid-Qing Period, Jesuits rode into China on cannon shells. Now in 1988, the largest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere, Hsi Lai Temple, has been dedicated in Los Angeles, USA. And this time, it was the Venerable Master Hsing Yun who came riding an airplane, bringing Chinese Buddhism to America.

When the temple was completed, the current issue of *Life* magazine at that time carried a picture of this magnificent Chinese-style temple, praising it as "the largest Buddhist temple in the Western Hemisphere," and describing it as "an American imperial palace." In April of the following year, the English edition of the *Readers' Digest* also carried a special report on Hsi Lai Temple.

In carrying on the tradition of Fo Guang Shan, it is hoped that Hsi Lai Temple will play the following three roles: 1.) provide America with a center for spiritual culture; 2.) establish a Dharma center of Buddhist studies for Westerners; and 3.) promote cultural exchanges between the East and the West. This is why a walk around the temple will reveal Buddhist followers of different skin color, while within the pilgrim's lodging there can be found Tibetan lamas from India, and visiting monks from Spain.

A Beginning of Limitless Hope

Today, Hsi Lai Temple has already become the finest location for showcasing Eastern culture, as well as the base of operations for developing Buddhism in the West. However, the process of founding the temple with all its ups and downs, presents a lively reflection of the Chinese people's history of struggle and initiative in foreign lands. In 1977, Hsing Yun accepted an invitation to attend America's bicentennial celebrations, which was the first time he set foot on this new continent. His keen insight had already perceived the rich and multifaceted nature of this country's culture, in which all kinds of ideas compete for attention. Beyond this, there were the growing numbers of Chinese immigrants to the United States, and these travelers abroad would also need a center for spiritual support. As a Chinese, Hsing Yun also possessed a certain ambition—for the past one hundred years, Protestants and Catholics had been propagating their religion all across China backed up by their fleet of gunboats, so why not employ peaceful means now to propagate Buddhism to the Western world?

He began discussing the possibilities with his enthusiastic followers, and their conclusion was why not give it a try. After careful consideration, it was decided that one of his main disciples, Tzu Chuang, and the English-speaking Yi Hang would undertake this "mission impossible." Following the dictum of "carrying on the practice according to the teachings," the two monastics did not have much to consider, and they began their journey with fifty thousand US dollars (for Fo Guang Shan at that time, that was quite a sum of money) in hand. Upon arriving in the United States, they made their inquiries and learned that even a cheap house would cost around seventy to eighty thousand dollars. At this point, they were ready to make their way back home. When Hsing Yun found out, he encouraged his disciples to stay put, and he himself flew to the United States to consider

the options. Heaven helps those who help themselves, and they eventually discovered that a church had been put up for sale. The disciples were unable to decide whether buying a Christian church and turning it into a Buddhist temple was appropriate or not, but Hsing Yun made the decision on the spot, for he felt that in buying a building that had originally some religious purpose would actually make things easier later on, and so with real determination, they made the down payment of twenty thousand US dollars, and then went to the bank to arrange a loan.

Finally, Chinese Buddhism had a beginning of limitless hope. And with that, several monastics lifted up their robes and began their own DIY projects of building walls and painting images of the Buddha. For the first joint practice, followers drove their cars long distances to participate. By the second and third occasion, the building was packed with people, and so the Baita Temple was built in Maywood. But not long after that, even Baita Temple became unusable because so many people wanted to come, which is why the idea of building an even larger temple came to be formed.

Ms. Chang Yao Hung-ying, a devotee and sponsor of Fo Guang Shan, strongly supported the idea and donated three hundred thousand US dollars. With this amount of money and donations from others, a property on top of a hill in Hacienda Heights was purchased. After six hearings and over a hundred meetings with local residents, the legal procedures were completed and Hsi Lai Temple could start its construction. Fo Guang Shan promised local residents of Hacienda Heights that Hsi Lai Temple would hold and sponsor charitable and cultural programs to contribute to the community. After the Temple was finally constructed, Fo Guang Shan indeed kept its promise and more. Hsi Lai Temple, over the years, has donated money and books to the community, provided venues for local conferences and meetings, and invited the neighbors for luncheons on a regular basis. A Chinese school was also set up within the temple, offering classes in

Chinese language and culture that are open to all. Hsi Lai Temple has been serving the local community as much more than just a Buddhist temple. It has brought about mutual understanding from different cultures, and has been reported on by local TV stations such as FOX and newspapers such as *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* and the local Chinese newspaper *World Journal*.

Leading the American Trend towards Learning Buddhism

Holding to his great vow and with the effort of all those who resided at the temple in service to its cause, Hsing Yun has already built Hsi Lai Temple into an internationally oriented and multipurpose center of Buddhist culture. Materials for the morning/evening chanting services, the Dharma Assembly of the Flaming Mouths, the Great Compassion Repentance Service, the Precious Repentance Service of the Liang Emperor, the Qingming Dharma Assembly, the Medicine Buddha Dharma Service, the Amitabha Buddha Dharma Service, and so on, have been translated into English, and there are Buddhist teachers fluent in English who can guide Americans in the Dharma Service. But not only that, English translations are on hand for the various large Buddhist assemblies, ensuring that Americans will be able to understand the Buddhism. Moreover, various English classes on Buddhism have been actively instituted, including English classes in Buddhist studies, Chan practice in English, monthly discussion meetings in English, periodically scheduled lectures in Buddhist studies, Buddhist studies camps in English, book clubs, etc., all of which are conducted in English, so that the vast and profound ideas of Buddhism can be communicated to Americans. Individuals such as Dr. Lewis Lancaster, president of University of the West and Prof. Ananda W. P. Guruge are invited to give lectures in English that relate to special topics concerning "Humanistic Buddhism." These lectures attract many Americans who come and listen, spurring within them an eager desire to delve more deeply into the Buddhist canon. In total,

more than a hundred classes in Buddhist studies are taught each year, while the number of students attending is nearly three thousand. Buddhist learning and Dharma Service joint practice are slowly becoming a part of daily life for the local people.

A student of the Buddhist studies class, Kuan Mu (Dharma name), has written his insights gained from the class that he would like to share with everyone:

I came to Hsi Lai Temple to attend the Chan Meditation class and the Buddhist Studies class and I was struck by how those who practice Buddhism (especially my classmates in the Buddhist Studies class) are transformed into different people. Buddhism has transformed me from an academic researcher of philosophy into a spiritual seeker. In the beginning, I knew that life was not predestined, but is a continuous process of exploration and examination. I try and practice the Dharma I have learned both in my family life and in my work. I have been participating in the Buddhist Studies class and the Chan Meditation class for more than a year already, and my life has been changed by what I have learned. I went on to participate in the Triple Gem Refuge and Five Precepts Ceremony, and I made a vow to practice the observance of the Five Precepts in my life, and to save sentient beings. As a part of this, I must not only avoid acting in a negative way, but more importantly, I want to strengthen my aspiration to be of positive benefit to others.

Each time the "Refuge in the Triple Gem" ceremony is conducted at Hsi Lai Temple, Americans constitute more than half of the participants, while at Five Precepts and Bodhisattva Precepts ceremonies, they constitute about a third. This demonstrates that more and more Americans are choosing Buddhism as their spiritual anchor.

As demonstrated by statistical data gathered over the years, at present the number of Western disciples at Hsi Lai Temple is already over twenty thousand. A student of Buddhism for more than fifteen years, Timothy Healy has said that the Zen learning he studied in Japan in the past emphasized individual practice and maintaining personal integrity. After participating in the English class on Buddhist studies at Hsi Lai Temple, he discovered that the ideals of Hsing Yun's "Humanistic Buddhism" emphasize bringing liberation to other beings and helping society. He felt more connected to this approach, and so he chose to take refuge and receive precepts at the same time, filling him with a feeling of Dharma joy.

The Steady Pace towards Buddhism's Internationalization

Hsing Yun has traveled to all five continents of the world, and wherever he goes, all the local devotees will ask him to establish a temple, and they add "make it as good as Hsi Lai Temple in America." It really seems that Hsi Lai Temple has become the model for building temples abroad. The small step of Hsi Lai Temple became a giant step in the Buddhist history of internationally oriented development. Learning from its experience with Hsi Lai Temple, Fo Guang Shan's pace at internationalization has made steady progress, projecting an extensive panorama in which "The Buddha's light shines throughout the threefold chiliocosm; and the Dharma waters flow all through the five continents." What follows is an introduction to a few of Fo Guang Shan branch temples around the world.

Australia's Nan Tien Temple

In July of 1990, Frank Arkell, the mayor of Wollongong on the outskirts of Sydney, donated twenty-six acres of land to Fo Guang Shan, and preparations for the building of Nan Tien Temple began. The temple was completed in 1995, and it was here that the Fourth World Congress of the Buddha's Light International Association was

held. During the opening ceremony, many high officials such as Australia's prime minister came to offer their congratulations, praising Nan Tien Temple as an important base for religion in Australia.

Nan Tien Temple is the first Buddhist temple in Australia constructed in the traditional palace style of Chinese monasteries, and its spiritual mission is to bring Chinese culture to the Southern Hemisphere. Buddhism has developed rapidly in Australia in recent years, and has already become the religion with the second largest number of believers, representing one percent of the total population. There are also many Catholics and Protestants who often come to Nan Tien Temple to conduct events and meet in fellowship. Due to Nan Tien Temple's positive interaction with the government and local society, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship agreed in 1998 to permit Nan Tien Temple to become a location where immigrants could be sworn in and confirmed.

The Australian government even supports the celebration of the Buddha's birthday, and on each occasion more than eight hundred thousand people participate in the event. The world famous Darling Harbor at Sydney raised the Buddhist flag on April 8th, 2001, to honor the Buddha's birthday. This was the first time that any flag other than Australia's national flag flew over the port.

In November of 2004, the "Fo Guang Shan Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony" was held at Nan Tien Temple, representing the first time in Buddhist history that the Chinese tradition of the Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony was conducted in the Southern Hemisphere. Two hundred bhiksus and bhiksunis from sixteen countries were ordained at this ceremony, opening a new page in the Buddhist history of transmitting its faith.

Currently in the planning stage, Nan Tien University will become the fourth university established by Fo Guang Shan, as well as the first university established in the Southern Hemisphere by Chinese people.

Australia's Chung Tian Temple

The temple is located in the middle of a national park between the cities of Brisbane and Logan in the state of Queensland. Construction on the first phase of the project was completed in October of 1993, which included the Yuan Tung Shrine, the conference rooms, library, and the Chung Tian Chinese School. The ribbon cutting ceremony was conducted by Hsing Yun and the mayors of Logan and Brisbane. Building permits for the second stage expansion plan were approved by the Logan City Council in October of 2001. Work on the Pagoda has begun, and the building is expected to be completed in 2006.

The Venerable Yi Lai currently serves as abbess of the temple, and besides conducting the Dharma Services, she often conducts a number of other activities, including Buddhist studies and Chan meditation classes in English and Cantonese, popular folk festivals, community fellowship activities, charity drives, exhibitions of cultural objects, lectures on specialized topics, and camp activities for young people. In particular, the Buddha's Birthday Festival has been held every year in May at the South Bank Parklands since 1997, and is jointly sponsored by the temple and the municipal government of Brisbane. The event attracts more than one hundred and fifty thousand people of different religious and ethnic backgrounds, who come to participate in the celebrations, thus facilitating the development of multiculturalism.

South Africa's Nan Hua Temple

In 1991, Dr. Hendrik Belsazar Senekal, Chief Executive Official of Bronkhorstspuit City in South African, arrived in Fo Guang Shan after flying a great distance, in order to offer a donation of six hectares (about 15 acres) of land, earnestly requesting that Fo Guang Shan build a Buddhist center in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Dr. Senekal stated at the signing ceremony, that as soon as Hsing Yun agreed, work on building the temple would commence immediately, while Dr. Senekal would do his utmost to attend to all the logistical support. Hsing Yun responded by saying that South Africa is rich in diamonds and indeed, diamonds are very valuable, but that Dr. Senekal's heart is more valuable than diamonds. The entry of the Dharma into South Africa would mean that the country would become all the more steeped in culture and religion. As inspired by the Ven. Hui Li's great vow "to be buried in Africa," the Main Shrine of Nan Hua Temple opened in April of 2001, while images for the shrine were dedicated in October of 2005. The temple is the first Buddhist temple in Africa, and it also marks an epoch-making undertaking in Chinese Buddhism's transmission of the lamp to the African continent.

Today, total land area has been expanded to eleven hectares, as the Buddhist teachers there lead the local populace in opening up fields for the planting of such crops as corn and potatoes in accordance with the long-term view that "giving people fish to eat is not as good as teaching them how to fish." The Buddhist teachers also extend their loving concern to the poor and uneducated of the next generation. Upon this continent that has never received the sweet rain of the Dharma before, Fo Guang Shan has built seven temples within the short span of a dozen years; these seven are: Nan Hua Temple, Pu Jiue Temple [near Johannesburg], Durban Meditation Centre, Newcastle Meditation Centre, Bloemfontein Meditation Centre, Cape Town Culture Centre, and Ladybrand Miao Jue Temple. Hsing Yun personally performed the tonsure ceremony for ten South African monastics in 1994, representing the first group of black Buddhist monastics in the history of Africa. Later on, the Buddhist College of South Africa was also established, and eleven classes of incoming students have already been enrolled.

Brazil's Zu Lai Temple

In July of 1992, the Buddhist, Chang Sheng-kai of Sao Paulo, Brazil, donated his residence to Fo Guang Shan as a Dharma center. Given the name Templo Zu Lai, it became Fo Guang Shan's first landing in South America, as well as the continent's largest Buddhist temple. The magnificent and stately Main Shrine was dedicated and opened in 2003.

Under the tireless teaching and guidance of the Buddhist teachers there, the local people slowly became imbued with the Buddhist sense of character and morality, and they began to understand the value of life, and truly love life enthusiastically. The "Children of Zu Lai" plan was extraordinarily profound. Zu Lai Templo sponsored more than two hundred and fifty children, those born into poverty that were uneducated and neglected. Their ages ranged from six to eighteen, and among them were those who had stolen and robbed, those who had worked for drug dealers, those who nearly contracted AIDS, and those who were almost single moms. Besides providing each child with clothing, shoes, and school supplies, the temple also gave each one of them ten kilos in food rations, and also instituted courses for them, including classes in cooking, gardening, reading and writing, tour guiding, and handicrafts; and in the future the temple hopes to offer courses in plumbing and electrical repair, carpentry, and agronomy. In this way, the children can master a skill so that they can support themselves and avoid falling into the pit of the three great crimes: stealing, drug addiction, and robbing. Today, these kids wear their yellow T-shirts and greet others politely with joined palms, speaking the words "namo Amito fo" with naturalness and grace.

This group of Zu Lai's children have completely transformed themselves, demonstrating with their own lives the broad and unselfish power of the Buddha's teachings and compassion, and even the parents, neighbors, and friends of these children have also been

uplifted as well. These children of Zu Lai are influencing their families and the future of Brazil.

Soccer is Brazil's national pastime, and many children there are interested in the game and have an inborn talent for it. Zu Lai Templo has established a soccer team, which is now heading towards the goal of representing Buddhism in soccer matches around the world.

France's Paris Vihara

In September of 1991, Fo Guang Shan established its first Dharma center in Europe, marking the beginning of Fo Guang Shan's mission of spreading "Humanistic Buddhism" to continental Europe.

Germany's Fo Guang Shan Temple of Berlin

Established in 1993, this is the headquarters of Fo Guang Shan in Europe. The first Short-term Monastic Retreat in European history was held there in 2004. The nearly two hundred novices who participated in the retreat came from thirteen countries.

Great Britain's Fo Guang Shan Temple of London

Completed in September of 1991, the temple marks the starting point for Chinese Mahayana Buddhism in Great Britain. Through the hard work of a series of Abbots and many Venerables, the Fo Guang Shan Temple of London (International Buddhist Progress Society London) not only guides the faithful in learning Buddhism, but it has also won the trust and recognition of the local government and people. In 1997, the government specifically designated the Buddha's Birthday Festival held each year at the Fo Guang Shan Temple of London as a regular activity for the Chinese community of Westminster.

In July of 2005, a tragic event erupted in London that shocked the entire world, and clicking to the website of I.B.P.S.

London [International Buddhist Progress Society London] on the second day, one could read the following message in both Chinese and English:

The sound of bombs exploding has reverberated through the London in which we live, and Londoners have been hurt. We feel deeply grieved by this bombing attack on London! At the I.B.P.S. London, our hearts that hold you dear will always be with you.

The I.B.P.S. London expresses its deepest sympathy and prayers for the victims of the series of bombings that struck London on July 7th, and their families. On July 10th (Sunday) at 10:30 am, the I.B.P.S. London will conduct a memorial service and a prayer service at this temple for the victims of this terrible event, and we would like to invite you all to attend and pray for London. We will also do all that we can to assist all those who are suffering from this bomb attack, and together we will get through this difficult time in our lives. If you require our assistance, please contact the I.B.P.S. London as soon as possible.

This clearly demonstrates the unconditioned compassion of Buddhism and it also constitutes an exalted sense of civic spirit.

From Internationalization to Localization

The most important work of "Buddhism's internationalization" since the great Dharma came to the West is gradually succeeding, and the seeds of enlightenment that were sown in the beginning are now slowly sprouting forth, while certain places are even producing tender flowering buds. However, looking towards the future, the visionary and yet practical Hsing Yun knows that there is still a long

way to go. If Buddhism is to be integrated into the mainstream culture of each country, and further develop its own sense of presence, there is perhaps yet another one hundred years of persistent cultivation that lie ahead. The top priority for this process is to go from Buddhism's internationalization to "Buddhism's localization."

The "*Buddha Path*" chapter of the *Vimalakirti Sutra* states: "The Prajna-wisdom is the bodhisattva's mother,/ While skillful means is the bodhisattva's father./ The teachers of all sentient beings/ Appear as the result of these two." As proven in the histories of the past, whether they be from ancient times or present day, from China or abroad, it is readily apparent that in its transmission and propagation, Buddhism must make the appropriate revisions in order to adapt itself to local customs and conditions, as well as to the given cultural background.

By promoting the localization of Buddhism, Hsing Yun has proven once more the breadth of his mind and the superiority of his insight. On April 19th of 2001, the "First Meeting of the 3rd Board of Directors of the Buddha's Light International Association" was held at the conference facilities of a hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa, and during that meeting Hsing Yun proposed the "Four Transformations:"

1. Humanize Buddhism
2. Culturally improve our lives
3. To Install equality in monastic and lay societies
4. To Promote localization of monastic establishments

To "Promote localization of monastic establishments " means that all the hundreds of temples and Dharma centers, as well as the associated work of Dharma propagation, that have been created through the joint effort of Fo Guang Shan's followers and members of the BLIA [Buddha's Light International Association], do not belong to any single individual, but rather constitute the shared wealth of

everyone involved. Furthermore, it is the wish of all those who belong to Fo Guang Shan, that within the next twenty to thirty years, the various temples around the world will be "localized."

A Calling and Not a Burden

In fact, before Hsing Yun had even begun to clearly advocate localization, the process of localization had already become a reality for many years. For example, localization work was being realized in Malaysia in an ordered and gradual process. The chief abbot for Fo Guang Shan in Malaysia, the Ven. Hui Hsien, was a Malaysian. After receiving a complete education at the Buddhist College in Taiwan, he was trained at a series of institutions. Thoroughly fluent in Chinese, English, and Cantonese, he is by nature both gentle and compassionate, and he possesses as well a profound understanding of the tradition of Humanistic Buddhism. Five years earlier, he was sent to Malaysia to propagate the Dharma and bring liberation to living beings, while Fo Guang Shan supplied support in terms of manpower, funding, and principles and experience for preaching the Dharma. Today, he has already brilliantly forged a sterling reputation for Malaysian Buddhism.

The Temple on the North Island of New Zealand was almost finished, and it had already been determined internally that its abbot would be a citizen of New Zealand, the Ven. Hui Feng. This represented yet another example of Humanistic Buddhism's localization. After coming from New Zealand to study at the Buddhist college in South Africa, Hui Feng returned to Taiwan to pursue advanced studies at the Buddhist college there, and to serve as an English teacher. He is currently the supervisor for the project team working on the Jian Zhen Library. Upon being informed as to this epoch-making mission, Hui Feng clearly understood that he was about to become a trendsetter, the first person to embody this turning point in the history of Buddhism for the Southern Hemisphere.

Speaking in clearly enunciated Chinese and yet somewhat embarrassed to delve into personal feelings, Hui Feng remarked:

Since I am the first one, I know that I will probably not be completely successful all at once. But those who come after me will be able to see where I made my mistakes and where I have come up short; experience will be slowly accumulated. But you must understand, the way Western society perceives Buddhism differs from that of the East, so it probably won't work if one tries to employ those methods here. Although the Master started from zero and created this religious order of Humanistic Buddhism, but after all, Buddhism was originally present in Chinese culture, while it is a stranger to the West. Perhaps this requires a greater degree of "true emptiness producing wondrous being" than was present when the master began his efforts back then. Let me cite an example. When a tree is cut down, if the roots are still present, it will still be able to grow branches and leaves again within a few decades; but the West never had this tree, and so I must go back and plant some seeds.

Tall and skinny in stature and with a lean and healthy face, a quick glance at Hui Feng reminds one of David Carradine, the star of the television show "Kung Fu" so popular many years ago. Hui Feng possesses several advantages: he speaks Chinese (and is slowly learning a little Taiwanese now); he understands proper Buddhist behavior; he once performed abroad representing Fo Guang Shan's Buddhist Choir; and has a deep interest in traditional Chinese culture. The Chief Executive of the Sangha Affairs Committee for the men's monastic order, the Ven. Hui Chuan has said:

The working life of Ven. Hui Feng is just like every

one else's at the monastery. At the art of flowers, plants, and rockery exhibit during the Lunar New Year's festival of 2005, as temperatures suddenly plummeted, he would always endure the low temperature to water the plants in the middle of the night. Foreign monastics like him who identify with the bodhisattva spirit of Fo Guang Shan and are willing to throw themselves into the work of global Dharma propagation are rare indeed. I hope he can create broad connections for a positive future, so that in the future there will be a group of Dharma brothers who will go and help him, people he knows well. By becoming abbot he is standing on the front lines, while others will support him by being directors and working behind the scenes.

Hui Feng was indeed fortunate to enter Fo Guang Shan, because it offers so many opportunities for study, and before him are the models of conduct represented by the senior monastics, whose spirit of doing things is to bring happiness to all living beings for the sake of Buddhism and humanity, fearless of any difficulties: "I am willing to work ten years, twenty years, a hundred years, even an eon as my contribution to Buddhism. This is a calling and not a burden." This was spoken by a blonde-haired, blue-eyed monastic, and one cannot help feeling deeply moved.

A Thirty-year, Long-term Plan

Hsing Yun has formulated a long-term plan for this process of localization that follows after Buddhism's internationalization:

1. The first ten-year period: course study and training. To train local people in the study of the basic knowledge regarding temple affairs, such as the administration of Dharma functions and how to receive and converse with guests. They are also to be given constructive criticism

regarding their practical training, the point being to sow the seeds for training a monastic or lay staff over the next ten years.

2. The second ten-year period: on-the-job training. After the period of practical training is over, the local staff (monastics and lay members alike) will all be able to undertake their duties, as well as the work of administration and Dharma propagation.

3. The third ten-year period: the selection of candidates for the position of abbot/abbess and manager. It is hoped that during this period, that local monastics or lay members will be able to shift out of the basic jobs and staff positions and undertake the duties of abbot/abbess and director.

The next stage, as Hsing Yun has pointed out, is not to "take" but rather to "give," that is, to transcend the boundaries of races and nations by applying a capacity of unselfishness, in order to ensure that the seeds of Buddhism are planted deeply, bringing happiness to this entire world with all its sentient beings of differing languages, skin colors, and cultures. Hsing Yun has said: "We must ensure that when each member of Fo Guang Shan goes to any of the Dharma centers around the world, it will be like returning to one's own home." Twenty-five hundred years ago, the Buddha transmitted the Dharma throughout the five regions of India, and twenty-five hundred years later, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun has transmitted the Dharma throughout the five continents. He is leading the members of Fo Guang Shan in their millions, to ensure that the Dharma is propagated in all the countries of the world.

Chapter

Ten

**The Four Great Objectives
Wisdom Forever Burning Bright**

If in judging the value of Fo Guang Shan, one is merely bedazzled by the grand buildings and the bustling people that greet the physical eye, one will indeed become trapped in an attachment towards "appearance," and will be unable to experience the true meaning of its existence. To really know Fo Guang Shan, one must delve deeply into its guiding principles, its core ideas, and its main objectives, for only then will a visit to this temple become a rewarding experience.

The great patriarchs and worthies of Buddhism have always emphasized the mind-to-mind transmission of the Dharma between master and disciple, and among the host of disciples at Fo Guang Shan, there are those who from time to time will ask Hsing Yun: "Master, what must I do to receive the mind-to-mind transmission from you?" He replies: "As long as whatever you do corresponds with the guiding principles of Fo Guang Shan, then you have a mind-to-mind transmission with me!" And what are the guiding principles of Fo Guang Shan? "Propagate Humanistic Buddhism; and create the Pure Land of Buddha's light." These are what characterize the Fo Guang Shan order, and these are also the goals Hsing Yun has spent his entire life trying to promote.

Firmly Holding to the Four Great Objectives

Fo Guang Shan has already taken traditional Buddhism out of the secluded valley where fate had consigned it, and with its creative thinking, Fo Guang Shan has forged a globally oriented framework for Humanistic Buddhism. Within this framework, "Fo Guang Shan" no longer refers simply to the Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Kaohsiung County's Tashu Village, but rather, it is a "collective noun," that contains more than one thousand monks and nuns and over two million followers, projecting its influence across the five continents of the world. However, no matter where its temples are located or how many followers it has, Fo Guang Shan firmly holds to the Four Great Objectives of "Propagate the Dharma through culture; foster talent

through education; benefit society through charity; and purify the human mind through cultivation." By carefully examining this train of thought as represented by these four objectives, one can clearly see the concrete accomplishments and contributions made by Fo Guang Shan over the last forty years.

Propagate the Dharma through Culture

After a visit to Fo Guang Shan, a librarian was moved to write the following:

At Fo Guang Shan during a mid-Summer's afternoon, visitors find relief by ducking into the thick shade for a rest. There is only the occasional chirping of birds that disturbs the quiet stillness in the air. I had heard long ago that Fo Guang Shan placed a good deal of emphasis on culture and education, but you won't realize that unless you've been there. So when I entered the temple complex, I was astonished; just this one temple of Fo Guang Shan actually has seven libraries: the Fo Guang Shan Public Library (open to the public), the Women's College Library, the Men's College Library, the Great Compassion Nursery Library, the Pumen High School Library, the Dajue Temple Library, and the Great Compassion Nunnery Library. Sitting quietly by the window in one of the libraries, one can delve deeply into the meaning of the Dharma in such comfort and freedom. Raising one's head to look out the window, one sees how the mountains present all their greenery and how the misty hills greet the wind--all together, it's yet another story written in nature.

The *Diamond Sutra* states, "Wherever this sutra may be found, it should be honored as the disciples honored the Buddha." It

also states, "Among all the offerings, the offering of the Dharma is first." The *Diamond Sutra* emphasizes that the merit of propagating the sutra's four-line verse exceeds the merit of offering heaps of the seven precious jewels filling the great thousandfold chiliocosm. In addition, Buddhism's Ten Practices regarding the Buddhist Teachings cover copying them, honoring them, bestowing them on others, listening to them, reading them, being ever mindful of them, explaining them to others, reciting them, thinking about them, and practicing them. All of this goes to show that culture occupies an extremely important position in Buddhism.

Over the past forty years, Fo Guang Shan has adhered to the path of using culture to propagate the Dharma. In 1958, it promoted the monthly publication of the Buddhist scriptures, in which the hard-to-understand text of the scriptures was reformatted using the new style of punctuation with clear divisions between paragraphs and lines, just like the format used in ordinary novels. This ensured that the Dharma became something that the masses in society could widely accept. The biweekly magazine *Awakening the World* (publishing an issue every ten days) was founded by the Buddhist Chang Shao-chi in 1957, and was given a totally new look after Fo Guang Shan took it over. The number of copies distributed for each issue exceeds several tens of thousands, which circulate throughout forty-two countries and regions. This magazine is offered free of charge, and the yearly cost of publishing such a magazine exceeds ten million NT dollars, but since it serves as a bridge for communicating with the millions of Buddhists around the world, the organization remains committed to its publication. In 2000, the magazine was merged into the newly founded *Merit Times* as the "*Awakening the World* Supplement." The magazine *Universal Gate* was founded in 1979, and its guiding principles are represented by what has universal appeal, what is mass oriented, what is life oriented, what has a focus on the literary arts, what is interesting, and what is internationally ori-

ented. Its readers are to be found in more than thirty regions, including Europe, America, Southeast Asia, Mainland China, Australia, and South Africa. In 2000, publication and distribution of the magazine was shifted to Malaysia.

With a history of more than thirty years, Fo Guang Publishing House continues the functions of the "Buddhist Cultural Services Office" (established in Sanchung in 1959 and then moved to Kaohsiung in 1964). It has published several hundred collections of books covering the Buddhist canon, general introductions, academic papers, literary works, historical biographies, and Buddhist teachings. Recently, it is developing a line of cartoons and children's books that use modern packaging to introduce traditional Buddhism. The Fo Guang Bookstore (established in 1978) has more than twenty stores, including those in Taipei, Kaohsiung, Hong Kong, Los Angeles, and Vancouver. In recent years, the stores have been successfully reorganized by combining their operations with the Fo Guang Yuan art galleries and the teahouses. The donations that were taken in during the Alms Procession to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of Fo Guang Shan's founding were used to establish the "Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education," that subsidizes academic conferences in Buddhist circles around the world and provides financial assistance for outstanding individuals to further their education. It supports the publication of Buddhist magazines, and also donates books to various libraries, prisons, and schools.

Editing the Buddhist Canon, Continuing the Life of Buddha's Wisdom

Of special mention here is the editing of the *Fo Guang Tripitaka*. Beginning in 1977, Hsing Yun established the "Fo Guang Shan Tripitaka Board" which had as its goal the compiling of the Buddhist canon in a modern way with the hope of continuing the life of Buddha's wisdom and spreading the sacred teachings. There are

often people who ask this question: over the generations there have been many people who have published editions of the Buddhist canon, and even today large amounts of this material are being reprinted, so why must Fo Guang Shan commit so much manpower, financial resources, and material to the editing and publishing of the Buddhist canon? There are three reasons for this:

1. The transmission of the Buddhist teachings and the foundation of Buddhist culture lie in the *Tripitaka*, the threefold canon comprising the Sutra (Buddhist scriptures), the Vinaya (the rules and precepts), and the Abhidharma (treatises, commentaries and sub-commentaries). Chinese dynasties over the generations have mobilized the power of the government's academic and cultural institutions to edit the Buddhist canon. On one hand, this was done as a way of signaling the great importance of culture to all the world's rulers, while on the other hand, this was a way of demonstrating how the economy and level of scholarship at that time had reached a certain high point, for only then could such a huge project of editing the canon be undertaken. It was also for these reasons that the precious treasure of Chinese culture would long endure. However, since the *Dragon Tripitaka* of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), no one has re-edited the Buddhist canon in the last three hundred years. Fo Guang Shan has been following its vow "to light an infinite number of lamps and set forth the brilliance of prajna-wisdom, for the sake of Chinese culture and the life of wisdom in Buddhism," and so has taken up this burden without hesitation.

2. Given the changing times, there is indeed a great need to preserve the essence of the original canon, but beyond that, there should be a way to give it a new meaning for this age. Besides what generations past have set as the sections of the canon: *Agama*, *Prajna*, *Chan*, *Pure Land*, *Avatamsaka*, *Saddharmamundarika*, *Yogacara*, *Guhya*, *Sravaka* and *Vinaya*, the editing committee has added some new sections that include Iconography, Ceremony, Literature and

Arts section, and the Miscellaneous section; totaling sixteen major sections in all. It is hoped that their work will incorporate texts from the Chinese Buddhist canon with those from other traditions, and link the past with the present.

3. In terms of its cultural vitality and its ability to serve as a link between the past and the future, the Chinese Buddhist canon is already facing a difficult situation. For example, given the immense number of volumes divided into too many categories, the task of making selections, reading the texts, and doing research have become very difficult. In addition, its ancient style in the classical language is quite abstruse, for it lacks both punctuation and paragraphing. This means that readers are put off by a sense of awe; they only honor these scriptures in their libraries or homes, unaware of the majesty of the canon for indeed it has already lost its function of propagating the teachings. Thus from the beginning, work on the first section on the *Agama Canon* was under the personal direction of Hsing Yun, with the Ven. Tzu Yi serving as general editor. Scholars in the fields of Buddhism, literature, history, and philosophy, as well as dozens of language specialists in Sanskrit, Korean, Pali, and Japanese were invited to participate. It drew widely from such previous editions including the Mahayana and Pali canons, as well as those editions published in China, Korea, and Japan. The work included textual annotations and critical research into the entire text, as well as punctuation and paragraphing added to the body of the text, along with explanations of the names occurring in the text and the meaning of the title itself, as well as an index at the end of the text. This ensured that "everyone could read it, easily understand it, believe in it, and put it into practice."

After the office of Fo Guang Shan for editing the Tripitaka had produced several sets of the Tripitaka, the age of the Internet arrived following the widespread adoption of personal computers. In 1995, the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and

Education established the "Fo Guang Shan Electronic Buddhist Texts," a special team whose sole responsibility is to produce digitized versions of Buddhist books, materials, and the scriptural texts as based upon the paper version. The advantages of a digital Buddhist canon include the convenience of mobility and storage, and of searching and making comparisons. In 2004, the website for the Buddhist Electronic Texts was also established, which offers searches and inquiries online. The digital version of *Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Dictionary* was published in 1997, becoming the first digital Buddhist dictionary in the world, and its bilingual edition in Chinese and English was made available in 2003.

Foster Talent through Education

Hsing Yun once said, "Without education, no matter how profound the teachings are or how many sacred texts exist, who would study them? Therefore, we must promote education. The sangha must have an education for the sangha; devotees must have an education for the devotees; and children and women as well must also have an education that is suitable for children and women." This is the idea that has led Fo Guang Shan to develop its educational mission. From the attention paid to education on the part of its devotees, one can also see the success of Fo Guang Shan's educational activities in this area. In the past, devotees have generated merit for the sake of averting disaster and seeking safety, but now they understand that fostering talent is all the more important. It often happens that there are people who earmark one or two thousand NT in cash for the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education, while each year, the vice-president of Chunghua Headquarters of the Buddha's Light International Association, Chen Shun-chang, sets aside a sum of money to be used specifically for education.

Life in the Monastery, the Continuation of the Dharma Lineage

While he was alive, the former chair of The Buddhist Association of China, Zhao Puchu (1907-2000), was most concerned

about the fostering of Buddhist talent. He once gave a memorable talk to the Shanghai branch of The Buddhist Association of China, in which he said, "The most important matters for Buddhism are three-fold: the first, fostering talent; the second, fostering talent, and the third, fostering talent." Great minds think alike, and Fo Guang Shan's efforts at fostering talent within the sangha (the monastic community) over the past forty years has never ceased. Hsing Yun served as the first president of Tsung Lin University, a position that was later occupied by the venerables Tzu Hui, Yi Heng, Hui Kai, Yi Hua, and currently by the Ven. Man Chien. Man Chien has said:

I consider myself fortunate indeed to be a disciple of such a great Master. He has made education his life's work, and in this his zeal and faith has never wavered. He adapts his teachings to his audience according to their capabilities and skillfully presents his guidance as conditions arise. The usual way he handles things is through wordless teaching. He serves as an example for others and teaches even without speaking. In all of his actions as a person, his deeds and his studies, there is an all-inclusiveness that makes him the finest of teaching materials.

Hsing Yun's noble achievements through his persistent work in opening schools touch the heart. Back when the areas of southern Taiwan were short on teaching staff, many teachers were personally sought out by Hsing Yun and they would come in droves from Taipei to teach classes. When these teachers arrived it was often the middle of the night, but no matter how late it was, Hsing Yun would be waiting at the temple gate to welcome them when they arrived. He would even roll up his sleeves and prepare for them some midnight snack, and keep company with them as they enjoyed their meal before going to bed, for only then would he return to his quarters, his mind at ease.

And when these teachers left the temple to return north, he would certainly see them off himself, his only concern being that any failure at hospitality would mean they would never come back.

As it has developed to this very day, the monastic education at Fo Guang Shan is still undergoing a constant process of reform and innovation in terms of its facilities, its organization, and its curriculum. At the same time, its vision is broadly international, and its reputation as the most complete educational institution for Buddhist studies in the history of Chinese Buddhism is well deserved. An analysis of its unique characteristics include:

1. It has been in operation the longest without interruption.
2. It has the highest number of continuing students, and it has the highest rate of people engaging in actual Buddhist-oriented work of various kinds after graduation.
3. Its quality is the highest and it offers the most opportunities for further study.
4. It has the highest level of internationalization.
5. It combines traditional spirit with a modern look.

Devotee Education and Social Education

Basing itself on the ideals of Humanistic Buddhism, Fo Guang Shan is also engaged in devotee education and social education. "In order to provide society at large with a life-long learning environment, to benefit the masses studying and practicing the Dharma, to help master the key aspects of modern life, and to adapt to the demands of modern society," Fo Guang Shan has developed a whole series of programs. These include: summer camps, Sunday schools, and arts and crafts classes for children; and for young people, there are the summer camps for new post-secondary students, youth centers, and the BLIA Young Adult Division. Given the multifaceted nature of society, Fo Guang Shan also offers general courses in skill-oriented education, such as cooking, women's choir, calligra-

phy, youth orchestra, Taijichuan, and so on. It also holds regularly scheduled exhibitions and demonstrations, and its record of achievement in these areas has been outstanding.

In January of 2005, the president of Japan's Koyasan University, Dr. Chisho Namai, was invited to attend the installation ceremony for Fo Guang Shan's seventh head abbot. Afterwards, Prof. Namai spent two days visiting throughout Taiwan and though his trip was short, it turned out to be a very fruitful one. On the eve of his departure, he spoke of his impressions during this trip: "The Dharma centers are doing very well, and the people who come there are quite young." Accompanying Prof. Namai throughout the entire trip, the abbot of Motosu Temple in Japan, the Ven. Man Jun understood the professor's feelings. Since most young people in Japan do not believe in Buddhism, at present most of the devotees there are in their seventies and eighties, and some cannot even straighten their backs. "We represent the progressive Buddhism of today."

In 1975, a general meeting of the devotees was held, and thus the first program of educational training classes in the Buddhist community was inaugurated.

In 1983, the "City Buddhist College" was inaugurated at the Pu Hsien Temple in Kaohsiung, and then one after the other, the various other branch temples also began to implement this program. With three months per academic session, students use their time after work to come and attend classes; these students include college professors, high school teachers, company managers and executives, civil servants, and so on. Such accommodating and considerate programs enable Buddhism to join with human society in a positive way, achieving results that are both broad and deep.

In recent years, these efforts have been elevated to another level. The Buddha's Light Humanistic University [an open university that offers on-line distance courses in Buddhism] was established at the Jin Guang Ming Temple in Sanhsia of Taipei County. It offers a

learning environment for Buddhist studies and secular classes to people at different levels.

In the area of social education, the first Buddhist kindergarten in the country was opened--the Ciai Kindergarten in Ilan. The number of its graduates over the years has now reached more than thirty thousand, and they are to be found at all levels of society. There is the Humanities Primary School in Ilan that is a privately owned, publicly run school; while the Juntou High School and Elementary School in Puli has an excellent environment, an active school life, and a meticulous approach to teaching. With so many privately owned and operated schools experiencing difficulties, for these schools to have an outstanding record of stable growth in student enrollment is rare indeed.

The Pumen High School is divided into the junior high and senior high sections. When it was founded in 1977, there were only ninety-one students, but at present, the number of students has already exceeded twelve hundred. With its conscientious teaching and its strict management, the school has been commended by the Ministry of Education and the local education department as an outstanding private school.

As for universities, there is the University of the West (formerly Hsi Lai University) located in Los Angeles County, in the United States; it takes the small scale and yet refined approach, its faculty and students come from various countries around the world, it has become a center of academic exchange for international Buddhism. Fo Guang University and Nanhua University are located in Ilan and Chiayi respectively, with their emphasis on spiritual growth and education in humanities and social sciences, they could be considered the best and most promising of the newer institutions. Currently in the planning stage, the Nantien University will become the first university established by Buddhists in the Southern Hemisphere.

Benefit Society through Charity

When it comes to discussing the Buddhist participation in charitable endeavors, many people will immediately think of the Tzu Chi Foundation led by the Venerable Cheng Yen. Given its main focus on charity, the foundation has a distinctive reputation in this area, so it is no wonder that such an association is frequently made. Likewise, Fo Guang Shan's participation in charitable work has been an ongoing process of continuous expansion and cultivation since its very inception, though it has not been systematically publicized.

Holding to the ingrained sense of Buddhist compassion and the spirit of empathy with all living things, Fo Guang Shan's charitable and social welfare undertakings are planned and coordinated by the "Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation," with the Ven. Tzu Jung as its current board chair. Tzu Jung further points out:

Master Hsing Yun has advocated that we do not pursue those active areas of charity work; Fo Guang Shan should be doing more of what others are doing less; and appear more in places where others are going less.

Besides material assistance, Fo Guang Shan charitable welfare certainly has a transformative aspect through the Buddhist teachings, which employs the functions of clarifying cause and effect and purifying the human mind to lead those injured in disasters to learn and appreciate how "the assistance of others is limited, for one must rely on oneself to help oneself." Even in the face of life and death, Fo Guang Shan endeavors to help them transcend suffering and to stimulate a new sense of consciousness, giving them the strength to rebuild their lives. With a sense of earnest concern, Tzu Jung goes on to say:

A lot of charitable work is done in a sensational manner, but

in fact doesn't really help that much. It's just like dragging someone out of the water (the sea of suffering) and comforting them a bit, only to toss them back in again.

Charity Welfare Projects

I. Medical Care Services

1.) Fo Guang Clinic

Established in June of 1976, the clinic was located in Kaohsiung's Shoushan Temple. Hsing Yun has said: "The main goal of the Fo Guang Clinic is to provide the opportunity for the poor with low incomes in society to receive complete medical treatment and care." Two years later, the clinic was moved back to Fo Guang Shan. Although small in scale, the clinic offers a full range of services, including traditional Chinese medicine, Western medicine, dentistry, and acupuncture. Medical treatment equipment available at the clinic has slowly increased, including equipment for electro cardiograms, testing blood sugar, and ultrasound scanning. Owing to its convenient location and the commitment of its doctors and nurses to volunteer their medical services, the clinic has become a haven of care for poor patients in the neighboring districts of Kaohsiung County.

2.) Mobile Clinic

Since the Fo Guang Shan Clinic can only serve a limited number of people, Hsing Yun further established the Volunteer Medical Treatment Team in 1984. With its mission to "benefit the community through the sweet dew of Buddha's light," the team brings medical treatment personnel and equipment to remote areas. In 1987, this was expanded into the "Mobile Clinic" effort that can go into any region to provide patients with the finest possible care. In its initial phase, there was only one free medical treatment truck, and every day it would go out to provide services in one location. Later, the fleet was expanded to nine vehicles, and every week they would go and provide medical services in twenty locations. At each loca-

tion, it can accept more than one hundred twenty patients for medical treatment each day, while each month the total number of people receiving free medical care is around ten thousand. With the smallest amount of financial resources, the mobile clinics achieve the highest degree of effectiveness, while the medical care coverage has gone from the initial four areas of Tashu Village, to a much expanded area encompassing the mountainous regions of Nantou, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. Such areas as Tainan, Chiayi, Taipei, and Ilan, as well as the outer islands, all followed suit and established their own medical treatment teams.

Except in cases of such major natural disasters as typhoons and road closures due to landslides, the mobile clinics have never stopped making their rounds to provide free medical treatment. Delivering medical care to remote regions is extraordinarily hard work. One often has to carry the boxes of medicine for a long time on foot, before arriving at a given location, and once there, one must carry out the medical treatment in a crude environment. Besides the commitment of the doctors, there is also the commitment of the devotees to take turns going to the various medical treatment stations and helping out with patient registration and preparing prescriptions, as a complete expression of compassionate love. Besides the treatment of physical ailments, there are also Dharma teachers who accompany these medical teams. They respond to the various doubts patients have about life, while at the same time they give psychological and spiritual guidance and counseling.

II. Care for Seniors and Orphans

1.) Senior Citizens' Home I-Lan

The "Senior Citizens' Home I-Lan " was originally called "Loving Fellowship Relief Home," and was founded by the Christian Tung Hung-lie in May of 1962. Owing to economic hardships, Hsing Yun was asked to take over its management in July of 1967. In 1971,

the Ven. Yi Jung and the Ven. Shao Chueh (d. 2005), both graduates of Fo Guang Shan's Dong Fang (Eastern) Buddhist College, vowed to serve there, and over the past thirty years or so, the institution has been constantly adding buildings, including the Recreation Room and a Buddha hall. Moreover, flowers and trees have been planted all around and pavilions built, which make for a beautiful environment with clean fresh air. The elderly people living there enjoy a life of bucolic comfort. Whenever a fellow resident passes away, everyone gathers to chant Buddha's name together, so that the deceased can calmly pass into the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss amid the sounds of reciting Amitabha Buddha's name. During its initial phase, it mainly took in elderly people who were alone and helpless, but currently this policy has been expanded to also accept healthy seniors sixty years of age and above. It has also instituted daytime nursing care for seniors, making it the first institution for senior welfare in the nation to offer this kind of service.

Everyone has experienced at least a momentary sense of mercy, but long-term compassion requires patience and perseverance. Venerable Shao Chueh and Venerable Yi Jung have dedicated half of their lives in service here. As the days and years pass one by one, they bathe and feed those living in the home, preparing their medicine and arranging their funerals. Truly, they are the finest examples of the bodhisattva practice, and both were awarded the honor of national good Samaritans at the same time.

2.) Fo Guang Senior Citizens' Home

The origins of this institution relate to Hsing Yun's idea of fostering the traditional spirit of filial piety and respect for one's elders and the promotion of harmonious family values. This is done by helping senior citizens settle down with a happy life, and by providing a place where they can be cared for during their remaining years. The Senior Citizens' Home began operations in 1976, and it is located on a hilltop to the west of Fo Guang Shan. With its tranquil beau-

tiful location, it stands near Pumen High School and the Samantabhadra Shrine and distantly faces the Great Welcoming Buddha on the eastern hill. This gives it a sense of existing in its own world removed from worldly concerns, and with its refreshing peacefulness, it seems like a hidden paradise on earth. One of the seniors residing there created and recited the following verse: "The Fo Guang Senior Citizens' Home is a most refreshing place,/ Surrounded by forests of fine bamboo far into the distance./ A quiet paradise for old folks with no profane guests;/ Just like the Nanyang retreat for that famous minister Zhuge long ago./"

The building complex itself consists of three, two-story buildings in apartment style; the construction is elegant with comfortably appointed living areas and well-equipped bathrooms. The complex also includes a vegetarian dining hall, a hall for reciting Buddha's name, a reception hall, pavilions, and gardens. The residents there are all devotees who have taken refuge in the Triple Gem and include retired civil servants, college professors, military officers, lawyers, and business people. They all have wonderful homes, but they come to the Fo Guang Senior Citizens' home seeking a life of cultivation through "renunciation." Some spend their days reciting Buddha's name, while others devote themselves to a profound study of the scriptures. In their free moments, they raise orchids, enjoy tea, recite the scriptures, and exchange their insights into life. And in all of this, they receive appropriate care.

3.) The Great Compassion Nursery

The Great Compassion Nursery was established in 1970 with the formal approval of the Kaohsiung county government. After several renovations and expansions, it is currently housed in a large six-story building, which includes offices, reception rooms, an activity center, self-learning labs, dormitories, tutorial rooms, and so on. The nursery takes in orphans between the ages of three and twelve who have lost both parents or had a parent die while in service to the

country. The nursery also accepts the children of single parents who cannot otherwise be cared for, and even child protective custody cases submitted by various county or city governments, as well as special cases with sufficient cause.

III. Counseling and Moral Instruction

1.) Moral Instruction in Prisons

When he was residing in Ilan, there were the towns and schools Hsing Yun would visit, but prisons too were places he would turn the wheel of the Dharma. The moral instruction at prisons that Fo Guang Shan is currently supporting include: Kaohsiung Prison, Kaohsiung Women's Prison, Kaohsiung Detention Facility, Mingyang Reform High School, Lioujia Correctional Facility, Chiayi Detention Facility, Changhua Prison, Keelung Prison, Keelung Detention Facility, and the Hualien Minimum Security Prison, and there are more than twenty-seven thousand people benefiting from this program.

2.) Drug Rehabilitation Counseling

In 1995, a rehabilitation facility was formed in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, known as the "drug rehab village." It promotes anti-drug and drug use and rehabilitation work by relying on the power of religious faith and spiritual influence, as well as psychological counseling. It is hoped that such efforts can help drug offenders to make a healthy return to society.

Courses are set up so as to place a dual emphasis on understanding and practice; courses that emphasize practice include meditation, sacred singing, and sutra copying, while courses that emphasize understanding include basic Buddhist learning, Buddhist principles, the biographies of eminent monks, the ways and benefits of reciting Buddha's names, and the philosophy of the Buddhist schools. Since the program's inception, sponsored activities have included: purifying ceremony, Amitabha Thrice Yearning Chanting Service,

sacred singing contest, family gatherings on Mother's Day, birthday parties, taking refuge in the Triple Gem, speech contests, and so on. In addition, there are group counseling sessions and courses for mastering certain technical skills such as vegetarian cooking, arts and crafts, and horticulture. All of this is done so that when the students return to society, they will be well prepared to communicate and interact with others and to support themselves with a specific skill.

IV. Social Concerns

1.) Crisis Assistance Team

Established in 1967, the Crisis Assistance Team works to give assistance to those who have suffered sudden and devastating changes in their lives by supplying goods, food, and money to help them get through this period of crisis. People can apply for the program themselves and applications are also accepted from relatives or through village, town, area, or district leaders and from people at large. People are also accepted into the program based upon newspaper reports and recommendations from charitable organizations, family support centers, and the social work centers in hospitals. Once the facts of their cases have been verified, they are immediately given assistance in all cases. In addition, in cases such as the Grand Canyon plane crash in the United States, the Nagoya plane crash in Japan, the Osaka-Kobe earthquake, floods in Mainland China and Taiwan, the Taiwan earthquake that occurred on September 21st, 1999, etc., Fo Guang Shan engages its empathetic spirit that sees the sufferer as oneself and actively provides relief in a timely fashion.

2.) Winter Relief Aid

Beginning in 1981, relief visits have been made every winter to low-income families and people suffering from poverty and illness living in different towns and villages. Besides providing material and financial support, the program also arranges for free medical treatment, while accompanying Dharma teachers give instruction in the

Buddhist teachings and offer spiritual guidance and comfort. For the past twenty years or so the scope of the relief aid program has slowly expanded to include all of Taiwan, as well as the islands of Lanyu and the Penghu Archipelago; the number of aid recipients is around twenty-three hundred families. The Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation has also gone to such places as the Philippines, South Africa, and India to bring relief aid. In addition, each year Hsi Lai Temple in the United States conducts joint winter relief aid programs with the local Mormon and Methodist churches, bringing benefit to the local area as well as achieving religious dialogue.

3.) Caring for Seniors Living Alone

Society is facing an aging population, and according to statistics, by the year 2002, one in every five people will be a senior citizen. The Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation conducted a care survey for seniors living alone in the twenty-seven villages, towns, and cities of Kaohsiung County, and enlisted the help of volunteer groups, care-giving groups, medical treatment teams, and volunteer doctors and nurses to provide medical treatment and fellowship services to people living in elder care homes. All of Fo Guang Shan's various branch temples throughout Taiwan offer services for seniors living alone and no matter how remote, the location teams will go and visit despite the hundreds of miles involved. There was a ninety year-old gentleman by the name of Kao Chao-he living alone in the northern mountainous zone; the volunteer workers washed his comforter and gave him a heavier overcoat to better resist the cold, but not only that, they also erected a water tower that was fed by a mountain stream, enabling Mr. Kao to enjoy "running water" even in his house. The rich warmth of human affection and the compassionate Buddha's light and Dharma water slowly brought happy smiles to this senior citizen who had been living alone for so long.

4.) Hospice Care

"Hospice care" was introduced from Europe and America, and in recent years, it has slowly achieved serious attention from medical centers as they address the treatment and care of patients in the final stages of serious illnesses. The goals of hospice care are to assist the patient in facing the issue of death in a calm and quiet manner, to help them have a clear understanding of death, and to remove any fears they might have about death, as well as to assist family members in reducing their level of grief. Regarding the so-called "great matters of life and death," the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation, along with the Buddha's Light International Association, began recognizing the importance of this issue long ago, and has instituted hospice care teams to assist in chanting Amitabha Buddha's name. The former organization not only is a legally registered support group for the Chungte Hospice Ward of the Veterans General Hospital of Kaohsiung, it also sends Dharma teachers and volunteer workers to continuously carry out the work of hospice care.

When visiting terminal cancer patients in the Chungte Hospice Ward, one will discover young people who have just become mothers or fathers, but are now stricken with breast cancer or lung cancer; then there will be the older folks who have gone through so much in their lives and were preparing for a peaceful end to their lives, but now suffer from liver cancer or colon cancer. These patients have chosen hospice and palliative care and have declined emergency resuscitation, which means they will not accept such mechanical means of emergency resuscitation as endotracheal intubation and external defibrillation. Doctors will try as much as possible to assist in reducing physical pain, while the Dharma teachers and volunteer workers will lead these patients to a peaceful passing into the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.

In 2000, Veterans General Hospital of Kaohsiung celebrated its tenth anniversary, for which it made special arrangements with Fo Guang Shan Monastery to conduct a Dharma assembly for the invoca-

tion of blessings to honor one's elders on the 15th day of the Seventh lunar month, a day when prayers are offered on behalf of the dead. Not only was merit dedicated to one's ancestors at this event, but prayers were offered to dispel the sufferings of the sick, to bring health to all and to bring salvation to the dearly departed. The venue for the ceremony was arranged in a solemn and dignified manner, and more than one hundred doctors, staff, and patients from the hospital enthusiastically participated in the event. Some patients came with their IVs to attend the ceremony and worship the Buddha, while some older people present were unable to understand the meaning of the Buddhist texts, but still joined their trembling hands together in prayer and intoned the Amitabha Buddha's name along with everyone else. The scene was very warm and moving.

5.) Longevity Memorial Park

"Life is never an occasion for happiness, nor is death ever something lamentable." In the eyes of enlightened beings, life is the continuation of death and death is the transformation of life. Therefore, life is not life and death is not death; as life and death are the same, why bother feeling happy or sad?

In order to enable the dead to seek rebirth in the Buddha field and increase the causes of superior enlightenment, the Longevity Memorial Park was established in 1974. Initially, it was called the "Longevity Memorial Park and Public Garden Cemetery," or just "Longevity Hall." Planted with luxuriant plants and trees, the park faces the Kaoping River with its beautiful scenery, and to the side is the Great Welcoming Buddha to keep it company. The park also contains a seven-story building in the Chinese traditional palace-style. The first floor contains four ceremonial halls that are well equipped, where prayers for the dead, funeral ceremonies, and memorial services can be conducted. The second floor contains the Wish Fulfilling Residence that has six hospice rooms with all the appointments of a modern home. Here, terminally ill patients can live together with their

families. With proper care and amid the sounds of chanting Amitabha Buddha's name, the terminally ill can peacefully complete the final journey of their lives, while family members can also receive spiritual and psychological comfort. In addition, the Longevity Memorial Park also provides two thousand niches so that the poor and indigent will have a place where their cremated remains can be interred free of charge.

Summarizing what has been introduced here, one can say that a person's entire life, from birth, old age, sickness, and death, can all be completed in the "Pure Land of Buddha's Light."

Purify the Human Mind through Cultivation

Differing from most social groups, Fo Guang Shan is after all a religious organization, and such activities as Dharma assemblies, Dharma Services, spiritual cultivation, scriptural recitation, and meditation still occupy an important position. Besides the scheduled Dharma Services as well as the Buddha worship and repentance services that are more routine in nature, Fo Guang Shan also offers various other activities, including individual retreats, monastic and lay joint practice, various kinds of Dharma assemblies, the Eight Precepts Retreat, the Seven-day Retreat for the Practice of reciting the Amitabha Buddha's name, the Chan practice of pilgrimages for "copying the scriptures", pilgrimages to the sacred sites of India, circumambulation of branch temples, and devotee assemblies. Having become Buddhists and developed their roots of goodness owing to their connection to the various Dharma practices, devotees find within Fo Guang Shan their center of faith and their spiritual refuge.

Hsing Yun often instructs his disciples by employing the skillful means of Humanistic Buddhism: "Dharma practice does not merely refer to recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name or Chan meditation, it should also include lectures on Buddhist studies, book reading clubs, seminars, discussions on specific issues, and even

other activities of various kinds." Hsing Yun goes on to say:

Buddhism in the past often only valued recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name, and Buddha worship, and it lost many devotees. Buddhism is all about bringing universal liberation to all sentient beings, and universal liberation means that you get people to do what they like. If you don't want to practice recitation of Amitabha Buddha's name, then you can meditate. And even if you don't believe in Buddhism that still doesn't matter, you can practice Buddhism, and rally people together on behalf of Buddhism to do good deeds. If you don't like worshipping the Buddha, that doesn't matter either; you can come and eat vegetarian meals; but if you find vegetarian food not quite to your liking, then you can come to the temple for conversation and fellowship, sing Buddhist songs or listen to music. Therefore, the Humanistic Buddhism being promoted now represents a multi-faceted and multi-functional approach to spreading the Dharma. We must practice the Buddha's "giving the right encouragement based upon the individual's capacity" according to everyone's capacity and needs; this then is Humanistic Buddhism.

I have never liked complicated rules and ceremonials that are so formalistic, which is why I shortened the time for the daily practice sessions, modified the procedures of the ceremonies, reduced ritualistic formalities, and made things more convenient for everyone. Substituting simplicity for complexity has increased effectiveness.

The Ven. Hui Chuan, President of the monastery's Supervisory Council, indicated that in recent years, the Dharma practice activities at Fo Guang Shan have become more standardized and more routine in nature, including the time when such Dharma

assemblies are conducted. The sequence of actions in conducting a Dharma assembly have been integrated into a unified process that is consistent at all branch temples around the world. What this means is that no matter where a devotee goes, they can quickly join in, sparing them from having to adapt to something new all over again.

A Visit to the Temple is a Rewarding Experience

This immense global mechanism that is Fo Guang Shan is like a constantly turning cogwheel, each "click" followed by another in a tight seamless process. In terms of organizational scale, it would be considered the best implemented program in Taiwan; in terms of membership numbers, it also ranks among the top; in terms of its social impact, few other Buddhist groups can come close to matching it; in terms of its name recognition, rare indeed are those unaware of Fo Guang Shan. Upon seeing a monastic, quite a few people will spontaneously ask: "Are you from Fo Guang Shan?" It seems that Fo Guang Shan has become a representative label for Taiwanese Buddhism.

However, from the Buddhist perspective, material things have their formation, abiding, destruction, and voidness; so if in judging the value of Fo Guang Shan, one is merely bedazzled by the grand buildings and the bustling people that greet the physical eye, one will indeed become trapped in an attachment towards "appearance," and will be unable to experience the true meaning of its existence. To really know Fo Guang Shan, one must delve deeply into its guiding principles, its core ideas, and its main objectives, for only then will a visit to this temple become a rewarding experience.

Chapter
Eleven



*Collective Creation, Systematic
Leadership*



Just like the billionaire Wang Yung-ching and his Formosa Plastics Corporation or CEO Jack Welch and his General Electric Company, the smooth and orderly operation of Fo Guang Shan cannot be separated from Hsing Yun's core ideals and planning; and within these, "collective creation and systematic leadership" occupy a pivotal position.

The Chinese people have a saying: "A single branch does not make a tree; nor does a single tree make a forest." Buddhism holds to the principle that "phenomena do not appear in isolation," for one must neither become attached to any particular thing or person, nor reject any particular thing or person. Indeed, it is only due to this essential principle that Buddhism has been able to build upon all the possibilities and constantly make breakthroughs, thereby advancing its life of wisdom for more than two thousand years.

After Buddhism was transmitted to China, generations of leading masters and great worthies have carefully followed the Buddhist system and founded monasteries and instituted monastic rules. Their emphasis on organizational structure was extraordinary, and became known as the "four departments of a monastery" (that are responsible for the temple's monastic training, personnel and guest affairs, general management, and temple supplies) and the "forty-eight monastic duties." Within this structure, each job was clearly specified and each duty was fully implemented. As founded by the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, Fo Guang Shan is heir to the traditional monastic system in use since the height of the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE), and yet it has also adopted management tools from modern business enterprises. On this point, Fo Guang Shan exercises mature control over these two fine horses of traditionalism and modernity, so that they each pull their weight and work together as a team. Within the last ten to twenty years in particular, the development of Fo Guang Shan has become more comprehensive, while the quality of its staff has been constantly improving. This has ensured that this Monastery

Humanistic Buddhism, both in terms of its spiritual meaning and systematic structure, appears increasingly more well rounded and integrated.

On more than one occasion, Hsing Yun has taken great pains to remind the Fo Guang Shan devotees to:

- * Look to the content of Fo Guang Shan, rather than its external appearance
- * Look to the entire membership of Fo Guang Shan, rather than any particular individual
- * Look to the Fo Guang Shan system, rather than any particular case
- * Look to the history of Fo Guang Shan, rather than any particular period of time

Fo Guang Shan's Decision-making Body--the Religious Affairs Committee

Upon delving deeper into Fo Guang Shan's system and operations, one will be surprised to discover quite an interesting and vigorous organization that includes, a dispatch and control hub that can gather and redistribute resources through the effective and dynamic movement of personnel, materials, money, and information. Not only does such a well thought-out and orderly system of organization represent something of great significance for the history of Buddhist development, but it also serves as a very valuable point of reference for others.

Let us begin our discussion with Fo Guang Shan's decision-making system. "The Constitution of Fo Guang Shan Monastery" was promulgated five years after its founding, and the first clause clearly states: "The monastery is a Buddhist practice center that has been established by the Ven. Hsing Yun, one that is managed by bhiksus and bhiksunis and is supported by upasakas and upasikas. Its formal designation is: 'Fo Guang Shan Monastery,' and it is also called the

'Religious Affairs Committee of Fo Guang Shan,' or the headquarters. It is the Religious Affairs Committee that will publicly appoint its president who will serve as the monastery's abbot/abbess, and the committee will work together to develop Buddhist projects through a process of collective creation." According to the "Constitution of the Religious Affairs Committee of Fo Guang Shan," the "Religious Affairs Committee" is the most powerful organization within Fo Guang Shan. Playing a role equivalent to the "board of directors" at most corporations, the committee is responsible for drawing up developmental policy for the entire organization. The Religious Affairs Committee is comprised of nine members (equivalent to a "board of directors") and three alternates, and from among these its president is selected (i.e., the head abbot/abbess of Fo Guang Shan; the present committee has changed the name of "president" to "committee chair"); each committee member originally served for six years, but the present committee has changed this to four years.

Over the past forty years, there have been seven terms of office for the Religious Affairs Committees and four committee presidents. The current chair of the Religious Affairs Committee is the Ven. Hsin Pei, who is the seventh abbot of Fo Guang Shan Monastery; the previous presidents of the committee were Hsing Yun, Hsin Ping, and Hsin Ting, respectively. The members of the committee are selected by democratic vote. Taking the election of the most recently constituted Religious Affairs Committee (for the year 2004) as an example, there are nearly thirteen hundred members of the monastic and lay communities (celibate male and female teaching practitioners) in the monastery, and of these, more than five hundred and twenty people have voting rights as based upon an evaluation of their seniority and their experience and degree of scriptural learning, while more than two hundred and ten people have the right to stand for election. Upon the recommendation of the out-going Religious Affairs Committee and the elders, twenty-one people from this latter group

were nominated as candidates for the next Religious Affairs Committee. The more than five hundred electors held a public election in the Tathagata Hall , voting for nine members of the Religious Affairs Committee, then the committee itself elected the committee chair from its own membership.

After observing one of its meetings, one would find that the Religious Affairs Committee conducts itself in an orderly and judicious manner, and can well be compared to the nation's Legislative Yuan. The committee is first divided into small groups that meet to draft proposals that are then reported to the committee. After a period of careful consideration and thorough discussion, proposals are passed after three readings and duly recorded in the minutes, whereupon they are turned over to the relevant departments for execution. After that, there are also progress reports and review assessments.

Administrative Agencies--the Five Councils and the Ten Commissions

Now we will take a look at Fo Guang Shan's administrative organizations. In their earliest form, the administrative organizations were known as the "five offices and two groups" (Religious Affairs Office, Education Office, Cultural Office, Charity Office, Welfare Office, Planning Work Group and the Implementation Work Group). This system gradually evolved into the "four councils and six foundations and committees" (Elders Council, Supervisory Council, Education Council, Culture Council, Fo Guang Pure Land Cultural and Educational Foundation, Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education, Fo Guang Shan Tertiary Education Organizing Committee, BLIA Development Committee, Fo Guang Shan Religious Affairs Research and Development Committee. Presently, there are "five councils and ten foundations and committees." The "five councils" are: Elder Council, Supervisory Council, Culture and Art Council, Education Council, and Charity Council;

and the ten foundations and committees are: Fo Guang Shan Tripitaka Board, Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education, Fo Guang Pure Land Cultural and Educational Foundation, Humanistic Culture and Education Foundation, Fo Guang Shan Benefactors Board, Fo Guang Shan International Buddhist Progress Society, BLIA Development Committee, Fo Guang Shan Tertiary Education Organizing Committee, Fo Guang Shan Television Dharma Promotion Committee Fo Guang Shan Religious Affairs Research and Development Committee, and the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation. The core administrative organization is the Supervisory Council (equivalent to a general management office), which supervises such units as monastery affairs, devotee affairs, welfare, finances, reception center, and information technology. It administers nearly three hundred separate units, including all the branch temples.

With its headquarters in Taiwan's Kaohsiung County, Fo Guang Shan has a vast network of nearly two hundred branch temples. The great majority of these were established by Hsing Yun himself, but there were a small number of originally independent temples that suffered financial or administrative problems and requested to be merged into the Fo Guang Shan system; and there were also some temples that willingly accepted Fo Guang Shan management because they had been racked by personnel disputes or lacked a successor upon the death of the current abbot. Situated near Chung-cheng Park in Keelung, the Chi Le Temple had a certain connection with Hsing Yun that goes back forty years. When he led the monastic relief team in 1949, Hsing Yun landed in Keelung by ship, and he happened to pass the entrance to the old temple while taking a stroll. When he looked inside, a monastic raised her head and peered back, but no words were exchanged between them. Thirty-two years later, the abbess of Chi Le Temple, the Ven. Hsiu Hui, the very person who had glanced back at Hsing Yun during that earlier encounter, was then

erving as director of the Keelung Buddhist Association, and she invited Hsing Yun to come to Keelung and conduct a three-day seminar on Buddhist studies. In this way, she came to know his writings and identified with the ideals of "Humanistic Buddhism." Three years later (1984), the eighty year-old Hsiu Hui unconditionally donated Chi Le Temple to Fo Guang Shan, including all temple buildings and its more than three thousand square meters of land, and Fo Guang Shan began its renovation of the temple. There was also Yuanming Temple located in the outskirts of Ilan, where Hsing Yun had completed his *Biographies of the Buddha's Ten Principle Disciples* and his work on the *Sutra of the Eight Realizations of the Great Ones*. It was entrusted to Fo Guang Shan in 1982 just prior to the passing of its abbot, the Ven. Chueh Yi.

Under the leadership of the main temple headquartered in Kaohsiung is the first level of "branch temples." Examples include Taipei's Pumen Temple, Kaohsiung's Pu Hsien Temple, Taipei Fo Guang Shan (Taipei Vijara), Lanyang Temple, Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles, and Tokyo's Fo Guang Shan. These temples are established in a metropolitan area with more than a million inhabitants; they hold regular Dharma assemblies for a thousand people or more, and have in residence eight or more monastics who serve the local devotees. The second level is represented by affiliated temples, lecture halls, and viharas; examples include Keelung's Chi Le Temple, Fushan Temple, the Panchiao Lecture Hall, the Yuanlin Lecture Hall, and the Tainan Lecture Hall. These branch facilities are established in cities with more than five hundred fifty thousand inhabitants; they hold regular Dharma assemblies for five hundred people or more, and have in residence four to eight monastics who serve the local devotees. The third level is represented by the "Chan and Pure Land centers;" examples include the Chan and Pure Land Center in Sanchung, the Chan and Pure Land Center in Neihu, and the Chan and Pure Land Center in Tainan. These facilities are established in towns and villages; they

hold regular Dharma assemblies for two hundred people or more, and have in residence two to four monastics who provide services there. In addition, there are also preaching centers that are established in remote areas; Monastics teach the Dharma at these centers by adopting a circuit ministry.

Taking in the Big Picture, Working towards the Same Goal

Expressed in other terms, it is as if Fo Guang Shan were a transnational corporation with nearly two hundred subsidiaries around the world. Under the head office, there are also many independent working units that are staffed directly or indirectly (volunteers) by tens of thousands of people, while its loyal customers number as high as two million people and more. Such an immense and complicated organization would compare favorably to any corporation on the Fortune 500; and to treat it as the subject of a case study would certainly whet the appetite of any esteemed specialist in business management.

Just like the billionaire Wang Yung-ching and his Formosa Plastics Corporation or CEO Jack Welch and his General Electric Company, the smooth and orderly operation of Fo Guang Shan cannot be separated from Hsing Yun's core ideals and planning; and within these, "collective creation and systematic leadership" occupy a pivotal position. With respect to "collective creation," Hsing Yun once made the following simple comment:

In the early days of Fo Guang Shan, I had absolutely nothing, so when I first came to Kaohsiung, I brought along Hsin Ping, Tzu Chuang, Tzu Hui, and Tzu Jung and together we began to toil and work. We cleared away weeds and moved rocks, for the construction work of founding the monastery was nurtured with our own bodies and minds. We had neither modern equipment nor today's management

theory, and yet group planning and group effort was our consistent approach, while collective creation was the tacit understanding we all held in common. We drafted the general layout for the temple's physical structures in the Lichee Garden, and came up with the guidelines for preaching the faith in the old Huiming Hall. Going from nothing to something, we all took it one step at a time, and during our work, there were perhaps personal differences over understanding, conceptualization, and judgment, but once an issue affected the temple as a whole or related to the needs of Buddhism, then everyone promptly came together. There was never any dissension in our thinking, for what we shared in common was the determination to overcome difficulties and work towards the same goal. The reason for this was quite simple: we were a part of Fo Guang Shan, and believers in the Buddhist faith. This was the spirit behind the temple's founding.

Today, there are many more people, with many work units and many tasks involved, while our levels of contact now extend from devotees and members of society to international networking. Naturally, to employ the original meeting format involving small group discussions and oral agreements is no longer appropriate. However, the basic principle of collective creation and group effort must still be retained. Besides all the document preparation, the submission of written progress reports and the phone conferencing that is done around the table, what is even more important is how we put ideas into practice, facilitate all levels of interaction and allow flexibility, and also keep accurate records of all these practices and procedures.

What any group fears most is that one person will take over and act arbitrarily; such behavior is considered

unacceptable at this monastery. The best approach is to seek more opinions and advice from several people when any decision is to be made; and before any action is taken, general meetings must be held to communicate the thinking behind it. Collective creation does not mean many people supporting one individual, rather, it means that each participant has a say in the decision-making process.

From its founding to the present, nearly every single issue has been decided by democratic means. At "staff meetings," "duty meetings," "department head meetings," and at the various "council affairs meetings," everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and exercise their right to vote, regardless of their degree of seniority or the duties they undertake. Even during meetings personally conducted by Hsing Yun himself, anybody who happens by and is so inclined is free to sit in and listen at anytime. Not only does this style reduce any resistance towards work, it also ensures that members of Fo Guang Shan will learn the art of communication by attending such meetings. As Hsing Yun always says, one can speak freely during meetings, but one must support the decisions once they have been made, for only this approach represents the true democratic spirit.

Rely on the Dharma and Not Individuals

In the Buddha's time, the monastic community was completely dedicated to its organizational system. In the Buddha's *posadha* system for confessing one's faults (when the monastic community would gather together and reflect upon their religious lives) and his system of *karman* discussions (in which meetings were held to adopt resolutions), we can see a set of legal procedures that are even more detailed and complete than those of many modern countries. Since his management style reflected a deep understanding of human nature and his system of rules and regulations were so skillfully adaptive, the

Buddha's monastic community could be ranked among the best groups and organizations we have today.

In comparison with past Buddhist associations with their loose approach to organizational systems that lacked any cohesive force, Fo Guang Shan's global organization is something rarely seen in Buddhist history. Its approach is indicative of both decentralization and centralization, reflecting a horizontal system of regions and a vertical system of specialization, that come together to form a matrix-like structure. The nucleus and the periphery are tightly bonded together with a strong cohesiveness and a powerful team spirit. The key element here is a system that is both clearly delineated and achievable.

The personnel structure is divided into two systems: one is a system of ordered rankings (individual qualifications) and the other is a system of job classification. The system of ordered rankings is how Fo Guang Shan encourages its members to improve themselves both morally and academically. These rankings are divided into five classes and nineteen grades, and each individual's ranking is determined by evaluating their commitment and diligence in three areas: spiritual cultivation (moral character, personal integrity, spiritual practice, etc.), work experience (one's contributions to the temple, length of service, etc.), and academic achievement (general schooling, level of education at Buddhist colleges, research into the Buddhist canon, etc.). The order of rankings is as follows: "Purified one" (those beginning the Buddhist path who must purify the body and mind) comprising six grades, one year for each grade; "Learner" (striving to attain knowledge) comprising six grades with three to five years spent completing each grade; "Practitioner" (emphasizing spiritual cultivation) comprising three grades with three to six years spent completing each grade; "Instructor" (teaching others) comprising three grades with five to ten years spent completing each grade; and the highest class being "Master" (elder). Those who enter the Buddhist path late in life

are enrolled as "Pure peaceful one;" they receive increased benefits but are not considered for promotion. The system of job classification thus refers to the administrative position occupied by the individual within the temple or other related institutions.

Regardless of one's level of seniority, personnel are rotated to other positions on an average of once every three years. This usually occurs on the first and seventh months of the lunar calendar. Each individual first drafts a statement of purpose and submits a self-evaluation form, then the Religious Affairs Committee holds a personnel review and evaluation meeting to discuss the issue of personnel transfers. Assignments are made based on the individual's statement of purpose in conjunction with the needs of the various units. Any appeals are discussed as separate cases.

This system ensures that there is always a fresh current running through the pool of talent, and that no individual can cling to their post or abuse their power. With its clear delineation of promotions, demotions, rewards, and sanctions, the strategy for manpower utilization is both dynamic and flexible. At the same time, the system also ensures that members of Fo Guang Shan will cultivate a temperament for a division of labor through coordination. Thus, whenever a large-scale activity occurs, the ability to mobilize personnel is very strong, and as tasks are assigned, each person can be positioned to exert maximum effort and overcome all difficulties. As for the devotees, such a system establishes the concept of "relying on the Dharma and not individuals," in that one should support the Dharma and the temple, rather than becoming attached to one's relationship with a particular monastic. This gives everyone the opportunity to come to know a new leader, so that the system is substituted for individual preferences.

The System of Shigu and Jiaoshi

From its inception, Fo Guang Shan was to be a monastery held in common by the Seven Classes of Disciples, and from this developed the unique system of Shigu (female laity) and Jiaoshi (male laity). After the ceremony marking their entry upon the path, they are the equals of monastics except for their differences in appearance. Their benefits, classes and grades, job opportunities, and career prospects are equal to those of the monastic community. For example, one position for each term of the Religious Affairs Committee is reserved for a member of the laity. Shigu Huang Meihua is currently one of the nine committee members, and she possesses the same rights to speak and vote as anyone else. She indicated that since a layperson lacks the protection afforded by the monastic dress, a layperson's faith in spiritual cultivation must be stronger than that of the monastic, and the requirements for entry onto the path are somewhat more rigorous. Fo Guang Shan treats its Shigu and Jiaoshi with extraordinary respect and care, for it does not want to leave the impression that they are merely Dharma protectors who stand subordinate to the monastics. Rather, Fo Guang Shan wants them to continually improve themselves, for the Shigu and Jiaoshi may even develop themselves more thoroughly than the monastics themselves.

The Shigu and Jiaoshi at Fo Guang Shan are really marvelous, and they are prepared to take up any challenge. Sometimes they accompany the monastics who have business outside the temple; they will follow behind carrying any luggage or briefcases, for they are concerned that if the monastics were to do so themselves, it would affect the dignity of their presence. There are other times when unruly troublemakers come to the temple, the Shigu and Jiaoshi will stand in front as a shield and speak to them, because they are concerned about the appropriateness of having the young monastics deal with such people.

In terms of ordered rankings of classes and grades, the Shigu

and Jiaoshi are divided into three classes and twelve grades. These include the "Purified one" (a total of six grades with one to three years spent completing each grade); "Learner" (a total of six grades with three to six years spent completing each grade); and the highest class of "Practitioner" (a total of three grades with five to eight years spent completing each grade). Hsing Yun often encourages the Shigu and Jiaoshi to develop Buddhist business ventures, so that this source of income can be used to support the temples, ensuring that the monastic community can tend to spiritual matters free of any worries. He goes on to predict that in the future, Buddhism will not be able to rely completely upon donations. It will have to obtain the funds for its spiritual mission from positive businesses that it manages, so as to become financially self-sufficient. This is why he encourages the training of Shigu and Jiaoshi so that they can develop their strengths and show what they can do best.

Self-sufficiency for Buddhist Business Ventures

There are often people who will ask, "Given the magnificence of Fo Guang Shan's buildings and the nearly two hundred branch temples around the world, where does the money come from to cover such immense expenditures?" They do not know the whole story. Besides the temple buildings, Fo Guang Shan must supply room and board for several thousand members of the monastic and lay communities, as well as cover the expenses for all the education and benefits, etc., not to mention the costs relating to all the other Buddhist non-profit business ventures. Among these, funds are needed for nearly six hundred students at the Buddhist colleges so that they can study Buddhism and cultivate their spiritual practices; funds are needed for supporting the nearly one hundred orphans at the nursery; and funds are also needed to provide a comfortable life for the more than two hundred destitute seniors who are living out their declining years at the Fo Guang Senior Citizens Home and the Renai Senior

Citizens' Home I-Lan; then there are all the many administrative units that require funding to support their activities of transforming the lives of human beings. Fo Guang Shan does not have any constant source of income or property, and yet it can be self-sufficient and cover such huge expenses. In a sense, one could say that it puts its wealth from all directions to a high level of "use," and develops the value of all its donations to the nth-degree.

So as not to completely rely upon the generosity of its donors, Fo Guang Shan has developed its own sources of income; examples include Buddhist bookstores and gift shops, magazine offices, publishing houses, kindergartens, primary and high schools, and universities. There are some people who disagree with Fo Guang Shan's "multifaceted approach to business," and criticize it for being too "commercial." But as Hsing Yun points out, "Buddhists are not social deserters. They should apply their own abilities in exchange for what they get. And besides, in carrying out religious work and spiritual cultivation, one must first be free from want before there can be any service to society or any contribution made to the larger community. For what Buddhism takes from society, it should give something back to society in return. This is the primary reason for having Fo Guang Shan operate its business ventures." Hsing Yun earnestly explains his long-held wish: "In committing ourselves to service by employing our labor and intelligence, we receive in exchange the resources needed to conduct our religious work and spiritual cultivation, in this way, we need not be dependent upon society for our livelihood."

"The Catholic and Protestant churches make money from the business ventures they operate, and society applauds them, so why must Buddhism recoil from money in horror?" as Hsing Yun points out so openly. There are people in the Buddhist community who always feel that poverty is the only way to practice spirituality, and any discussion of "money" is considered vulgar. However, "doing

something always involves money unless one intends doing nothing at all, and this is a very realistic problem. What is the best possible way to employ the good, ethical, and sacred wealth from our donors in business ventures that benefit living beings is the only issue truly worthy of our consideration." Hsing Yun feels that, for a modernized Buddhism, as long as any business venture is beneficial to the economy of the country and the lives of its people, as in the case of farms, factories, corporations, banks, etc., Buddhists should go out and do it. This is what bringing liberation to living beings means.

The Priceless Dharma—Making Broad and Positive Connections

Besides its own business ventures, a temple cannot do without the lamp oil and incense offerings for the Buddha and the donations of its devotees. But Hsing Yun has his own take on this matter. Traditionally, a temple's greatest source of income was thought to be limited to conducting repentance ceremonies and memorial services for the dead, or finding some major patrons to support the temple, and indeed, Hsing Yun does not oppose doing so. But the conducting of repentance ceremonies and memorial services on behalf of the laity should be founded upon a mutual relationship of support between monastic and devotee, something other than a simple monetary exchange. It is also the case that devotees do make contributions to the temple, and so in times of need, the monastic community is duty bound to offer help to the devotees. Therefore, when it comes to repentance ceremonies and memorial services for the dead, Fo Guang Shan's various branch temples avoid the purely business transaction approach, and so each ceremony is carefully conducted in its proper order and with genuine sincerity.

Drawing together a few major donors is not something Hsing Yun likes to do. If one individual puts too much money into a temple, then the thought that "I built that temple single handedly" comes to

mind too easily, which leads to flagrant interference in temple affairs and damages the relationship between the monastic community and the donor. Hsing Yun explains his own idea:

I do not rely upon major donors, because it's the major donor who will try to take control, which puts the temple under a lot of pressure. Traditionally, there are many examples of how interference by major donors crippled the development of a temple at every turn. For example, I had one major patron who took me to task over my education projects, saying that they would leave me with nothing to eat. I replied that I didn't know whether I would have anything left to eat or not, but education was simply too important for Buddhism. You don't have to support me, but please don't oppose me.

This is why Fo Guang Shan has a very important rule: monastics decide their own affairs, and the lay devotees are not to interfere.

Hsing Yun prefers small amounts of money to large ones, and an infinite number of small donors over one or two big ones, which is what he means by "creating broad and positive connections." But one may ask, just how does one actually go about creating broad and positive connections? First of all, when anyone comes to the temple and makes a donation as an act of merit, they are given a small souvenir. Although the souvenirs are not worth that much, they are very well received because they "come from the Buddha." So over these many years, one could say that "a grand Fo Guang Shan has been built from all these little souvenirs."

Additionally, as in building the Great Buddha Land, the Great Compassion Shrine, and the Jade Buddha Hall and the Golden Buddha Hall, Hsing Yun was able to complete these projects by bringing together the combined strength of large groups of people. There are

four hundred and eighty golden Buddhas surrounding the Great Welcoming Buddha in the Great Buddha Land; the Great Compassion Shrine has eight thousand images of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva [Guanyin]; the Main Shrine contains fourteen thousand and eight hundred Buddha niches, each of which holds an image of the Sakyamuni Buddha; added to this are the building columns, the glazed tiles, and the bas-reliefs, all of which have been offered to the temple through devotee subscriptions. Each donation is inscribed with the donor's name, so that the donor forever makes a positive connection with Fo Guang Shan. But what people relish telling most of all is the launching of the "Million Founders Education Campaign," in which each participant contributed one hundred dollars every month. Just as drops of water become a great ocean, all the bricks and tiles, along with every plant and tree, were bathed in the merit offered by those participating in this campaign. Numerous students over generations will become the field of merit that these "million founders" have cultivated.

Hsing Yun believes that generosity must spring from the joy of helping others and be in accord with conditions and one's capacity. He has even made the following analogy: if a devotee has only fifty dollars and yet you tell him or her to contribute one hundred, that is nothing but a form of extortion! Hsing Yun says it all when he comments, "It is because the Dharma is so priceless that we cannot measure it in monetary terms." For the past forty years, Hsing Yun often says to the devotees, "Fo Guang Shan's account book hangs on its walls, and the names of all its meritorious donors will remain forever inscribed in the history of Fo Guang Shan."

Monastic Life as Signaled by the Bell and Wooden Block

Fo Guang Shan is the monastery for Humanistic Buddhism, and every single one of its buildings was constructed with the devotees in mind. The magnificent splendor of the shrines and the bright

airiness of the reception hall, are intended to make the guest feel quite at home. It is important to note that all these modern facilities were only installed for the sake of the great host of devotees. As for how the temple's monastic community lives, there is clearly a "double standard."

Most people are hardly aware, that behind the words "Contemplative sanctuary; no visitors allowed," there is actually another world that is so completely different. The separation of a single wall blocks off the bustling existence of the external world; the separation of a single wall casts away the raucous comings and goings of mundane life. This contemplative sanctuary that is closed to the public was built during the early period of Fo Guang Shan. The plants and trees within the sanctuary grow naturally, but no real painstaking effort was expended to beautify the place. The cement floors of the building are riddled with long, winding cracks, while its walls have been whitewashed who knows how many times, and except for some cracking, they have been covered with drawings now mottled with varnish. The monastic residence adheres to the ancient tradition, for there are no air conditioners nor any soft carpets, and all the rooms have the exact same arrangement: one table, one chair, and one wooden plank bed. These too are just like the building itself, for they now show their advanced age after many years of use.

The Buddhist College still maintains the traditional monastic rules even today, as signaled by the bell, drum, and wooden block. Everyday at 4:30 a.m., monastics get out of bed and gather for the morning service, which is then followed by the morning meal served in the dining hall. The rest of the morning and the afternoon each includes three hours of classes in Buddhist scripture and teachings. The evenings include two hours of individual study, which is then followed by the evening service, meditation, and relaxation. In addition to this, the monastics must do the sweeping and cleaning, participate in group physical work, and boil the rice and cook the dishes (old-style, wooden stoves are still used for cooking since they require constant attention to the adding of firewood and the adjusting of cook-

ing times; thus serving as a way to train the students in patience and concentration). Many people have quite vivid memories of their lives at the college:

We were divided into groups that took turns doing the cooking, and the first time I tried to get the fire going in the stove, I choked so hard on the smoke that tears streamed down my face. The vegetables were cooked in a wok as large as a table; and if you weren't careful with the spatula, you could easily flip the vegetables out of the wok. I once had to get up at three a.m. to grind the beans and make soymilk, only to fall asleep over the grinder.

Here there are no weekend breaks nor any overtime pay. The monastics have but a few articles of clothing the whole year round, and no more than two pairs of sandals either. As they come and go, they remain pure and uncorrupt with not a cent to their names.

Having recently relinquished the abbotship of Fo Guang Shan, the Ven. Hsin Ting pointed out that the Fo Guang Shan Cultivation Center was completed during his tenure, including the Amitabha Chanting Hall, and the Sutra Transcription Hall that were built to help the monastic and lay communities strengthen their spiritual practice:

Fo Guang Shan has changed dramatically over the past ten years, and all the major projects were under development just about the same time. However, these external changes have never affected the foundation of our spiritual cultivation, nor have we lost our core faith.

If you stroll all around Fo Guang Shan, you will by chance come upon people engrossed in their sweeping or mopping their brow during chores. Under no circumstances should these people be ignored. Their erudition in the Dharma and their experience of Buddhist practice are perhaps beyond profound, and yet you would never know it.

The Religion's Core Values

In recent years, the topic of "core values" is eagerly discussed in business circles. So what are Fo Guang Shan's core values that led to its rapid development? The Executive Vice President of Trend Micro, Jenny Chen (currently serving as Trend Micro's director for technology culture) spoke of her personal experience at a symposium entitled "Raising Executive Ability, Creating Wealth for the People" held in 2003:

In autumn of last year, my husband and I went to the Motosu Temple in Japan and saw the maple leaves blowing about its courtyard. There was a female devotee who was constantly sweeping, but she couldn't keep up with the leaves that were falling so quickly. We saw that the more she swept, the more leaves fell, , and so the two of us told her that she might as well quit sweeping. We were surprised when she answered us with a humorous smile: the more the better, for in this way my merit will be even greater.

Vice President Chen felt that this was the source of Fo Guang Shan's strength--religious integrity and the joyful willingness to serve.

Indeed, an analysis of Fo Guang Shan's management-style in its quintessential form would reveal, that the key to it all lies in its management of the mind. Take its use of money for example, Fo Guang Shan's approach is based on the budget system, but each person knows that the money comes from all its donors worldwide, and that every penny of it should be used in the best possible way. This means that projects are often completed under budget. Its manpower is another example. Given its common sense of purpose, people are happy to serve three hundred and sixty-five days a year, twenty-four hours a day, as long as what they do supports and benefits the needs of the whole. It is doubtful that such a spirit of dedication can be found in any secular corporation.

In 2001, Prof. Kuo Kuan-ting of Fo Guang University published an article entitled "The Management Philosophy of Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism." In his article, he makes the following point:

The reason the management spirit of Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism was able to develop so rapidly and be employed so smoothly is surely the result of its intimate relationship with the unique spirit of Fo Guang Shan's business operations.

The article's conclusion points out that Fo Guang Shan is based on the Monastic Community of the Six Points of Reverent Harmony as taught by the Buddha (the harmony of view as a shared understanding, the harmony of the precepts as a shared practice, the harmony of pooling all resources, the harmony of purpose as a shared joy, the harmony of speech without reproach, and the harmony of life in communal quarters), which is further supplemented by modern corporate management. The ultimate form of management is the management of the mind, in which the monastic community is solidified and bound together through the shared faith in Humanistic Buddhism, as opposed to the contractual relationships or the *quid pro quo* of most corporations.

A Living Organism of such Energetic Vitality

As a member of the Religious Affairs Committee, the Ven. Man Chien is very confident that as the times advance, its format of internal structure will continually be adjusted. This has meant that the Fo Guang Shan system over the past few years has become more and more complete. With its solid foundation and the close interlinking of all levels, Fo Guang Shan is faithful to its roots but still has the courage to innovate. The various business ventures have also registered themselves as public corporations and are now subject to the oversight and regulation of the law. As Man Chien puts it, "For a Buddhist organization to develop in this way may perhaps astound

outsiders, but we feel that it is only natural."

Over the past forty years, Fo Guang Shan has become something like a living organism with such vitality and energy; every minute it breathes in and out, while its heart beats quite vigorously. The unique qualities of its members were not something that came about in two or three days either. Wherever you go in this world, you can recognize a Fo Guang Shan member immediately: their demeanor is dignified, their movements are lively, and their speech is refined; while from within springs a vital force of energy that is dynamic and active. Who says Buddhism is a passive escape from the world? Who says Buddhism means renunciation and ascetic practice? And who says the monastics just hang their heads in dullness and reticence?

The monastics at the temple live with meticulous care as conditions arise. They can sit with kings and rulers, or walk along with ordinary folk, while their "professional standards" are recognized as the best among all of Taiwan's monastic groups. Fo Guang Shan has the highest level of operational efficiency, while its temple management and the conduct of its legal affairs are all in perfect order. Chao Ning, the former president of Fo Guang University, believes that the various terms in vogue these days in management studies, such as the "knowledge economy," "learning organization," "executive ability," and the "Blue Ocean Strategy," could all be used to describe Fo Guang Shan's management philosophy. Furthermore, before these theories even appeared, Fo Guang Shan had already put them into effect. "It was his creation, and he himself was doing it, for he has both the brains and his two hands. Hsing Yun's management style is equal to that of world-class corporations, but what's even more important is his mind."

Deeply rooted in stability below and offering endless potential above, Fo Guang Shan has established a model for religious groups in which the traditional and the modern support each other, and as such, it has already become a quality product for the religious world. This brand name implies an extremely high level of added value, while its effectiveness extends internationally, resounding throughout the world.

Chapter
Twelve

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central diamond shape with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs extending outwards.

Dharma will Light the Torch

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central diamond shape with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs extending outwards.

If a high school graduate joined the monastic order forty years ago, people would say, "Good heavens, we have an intellectual on the Buddhist path!"

Coming from an ancient monastic monastery in China and having received a complete education in Buddhist studies, Hsing Yun at that time was still quite young in age, yet he could see that "Buddhism needs young people and young people need Buddhism. He was well aware that in order to turn around the fate of Buddhism, he had to start from the ground up, by training new talent.

Time: August 2005

Place: The auditorium of the Tathagata Hall, Fo Guang Shan

Attendees: The Venerable Master Hsing Yun; the seventy-eight graduates from the Fo Guang Tsung Lin University, the Men's Buddhist College, the Women's Buddhist College, Dongfang Buddhist College, the English Buddhist Department and the Japanese Buddhist Department of the International Buddhist College, as well as more than two thousand honored guests.

Occasion: The 39th combined graduating ceremony for the Fo Guang Shan Tsung Lin University. After reading their pledge out loud, one by one the graduates received their diploma from Hsing Yun's hands. Some of them will continue with further studies; and some will be assigned somewhere in the world to begin their Dharma propagation work. Before the ceremony was over, each graduate held a lamp cupped in their hands, and facing their teachers and the assembly, they sang in unison "The Song of the Dharma Preacher." Such enthusiasm was written upon their young faces, while their clear and bright eyes sparkled with light.

Going through the time tunnel, we return to

Time: January 1967

Place: Dongfang Buddhist College (formerly the Shoushan

Buddhist College), Fo Guang Shan

Attendees: Hsing Yun, President of the Buddhist College; twenty graduates, and a certain number of honored guests.

Occasion: The ceremony for the first graduating class of the Dongfang Buddhist College; the graduates included such first generation of Fo Guang Shan disciples as Tzu Chia (d. 2003), Tzu Yi, and Yi Yen, symbolizing how the torch was being passed to remain forever bright, now that Buddhism had crossed over to Taiwan.

Note: The following day, the *Central Daily News* reported on this graduation ceremony with the headline "Taiwan's First Batch of Buddhist Scholars." It went on to affirm that this group of locally trained monastic talent would be playing a decisive role in Buddhism's future development. Right up to this very day, this entire group of students is still making its contributions to the Buddhist path; none have drifted away.

If the Shoushan Buddhist College of forty years ago was a tender sprout, then today's education in Buddhist studies at Fo Guang Shan is a great tree with flourishing branches and limbs, one that is heavy-laden with fruit. Altogether, Fo Guang Shan has graduated 3,113 students, and among these, 2,015 are monastics and 1,098 are members of the laity; while over the past years, fifty-two people received a doctorate degree, and 223 people received a master's degree.

Yesterday's Buddhist College, Today's Fo Guang Shan

When he first arrived in Taiwan, Hsing Yun served as a teacher at the Taiwan Buddhist Training Institute, giving him the opportunity to gain an understanding of the local conditions for education in Buddhist studies. He discovered that the educational level for Taiwan's monks and nuns at that time was generally quite low, and

some of them were called "caigu" [vegetarian nuns], who might be illiterate, but could chant the Buddhist scriptures from having memorized the text aurally over many years. There was also another group of people who made all their money by conducting memorial services for the dead, and they became Buddhism's "burned and ruined seeds," for they hardly ever read the Buddhist scriptures or studied its principles. Coming from an ancient monastery in China and having received a complete education in Buddhist studies, Hsing Yun at that time was still quite young in age, yet he could see that "Buddhism needs young people and young people need Buddhism."

As recorded in his book *A Journey Abroad*, Hsing Yun visited the countries of Southeast Asia in 1963. He saw great temple complexes that had been built on a grand and impressive scale, but he could not help thinking, "Everyone is so busy building Dharma centers, and one temple after another is being completed and dedicated, but who is going to run these Dharma centers a hundred years from now? To be sure, building Dharma centers is no easy task, but to keep them going in the future will be much harder. What Buddhism today lacks most of all is a younger Sangha." He was well aware that in order to turn around the fate of Buddhism, he had to start from the ground up, by training new talent, for "talent is the beginning of any restoration."

As early as the Ilan period, there were already young people making requests to follow him into the monastic order. Hsing Yun recalls:

Speaking of accepting disciples into the monastic order, that was something that happened after I moved to Leiyin Temple. The earliest of these were Hsin Ping in the men's order and Tzu Chia, Tzu Yi, and Hsin Ju of the women's order. At that time money was really tight, but I did my best to gather enough, so I could give them the

customary red packets of money. Furthermore, I personally made the monastic robes for them, helping out during the whole process, from buying and dyeing the cloth, to all the cutting and sewing. Even now, I still remember the jubilant expressions on their faces when they received their monastic robes.

So as to ensure that these young people could study after entering the Buddhist order, Hsing Yun established a Buddhist college at Shoushan Temple in Kaohsiung. When he bought the land encompassing the bamboo grove in Tashu Village, the first building that was completed there was the Buddhist College west of the Treasure Bridge. He personally planted eighteen trees on its campus, "as to commemorate the eighteen monastics from Shoushan Buddhist College's first graduating class, for they have shared all the joys, sorrows, and hardships with me." One could say that if it were not for this pursuit of education in Buddhist studies, there would not be the Fo Guang Shan we have today.

Courageously Operating Schools, Fearless of Hardship

One could say that Fo Guang Shan's Tsung Lin University is the Buddhist college that has had the most complete curriculum, the most students, and the most refined standards of excellence over the last hundred years. But there is the old adage: "It's better to lead a squad of soldiers than a hall of monks;" and during her life, the Venerable Tzu Hang put it more directly: "If someone is bothering you, convince them to run a school." All of which gives you some idea of the trouble and difficulty involved.

Beginning with the very first student, not only was tuition at the college completely free, but even room and board, clothing, and notebooks were provided free of charge. In order to cover the daily expenses of the college, Hsing Yun, who never believed in chasing

after income from memorial services for the dead, was forced to conduct services at funeral homes and was often reciting scriptures for the recently deceased in morgues, where he would perform these services all through the night. He did so because such activities would garner a bit more in donations, but even so there were not enough people to do all the chanting. There was a certain Miss Li, who was in charge of the academic affairs at the college, and was so moved by Hsing Yun's enthusiasm for his college project, that she even joined the monastic order and helped out with the chanting; this Miss Li is now better known as the Ven. Tzu Chuang. There was Instructor Chang who was in charge of student affairs; each day she would go to the bakery to help out with packing the cakes and candies, in order to contribute to the college more monetary assistance; now she is the Ven. Tzu Hui. There was also the Ven. Tzu Jung and such lay disciples as Wu Pao-chin and Yang Tzu-man, who offered all their income from their teaching at the kindergarten to defray the expenses of the college. The Shigu Hsiao Pi-hsia sold her real estate and donated the proceeds to the cultural and educational fund. When plans were being drawn up to establish the graduate program for the Chinese Buddhist Research Institute, Hsing Yun led his students in rolling up their sleeves and tying on their aprons, so that they could cook noodles for the visiting pilgrims. This was done in hopes that they would enjoy a good meal and donate funds to support the establishment of the school.

Moved by Hsing Yun's steadfast sincerity, there were indeed quite a few people who extended a helping hand. Ven. Tzu Chuang herself witnessed a miraculous incident that was like "a bodhisattva's divine intervention." She still clearly remembers how the money budgeted for one year was almost used up. It was also the very eve of that year's student summer camp at the temple, and there was nothing at all to cover the expenses for the students' meals. As she sat there surrounded with worry, a barefoot old country woman appeared

at the door. Wearing a bamboo hat and dressed like a farmer, she wanted to see the abbot. Tzu Chuang came out to greet her, and treated her to some rice noodle soup. When the old woman had finished eating, she casually took out a small package wrapped in newspapers and said, "This is for the abbot; use it however you wish." Thereupon, she turned around and was gone. When Tzu Chuang opened the package, she was stunned to find fifty thousand NT dollars neatly piled in a stack, thus saving them from their urgent crisis. To this day, nobody knows the old woman's name or where she came from.

A World View and a Global Strategy

The early stage of Fo Guang Shan's founding was a difficult time economically and manpower was in short supply. Even so, Hsing Yun courageously sent Tzu Hui, Tzu Jung, Tzu Chia, Tzu Yi, and Tzu Chuang to pursue advanced studies in Japan. Even though he had to scrimp and save, as well as work much harder in order to pay for the high cost of tuition, in his letters to his disciples, he never discussed financial matters at all. He only reminded them repeatedly not to economize too much, eat nutritious meals, and keep regular hours. Many people tried to persuade Hsing Yun to give up on this idea: "If they go, they will never come back; won't you be losing all of this talent? If they do return, how will you lead such superior intellectuals?" He calmly replied: "It doesn't matter if things are a little tough for me now. Once they return, they can help Buddhism do a lot of things; as the saying goes: 'Some learn the Way earlier in life while others learn the Way later; one achieves excellence in one field while another achieves excellence in another field. I don't feel that I am any smarter than my disciples, and it is my hope that they will surpass me, just as 'blue is made from the indigo plant, and yet it surpasses indigo in color.'" When these disciples returned home upon the completion of their studies, Hsing Yun learned in a round-about manner about the

gratitude they felt for all his painstaking efforts, how they pursued their studies with great diligence and saved money on their food and expenses--it often happened that two of them would share a single steamed bun.

As Fo Guang Shan entered its second decade, Hsing Yun began drawing up the blueprint for globalization in his mind, and kept on selecting his intellectually promising disciples for further study abroad. Besides Japan, Korea, and India in Asia, the locations for their studies abroad were expanded to include the United States, France, Great Britain, Brazil, and South Africa. Today, this group of Buddhist disciples represents the pinnacle of well-balanced and outstanding monastics in the history of Chinese Buddhism. Having mastered such languages as English, Japanese, French, Tibetan, Pali, and Korean, they will become the pioneers in transmitting Buddhism to all parts of the world. This young generation of modern monastics that Hsing Yun has trained is a far cry from those of the past, those monastics who tended to their wooden block alone in the fading candlelight, obstinately clinging to their isolated temples in mountain retreats.

Finding the Meaning of Life

In the past, upon seeing a young monk or nun, many people would say, "Gosh, to become a monastic at such a young age, that's so sad!" The young people who have joined the monastic order at Fo Guang Shan are unlike what most people imagine: those who have been driven by disappointment, a failed romance, or do so as an act of renunciation. On the contrary, they have all chosen this path in life quite willingly, out of a feeling of compassion to serve living beings, for their smaller sense of love has been transformed into something larger. This is why they are happy, positive, healthy, and cultivated in bearing. They give Buddhism a fresh new appearance. But let us pose a "worldly" question: what's so good about being a monastic? And even more to the point: what's so good about being a monastic at Fo

Guang Shan? Why not listen to what these monastics have to say about their own experiences? In 2005, the Ven. Hsin Ting received an honorary doctorate degree from Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. As he sees it, he feels very fortunate to have been a monastic at Fo Guang Shan for the past thirty-eight years: "Having a Dharma center in the midst of a bustling place gives you a fortunate opportunity for enlightenment when adversity comes. Fo Guang Shan is the largest and best stage for cultivating merit and wisdom."

The Ven. Yi Chun, who holds a teaching post at the University of Hong Kong, has said:

When I came to Fo Guang Shan temple after graduating from the National Taiwan Ocean University, I asked the Venerable Master to allow me to join the monastic order. He told me to go wash dishes and do the serving at the Pilgrims Lodge. I knew he was trying to test me, so I accepted the test with a heart full of confidence. I served dishes back and forth for almost a year. At first, I couldn't serve the dishes properly. Others could serve three or four plates of food at the same time, while I could only manage one. On top of this, I still had to wash the dishes, and both my hands became wrinkled from being soaked in soapy water for so long. Later on, I was transferred to the snack bar to sell soda pop. In those days there were no easy-to-open caps, so I often got blisters on both hands from opening the soda pop bottles; the pain was quite unbearable. But I never lost my religious calling to join the monastic order and learn Buddhism. From that experience, I also realized that it's no good just reading books without really being able to do things well.

The Ven. Yi Fa, who obtained her doctorate from Yale University, found the meaning of life in making a choice between the

"big I" and the "little I":

When I joined the monastic order, my entire family came to the temple to convince me to go back. My father just asked me one question, relating to how the nation, society, and my family had raised me all these years, and had given me so much education, so if I were to remain a monastic, how was I going to repay the nation, society, and my family? I answered my father by saying that becoming a monastic does not mean forgetting one's family, and that later on I will be more able to put wholehearted effort into making a contribution to the nation and serving everyone. I still remember when I was studying at National Taiwan University, a certain professor also asked me whether I would choose to join the monastic order or continue with my studies. I said that the four years of college education was only a small part of my life, but joining the monastic order represented my life as a whole, and that was something worth pursuing.

Sending a Son off to the Monastic Order while being Filled with Joy

Years earlier, many parents would oppose their sons or daughters joining the monastic order, but in recent times, most of the students at the Buddhist college who request admission into the order do so with their parent's approval or encouragement. When the tonsure ceremony takes place, the entire family is on hand to celebrate. The prime minister of the ancient Tang Dynasty, Pei Xiu (787-860 CE), who "sadly sent his son to the Buddhist temple," stands in marked contrast to today's parents, who "joyously send their sons to the Buddhist temple."

However, the brochure for the Fo Guang Shan Tsung Lin University clearly states, that learning Buddhism does not necessarily require joining the monastic order. Joining the monastic order

through the tonsure ceremony is a wonderful thing; even more so, it is a joyous thing that one does out of one's own free will. The more people come to Fo Guang Shan nowadays to request admission into the monastic order, the more carefully one's qualifications are checked. Students currently studying at the Buddhist College must be interviewed by their advisor and the college president. If the candidate has already performed service at the temple, then it is their service unit that first submits a report on their work performance and their level of commitment, which is then examined by the Sangha Affairs Committee; final confirmation is then given by Hsing Yun. The examination process includes: the motivation for their initiation, whether or not the candidate possesses the temperament for a monastic calling, and the requirement to obtain their parent's approval. After a period of observation and evaluation, the decision is then made as to whether or not the candidate can undergo the tonsure ceremony. Some people have applied and wanted for two or three years, and have undergone repeated examinations for consideration. They end up constantly complaining tearfully to the monastic director, clearly showing how difficult it is to join the monastic order.

Since his son, the Ven. Hui Kuan, joined the monastic order at Fo Guang Shan, the devotee Lai Yi-ming is known as "Kuan's Dad," recalled that at the time, both Hui Kuan and his elder brother wanted to join the monastic order. Hsing Yun said that he was not greedy, and that he would only take one son, leaving the other to take care of the father. And besides, as Hsing Yun pointed out at that time, there is no absolute need for one to become a monastic; three of the four great bodhisattvas were members of the laity. Lai Yi-ming commented:

When Hui Kuan joined the monastic order, our whole family was overjoyed; no one opposed it. The Yuanlin Temple reserved three touring buses to bring people to witness the ceremony. Our Lai family now feels that becoming a monastic

is better than even obtaining a Ph. D., for we consider it the greatest honor that our child has joined the monastic order.

Upon hearing what his father had said, Hui Kuan laughingly added:

My father has often said to me, that in all his thirty years of work in financial investments, my joining the monastic order at Fo Guang Shan should be his best investment of all. Because no one knows if any of those other companies will still exist a hundred years from now or not, but Fo Guang Shan will forever be a blue-chip stock.

Fo Guang Shan has always valued its young people. Hui Kuan was twenty-seven when he was elected to the Religious Affairs Committee, and was appointed the director of the Supervisory Council at the age of thirty. If it were a more traditional temple, he would probably be left cooling his heels for several decades. Hsing Yun said:

I hope you young people will go do something now; if you run into problems, there are still many of us around; we can pass on our experience and help you put things right. We shouldn't hold on to our positions, because when we pass away the young people will not know how to do anything.

"You have to pick the right place to become a monastic." Hui Kuan recalled attending one of his school reunions, where he asked about his classmates and learned that they were developing their careers at such major corporations as Panasonic, Formosa Plastics, and National. He exclaimed in admiration, "That's wonderful; you all picked major corporations." But he was surprised when his classmates replied in one voice: "You picked a big one too!" Then there

was the time Hui Kuan was invited to give talks at a several dozen high schools around Kaohsiung County. With his sincere attitude and his relaxed and thought-provoking way of expressing himself, he was a hit with the young students, telling them:

If I hadn't become a monastic at Fo Guang Shan, I wouldn't have such a big stage to work with, nor be able to make such broad connections. The master has helped us by creating this stage, and it is up to us to pass it on.

Becoming the Buddha's In-laws

In order to thank the parents of the disciples for their support and contributions, the first ever "Fo Guang Families Party" was held at Fo Guang Shan in February of 1993 to celebrate the parents of the monastic disciples, Shigus and Jiaoshis; this has become a biennial event. But even during ordinary times, the welfare of the related families is very important. For example, if any of the parents fall ill, it might be some time before their monastic son or daughter now serving abroad could hurry back, and so a Dharma brother or Dharma sister would immediately be sent to offer care and support. Monastics would receive help in preparing gifts for their parents' sixtieth birthday, so that they could return home and celebrate. Furthermore, various benefits are applied including help with providing the parents with daily needs and care, and funeral arrangements, in accordance with a monastic's grade and class. This enables the parents to share in the glory and merit brought to them by their monastic son or daughter.

The biennial "Fo Guang Families Party" is like a carnival. Cars are sent to places around Taiwan to pick up the parents of the disciples and bring them to the monastery. The arrival of each car is immediately signaled by the sound of welcoming firecrackers, and garlands of multicolored flowers that each monastic has prepared for

their respective parents are presented. One car after the other arrives throughout the entire morning, and the whole temple overflows with the sounds of firecrackers and joyous laughter. When Hsing Yun greets the parents of the disciples, the first thing he says is "Welcome each one of our 'in-laws!'" This immediately sparks a round of thunderous applause. Hsing Yun then continues:

One could say that your sons and daughters have been joined to Fo Guang Shan in marriage, and what everyone is most concerned about is how they are doing at Fo Guang Shan. We have a sound personnel system here, and after the disciples join the monastic order, they are sent to study at educational institutions. After graduation, they are assigned work by the Supervisory Council. During their period of service, the Human Resources Department sets the standards for promotion or demotion based upon an examination of each individual's professional performance, spiritual performance, and academic performance. Any complaints can be submitted to the Sangha Affairs Committee for a hearing. Not only is the approach fair and open, but each unit also functions to check and balance all the others, thus eliminating favoritism, high-handed behavior, and suppression. Therefore, you do not need to worry about your sons and daughters joining the monastic order at Fo Guang Shan

The father of the Ven. Yi Fa, the devotee Yang Sung-tsun, has said:

At first, I was adamantly opposed to Yi Fa's joining the monastic order here because I didn't know about Fo Guang Shan's educational system, and I beg that the Venerable Master will forgive me for those feelings at that time. Now I support her decision wholeheartedly, and would also ask the

Venerable Master to continue giving Yi Fa more guidance; I am also very grateful to the Venerable Master for sending Yi Fa to study at Yale University in the United States.

When you visit Yi Fa's old home situated in Beigang, you will meet the nearly eighty year-old Mr. Yang, Yi Fa's father. When he mentions Hsing Yun, he becomes overwhelmed with grateful feelings and is at a loss for words, repeatedly pointing his thumb upwards in an expression of his heartfelt admiration and gratitude. Twenty years ago, Mr. Yang's daughter had just been accepted into the Law School of National Taiwan University, when she suddenly and firmly decided to join the monastic order. Mr. Yang was shocked and angry, for it seemed to him at the time, that Buddhism was going to deprive his daughter of her future. On several occasions he accosted people at the monastery, taking both a hard and soft approach to try and force his daughter back home. When his daughter went on a hunger strike to declare her intentions, he flew off in a great rage looking for Hsing Yun, who received him very politely. Hsing Yun told him that his daughter could still continue her studies while wearing monastic robes, and that Fo Guang Shan would do all it could to train and educate her.

Hsing Yun did indeed keep his word. In 1997, Yi Fa received her doctorate degree from Yale University, and Mr. and Mrs. Yang flew to America to attend the graduation ceremony. That photo of them and their daughter hangs in a place of honor in their living room, letting all their neighbors and friends know that the Yang family had produced a Ph.D. He is always reiterating that for his daughter to be where she is today would not have been possible without Hsing Yun's complete support. This path in life as a monastic has been the right one, and his daughter is indeed fortunate to have found this calling in life. Her mom and dad need have no further worries. Moreover, Fo Guang Shan has looked after them as well. When Yi Fa's mother

passed away, the Ven. Hsin Ting made a special call on them to give comfort and care. In short, being an in-law of the Buddha makes Mr. Yang truly happy.

A "Five Star" Monastics

In 2004, Fo Guang Shan's "Triple Platform Full Ordination Ceremony" was held at Nan Tien Temple in Australia. The new ordination candidates wore their yellow robes neatly, with black carry-on bags held in their left hands and black cloth bags for monastic travel hanging from their right shoulders. This is how they looked when they departed Kaohsiung for their trip abroad, and the ground crew for China Airlines said that they had never seen a group of nearly one hundred people leave the country in such an orderly and disciplined manner. Not only was their bearing dignified, but even their luggage was very simple and neatly arranged all in a row. For a group traveling abroad, they represented a model worthy of emulation. When the airport staff was about to affix the luggage tags, they saw how orderly and uniform the group's bags were, with their yellow cloth straps, their Dharma name tags, and identifying numbers all neatly squared away, and were deeply moved. They carefully affixed the luggage tags all in the same place, unlike their past casualness.

When they arrived in Australia and passed through customs, the officials there were mesmerized by the group's appearance. It was the first time that so many monastics had been at an Australian airport at the same time, but here they were, an orderly and dignified group with their baggage of uniform simplicity. The customs officials responded with an elevated tone of respect, and as word of mouth spread, they came in droves to take photographs. This is equivalent to a wordless form of citizen diplomacy that enhances the image of the Taiwanese people a great deal, and represents a concrete manifestation of the success Fo Guang Shan has achieved with its monastic education.

Many people feel the same way, that upon entering any Fo Guang Shan temples or having contact with its bhiksus and bhiksunis, they immediately have the impression that "something is uniquely different." Here people move about in a measured pace, converse in a proper manner, and dress in an orderly way. Thus, the so-called "three thousand rules of comportment and the eighty thousand minor details of conduct" are expressed in every movement of the body. The author Chou Hsiao-hung (b. 1932, pen-name: Hsiao Hung) has had his own experience of this:

The many staff members at Fo Guang Shan are kind and courteous. If you meet them on the walkway, they will surely greet you with palms joined together; and if the walkway is a bit narrow, they will certainly stand off to one side and let you go first. This is no pretense, but rather true sincerity that is expressed externally only because it's already there on the inside.

When the Fo Guang Shan Monastery had just been established more than thirty years ago, living conditions were quite poor, but strange as it might seem, many devotees enjoyed making pilgrimages to the monastery to worship the Buddha. On one hot afternoon, a group of legislators from the Taiwan Provincial Assembly paid a visit to Fo Guang Shan. As they were leaving, one legislator said to Hsing Yun, "Thank you for your hospitality. We feel this place is very welcoming and dynamic; very different from other places." Another legislator quickly interjected, "That's right, because the Venerables here are more expressive." Then there was the scholar who attended the Fo Guang Shan Conference for Young Academics held in 1990; this person was also struck by "the warm and enthusiastic vitality of the monastic community here at Fo Guang Shan." There was also the retired professor from Tokyo University who enjoyed visiting the Fo

Guang Shan temple in Japan. She said that going there gave her a sense of calm, and yet she didn't quite know why. And then there was the famous Japanese broadcaster who spent some time with some monastics from Fo Guang Shan, after which he couldn't help posing these questions: "Why are your eyes so clear and pure? How can there be souls as pure as yours in this world? It seems as if there is some great power within you. What is your faith?" They can inspire a sense of respect in others because there is such a strong sense of mission within their hearts, as well as the firm commitment in prolonging the life of Buddhist wisdom.

The monastic community at Fo Guang Shan is skilled in the traditional forty-eight monastic offices and the basic art of the three knives (cooking knife, shaving knife, and tailor's knife) and the six instruments (wooden fish, bell, drum, chimes, wooden block, and iron gong), but beyond that, they must adapt to the changing times. This is why they are also equipped with skills in such areas as writing, public speaking, legal affairs, community education, accounting, automobile driving, and computers. As members of the monastic community at Fo Guang Shan, they always bring along the Dharma robes, and no matter where they go, they should not only be able to recite the Buddhist scriptures, but they must also be able to take care of the lamps and incense, greet guests, conduct ceremonies, and perform administrative duties. They should be able to actively offer help, greet devotees, and know how to deal with things in a skillful way. But in particular, they must be able to teach the Dharma. Indeed, nearly every one of them can do the work of ten, and be able to think as big as the universe and as small as a square inch.

Hsing Yun has said that monastics should pay attention to how they speak and act in their daily lives. They are to talk less and when they walk, they should be dignified. They should not look sideways, nor should they wear a hat or use an umbrella. Their clothing and socks should be neat and tidy, and they should not go out wear-

ing only the short garments [without the robes]. And they should not stay in the house of the laity overnight. This is because each gesture of a monastic, each footstep, each arching of an eyebrow or blink of an eye, are all wordless teachings for the lay community. Besides their reliance upon the blessings of power and benevolence of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the great majority of devotees, by and large, still depend upon the monastic community to help them attain the mind-to-mind transmission with the Buddha. One word of encouragement can give the devotee confidence; while the service of a helping hand can give the devotee happiness. If the devotees are unable to obtain confidence from the monastic community itself to the point where they become disappointed with Buddhism altogether, then this would represent a grievous error on the part of each and every monastic.

One wonders how many people are aware of the unified head-shaving practice for the monastics of Fo Guang Shan. No matter what is happening globally, all the monastics at the various temples around the world follow this unified practice of shaving their heads every other Saturday morning. If you look carefully, you see that the growth of hair on everyone's head is all the same. Though this is a minor detail, it still reflects the professionalism and self-discipline of the group as a whole. The cross-straits Buddhist music performance held in 2004 was a real eye-opener for the monastic delegation from Mainland China. On a given Saturday morning, they saw how all the monastics at Fo Guang Shan had gotten their heads shaved. In comparison to the varying lengths of hair exhibited by the monastics from the Mainland China delegation, this was a stunning contrast in discipline. The assistant delegation leader, Qi Xiaofei, was quite surprised, that Fo Guang Shan would be so consistent and orderly even over such a matter. He quickly proposed that the members of his delegation should also adopt this practice of unified head shaving.

Hsing Yun's aim in founding the Fo Guang Shan's Tsung Lin

University was:

Thinking freely and living piously;
An ordinary life in an exalted realm;
Disciplined behavior with a capacity for universal benevolence;
A short life with an eternal future.

This is modern Buddhism's goal for a profoundly higher calling.

The Master Understands Me the Best

Hsing Yun is both a miner and sculptor of talent, and his disciples admire his capacity to judge others clearly: "He understands us better than we are able to understand ourselves." In an average family that has only two or three children, it is still quite difficult to treat them all with complete fairness. The children will always complain about their parent's favoritism. However, if you were to go to the more than one thousand disciples of Fo Guang Shan and ask whom Hsing Yun treats the best, each one of them would say, "The master treats me the best." With so many people and things going on at the temple, some disagreements inevitably arise, but each disciple will have the same thought: "Though I have been wrongly accused, it's OK as long as the master understands!"

The host of disciples are unanimous in their description of Hsing Yun's "attention to detail and his thoughtful observations that tell him what every person needs." For example, someone presents him with an excellent pen, and he would say give it to Tzu Hui. When Yi Kung changes her living quarters, Hsing Yun would see that she is given a somewhat larger room (because Yi Kung has a lot of books); and after she is settled in her new quarters, Hsing Yun would have someone put in a desk lamp (because Yi Kung will want to read). The Ven. Man Chien recalls that during her service at America's Hsi Lai Temple several years ago, there was one meal during which a certain

senior monastic said that Man Chien was a well-rounded person, except that she doesn't smile. Hsing Yun looked at Man Chien and said that could not be, for she is very natural. Man Chien commented, "This remark gave me a sense that the master understands me; for at that moment I was embarrassed, but the master was compassionate to give me a lot of encouragement with this timely remark." Stationed in Paraguay, the Ven. Chueh Sheng has also had a similar experience. On one occasion, she was returning to Paraguay and it so happened that Hsing Yun was going abroad as well, and he invited her to ride in the same car. On the way to the airport, someone said to Hsing Yun that this is Chueh Sheng as a form of introduction. Hsing Yun said that he knew of her, and that Chueh Sheng had a unique quality of not needing any applause, for all she needed was constant guidance. Chueh Sheng remarked, "I was extremely moved; because I am so far away, I rarely have an opportunity to be with the master. As the master knows me so well, it is only fitting that I do my very best for him."

This phenomena has led some disciples to "speculate" that Hsing Yun must have some supernatural power, otherwise how could he know what his disciples are doing and thinking despite being spread all around the world. It happens quite often that one comment Hsing Yun does give comes to represent an important moment in their lives, like the sun coming out from behind the clouds. The Ven. Man Jun's interpretation is: Hsing Yun's state of mind is like the calm surface of a lake, into which the original form of every individual is reflected, so no matter what others say, he has already seen your own original nature. If you put this question to Hsing Yun, and ask him how he does it, he will smile kindly and say, "Respect! Tolerance! However, this is not something I do intentionally, but it is a genuine expression of how I treat others. Primarily it is because we share the same faith, that it is not so important whether we're together or not. It's the same as me never having seen the Buddha with my own eyes,

and yet he is always in my heart."

The monastic community at Fo Guang Shan has gone from a dozen or so members that lived together day and night during the early years, to the more than one thousand monastics of today who are preaching the Dharma on five continents. As the monastics do not see one another that often, they sometimes cannot remember each others' names upon suddenly meeting. On the contrary, regarding the names of the disciples (even their pre-monastic names), as well as their character, their specialties, the position they have held, and the directors they have worked with, it is Hsing Yun who remembers more clearly than anyone else. Once, the Ven. Tzu Jung saw a young monastic and could not think of the person's name. She was racking her brains, thinking that's...., when Hsing Yun said in an understanding way, "All of you should just come and ask me."

Democracy and Equal Rights

If you stretch out the five fingers of your hand, you will see how each is a different length; and how much more do the more than thousand monastics differ in background, temperament, and ways of thinking. Like a great ocean encompassing all things, Hsing Yun can be completely accepting. Hsing Yun dispenses with established practices and trusts every individual, for as long as they are willing to undertake responsibility and participate, he will certainly give them an equal opportunity. Everyone makes mistakes, but he is always there offering his disciples one opportunity after another. Even if a disciple hurts his feelings, he has never turned his back on any one of his disciples. And no matter how difficult an individual has been for everyone, Hsing Yun will still keep that person by his side without the slightest sense of antipathy, repeatedly offering his guidance. He put it this way: "I do so because all of you are doing just fine; it's just that person who comes up short!" The Japanese devotee Chen Yi-min once said to Hsing Yun: "Master, you're really great. Just having to

deal with so many disciples with their different personalities must certainly require a lot of effort!" After a moment's reflection, Hsing Yun replied:

I have never considered myself great. What matters is that my relationship with my disciples is not one in which I give the orders and they carry them out, rather, it's more like the meeting of minds, the exchange of experience on the Buddhist path. I give them patient and systematic guidance, and do not coerce them with my authority. "Three parts master-disciple relationship, seven parts friends on the spiritual path." This has enabled me to receive good council and take in a wide range of opinions.

When his disciples have made a decision that he may not agree with, he is still not inclined to express his disapproval. There are certain things that his disciples will not report to him, and though by chance he may learn about them indirectly, he still will not be cross with them, but instead, will trust that it is best for them to be able to handle such matters on their own. When a disciple does something wrong, not only will he not rebuke them in a severe tone, but instead will sympathize with the anxious feelings of those involved; so he will assemble the relevant departments to come up with the best plan for resolving the problem together. When his disciples speak improperly or talk out of turn, at the very most Hsing Yun will give a humorous retort that will help them realize their error without hurting their feelings. By handling things in this manner, there is no telling how many contentious disputes were eradicated or how many problems in communication were eliminated.

Democracy and equal rights are perhaps Fo Guang Shan's greatest characteristics. In most cases, when master and disciples live together, it is the master who expounds from above, while the disci-

ples quietly listen below (sometimes they must kneel). This makes for an atmosphere that is both stern and forbidding. But the monastics at Fo Guang Shan possess the ability to think independently; they don't simply nod their heads and acquiesce. Excitement surrounds Hsing Yun wherever he goes, and his disciples speak to him free of any distinction in status, and so there is no sense of distance and no one feels inhibited. The Ven. Hui Kuan recalled, that before going to the Buddhist lecture being held at the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei, Hsing Yun still wanted to gather ideas about any new material or stories he could present. His ability to accept new things is very strong, and he is always asking his disciples about which things are currently popular in society. He does not reject internet jokes, and he still often says that you can write a report and "e-mail" it to him. As Hui Kuan noted, "When he pronounces the word "e-mail" in his local accent, it is truly something special."

In employing personnel, average corporate managers will either always use those individuals with whom they are most familiar, or, they cannot tolerate their subordinates who are more brilliant and discerning than they are. But Hsing Yun genuinely tries to make his disciples a success. As long as the right conditions are present, he will enable them to reach for the stars. For example, he encouraged his secretary Man Kuo to take the position of chief editor for the *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal*; he supported Man Yi's writing career; and he transferred Man Chi to the position of director of the information technology center.

Having joined the monastic order only ten years ago, the Ven. Ju Chang is already the executive director for Fo Guang Shan's nine Fo Guang Yuan art museums around the world. As she recalls, she originally wanted to draw up a chronology of Hsing Yun's life several years ago. One day, Hsing Yun called her and asked how old she was. She answered that she was twenty-four. Hsing Yun thought for a while and then said she was so young, and that a young monastic's

future was more important than any chronology. Hsing Yun then asked her if she had ever considered planning for a career, and since the Fo Guang University had just established a graduate institute of art, Hsing Yun suggested she go and take the entrance exam to study at the institute. When he had finished speaking, Hsing Yun took out two thousand NT dollars and told her in to go buy some reference materials. Ju Chang added, "When I heard him say this, tears immediately poured from my eyes." Several months later, Ju Chang did not fail these expectations by successfully passing the exam. Once more, Hsing Yun wanted to see her, telling her that she was not there just to study, but also to gather materials for editing an illustrated series of books on world Buddhist art. Later on, Hsing Yun also had her take on several vision-oriented jobs, including the appointment as chief artistic director for the Sakyamuni Buddha Memorial Pagoda that was budgeted at two billion NT dollars. Ju Chang added:

I was afraid that I couldn't do it, but he encouraged me saying, "Don't worry, I am just giving you the chance to participate; I will ask others to come and help you." He employs people in a bold and confident manner, for he is not worried that you may fail, only that you won't do it at all. His approach is not to give orders, but to empower you to develop yourself. He wants to foster talent and is not bothered about wasting money, for at least he has bought some experience. In learning by doing, I have come to understand that undertaking something is equivalent to growing.

Holding the Master Tightly

When deluded, the master liberates; when enlightened, one liberates oneself. It is hoped that with this bond, both master and disciple will find completion on the Buddhist path. Nurturing disciples is like raising orchids; they must be trained through an accumulation

of knowledge and enriched through an accumulation of goodness. Besides a spiritual calling and the connection to the Dharma, the loving concern and consideration between master and disciple constitutes the cohesive force that binds the monastic community together. But what is the heart of a master like? It is the heart of doting anxiousness; it is the heart upset by promise unrealized; and it is the heart of attentive sincerity.

On this point, Hsing Yun tells the following story:

It was the year Yi Kung (the first college graduate to be ordained at Fo Guang Shan) went to Tokyo University for further study. I accompanied her all the way to Japan and personally entrusted her to Prof. Mizuno. I was also concerned about Hui Kai's living conditions, so I made a special trip to Temple University in Philadelphia; and in order to see how Yi Fa's studies were going, I took the trouble of giving lectures at Hawaii University and Yale University. I even used my many pilgrimage trips to India as an excuse to visit Yi Hua, who was working on her academic degree at the Sanskrit University founded by the poet Tagore. Whenever I go abroad, I am like the "god of wealth," as I bring money to my disciples so that they can buy books and school supplies. Not until I have given away all the money I carried out of Taiwan, plus all the honorariums I received during my trip, can I happily return to Fo Guang Shan. I put up with all the cold, harsh weather out of a sense of love for my disciples, something that only those who are fathers and mothers could possibly understand.

During Hsin Ping's and Yung Ping's convalescence after surgery, I would go to see them at the hospital again and again. When other monastics were ill and receiving IVs, I would often comfort them by bringing rice porridge and

pickled vegetables. Others would see that and jokingly call me an "obedient Master," but in fact I was just trying to express a sense of gratitude for our spiritual friendship.

To speak of Hsin Ping is a source of deep pain for Hsing Yun, as he has recorded in his diary:

April 8th, 1995: I was in the Philippines attending a board of directors meeting for the Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Buddha's Light International Association when I heard the news that Hsin Ping had passed away yesterday. A wave of heaviness struck my heart, but I held back the grief that I felt so that I could go on with chairing the meeting. Rushing back to Taiwan the next day, I remained silent throughout the entire trip; all I saw was a shooting star streak across the sky.

Upon arriving at the temple, the sounds of Amitabha Buddha recitations reverberated in my ear, and I had made it in time to catch a glimpse of him lying in his mortuary crypt at Longevity Shrine. Hsin Ping's spirit altar was solemn and dignified. As I offered my incense, who could understand my pain and the deep unwillingness to be parted from him. The "impermanence of life" is indeed a phrase we monastics experience on a more profound level, but now it was me who was suffering this immense shock. It doesn't matter that I have more than a thousand disciples, each one of them holds a unique and special place in my heart; and among them there can be no substitution.

When Hsin Ping entered the hospital for his operation in October of last year, and over the ensuing half year, I visited him in the hospital eight times altogether. He was always comforting me, telling me not to worry. He said that all he

needed was to rest quietly for a while before he would be back at the monastery fully recovered. His words still echo in my ear, but here I am today offering incense in his memory.

As Hsing Yun treats his disciples like this, they hold to their master all the more with their hearts and minds. Each time Hsing Yun tours the temple or travels about preaching the Dharma and giving teachings, he will inevitably miss meals and feel exhausted. His disciples are always at his side, bringing a cup of hot tea, a hot meal, and a hot towel, which naturally reveals their sense of respect and thoughtfulness. This is particularly true when it comes to the diabetes that has troubled Hsing Yun for many years, for he must take medicine at fixed times in order to control the disease. After each meal, a disciple will quietly present him with a pill and a glass of warm water. Not until Hsing Yun has swallowed the pill with the water, will the disciple then contentedly withdraw. In the last few years, Hsing Yun has had many opportunities to travel by car. Each time he gets in or out of the car, a disciple in his entourage will cover the car's door-frame with his hand, fearing that with his tall stature, Hsing Yun might accidentally hit his head.

Bit by bit over the decades, Hsing Yun and his early disciples are both master and disciple as well friends on the spiritual path, while the younger disciples still see him as a father. "The venerable master is really great, but not like a lofty mountain that is so unapproachable. He is like the air that you breathe in and breathe out so naturally. The air we breathe is very important, for without it we would die, and yet the air doesn't make you feel like it's oppressing you." On one occasion the topic turned to filial piety, and Hsing Yun became quite emotional on the subject:

I have more than one thousand monastic disciples, and

every one of them is much better than the sons and daughters in most families. I was in Veterans General Hospital for my coronary artery bypass surgery, and truly there were several hundred people serving me in shifts. I never had any children, but it seems like I have many sons and daughters after all.

Hsing Yun once made this remarkable analogy:

For most families, when the parents are young and the value of their usefulness is high, the children will try and grab this and that; this period is like a basketball game. After middle age, the children will push the parents around; this period is like a game of volleyball. And once the parents grow old and cannot move about so well, then the children kick here and there, for their only wish is to kick the parents out; this period is like a game of soccer.

I joined the monastic order when I was twelve, and so never had any children of my own, but my disciples treat me much better than secular children do their parents. And I believe, that even when I am old, my disciples will still hold me tightly, like a ball in a rugby match, and never let me go.

Pillars of Buddhism, the Universal Brightness of the Buddha's Light

"If one does not become a monastic, or does not join the monastic order at Fo Guang Shan, then the story of one's life will be totally different, for it would not be so rich and fulfilling." This is the unanimous expression of the monastics at Fo Guang Shan. As the saying goes, "It takes ten years to grow a tree and one hundred years to grow a generation of good people." It is with this sense of calling and vision, that the Venerable Master Hsing Yun has created a modernized Buddhist army, the one thousand and more pillars of Buddhism who can carry on the Tathagata's legacy. The Buddha's light shines everywhere; look at them now!

Chapter
Thirteen



*Not Rejecting a Single
Living Being*



One day, Hsing Yun was taking a walk at Hsi Lai Temple even though he found it painful to do so. His disciples could not stand it any more and asked him: "You are having such a hard time. Why don't you rest a bit first?" Hsing Yun replied: "If I can't bear this minute of pain, where will I find that extra minute to give to sentient beings?"

The "9-11 Attack" on the United States shocked the world. The World Trade Towers with their modern beauty were destroyed in an instant and several thousand people perished in its ruins. One month later, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun of Fo Guang Shan personally led forty of his monastic disciples into the disaster site to recite Buddhist scriptures and bless the area by sprinkling Dharma water. This was the first Buddhist group that came to express its concern and condolences since the incident occurred. Having been brought to the site by special police escort, Hsing Yun stood on a temporary platform, reciting Buddhist scriptures and sprinkling Dharma water on behalf of police, firefighters, and construction workers who were doing the digging. The ceremony was to bring peace to those hurt in the attack, enabling the living to dispel their fears and the dead to seek an earlier and higher rebirth. Its purpose was also to awaken humanity's Buddha nature of compassion, so that people will turn away from violence and promote peace. He offered his prayers for those who died:

In the terrorist attack of 9-11, you have died as victims of a senseless act. Most of you are Protestants and Catholics, and the God of your faith will certainly receive you into Heaven, where you can rest in peace. We are Buddhists who have come from the East, and we are here to express our concern and condolences on one hand, while at the same time we are reciting Buddhist scriptures and chanting Amitabha Buddha's name on your behalf, in hopes of

fostering the conditions for your ascendance to that heaven. The world is full of turmoil and confusion, and we also hope that you can lay all of that down from this point onwards. Your relatives will receive help from the government and benefit through the kindness of others, and may even contribute their efforts in bringing peace and prosperity to America. So you may put your minds at ease and go now!

After Hsing Yun's prayer was translated into English, many at the site were deeply moved and shed tears. The Rev. John Hiemstra, head of the Council of Churches of the City of New York, accompanied Hsing Yun throughout the entire ceremony. This was a historical moment of extraordinary significance.

It was not long before America opened hostilities against Afghanistan, and people were nervous, fearing that the terrorist organizations would retaliate. It was during such unusual times, that Hsing Yun was resolute in keeping to his pre-arranged teaching tour, and so in early October, he boarded his plane bound for America to begin a series of Dharma teaching activities. Over the ensuing sixteen days, Hsing Yun joined in the "conversation with religious leaders," gave four "lectures on Buddhism" held at universities and the conference center for the U.S. Congress, attended six performances of the "Buddhist Music and Cultural Arts Performance," presided over three "Triple Refuge and Five Precept" ceremonies, three "news conferences," and several "seminars for BLIA staff, and "Boy Scouts induction ceremonies." Although this trip to America was fraught with danger, Hsing Yun felt that, for the sake of fulfilling the needs of all living beings and in order to preach the Dharma, he himself was not afraid whether he lived or died.

An Unmoored Ship in a Vast Sea

Browsing through Hsing Yun's travel schedules over these many years would reveal the wide-ranging scope of his journeys.

These would include: not less than ten trips to Japan and Korea; a series of Dharma teachings in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand that have been going on for more than twenty years; eight trips to Europe; six pilgrimages to India; ten trips to New Zealand and Australia; three trips to Africa; trips that have taken him all over the U.S. and Canada; and visits to the majestic mountains of Mainland China. Marking his steps along these journeys has been the establishment of a series of Fo Guang Shan branch temples. One after the other, flags of the Buddha's Light International Association proudly wave in the wind, as the seeds of Buddha's light are sown and Humanistic Pure Lands appear again and again. The rapid development within the last twenty years is directly connected to Hsing Yun's initiative in "going out" after passing on his baton as head abbot at the age of fifty-eight. Not only did this initiate a globalized and all-encompassing Buddhist mission, but it also created a glorious second springtime of life for himself as well.

Looking back on his original intentions in retiring from his post, besides his desire to fully implement the monastic system and to train new leaders, Hsing Yun also wanted to be relieved of all the details relating to administrative service, so that he would have ample time for spiritual cultivation, disciple mentoring, reading, and writing. However, given the dynamic vitality of a strong man who had yet to reach the age of sixty, Hsing Yun was not about to rest in seclusion. Indeed, his actions over the last twenty years are a testament of this, for once he was relieved of his official responsibilities, he became something like an unmoored ship in a vast sea, one that could sail far and wide creating a broader opening to Dharma propagation. If he had remained in his post, there would probably be no Buddha's Light International Association with its million members we have today, nor would there be any Fo Guang Shan on such a grand scale. Hsing Yun explains:

For me, being in and out of worldly rank and office is just like drifting clouds. The more you can let go, the higher and freer you can feel. Throughout my entire life, I was never seriously concerned about my own future, for I felt that whatever successes I achieved were the product of certain conditions. On the day I resigned, I turned over my office in accordance with our system; I didn't even return to my official residence as founder, but left the temple straight away for the Pei Hai Vijara in the north. My first thought was to make it easier for my successor to do his job.

Not until one gives up something, can one gain something; and only after the back foot is raised can one take the next step forward.

Answering a Thousand Prayers in a Thousand Places

Year in and year out, Hsing Yun has never let fatigue deter him from his travels abroad, and yet he never has a moment's time for himself. Upon arriving at a place, his trip is always fully booked from the time he gets off the plane (or out of the car) till the time he leaves. This includes establishing a chapter of the Buddha's Light International Association, building temples, inspecting construction sites, and giving lectures on the Dharma, as well as participating in meetings, TV show tapings, news conferences, conversations with people, and phone conferences; and there are even the occasional house blessings and Dharma assemblies; and he must still squeeze in time for mentoring his disciples, giving impromptu teachings, and doing his writing. He is like the thirty-two manifestations of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva [Guanyin], who answers a thousand prayers in a thousand places.

In 1991, he slipped and fell in the bathroom. On the third day after leaving Veterans General Hospital where he had an operation, he still gave a Dharma talk and conducted a refuge ceremony at the

BLIA Hsi Fang Sub-chapter in Changhua, having previously accepted an invitation to do so. Although the organizers of the event were willing to reschedule for a later date and his disciples were lining up to accept this burden on his behalf, Hsing Yun was properly dressed and headed off for the event as promised. In those days, Taiwan's various public venues lacked obstacle-free facilities for the handicapped. Thus, sitting in his wheel chair, Hsing Yun had to follow a pitch-dark passageway behind the stage, and then ascend to the podium of the activity center for Wenkai Public Primary School. The thousand devotees were already sitting quietly, but they responded with thunderous applause as soon as he arrived. Less than two weeks later, he was conducting a previously scheduled symposium for the "Chinese Association of Writers and Artists" being held at the International Conference Room of the Taipei Central Library. When those attending saw him being pushed up to the podium in his wheelchair, they were so moved that they shed tears. After that, he overcame all kinds of difficulties in order to give a lecture at Japan's National Diet building, where some diet members joined together to help Hsing Yun get on stage. At the end of that same year, he flew to Hong Kong in order to give a three-day lecture series on Buddhism at the Hong Kong Coliseum. China Airlines installed a special elevator so that he could get in and out of the plane.

Hsing Yun has spent his entire life fulfilling the wishes of living beings, which is why he is constantly on the go, always fighting for every minute and second. On one occasion a mistake had been made with scheduling, which meant he was supposed to conduct two events during the same noon hour, one was the Chan talks and vegetarian meal with entertainers held at the Taipei Vijara, the other was a news conference for the charity art auction to be held at the Dong Hai Temple's Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery in Taichung. Two hundred kilometers separated these two places, and yet the organizers stubbornly insisted that their event was more important. The only way to

avoid an argument was to arrange things so that Hsing Yun went to Taichung at 10:30 in the morning, and then Taipei at 1:30 in the afternoon. Now the times for these two events had been rescheduled, but traffic on the expressway could not be controlled. But he still managed to arrive at both events on time, making everyone happy.

Lost in a Dream

In one's imagination, Hsing Yun's many global treks of "chasing the wind, chasing the sun" would make for a pleasingly romantic life. But one can hardly realize just how unpleasant such journeys can be. Boarding planes and changing planes can easily take up a dozen hours or so. After each long-distance flight, it feels like a layer of skin has been peeled off the body; upon disembarking from the plane, one seemingly is still walking in the clouds, giving one a floating feeling of insubstantiality. Packing bags and transporting luggage everyday seems to turn one into a shipping company for the various Fo Guang Shan branch temples and associations around the world.

On the topic of air travel, Hsing Yun can indeed speak of some unusual experiences he has had. On one occasion he was on a flight from Miami to Brazil when the fuel indicator lit up, signaling a problem. The plane landed in Puerto Rico for a check, but nothing turned up, and so the plane had to return to Miami in accordance with flight regulations. Thus, a flight that was originally scheduled to take only nine hours actually ended up being more than a thirty hour odyssey before he arrived in Brazil, delaying the talk he was to give at the Universidade De Sao Paulo. An even stranger incident occurred during his flight from Xi'an to Dunhuang. The plane had stopped for refueling at Lanzhou in Gansu Province, but when the refueling was finished, the plane still lingered on the ground and did not take off. The pilots had gone off to eat, leaving the payload of passengers just waiting there for nearly four hours.

Hsing Yun has traveled to all five continents, and he often

flies from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern Hemisphere. He flies from the summer here to the winter over there; and from the daytime of this place to the nighttime of that place. He lies down with his clothes on, and when he wakes he is still drowsy, not knowing where he is. In particular, adapting to the extreme shifts in time and temperature truly demands good physical stamina and patience. Hsing Yun describes his own ability at making environmental adaptations: "My mind seems to possess a tuning mechanism that can correctly adjust to any changes in time and location. Thus, my emotions and powers of concentration will immediately become attuned to the appropriate frequency." The devotee Chen Yih-min accompanied Hsing Yun on a trip to Europe one year. Everyday a Triple Gem refuge ceremony was held, and life was like "being in an army on a military campaign." Hsing Yun would rise at three in the morning, and would be on the platform by five, "As soon as the master sat there, he would become reenergized. And he was sure to know if anyone below was dozing off."

Even as a young man, Hsing Yun became a Dharma master much beloved by all. He receives a warm welcome at every place he visits, and going from point A to point B, the welcoming crowds are always there surrounding him: Mr. so-and-so requests a teaching; Ms. so-and-so comes to pay her respects. With hardly any time to catch his breath, he is then ushered up onto the stage for his talk. Coming down from the stage, he is again surrounded by the welcoming crowds: this person wants his autograph, that person wants to take a photograph; and so it goes until he gets in the car once more. It often happens that for more than a dozens hours in a day, he doesn't even have time to go to the restroom. Hsing Yun speaks with a certain sense of resignation, "It's not that I possess some sort of supernatural power, but when I see the crowd's enthusiastic joy, I can't bear brushing them aside so I can excuse myself for a restroom break!"

Having once served as his medicine dispenser, the Ven. Man

Yi has personally witnessed Hsing Yun's stamina for travel. In 1997, Hsing Yun met with the pope at the Vatican, and then went to Malaysia to conduct a Triple Gem refuge and five precepts ceremony. The temperature difference between these two places went from six degrees Celsius [42 on F] to over thirty degrees Celsius [over 85 on F]. There was simply no time to take off even the sweater. As the refuge and precept ceremony went on, the four or five layers of clothing from his underwear, shirt, long robe, and red Dharma robe, became completely soaked with sweat both inside and outside. On top of this, he had not been eating regularly either, and so the amount of medicine he needed could not follow the doctor's prescription; the attendant dispensing medicine had to give more or less depending upon the circumstances. On one occasion he eventually came down with a serious cold in New York due to jet lag and climate changes; and he still had not completely recovered from it when he reached Vancouver.

In order to engage with the thousands upon thousands of people, Hsing Yun must be careful about all of their difference in terms of race, language, gender, age, and temperament to the best of his ability. One must give people a sense of joy and a good feeling before you can make a connection with them through the Dharma. The ancients speak of "the great distance of a thousand miles," but the distance Hsing Yun has traveled is more than one or two hundred thousand miles; the ancients also say, "reading ten thousand books is not as rewarding as traveling ten thousand miles;" and yet Hsing Yun has seen ten thousand different kinds of people and has given ten thousand different kinds of teachings.

A Small Yellow Flower so Emotionally Touching

Some people remark sarcastically that because Fo Guang Shan already is doing so much what is the point of further expansion?

They are really too "greedy." Those who know Hsing Yun understand that it has nothing to do with ambitious greed, but rather a vow: "I wish to borrow yesterday in repayment for today; and I wish to borrow tomorrow to make up for today," and on some occasions, Hsing Yun has worked twenty hours a day. But no matter what you say, Hsing Yun is already eighty some year-old man, and in physical strength and energy he cannot be compared to the younger generation. He can also become weary and tired, and will occasionally want to stop a while to catch his breath:

Sitting in meditative concentration is so comfortable, but there is no avoiding the weariness of travel! I don't like riding in cars or flying in planes either, but life is short, and there are just too many things that need to be done. It would be quite easy for me to find a quiet retreat and live a simple life, but there is still so much Dharma propagation work that remains unfinished. How can I rest. I am the model for my disciples, and if I were to rest, wouldn't they want to follow my lead and rest as well?!

In April of 1996, Hsing Yun gave a major Dharma lecture at the National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. There were eight thousand admission passes, but once news of this grand Dharma assembly was announced, they were all snapped up in a flash. The night of the event, over a thousand tour buses had converged at the stadium, bringing devotees from such regions as Penang, Taiping, and eastern Malaysia. As he was about to leave the stadium, the organizing group had arranged for Hsing Yun to ride in an electric car and circle round the inside of the stadium; the car was personally driven by the Minister of Home Affairs, Mr. Ong Ka Ting. The audience continued to greet him with the lotus flower gesture or by waving their hands. He was so moved by the enthusiasm of the devotees, that he

could not refrain from getting out of the car to shake hands with everyone. The devotees gathered around him to shake his hand one by one, as wave upon wave of people surged forward and then left, lasting for more than an hour. After some difficulty, members of the Buddha's Light International Association managed to clear a way out, and only then was Hsing Yun able to get into his car and leave the stadium. Returning to his guest quarters that night, he discovered that the hem of his long robe had come loose, while both elbows had quite a few bruises. Even so, the sounds of the cheering devotees still lingered in his ears.

Hsing Yun has traveled to various places to preach the Dharma, and has been welcomed with warm enthusiasm and solemnity. He has also received quite a few expensive gifts, but what touched his heart the most was a small yellow flower presented by a little girl in Ladakh on India's border. Hsing Yun gives his own personal account of the story:

Amid the sea of well wishers seeing me off, my car began to move. But I had already caught sight of her holding a small yellow flower. With the corners of her mouth pursed, she was shyly looking towards me. But only as we began to leave, did she catch up with the car in one big stride, sticking the yellow flower she held in her hand through the window. I hastened to tell the driver to stop, and took off the crystal prayer beads I wore on my wrist and gave them to her. She smiled sweetly, her eyes brimming with tears. Then the car began moving again, and the petals of the flower slightly quivered in the wind. As I looked into the car's rearview mirror above the front seat, I saw her in the distance, just holding that pose with palms joined, and I was left feeling deeply touched for a long, long time.

Chapter
Fourteen

*Grand Assembly of
Buddha's Light Members
On Spirit Mountain*

BLIA spreads the seeds of Buddhism throughout the world by employing peace, tolerance, joy, and kindness, creating another form of "the sun never sets:" wherever the sun rises, the Buddha's light shines universally, and the Dharma waters flow continuously. Who founded this Buddha's Light Association that transcends race, nationality, and culture? Who leads and supports the Buddha's Light International Association by employing compassionate wisdom and the adamant power of his vow? None other than the Venerable Master Hsing Yun!

May kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity pervade
all Dharma realms;
May all beings benefit from our blessing and friendship;
May our practice of chan, pure land and ethics help
foster patience and equality;
May we undertake the great vows with humility and
gratitude.

This is the Four-line Verse for members of the Buddha's Light International Association, which is recited silently in the mind before meals by the more than two million members around the world. It is also sung during morning/evening services and at Dharma assemblies and activities.

- 1.) We uphold the Buddha's teachings, and devoutly respect the Triple Gem; we preach the Dharma for the benefit of living beings, and enlighten the world and its people
- 2.) We promote a Living Buddhism, and create a Pure Land of Buddha's Light; we are pragmatic in worldly affairs, and bring relief to the world through kindness and compassion
- 3.) We observe the tradition of the Buddha's teachings, and harmonize the Five Vehicles; we cultivate the three principles:

morality, meditation, and wisdom.

- 4.) We develop an international outlook, and engage in cultural and educational activities; we develop greater broad-mindedness and give respect to the mass of humanity

These are the core objectives for members of the Buddha's Light International Association, which are constantly being reviewed by the more than two million members around the world. These serve as a motto for how its members are to treat others and things, strengthen their commitment to the path, and cultivate spiritual practice and introspection.

- 1.) We pay homage to the ever-abiding Triple Gem, so that the true Dharma will always remain and the Buddha's light will shine everywhere
- 2.) We have faith in Humanistic Buddhism, so that we can find fulfillment in our lives and happiness in our homes
- 3.) We practice the Buddha's teachings in our everyday lives, and maintain a respectful attitude at all times, wherever we go
- 4.) We cultivate kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity, performing acts of goodness everyday so that our bodies and minds are upright
- 5.) We respect the members of the association, greeting them when they come and bidding farewell when they go
- 6.) We possess "correct understanding" and "correct view," and we develop our own self-nature of prajna-wisdom.
- 7.) We experience Dharma joy and happiness, forever eliminating afflictions and turning away from ignorance
- 8.) We make our vow to bring universal liberation to all beings, so that a Pure Land and Buddha realm will appear on earth.

These are the articles of belief for members of the Buddha's Light

International Association, by which the more than two million members worldwide constantly persevere in generating the pure aspiration for enlightenment, so that they may join together in establishing a Pure Land on this earth.

Buddha's Light Members are All Around the World

The Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) is an internationally oriented civic group that was founded by Chinese people and Chinese Buddhists, and in (2006), it celebrates its fifteenth anniversary. It has developed into an internationally oriented group that has two main Headquarters: the Chunghwa Headquarters and the World Headquarters, encompassing more than one hundred seventy chapters and over a thousand sub-chapters and preparatory committees in over one hundred seventy countries and regions around the world. The Chinese Headquarters stood out among the 1,850 civic groups across Taiwan and for fourteen consecutive years has received the Nation's top civic organization award. At present, BLIA is the world's fourth largest, international service organization (the other three being the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, and Kiwanis International). Upon the endorsement of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2003, the association formally obtained its special consultative status as a non-governmental organization (NGO) of the United Nations, and among the two thousand and more NGOs recognized by the United Nations, BLIA is one of the handful of civic organizations in which Chinese form the core membership.

Today the yellow vest with the lotus flower and circle emblem of the BLIA, worn by people of different races, proves that Buddha's Light members are all around the world. The logo represents a simultaneous focus on both the mundane and supra mundane, in which the sentient beings on earth generate the lotus mind of purity, and together they constantly turn the wheel of the Dharma. This

both perfects human character and completes the Buddhist path. The brightness and purity of the lotus on the other hand are reflected back upon the earth, enabling the earth to become transformed into the most perfect world in the universe. Symbolizing the all-encompassing three times (past, present, and future) and the ten directions, the association's flag of five-colored stripes now flutters in the sky above the six continents.

All avid readers of history know that a hundred odd years ago, the British Empire with its colonial policies sailed its warships on the world's oceans, building its "the sun never sets" empire through military force, so that wherever the sun rose, so too did the British flag. One hundred years or more later, BLIA spreads the seeds of Buddhism throughout the world by employing peace, tolerance, joy, and kindness, creating another form of "the sun never sets:" wherever the sun rises, the Buddha's light shines universally, and the Dharma waters flow continuously.

Monastic and Lay Members Invigorate Buddhism Together

On February 3rd, 1991 during a solemn and magnificent ceremony, the Chunghwa Buddha's Light International Association held its grand inaugural meeting at the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei. This was the grandest inaugural meeting for a religious organization since the founding of the Republic of China. In terms of Buddhist history, it was also a pioneering effort with profound implications. At the inaugural meeting, Hsing Yun specifically addressed the core objects of the Buddha's Light International Association:

In the past, Buddhism seemingly gave people the impression that Buddhism only belonged to the monastics, and did not have much to do with lay people. The establishment of the Chunghwa Buddha's Light International Association

is a hope that we can go from a Buddhism of the monastic community to one of the lay community. In the past, any discussion of Buddhism made it seem like something that only belonged in the temple or monastery. The establishment of the Chungghwa Buddha's Light International Association is to enable Buddhism to go from the temple and monastery into society, and even every single household. In the past, Buddhism gave people the feeling that it was something static and inflexible. It is hoped that through the establishment of the Chungghwa Buddha's Light International Association, Buddhism can become a driving force. In the past, Buddhism gave people the impression that it was all about self-cultivation. I hope that the establishment of the Chinese Buddha's Light International Association will develop Buddhism's ability to benefit all beings.

In the past, people believed that only in Taiwan could you find many Buddhist followers, but now, the establishment of the Chungghwa Buddha's Light International Association means that Buddhism will spread beyond Taiwan to reach the entire world. In the past, the degree of a devotee's realization was irrelevant, for a devotee always remained just a devotee, and was not able to reach any higher state. And once one joined the monastic order, one did not have to wait for tomorrow, one became a Buddhist master that very day. But with the establishment of the Chinese Buddha's Light International Association, it is hoped that through proper certification, devotees can become Buddhist teachers just like the monastics, so that they may engage in work that purifies the mind, improves the moral conditions, and makes a contribution to society and the nation.

In summary, this is what Hsing Yun means:

- 1.) From the monastic community to the lay community
- 2.) From temples and monasteries to society
- 3.) From self-realization to benefiting others
- 4.) From the passive to the active
- 5.) From being disciples to being teachers
- 6.) From Taiwan to the world

Rapidly Accumulating International Strength

Given Fo Guang Shan's strong and solid base, as soon as the Chunghwa Buddha's Light International Association was established, it had over three thousand members. Besides the vertical division of regional affiliations, there was also the horizontal combination of professional affiliations. For example, a sub-chapter for teachers was formed in Tainan; the National Immigration Agency formed the "Tathagata Sub-chapter;" then there was the "Jewel Light Sub-Chapter" formed by those working in the financial services world; and there was the "Veterans General Branch Association" formed at Taipei's Veterans General Hospital. The rapid development of the Chunghwa Buddha's Light International Association left many other organizations lagging far behind: In one day, Hsing Yun set a record by certifying the establishment of fifteen branch organizations all at once.

With all the enthusiasm that marked the beginning of the Chunghwa Buddha's Light International Association in Taiwan, Buddhist followers abroad also eagerly rallied together, and within a mere one year's time, it already had the strength to become an internationally-oriented civic organization. Following the establishment of the Chunghwa Headquarters, the grand inaugural meeting of the World Headquarters for the Buddha's Light International Association was held at Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles on the 16th of May 1992. More than four thousand member representatives from five continents, thirty countries, and fifty-one regions gathered in one hall. In

so doing, they broke down the "Berlin Wall" between races and religious sects, setting a milestone for Buddhism as it moves towards greater globalization in the 21st century. Such honored guests as the Dominican President Clarence Seignore and the California Secretary of State March Fong Eu were present at the opening ceremonies and gave speeches to celebrate the event. Vice President Gore sent his written congratulations for the successful establishment of the association. The mayor of Monterey Park in Los Angeles, Samuel K. Kiang, declared May 16th to be that city's "Buddha's Light Day," in order to commemorate this great event.

It was only a short time before the inaugural meeting, that the Los Angeles area was rocked by riots in the Black community that were sparked by racial barriers, something which shocked the world. Los Angeles was instantly transformed into a land of darkness, where everyone feared for their safety. Hsing Yun vigorously rejected the general consensus "to stay out of the endangered city," and decided to establish the BLIA at that time and in that place. This ensured that Buddhists from around the world could come together under the conference's theme of "Joy and Harmony" to speak frankly and accept one another, regardless of their regional or racial differences. In particular, the juxtaposition of these two events underscored the extraordinary preciousness of the Buddhist teachings of peace and tolerance.

Many years later, Hsing Yun's impressions regarding this event were still quite clear:

During the riots in the black communities of Los Angeles, the entire country was in an uproar and everyone was upset and trembling in fear. No one dared leave their houses after returning home from work. But when I gave that Buddhist lecture in New York one night, the auditorium was still packed as usual, and when the ceremony establishing BLIA's World Headquarters was held several days later at the Music

Center in Los Angeles, an astonishing four thousand or more people came to participate.

The ceremony establishing the Buddha's Light International Association truly represented a great coming together in the history of Buddhism. There, united in one auditorium, were Buddhist followers from such countries and regions as China, Japan, Korea, and Tibet, as well as all Seven Classes of Disciples from the monastic and lay communities, including representatives from Buddhism's Northern and Southern traditions, and the esoteric and non-esoteric teachings. Buddhism's power to influence was clearly made manifest, and in this Buddhist followers have their share of glory. Nishihara Yuchi, the president of BLIA's Tokyo Chapter, commented excitedly: "Within the span of a day, I have made more than four thousand new friends on the Buddhist path."

Clear and Explicit Ethics for the Group

When the "Dharma lecturer" system was established in 1993, Hsing Yun was actually taking a huge risk; indeed, one could say he had violated a cardinal taboo within the Buddhist community, that of instituting the "lay master." Truly, for a monastic to promote equality between the monastic and lay communities, so that members of the laity can also spread the Dharma, required a degree of broadmindedness and courage that was quite extraordinary. This was so because within its long tradition of several millennia, Buddhism had always put the monastic order first and the laity second, but after the establishment of the BLIA, the laity could actually preach the Dharma for the benefit of beings just as the monastic order. Thus, Hsing Yun could quite easily be accused of encouraging the subversion of religious authority and the erosion of monastic power. However, he was not intimidated by the pressure of tradition, nor was he deterred by concerns over superiority versus inferiority. He felt that the monastics

and laity were equally important, and that they should help and guide each other, so that together they could revitalize Buddhism.

The main goal of establishing the Buddha's Light International Association was to organize the broad-ranging community of lay people around the world, and give them training to develop their power, so that they could shoulder the great task of preaching the Dharma. It is Hsing Yun's firm belief, that if the monastic and lay communities can work together seamlessly in a complementary fashion, then their combined efforts would be like a man of steel employing both arms or a great bird unfurling both wings, certain to bring Buddhism to a higher and more far-reaching state. The General Secretary for BLIA's World Headquarters, the Ven. Tzu Jung, explains the profound implications involved:

BLIA motivates devotees to study Buddhism. The presidents and staff of its various chapters and sub-chapters are all outstanding members of society, who are successful in their careers and have also achieved things in their fields of specialization for which they are justly proud. However, once they put on that yellow vest of the BLIA, they put aside their position in society and vow to serve others. In so doing, they join the ranks of those on the bodhisattva path and actively engage in all manner of compassionate relief work, as they march forward towards a new milestone in Humanistic Buddhism, one that is shared by both the monastic and lay communities. Such activities also ensure that Chinese Buddhism receives an infusion of new talent.

Hsing Yun emphasizes:

In promoting an emphasis on the lay community, one can not ignore the position of the monastic community, for regardless of whether one speaks in spiritual, historical, organizational, or philosophical terms, "so long as the

monastic community abides, so does the Dharma." The monastic community is the Jewel of the Sangha, the teacher of gods and humans, and as such, the laity will indeed treat the monastic community with respect, showing that they will not introduce partisanship into Buddhism, and that the ethical principles are clearly defined. This is also the approach I have upheld for so long.

Knowing Hsing Yun so well, the Ven. Tzu Hui can say:

The Venerable Master is extraordinarily clear-minded. He's not going to turn the Buddha's Light International Association into some ordinary organization that becomes a mere flash in the pan. He has never contravened the spirit of Buddhism. These are the ethical principles of the Buddha's Light International Association, which demonstrate our success at educating the devotees, and everyone has carried them out very well.

Building Confidence, Contributing to the Community

For many people who have witnessed the astonishing development of the Buddha's Light International Association, a host of questions spring to mind: What is behind the organizations explosive development and strong appeal? How can it draw together groups of people from various professions and with such disparate backgrounds and attitudes? How can the organization produce a whole series of activities with such creativity and success by solely relying upon volunteer help? Why are people so completely transformed after joining the Buddha's Light International Association, enabling them to taste the joys of life? How is the organization able to develop the hidden treasures of the mind?

Let us listen to what members of the Buddha's Light

International Association have to say about what they genuinely think and feel. The Lay Dharma Lecturer Chen Chia-lung has said, "I have received much more from the association than I have given. It has given me a platform to study and develop, which is how the association has been training me." Through their participation in the Chung Tian Temple and its Chinese school in Queensland, Australia, the couple Liu Chao-ming and Chen Chiu-chin came into contact with Fo Guang Shan, and they discovered right away how warm and caring the monastics of Fo Guang Shan treated the laity. It was like being bathed in a gentle spring breeze or being welcomed into a large family, so one tended to follow right along as a matter of course. Soon afterwards, the local Buddha's Light International Association was established, and the couple joined and took up important positions within the group. Liu Chao-ming often traveled back and forth between Australia and Taiwan, but as president of the Queensland chapter, he wanted to ensure the smooth progress of the association's affairs, and so he took money out of his own pocket to hire some professional staff, while he himself spent a lot of time visiting families and contacting the group's members each time he returned to Australia. Chen Chiu-chin comments:

We are indeed fortunate to be able to learn and grow within the Buddha's Light International Association, for it has given us a great deal of room in which to develop ourselves. Everyone in our family, both old and young, has been nourished by the Dharma and we feel blessed. The Buddha's Light International Association has expanded our lives and increased our wisdom, so that we can live our lives with more joy and greater confidence. When the association sponsors activities, there are often many occasions in which we must go on stage to give a talk. Afterwards, the monastics and our fellow members are always praising us for our

eloquence, something which has made us more self-confident.

The Buddha's Light International Association serves as a refuge for overseas Chinese, those who are willing to sow the seeds of brightness, lighting infinite lamps in the human world.

A lawyer by profession, Lin Yeik Le is chief legal council for BLIA's World Headquarters and is also the president of its Malaysian chapter; this has been her experience: "That's right, the entire staff of the Buddha's Light International Association are volunteers. We all have our own jobs, but in joining the association, we have learned how to organize our work in an appropriate manner; we don't simply put our work aside and forget about it." She then goes on to talk about how the Buddha's Light International Association has been developing in Malaysia: "English and Malay are the principle languages of Malaysia, and in comparison, Chinese language ability is relatively weak. This presents certain difficulties if one is trying to attract people using purely printed materials, but the Buddha's Light International Association has sponsored many multifaceted activities to bring liberation, especially for the young people." Her comments confirmed what Hsing Yun said in the October, 1992 issue of the *Buddha's Light Newsletter*: "The development of the Buddha's Light International Association must depend upon the strengthening of its activities because the activities bring vitality and strength."

Originally not a Chinese speaker, President Lin can now express herself fluently in Chinese after participating in the Buddha's Light International Association for four years, and this too represents an immaterial gain for her. She particularly admires the association's idea of equality between the monastic and lay members, in which the monastics treat the laity with respect and the laity honor the monastics, and thus they work together hand-in-hand to support one another. Not only does this give the laity a sense of dignity, but it also gives them a sense of responsibility, which the intellectuals and industrious

find more acceptable. "If you only had them attend Dharma assemblies and worship the Buddha, they would still make their donations but they themselves wouldn't come," she says, hitting the nail on the head. Dressed in her elegant Malaysian long-skirt and wearing the BLIA's yellow vest, Lin Yeik Le appears all the more intelligent and enthusiastic. In speaking of the Buddha's Light International Association, she swells with pride: "The local Indians recognize this vest as well; when they see it they will say that the Buddha's Light has come."

The President of BLIA for Southern Malaysia, Shen Yongan comes straight to the point when he says:

The Buddha's Light International Association enables us to understand how the Dharma can guide our everyday lives, and that learning Buddhism does not mean we abandon our roles and responsibilities in this world. Perhaps others do not understand why we are so willing to put so much of our time, effort, and money into something that is completely supported by volunteer work. Why do we willingly do so with neither complaint nor regret? In fact, each one of us wants to share in and contribute to a sense of group feeling, but in the past we lacked a platform like this. Instead, people were left doing their own thing; people made money and took vacations, becoming more and more selfish. They enjoyed riches and comfort but found their lives empty. But now the Buddha's Light International Association has created this platform and has put us upon it. Superficially, we are the ones putting out, but actually we get back much more from it. Many people have had similar experiences, that after joining the association, they become much wealthier as their businesses become more prosperous, and their relationships with others become broader and smoother.

A Door Open to the World

The Buddha's Light International Association is not merely a religiously oriented civic organization; it also plays a role in bridging cultures. It is yet another door that Taiwan has opened towards the world. When BLIA's second general conference was held at the Linkou Sports Arena, the total number of participating delegates coming from around the world was over thirty thousand. After the conference, a sight-seeing trip was arranged for the delegates, enabling these international visitors to personally experience a free and prosperous Taiwan, as well as providing good publicity for the country. When a chapter of the association was established in South Africa, one by one BLIA members scattered throughout such areas as Johannesburg, New Castle, Durban, Bloemfontein, and Pretoria, arriving on the scene despite the great distances involved, including even representatives from the [ROC] Investment Association in South Africa and the Taiwanese Association of South Africa. Central News Agency correspondents stationed in South Africa and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative stationed in South Africa also came and were present at the gala occasion. They all expressed their appreciation of BLIA's public appeal: "Today represents the great unity of overseas Chinese."

Based on tolerance and impartiality, and under the guidance of Hsing Yun, BLIA's all-pervasive influence has reached such an extent, that even the remote mountainous region of Ladakh on India's border, with an average elevation of fifteen thousand feet above sea level, now sports a BLIA flag waving in the blue sky. The Ven. Sanghasena, the president of the BLIA, Ladakh International, comments on his experience of participating in the Buddha's Light International Association: "I have been the president of the (Ladakh) Buddhist Association for eight years now, and yet my reputation, my power, and everything I am have not taken me one step outside of Ladakh, but now that I have joined the Buddha's Light International

Association, all at once I can be in contact with Buddhists from around the world."

Since it was founded fifteen years ago, the service-oriented activities of Buddha's Light International Association have never stopped, while their scope has grown steadily wider; examples of such work include donating blood (according to statistics from the Taiwan Blood Donation Center, it took in altogether more than seventy-seven thousand bags of donated blood for the year 2004, of which nearly forty thousand bags were donated by Buddha's Light International Association members; that is to say that for every two people who donate blood, one of them was a Buddha's Light International Association member). Other activities include: free medical care and haircuts for prison inmates, beach cleaning, and adopt-a-park efforts; prison ministries that preach the Dharma; anti-drug presentations at schools; free medical care and treatment in remote areas; bringing relief to disaster victims; and responding to the call of environmental campaigns by sweeping streets and planting trees under a burning sun, or recycling resources in the face of wind and rain.

On the international front, BLIA has joined relief efforts dealing with floods in the central and western parts of the United States, fires in Los Angeles, and hurricane damage in New Orleans, and so on. In addition, after 9-11, BLIA also donated two hundred thousand US dollars from its ticket sales for the Buddhist chanting performance as a post-disaster reconstruction fund. One day in winter, the Los Angeles Chapter of BLIA (USA) donated three hundred sets of daily necessities that were handed out to the several hundred homeless indigents taken in by the First Methodist Church of south Los Angeles. When these fearful and disheveled people received such warm help from the hands of Chinese Buddhists: "In one stride the gap between races and religions was crossed, and the love of life became a beautiful bond." This was how one pastor expressed his

heartfelt thanks.

The BLIA chapter in Paraguay worked with the local overseas Chinese and together they funded the building of the "Hospital Los Angeles Paraguay-China" that was completed in 2003. The hospital offers free medical care that benefits the sick and impoverished people of the area, and has already provided medical services to over twenty thousand people. There are statues on either side of the hospital's main entrance, one is of Saint Mary and the other is Bodhisattva Guanyin holding a child, symbolizing the congenial harmony that exists between the two cultures and peoples. The wife of the Paraguayan president expressed deep gratitude on behalf of her people when she said, "For a civic group from another country to contribute so much to the Paraguayan people is truly a miracle."

The Nan Hua Temple in Africa has been working with local BLIA chapters to push forward a plan for African hope projects, and currently two of these projects have already been implemented. The first is instituting Sunday schools that have accepted forty-seven children between the ages of seven and sixteen. Besides supplying them with such material resources as clothing, toys, and food, the program organizes singing, dancing, and painting activities in order to address the children's natural talents in the areas of music and athletics. At the same time, the "Nan Hua Soccer Team" was organized, which holds regular practices and participates in friendly matches with other teams. The second project establishes "soup kitchens" in five fixed locations, which provide bread and soup to seven hundred elderly people every month. In 2001, the Vice Minister of the Overseas Compatriot Affairs Commission in the United States, Wu Hsin-hsing, stated: "Besides the official Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Buddha's Light International Association represents yet another Ministry of Foreign Affairs, because its members can develop and expand the spirit of Taiwan abroad."

Oneness and Coexistence

The burgeoning development of the Buddha's Light International Association over the past fifteen years has demonstrated the vitality and correct vision of international Buddhism, while its members fully experience the meditative bliss that is for the enjoyment of self and the enjoyment of others. However, it is far from easy for a group with such huge numbers of members and an organization spread around the globe to maintain good communications and formulate a common consensus. Close observation and study would reveal that this all depends upon a set of clear guiding principles, the most important of these being an integrated system that still maintains a sense of initiative.

In terms of guiding principles, it must be stated first of all that this flourishing organization is not in any way a form of "Greater China Nationalism" or "Asian-centrism." On the contrary, it is richly endowed with an international character, and it sees the world purely in terms of a global humanity, rather than specific countries or regions. It has developed a generosity of spirit that accommodates diversity within oneness and finds oneness in diversity. It is the theme of "Oneness and Coexistence" for BLIA's Second General Conference that embodies this spirit, for "Oneness and Coexistence" originates from the Buddhist teachings of "unconditioned loving-kindness and the empathetic compassion of oneness." Hsing Yun further elaborates:

I came to Taiwan forty years ago and have lived in Taiwan for these forty years as well, but everyone still refers to me as that monk from the Mainland. I went to Mainland China in 1989 and the people there said I was the Ven. Master Hsing Yun from Taiwan. Later on, I went to the United States, Europe, and Australia, and I discovered that my nose had not gotten any bigger, nor had the color of my eyes become blue,

so the people there did not accept me as an American or an Australian. I couldn't help questioning myself as to where I actually came from. When I really think about it, all the wars between countries and the prejudice between races are occurring today because of meanness and antipathy, so as long as the earth bears no antipathy towards me, I am willing to be a citizen of the world. This does not just mean Buddhists helping Buddhists or Chinese helping Chinese, but rather seeing men, women, the young, and the old as one whole; seeing the rich, the poor, the powerful, and the humble as one whole; and seeing different cultures and races as one whole; for we all live together on this earth.

As for maintaining a sense of initiative in the system, a general conference of all the association's representatives is held once every two years, as a way of cementing a common fellowship and benefiting from mutual discussions, but beyond that, a board of directors meeting is held every year for the purpose of discussing important policies and formulating plans of action. Regular interaction is maintained through regional fellowship gatherings, international meetings, and the Buddha's Light communications network. "This does not merely represent a subjective hope, but also a real objective need." Hsing Yun recalled how extraordinarily hard it was to get things going when the Buddha's Light International Association was first established. It was like having to push a car before it could start moving down the road. But now, the global Buddha's Light International Association is already in motion, and it will not stop, for it can only keep moving ahead. If any individuals stop they will be left behind by the group; and if any particular chapter stops, the other chapters will lend motivation and support. Hsing Yun has an apt metaphor for this: the Buddha's Light International Association always stays active in the progressive tense. Although there are those

who say that there is too much going on at BLIA, they wouldn't want to miss any activity. Some members have the experience of attending and holding activities for the association and obtaining more and more business for their own companies. Everybody is so happy whenever a large meeting is held that some of them travel more than halfway round the world at their own expense in order to participate (the twenty-seven non-Chinese language chapters must still be subsidized). As old friends come together at such meetings, the feelings are especially warm. Hsing Yun is fully cognizant of what should and can be done when he says: "It's as though I built the stage and the members came along and extended it, like adding on a runway to the stage. To put it bluntly, once the Buddha's Light International Association gets going, it will blanket the world."

Time passes quickly, and this Buddha's Light International Association, so fresh in people's minds, has designed the blueprint for Humanistic Buddhism. Coming from the five continents of the world, the more than two million BLIA members take up the bodhisattva spirit of joy and harmony and transcend regional boundaries, as they actively develop the association's international character:

Religion knows no national boundaries,
For the Dharma pervades the human world;
The day you join the Buddha's Light International Association,
You are a Buddha's Light member for life.

Chapter
Fifteen

*One Dharma Lineage Nurtures
Both Sides of the Straits*

Contact between the Buddhist communities of Taiwan and Mainland China has remained at a standstill over the past fifty years, but it seems recently that a spring wind of hope is blowing. There has been an ongoing series of several unprecedented exchanges, within which Fo Guang Shan has played a decisive role. With the visit of the Buddha relic and other extraordinary events, the Buddha's light of compassion illuminated once more the way across the Straits.

It was eight a.m. at Xianyang Airport near Xi'an, China. The morning clouds cast a lingering haze over the horizon as patches of sky turned into ever deepening shades of blue. The texture of the sky's blueness was very delicate and even, giving one a sense of broad openness, as if the sky had become a canvas for a watercolor painting. Together, the clouds, the sky, and its soft color made for a harmonious dance, one that paused for a moment, and then began again. A chartered aircraft from Hong Kong Dragon Airlines with the identifying number of 8480 broke through the horizon as its nose rose up into the air, and then flew off towards the East. After a symbolic thirty-minute stopover in Hong Kong, the plane took off once more.

By three o'clock that afternoon, the chartered plane had arrived at Taiwan's Taoyuan International Airport. This was an event for the history books, a memory that would be inscribed in the hearts of millions of Buddhist devotees. This was because the chartered plane carried the finger-bone relic of Sakyamuni Buddha. As founder of the Fo Guang Shan order and president of the Taiwan Buddhist Committee for Welcoming the Buddha's Finger-bone Relic, and in conjunction with the Taiwan Buddhist community, Hsing Yun had personally escorted the relic to Taiwan. By that time, hundreds of thousands of devotees had gathered throughout the city of Taipei, and had set up altars of incense, flowers, and fruit. Lining the streets in welcome, they spontaneously joined their palms in sincere worship as

the flower bedecked car with the relic and its escort slowly passed by.

Over the thirty-seven days from its arrival in Taiwan on February 23rd, 2002 to its departure on March 31st, the relic was honored and worshipped in such places as Taipei, Sanhsia, Kaohsiung, Wuchi, and Puli. According to statistics, the number of people from Taiwan alone who attended Dharma assemblies in each location during this period and came to prostrate themselves in worship was five million. Those coming from all parts of the world brought that number to over eight million. These people had been telling each other with such excitement: the Buddha relic has come!

Conditions that Transcend Time and Space

In their earnest prayers and invocations, people were moved to tears in ways difficult to express. However, there were many there who were not completely clear as to how the Buddha's relic visit to Taiwan had come about, that the conditions for this life transcending event had its origins in a comment uttered more than a dozen years earlier. In 1989, Hsing Yun led a Dharma teaching tour to Mainland China that would also reunite families. The former head of the Chinese Buddhist Association, Zhao Puchu personally came to the airport to greet them. As soon as they met, Zhao shook Hsing Yun's hand and said: "This is truly a rare moment in time!" The implications of this comment were quite profound. For Hsing Yun personally, this meant that after more than forty years of separation from his homeland, he could now reconnect with his family that would embrace this wanderer's return; for the Chinese Buddhist community divided for political reasons by the Straits of Taiwan for nearly half a century, this journey symbolized both a reconnection with the past and an opening to a new beginning.

It was during this trip that Zhao Puchu invited Hsing Yun and his group to visit Xi'an's Famen Temple and pay homage to the Buddha relic. Upon personally viewing this relic of the Buddha's

body, Hsing Yun was overwhelmed with emotion, and was deeply impressed by the supreme and unfathomable qualities of the Buddha's power. At that moment, he had the following thought, that such Dharma joy should be shared with Buddhists and all the people of Taiwan. So he expressed his hope to Zhao Puchu, that the Buddha's bone relic could be welcomed and venerated across the Straits in the name of Taiwan's Buddhist community. From that moment onwards, Hsing Yun was ever mindful of this wish, and various other senior monastics within Taiwan's Buddhist community also expressed a similar hope. After more than a dozen years of communication and negotiations, the conditions were right, and both sides of the Straits came to a consensus on the following key principles: "A joint invitation was to be issued by the Taiwan Buddhist Committee for Welcoming the Buddha's Finger-bone Relic, headed by Hsing Yun. Everyone would venerate the relic, the security of which was to be absolutely guaranteed." This eventually led to the Buddha relic's visit to Taiwan, which set several records unprecedented in their time:

- * The event set a wonderful precedent for greater harmony within Taiwan's Buddhist community. The "Taiwan Buddhist Committee for Welcoming the Buddha's Finger-bone Relic" was organized in a way that transcended sectarian distinctions, so that all worked together in welcoming the relic to Taiwan.
- * It generated a sense of goodwill across the Straits in which both officialdom and the general public worked together to make the event a success. Cultural and religious contact was used to break the ice, transcending the political stalemate between the two sides. Groups were organized on both sides to see off, welcome back, and protect the relic, activities which involved around a thousand people. This was "the first close contact" between the two sides over the past fifty years.
- * The event opened a new page in cross-straits communication

and contact. Due to the unparalleled preciousness of the relic and all the difficulties associated with its safe transport, the final decision was to charter a Hong Kong Dragon Airlines aircraft to fly a direct route, thus facilitating further cross-straits communication and contact.

- * Joint news coverage of the relic's journey from Xi'an's Famen Temple to Taiwan was broadcast directly, and all news resources were shared by both sides. TV stations like Britain's BBC all vied to report on the event.
- * The Buddha's relic was viewed not only by Buddhists, but even by followers of such folk religions as the I-Kuan Tao ["Unity Sect"] or folk beliefs associated with such deities as Mazu, who came bringing their whole families in a steady stream of visitors.

The visit of the Buddha relic was the culmination of merit, in that the wishes of Hsing Yun really succeeded, truly fulfilling the promise of "a rare moment in time."

Fo Guang Shan Plays a Decisive Role

Contact between the Buddhist communities of Taiwan and Mainland China has remained at a standstill over the past fifty years, but it seems recently that a spring wind of hope is blowing. There has been an ongoing series of several unprecedented exchanges, within which Fo Guang Shan has played a decisive role:

- * February 2002: The Buddha's finger-bone relic kept at Xi'an's Famen Temple was venerated on a tour of Taiwan; Hsing Yun headed the effort to make this possible.
- * July 2003: As the SARS epidemic that raged in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Mainland China began to wane, the Buddhist communities on either side of the Straits jointly conducted the "Dharma Prayer Assembly to Subdue SARS

and Bring Peace to the Country, the People, and the World" in Xiamen, China. More than ten thousand people attended the assembly in which Hsing Yun was honored as the chief guest among the eminent monks and worthies in attendance.

- * Early November 2003: Hsing Yun went to Daming Temple in Yangzhou to participate in the "1,250th Anniversary of Venerable Master Jianzhen's Journey to Japan." As a native of Yangzhou, Hsing Yun was invited to give a talk, and in remembering Master Jianzhen, Hsing Yun transcended the thousand years and more of separation to speak directly to this great worthy.
- * November 2003: Fo Guang Shan's Buddhist chanting group was invited by the Research Center for Religious Art within the Chinese Academy of Art to participate in the "Festival of Chinese Buddhist and Daoist Music," held in Beijing and Shanghai respectively. This represented the first time that any Buddhist group from Taiwan formally conducted a musical exchange with Mainland China, an event that became a sensation in Buddhist cultural and artistic circles. Hsing Yun was also able to express his thanks in remarks delivered at Shanghai's Grand Theater.
- * February 2004: Taiwan and Mainland China jointly organized the "Chinese Buddhist Musical Tour." This created a combined Buddhist chanting group of over one hundred and fifty monastics from both sides of the Straits, with its members being drawn from Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan, Xiamen's Nanputuo Temple in Fujian Province, Ruyuan's Yunmen Temple in Guangdong Province, Xiahe's Labrang Temple in Gansu Province, Beijing's Yonghe Palace Temple, Xishuangbanna's Vat Bajay in Yunnan Province, Shantou's Anshou Temple in Guangdong province, and Songshan's Shaolin Temple in Henan Province. The group brought

together Buddhist music from the three great language traditions: Chinese, Tibetan, and Pali. The membership of the group was equally divided between Taiwan and Mainland China, and together both sides nominated Hsing Yun as the group's honorary leader.

* Over the two thousand years since its transmission to China, Buddhism has developed an extensive and profound body of teachings, as well as unique forms of singing and ceremonials. Fo Guang Shan's Buddhist chanting group excels in singing, while the Mainland members excelled in playing musical instruments and performing Chinese martial arts. This joint effort of members from Mainland China and Taiwan produced all manner of excellent performances. Its world premiere was held at the Kaohsiung Municipal Cultural Center, and then two performances were held at Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall, setting the record for total applause ovations at seventy-three. The group then toured Hong Kong, Macau, the United States, Canada, and various places in Mainland China.

The vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and abbot of Nan Putuo Temple in Xiamen, the Ven. Shenghui served as the performance group's leader. In his view, Buddhism on both sides of the Straits shares the same roots, and both Buddhist communities are related to one another through close familial ties and a common Dharma lineage, which is why the two communities share an unbroken bond of fellowship. Shenghui was interviewed by a reporter from the Xinhua News Agency, and he indicated how this great event was a historical first for both sides of the Straits: "Normal communications between Mainland China and Taiwan have yet to be restored and yet now these two

religious communities have already forged a link between each other!" During this short interview, the reporter was to hear such similar exclamations three other times.

A Great Breakthrough for the World Fellowship of Buddhists

Although Hsing Yun and Fo Guang Shan have never boasted about the contributions they have made in support of cross-straits exchange, yet a careful consideration of all that transpired would demonstrate how difficult these were to achieve. Indeed, it was more like a thousand mile journey fraught with hardship and constant setbacks, a heavy burden fulfilled despite criticism. Hsing Yun had always felt a deep familial bond with his homeland, and was ever mindful of his wish to bring his experience of developing Buddhism in Taiwan back to Mainland China. However, being restricted by the political conditions on either side of the Straits, such a hope could only live in his dreams for a long period of time. It was not until 1989 that he was able to return to his cherished homeland.

As Buddhists, the word "luck" is really not to be uttered, but as "luck" would have it, Hsing Yun's return to his homeland was determined by one small cough drop. In 1986, Hsing Yun and Ms. Tien-Liu Shih-lun were invited to attend the sixtieth birthday celebrations of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej, and it so happened they ended up sitting one row behind the President of the Buddhist Association of China Zhao Puchu and his wife. During the conduct of the ceremonies, Madame Zhao suddenly started coughing, and the more she coughed, the worse it became. Madame Tien took a cough drop out of her purse and quietly handed it to Madame Zhao. As soon as she put it in her mouth, her coughing stopped immediately, and she repeatedly offered her thanks. As Chinese meeting abroad like this, they became friends, and that evening, Zhao Puchu presented a book he had written, in which he had inscribed a few words.

In that year, Zhao Puchu was already nearing eighty and was serving as the vice-chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Not only was he well versed in Yuan dramatic verse and poetry, but he was also a very compassionate person who was an excellent scholar and Buddhist practitioner; he was also one of the three greatest calligraphers in China at the time. He had committed his life to Buddhism, and he did everything he could to protect it, sparing no effort to ensure that temples and monasteries were in good repair. In 1994 at the advanced age of eighty-eight, he went to Hong Kong far in the south to see to the construction of a great bronze statue of the Buddha on Lantau Island. The Hong Kong government even emblazoned the magnetic cards used in their subway system with a picture of this magnificent statue of the Buddha, in apparent recognition of its status as a cultural icon for Hong Kong.

When Zhao Puchu and Hsing Yun met for the first time that year, they were separated in age by exactly twenty years, but even so they got on very well together and regretted not having met earlier. For his part, Zhao greatly admired this younger friend for his success in spreading the Dharma, and he agreed to meet with Hsing Yun at a later date, so that they could develop their friendship further. Indeed, such a wonderful opportunity did occur in 1988. By the end of that year, Hsing Yun had taken up the heavy burden of hosting the Sixteenth World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference at Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles, one that symbolized the unity of Buddhists worldwide and was to have an even deeper impact upon religious contact and exchange between Taiwan and Mainland China; he also hosted the Seventh World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth Conference. In order to ensure the success of these two conferences, Hsing Yun put a considerable amount of thought behind its general theme, which became "Spread Buddha's Wisdom and Unite for Peace." Hsing Yun invited the Buddhist associations of both Taiwan and Mainland China to attend the conference at the same time, for he wanted to strength-

en exchange across the Straits and dissolve the impasse between the two sides.

In order to spare the conference from any political overtones, Hsing Yun explained in the invitations he sent out that attending delegations would be identified by their organizational affiliation, but would not be labeled by country designation. Except for the national flag of the United States where the conference was to be held, the only other flag to be raised at the conference venue would be that of the World Fellowship of Buddhists; the national flags of other countries would not appear. At the same time, he recommended that Taiwan and Mainland China continue to use the names of their respective organizations; and after consultation with his disciples who had attained Ph.D. and M.A. degrees, the English versions of these organizations were translated as "The Buddhist Association of Beijing, China" and "The Buddhist Association of Taipei, China." Thus in their English incarnations, the names of these two organizations further embodied the principle of "one China."

There then ensued an extraordinarily complicated process of negotiations which nearly broke down on many occasions, and it was only after many twists and turns that both parties adopted Hsing Yun's recommendations. Thus, the deadlock that had held both parties in contention for many years was dissolved, and in the end the two Buddhist associations from both sides of the Straits were sitting in the same conference hall. When Hsing Yun announced this new development at the conference's opening ceremonies, the five hundred and more delegates in attendance, who represented more than eighty Buddhist groups from more than thirty countries, responded with enthusiastic applause that long reverberated throughout the hall. In speaking of that moment's breakthrough, representatives from Hong Kong and Southeast Asia exclaimed that this represented a "Hsing Yun model" that was far more meaningful than the Olympic model. The enthusiastic applause of all conference attendees went on for a

full three minutes, with many representatives shouting out loud: "Wonderful!" It was due to this sincere effort and such concrete results, that Zhao Puchu sent a letter to Hsing Yun, inviting him to visit Mainland China.

The First Trip in Forty Years

In 1989, the "Dharma Preaching and Family Reunion Delegation of the International Buddhist Progress Society " finally set foot upon the homeland. The delegation seemingly made an entire circuit of Mainland China from March 27th to April 25th, going east to Shanghai, west to Dunhuang, north to Beijing, and south to Chengdu. As Hsing Yun was an internationally renowned and powerful figure within Buddhist circles, the Mainland government considered this visit a relatively important matter, and accorded Hsing Yun the status of a state guest. The then President of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Li Xiannian (1909-1992) and the President of the People's Republic of China Yang Shangkun (1907-1998) both made public appearances to greet the delegation. Mainland China's journalistic, artistic, academic, religious, and political circles all looked upon this tour as the grandest exchange to take place across the Straits of Taiwan in the past forty years. The writer Wang Yi-ling living in the United States was accompanying the delegation and made the following observation about the trip to Mainland China:

Wherever we went, the provincial governor and local mayor would receive us or hold banquets in our honor. Large ranks from the monastic and lay communities would line the streets in welcome regardless of whether we arrived at the airport or the train station, or even if we arrived before dawn; there were no exceptions. And when we went to temples or monasteries to offer incense and worship the

Buddha, we were greeted with red carpets and the sounds of bells and drums. No matter where we went by automobile, our motorcade would always have a lead vehicle driven by members of the police force. When it came to visiting Shanghai's Longhua Temple, it so happened that a temple festival was taking place and the whole area was thronged with visitors. So besides the lead vehicle, motorcycles were also dispatched. There were still concerns that even that was not enough, and so during the last leg of the trip to the temple, uniformed personnel ran along either side of the motorcade to clear the way.

During his visit, Hsing Yun gave a number of talks and speeches. He was invited to speak at the Great Hall of the People, and he also gave a lecture that was jointly sponsored by the three universities of Beijing, Qinghua, and Renmin, the title of his talk was "Chan Mind, Human Mind." The incisive nature of his remarks was delivered in a lively manner, stirring the audience to constant bursts of applause. When he arrived at the Manjusri Temple in Sichuan Province, crowds of people were standing in all five courtyards, while some people were standing directly in the street. At particularly moving points in his remarks, the audience spontaneously called out "Amitofo" in a loud voice. One Chengdu reporter was simply astonished with what he saw, saying that he had never seen such a scene in several decades. Over the following days, the local people relished talking about how a great monk had come from Taiwan.

A Flood of Emotions for a Hometown Reunion

Of course, since the name of the delegation also included the words "family reunion," Hsing Yun was certain to take this opportunity to return to his hometown that he had left so long ago and visit his family. He would also be visiting once more Qixia Monastery,

where he had joined the monastic order fifty years earlier. Both places would produce scenes that touched the heart. The experienced correspondent Lu Keng reported on Hsing Yun's return to his old home in Jiangdu:

In all my fifty-one years of experience as a correspondent, this was the first time I had ever seen the mobilization of an entire city with its tens of thousands of people that emptied out entire neighborhoods. When the motorcade reached Jiangdu, people lined the streets in welcome, the lines of people being two or three rows deep. Some people stuck their heads out of windows in tall buildings, while others climbed trees to get a better view. The sounds of applause and shouts of welcome reverberated down the avenue. After greeting his mother, Hsing Yun presented her with a bouquet of flowers, and holding her hand, he said simply, "I've come back!" He said nothing more. His mother answered, "It's good to have you back; it's good to have you back!" Eyes brimming with tears, the bitter longing and feelings of separation could not fully be expressed. Next, the two of them stood on a terrace and greeted everyone. His monastic disciples sang "In Praise of Mother," and Tang Degang and I recited a poem celebrating the reunion of mother and son. Proving himself to be a true religious man of the people, Hsing Yun spoke in his simple Yangzhou dialect, "I am Li Guoshen!" An old gentleman with tears in his eyes spoke, "At least this Yangzhou of ours has produced such a good person." As he bid farewell to his hometown, a neatly dressed woman came up carrying a child about three years old, and presented the child to Hsing Yun. As Hsing Yun bent over to kiss the child's face, at least twenty cameras closed in to take the picture.

On the day he returned to Qixia Monastery, Hsing Yun was welcomed with a great ceremony, and he was offered the grand seat of honor. Later on he gave words of instruction to the students, the young monastics of Qixia Monastery, urging everyone from the depth of his heart to make greater efforts: "Use the light of Qixia to kindle the hope for a future Chinese Buddhism." In addition, he went back to Zhenjiang's Jiaoshan Monastery and met with his old teachers who had taught him to worship the Buddha and recite the scriptures. Hsing Yun spoke freely of his early life there at monastery, including his mischievous behavior such as sneaking off to take the ferry, remarks that sparked waves of laughter from the audience. In recalling that time he stood there at Qixia Monastery to give his speech, a cascade of thoughts flooded his mind and for a time he was all choked up. He then put words to his feelings:

I stayed at Qixia Monastery for more than six years when I was just a child. I had never even been to the Dharma Hall. Now more than forty years later, not only have I entered it, but I have also been offered the seat of honor there. My old teachers who had punished and scolded me were all standing behind me, and for a moment I was overcome with a flood of emotions.

Continued Interactivity in Academics and Culture

This trip to Mainland China not only raised the morale of Buddhists on the Mainland, promoted Buddhist cultural, academic, and religious exchange, but it also transcended the political realities on either side of the Straits. The trip astounded the intellectual world of Mainland China, inspiring thirty people with Ph. D. and M. A. degrees to take refuge in Buddhism.

After this, Fo Guang Shan continued to interact academically with Mainland China. Such activities included: the "Dali Buddhist

Culture Investigative Team" supported by the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education Fund in 1990, which offered the academic world of Taiwan the first opportunity to actively investigate and understand the conditions for Buddhism on Mainland China; and that same year, the venerables Yi Yu and Yi Chun attended and presented papers at an academic conference at Dunhuang. In 1993, members of the Dunhuang Scientific Research Institute were invited to give presentations at Fo Guang Shan; Fo Guang Shan received a delegation of professors from Shanghai's Fudan University, who were touring Taiwan's cultural and educational programs; and more than twenty professors and scholars from such universities in China as Renmin, Beijing, Nankai, and Jilin were invited to a roundtable discussion with Hsing Yun.

In recent years, groups of younger members of the Fo Guang Shan monastic order have been pursuing advanced studies in Mainland China. They have made excellent progress in their academic fields and have won respect both inside and outside the college campus. Their lively and yet disciplined presence sparked admiration in others as to the high quality of modern monastics. Examples include: the Ven. Man Ting who attended Xiamen University and now teaches as a monastic who holds a Ph.D. degree; the Ven. Man Keng obtained the Ph.D. degree from Beijing University in 2005; while other monastics have studied at such places as Renmin University, Nanjing University, Sichuan University, Lanzhou University, Fudan University, Wuhan University, and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

In the area of religious exchange, the Ven. Hsin Ting was invited to Mt. Baohua, the famous temple for monastic rules and precepts, where he gave a talk on the monastic rules and precepts during the ordination period; such an achievement represents the highest possible honor. In 2004, he was invited to serve as one of the seven witnessing master during the ordination ceremony at Qixia

Monastery. He then went on to give teachings at Nanjing's Jiming Temple.

A number of important activities have taken place in the area of cultural cooperation; these include: The "Dunhuang Exhibition of Antiquities" that opened at Fo Guang Shan in 1991 and attracted more than a hundred thousand visitors during the exhibition period. This event served to advance cultural exchange across the Straits, as well as stimulate further developments in Buddhism; and it also provided an opportunity for both sides to observe and learn from each other. Later on, such famous Mainland artists as Fan Zeng and Madame Li Keran, the former Vice Director of Beijing Museum Yu Jian, and the Mainland author Shu Yi also paid a visit to Fo Guang Shan. The Beijing producers of China Central Television's program "The Beauty of China" made a special trip to film Fo Guang Shan, and they were deeply moved by the "Lantern Festival of Peace;" they were also profoundly impressed by Fo Guang Shan's way of combining the traditional with the modern. Hsing Yun also offered the award-winning *Fo Guang Buddhist Dictionary* in seven huge volumes to the Mainland's Buddhist Association of China, so that organization could distribute an edition in Simplified Chinese on a royalty-free basis.

The Light of Compassion Illuminates the Way across the Straits

Given the incredible success of Hsing Yun's first tour to Mainland China in 1989, and with the visit of the Buddha relic and other extraordinary events some ten years later, the Buddha's light of compassion illuminated once more the way across the Straits.

During the tour of the Buddhist music festival across the Straits, a correspondent from Phoenix Satellite TV interviewed Hsing Yun, and asked: "Besides music, what is your hope for future exchange and interaction across the Straits?" Hsing Yun replied:

In the past, cross-strait contact was limited to commercial activity; there was never enough in the way of cultural exchange. Although the current political systems on either side of the Straits are different, both peoples after all share the same cultural and ethnic origins, and are connected by ties of blood. A constant series of contacts through cultural, academic, athletic, and popular artistic activities would advance exchanges across the Straits.

Therefore, despite the vast expanse separating Taiwan from Mainland China, it cannot break apart the fellowship of the two sides in terms of religious faith; and no matter how wide the Straits of Taiwan are, no array of mountains or waters can shut out the sound of the Dharma that spreads abroad. Those so inclined can move beyond the economy and carry on more contact in the area of religion and culture, and that would be a good thing. This would promote mutual understanding and recognition, in that you help me and I help you; there's no need to remain hostile. This world needs peace, and that means more contact and more ties of friendship.

How both sides of the Straits will develop in the future is not only something that concerns the Chinese people, but it will also have an impact on world peace. Hsing Yun keeps the welfare of all Chinese people and of all humanity close to his heart, and this too is revealed in how he talks. He works hard to create those turning points towards peaceful contact, which is why some people lump him in with those who favor the "one China" policy, but on this Hsing Yun has said, "Actually, I'm not taking any particular side. It's just that I have an emotional bond with Taiwan, and a Chinese heart. I love Taiwan, and I love China too; and I love the world even more." In his view, as long as Mainland China's economy continues to develop and

political tensions are eased, both parties still have plenty of room in which to conduct exchange:

Those Chinese with a good conscience all approve of a unified China, but this is not a unification in which I take over you or you take over me, rather, it is one based on peace and equality. Before unification can take place, the following must be achieved: 1.) cooperation in the economic arena; 2.) exchange in the cultural arena; 3.) respect in the religious arena; and 4.) democracy in the political arena. China is not the possession of a small number of people, but rather represents the coming together of more than a billion fellow citizens.

A half century earlier, Hsing Yun crossed the sea over to Taiwan as a solitary monk, but today, Taiwan has become a successful experimental field for Buddhism, one that has already produced a rich and sweet harvest. But in the future, how can the stalemate between Taiwan and Mainland China be overcome, so that this precious experience in developing Buddhism can be brought back to the Mainland and made known to a wider audience, making it possible for the bright light of the Dharma to illuminate all of China sooner? It is Hsing Yun's ardent hope that, for the sake of the future of all the Chinese people, the authorities on both sides of the Straits will be able to "well protect the causes of things yet to come."



Chapter
Sixteen



*Spoken by the Buddha and
Needed by the People
All that is Pure, Good and Beautiful*

The lustrous sweet dew of Humanistic Buddhism will be like: "The spring rain percolating through the night,/ Nourishing things carefully but without making a sound;/" as it sheds its light upon modern society through Hsing Yun's work. Humanistic Buddhism will surely develop into the main current of Buddhism, reserving for us a beautiful existence in this lifetime and in the next.

Since the very founding of the order, Fo Guang Shan has always been spreading the message of "Humanistic Buddhism" and endeavoring to embody its practice. Regardless of whether you hear one of Hsing Yun's talks, read his books, or speak to him in person, or you visit one of Fo Guang Shan's temples to exchange ideas with his disciples or devotees, what you will always encounter is "Humanistic Buddhism," the idea that "the Dharma is lived in life, and life is lived in the Dharma." "Humanistic Buddhism" is not something created by Fo Guang Shan, for in tracing its origins, the principles of "Humanistic Buddhism" come from the founder of Buddhism himself--Sakyamuni Buddha.

Originally named Siddhartha, Sakyamuni Buddha was born on the eighth day of the 4th month (lunar calendar) in 563 BCE; his place of birth was the Lumbini Garden in the Indian state of Kapilavastu. His father King Suddhodana was head of the Sakya clan, and his mother was Queen Maya. His mother died seven days after his birth and Sakyamuni Buddha was raised into adulthood by his maternal aunt, the Lady Mahaprajapati. Prince Siddhartha was much beloved by the people of the entire kingdom, and his father put all his efforts into training him to become a wise ruler. In this he did not disappoint, for Prince Siddhartha turned out to be a handsome and intelligent young man, one who was skilled in both the civil and military arts. When he was seventeen, King Suddhodana chose the beautiful Yasodhara to be his consort, and the following year she bore him a son, the Prince Rahula. However, life in the palace with all its com-

fort and contentment, and the warm love and affection of his family, could not satisfy his desire to seek out the true nature of life and the meaning of the universe. So at the age of twenty-nine, he bid farewell to his family and left his homeland in order to pursue his spiritual quest. After several years of arduous practice, when he was thirty-five years of age, he was sitting on his Diamond Throne under the bodhi tree while gazing into the starry night and attained the realization that "All beings of this world possess the excellent quality of the Tathagata's wisdom." Thereupon, he began to teach with the "First Turning of the Dharma Wheel" and he established the monastic order. After a teaching career that spanned forty-five years, he entered Nirvana while lying between two Sala trees outside the city of Kusinagara in the year 483 BCE. The Buddhist scriptures that circulate in the world today are mainly a record of his teachings that were gathered together and organized by his disciples after his nirvana.

What this series of events demonstrate to us, is that Sakyamuni Buddha was born in this human world, grew up and attained enlightenment in this human world, and finally passed into Nirvana in this human world as well. He tasted all the joys and sorrows of human life, and experienced birth, old age, sickness, and death within this human world. Therefore, in the language of India, "Buddha" means "the enlightened one," and so the Buddha is an enlightened sage while people are ordinary beings who have yet to attain enlightenment. Fundamentally, the Buddhist teachings from the time of the Buddha are meant to address the issues of how we as human beings should conduct ourselves, how we should act and think throughout the course of our lives. Therefore, Buddhism is a religion based upon "human beings." Hsing Yun is trying to take the Buddha's teachings and instructions of twenty-five hundred years ago and skillfully apply them to our modern life. In giving Buddhism a new lease on life, Hsing Yun has developed "Humanistic Buddhism" that remains innovative without sacrificing the Buddha's original intent.

Bringing Blessings to Humanity

In fact, Humanistic Buddhism is simply just Buddhism, to which the word "humanistic" has been added to stress its emphasis upon humanity. For the Chinese New Year Spring Festival of 2003, Fo Guang Shan held the Buddhist community's first ever "International Floral Art Exhibition," and it was during this period that Prof. Charles H. C. Kao and his wife came to visit the main temple accompanied by Hsing Yun. Amid the vast displays of gorgeous and beautifully colored flowers, Prof. Kao suddenly asked, "Master, what is Humanistic Buddhism?" Hsing Yun replied without giving it a second thought, "Whatever was spoken by the Buddha and needed by the people; all that is pure, good, and beautiful; any teachings that can help in increasing human happiness; these are what constitute Humanistic Buddhism."

On another occasion, Hsing Yun was in San Francisco conducting family visits, and a certain school teacher was present who posed the following question:

We lay Buddhists don't think about the freedom from samsara [the bitter cycle of life and death], nor have we had thoughts about becoming Buddhas. The reason for this is that for us, becoming a Buddha is something so far, far away, while the freedom from samsara is an ideal quite unclear and indistinct. All we want to know now is how we can live in a way that is a bit better than others; and how we can improve ourselves a bit more than other "people."

Upon hearing this, Hsing Yun was quite moved. In the past, Buddhism had always tended to distance itself from human life, which meant that many people who were interested in Buddhism were left lingering outside its door. They remained hesitant, unable to become involved. Since ancient times, people usually did not think of

adopting Buddhist ceremonials until it came to time to bury their dead. It was thought that Buddhism was only about praying for a better rebirth in paradise after one dies, or that a belief in Buddhism meant an escape from reality, a renunciation of the world in a negative way. But in fact, all of this misrepresents Buddhism's fundamental message.

Hsing Yun vowed to propagate Humanistic Buddhism a long time ago. It is his ideal that Buddhism must move towards becoming human-oriented and life-oriented; more modernized, socialized, and popularized; more oriented towards art and literature, more entrepreneurial and systematized, and even more globalized and future-oriented. He made the following declaration in his preface to the *Special Edition Commemorating the Thirtieth Anniversary of Fo Guang Shan*: "Not until Buddhism becomes more humanistic and life-oriented, will it be able to penetrate into the family, society, and the human heart; and be able to form a oneness with life; becoming the Buddhism that people need." Hsing Yun has seen himself as a consistent and devoted promoter of "Humanistic Buddhism" throughout his entire life. His discussions of the Dharma are intended to give everyone a clear understanding of it; his books and articles are intended to give everyone a sense of experience; his building of temples is meant for everyone's use; his organizing of activities is meant for everyone's participation; and his holding of Dharma assemblies offers everyone a sense of Dharma joy. Whenever he gives teachings abroad, he always provides a translation, for he is always concerned about the needs of all at anytime and in anyplace.

In his *Recorded Sayings on Humanistic Buddhist Thought*, he has said:

Buddhism does not belong to the monastic order, nor does it provide scholars with something to research. Buddhism should be something that benefits the people

as a whole. Buddhism is not something theoretical or abstract, rather, Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes human nature and is endowed with a humanistic character, for it can bring joy and happiness into the human world.

Putting it all together, the main principles of Fo Guang Shan's Humanistic Buddhism are simply three in number:

1. Transform a Buddhism that pursues the next life into one that emphasizes this life.
2. Take the unapproachable and reform it into a practical humanistic Pure Land.
3. Transform the lament for a human life in which "all defilement is suffering" (afflictions, shortcomings, and imperfections) into the praise for life as happiness for all humanity.

The great humorist Lin Yutang (1895-1976) once said, "a good writer will evoke a response from all of his contemporaries." Hsing Yun is surely a religious figure who can "evoke a response from all of his contemporaries," and furthermore, he is often able to make the right move "in the very first minute," so that he becomes the leader of popular trends. Several years ago when the Chang Gung Memorial Hospital was starting its organ donation program, Hsing Yun signed the pledge before anyone else, evoking a similar response on the part of his many disciples and devotees. In the area of environmental protection, Hsing Yun vigorously supports recycling programs; and recently, he has given vocal support to groups working for the mentally and physically disabled, as well as those suffering from rare diseases.

The Vice President of BLIA's World Headquarters Wu Pohsiung witnessed this extraordinary capability himself: Seven years

earlier, Taiwan was struck with the great earthquake of September 21st, 1999, and Hsing Yun immediately established a general command for disaster relief and became completely engaged in relief work. But besides that, he also heard that many young soldiers who were removing bodies during the day were suffering from nightmares at night. They would often wake up screaming, which would disturb and upset the whole army camp. As a consequence, not only was Hsing Yun invited into the army camps to comfort the disaster relief troops, but he also conducted several prayer assemblies in front of the Nantou Sports Coliseum to ward off disasters and invoke blessings. Upon the completion of these prayer assemblies, one by one the soldiers would come forward as monastics on either side would sprinkle Dharma water to dispel negativity, then they would walk up to Hsing Yun who would personally rub their heads, say a few comforting words, and then present them with a small blessed gift. Many primary and middle school principals had also joined the crowds in lining up. As Wu Po-hsiung sees it, Taiwan does indeed have the folk custom of "fright calming," but Hsing Yun has taken it to another level altogether, making it a kind of "fright calming in the Fo Guang Shan manner."

In his time, the Buddha gave clear and detailed instructions as to how to live as part of a family amid one's parents, relatives, and friends; how to live as part of a social group; how to utilize the resources needed in everyday life; and how to build intimate relationships as between married couples and friends. The Buddha also clearly addressed such issues as the management of wealth, religion, medical care, politics, society, and international relations. Buddhism's paramount function is not only to help the dead so that they may find a better rebirth, but more importantly, the Buddha's promise of a "Humanistic Buddhism" is to be found in a harmonious society, clean politics, and a well-managed economy. In this way, all manner of human ventures can be handled in a reasonable way, so that a life of

meaning and value can be fulfilled. Hsing Yun encourages all followers of the Buddha to develop a self-awareness that is actively concerned about the changes taking place within society. This is why in recent years, whenever he discovers that society has produced some new phenomena or trend, or some new problem, he will ponder again and again: " Which of Buddha's teachings can serve as our essential guide? How should a modern Buddhist respond?"

Hsing Yun is fully cognizant of the cardinal dictum of "the Dharma as essence and secular learning as function," which enables him to apply the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings to deal with all manner of issues in accordance with the truth and with particular circumstances. Examples of such issues include: the job economy, the international situation, democracy and human rights, the ecology of nature, educational reform, racial conflict, reproduction and health, family violence, organ donation, and fortune telling. In all of these, Hsing Yun endeavors to clear away any confusion people today might have. In addition, he does not shrink from addressing such immediate social concerns as human cloning and foreign brides: "In fact, a basis for everything can be located within the Buddha's teachings, it's just that I apply them in response to contemporary needs." He believes that if Buddhism cannot solve the problems of modern people and cannot keep up with the times, it will disappear in the end.

Joyous Practice instead of Ascetic Practice

With a character that combines idealism with practicality, Hsing Yun advocates joyous practice instead of ascetic practice. This is because modern Humanistic Buddhism is noisy and colorful; it is active and engaging: "By Humanistic Buddhism, I mean something that contains the joys of life, the abundance of wealth, the moral path of compassion, and the universal liberation of the Mahayana; its ideal is found in the Pure Lands of the Buddha." As described in the

Amitabha Sutra, the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is a place where the ground is covered with gold, where one can enjoy buildings, walkways, and trees all encrusted with jewels, the very absolute in magnificence and beauty. Clearly, a belief in Buddhism does not necessarily demand a poverty-stricken life of weary suffering, for Buddhism is actually a religion of abundance, happiness, and contentment. Hsing Yun reaffirms again and again, that Humanistic Buddhism not only means perceiving nature directly by illuminating the mind and enlightening sentient beings, it also means that as one puts these into practice, one does not turn away from daily living, nor turn away from the present world and human life!

Hsing Yun recalls how more than forty years ago he came to Kaohsiung and built Shoushan Temple, and at first, there were many white-collar workers who were attracted by Hsing Yun's reputation. However, they were only willing to offer incense and were unwilling to prostrate themselves. So Hsing Yun had a sofa moved into the main shrine so that they could recite the scriptures while sitting. Later on, more and more people came to attend the Dharma services, and those people who originally were unwilling to prostrate themselves not only attended the morning/evening practice sessions on time every day, but they also performed all the required forms of obeisance, and became devoted Buddhist followers. This situation was to repeat itself in the United States. At first, American devotees had an unusually negative reaction against doing prostrations, and when Hsing Yun learned of this, he ordered that a classroom be equipped with tables and chairs so they could recite the scriptures while sitting. When news of this reached their ears, the Americans all signaled their approval, particularly the younger ones. Later on, someone asked Hsing Yun: "Won't doing it this way exert a bad influence upon them?" He answer: "Not at all; once they have a sense of faith, they will prostrate themselves to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas quite voluntarily."

The basic needs of most people are: abundant financial resources, a loving bond between husband and wife, a happy family life, and harmonious interpersonal relationships. These have always existed, and these are also the goals for which humanity has struggled throughout many generations, as well as the motivating force behind humanity's proliferation. In Humanistic Buddhism, one can speak of these needs quite forthrightly, and pursue them in a fair and open manner. For example, in Hsing Yun's view, for a husband and wife to live together conforms to the natural order of things, and they are permitted to do so even while staying at a Buddhist temple. Hsing Yun explains: "Fo Guang Shan does not break up husbands and wives, for during the Buddha's time, husbands and wives were permitted to practice together;" and "a husband and wife should love each other in happiness and harmony, for this is the only proper rule and precept for spouses living together." He also encourages parents to bring their children when they come to the temple for Dharma service or a Dharma talk as childcare is provided, so they can concentrate on worshipping the Buddha. Such opportunities can both promote a happier and more Buddhist-oriented family life, as well as serve to hand down the faith to the next generation.

Regarding the question of wealth, although Buddhism maintains that its monastics live a plain and simple life, what is known as "the three garments and one bowl," "a Buddhist rucksack weighs two and a half pounds," and contains "the eighteen items for monastic practice;" it offers the broad range of Buddhist followers a new perspective on wealth. Given the fact that "even a clever housewife cannot provide boiled rice from an empty pot," and "a poor couple finds no pleasure in life," a lay practitioner must have some monetary wealth. For without such resources, how are one's parents to be supported and how is one's family life to be secured? To cultivate the practice and engage in acts of charity requires money as a supporting condition. Even the various national and social development programs also require a rich treasury to provide a solid backing.

Therefore, Humanistic Buddhism does not condemn wealth, and all forms of "pure wealth," "good wealth," and "sacred wealth" are permitted so long as their source is clear and their usage is appropriate.

Establishing Oneself to Establish Others, Becoming Enlightened Oneself to Enlighten Others

Humanistic Buddhism takes a multifaceted approach that can accommodate living beings with differing spiritual capacities, but adapting to circumstances does not mean anything goes. In society today, there are various popular beliefs having to do with fortune telling, geomancy, and the seeking of divine advice that present themselves in Buddhist garb. These self-proclaimed wizards, quasi-immortals, and "supreme masters" employ animal spirits, ghosts, and divine beings as a way of inciting droves of people into consigning their hope and fate to divine powers. But this is a mistake, for people are too easily fooled into becoming controlled by these false teachings. As time goes on, people will become deluded, and end up falling into a trap. Humanistic Buddhism does not speak of the occult or divine powers, as underscored by the saying: "take refuge in oneself and in the Dharma, and nothing else," for the only person who can help you is yourself. Thus, one establishes oneself in order to establish others, and one becomes enlightened oneself in order to enlighten others. By making broad connections for a positive future, one will gain more help on the path to realization. Hsing Yun employs this example to remind others, one that could not be made any clearer: "When buying things, we make our choice based upon materials used and we care a great deal about quality. But religion too exhibits different qualities, and so for the sake of your own faith, you should take great care when making your choice."

Hsing Yun encourages people to step away from the trammels of divine power, for one must realize that the only controller of one's life is oneself. Authentic Buddhism promotes the quieting of all

concerns, so that one elevates one's own wisdom, compassion, and moral character by reducing one's deluded thinking. An individual's money, honors, happiness, and well-being do not fall from the sky, nor do they grow out of the ground, and they are certainly not bestowed by others. Only by relying upon one's correct actions, correct behavior, and correct thinking, can one enjoy happiness and well-being. Therefore, Buddhism promotes the idea that "every day is a good day, and every place is a good place; everything is good when one becomes a good person, and everything is good when one's heart is good."

There are some who firmly believe in miraculous responses or intervention, which constitutes a kind of internal personal sensation or a certain religious experience. Certainly they do exist, it is just that not everyone can have them; one just happens upon them, but one cannot seek them out. There are some old devotees who remember how many years ago during every Medicine Buddha Dharma service at Shoushan Temple, multicolored relics would form out of the candle snuff of each of the lapis-lazuli lamps in front of the Buddha hall. Some devotees would take these relics back home, but as soon as they reached the door, these candle-snuff relics would have already disappeared all by themselves.

Hsing Yun has had quite a few of his own mystical experiences. On one occasion in 1954, he was conducting a seven-day Amitabha chanting service, and every moment during those seven days, the sounds of chanting Amitabha Buddha's name [Amitofo] was constant and unending. Even if one was not in the Buddha hall, the sound of chanting would still reverberate in one's ear. During meals, it was one chant of "Amitofo" after the other; even every movement made while brushing teeth was transformed into sounds of "Amitofo." Each and every thought as one moved around or stayed still was clearly permeated by the sound of chanting Amitabha Buddha's name, which went on continuously. The seven days of the retreat seeming-

ly lasted only as long as the time required to snap one's fingers. Even today, Hsing Yun still retains a profound impression of what he experienced during that period, in which time and space disappear and one merges into one's surroundings without the distinction of self and things. However, he is not that willing to make known his own mysterious experiences of miraculous response, because these are something intensely personal in nature, and that other people doing the same thing would not necessarily have such an experience. Mystical experiences cannot be sought and are transient in nature, nor are they something one demonstrates to others as a performance. One must not become attached to any of these experiences, for such attachment will lead to confusion. Hsing Yun has said, that those of us with faith should not spread reports about miracles, rather, we should spread morality and wisdom, and we should spread the correct understanding and correct view, by making known the principles that are reasonable, inevitable, universal, and egalitarian in nature, so that everyone together can form a consensus. We should avoid those things that only certain people are able to see and most others cannot.

When someone asks him whether a belief in Buddhism entails some sort of miraculous response from the Buddha, Hsing Yun always answers: "We can get a response everywhere we go in this world: drinking water can quench one's thirst; eating can fill one's belly; and flicking the switch turns on the electricity.... These all represent the responses we can experience in our daily lives." And on one occasion someone gave a lively account of how they were always dreaming of Hsing Yun, to which Hsing Yun gave a nonchalant smile: "No wonder I am always so worn out. Other people get to sleep at the night, but I have to run off to be in your dreams;" a comment that provoked a lot of laughter all around. But Hsing Yun's meaning is clear: if anyone asks him about this, he would not give a stern lecture by saying that we don't talk about this in Buddhism which has nothing to do with all that hocus-pocus, nor would he

dampen their enthusiasm either. He would simply treat the subject somewhat casually and tell the person to ponder the truth of it for himself. But let's get to the heart of the matter. Does Hsing Yun actually possess any supernatural powers? "Of course not, supernatural power is nothing but experience," he says. For example, it was pouring rain before a major event was to take place, and other people were rushing around urgently asking Hsing Yun what to do. Without any hesitation, Hsing Yun said that the rain would be gone by two o'clock that afternoon; and sure enough, when the time came, the rain did stop. Hsing Yun commented, "In saying that I wasn't expecting some miraculous intervention, but it is just that according to recent weather conditions, it was logical to assume that it should turn out that way."

Humanistic Buddhism represents the Buddha's original intent, and through Hsing Yun's work at interpreting its message anew, it can now shed its light upon modern society. Through the efforts of Fo Guang Shan's monastic and lay communities that have put their bodies and minds to the task of spreading its message and putting it into practice, the lustrous sweet dew of the Dharma will be like: "The spring rain percolating through the night,/ nourishing things carefully but without making a sound./" Humanistic Buddhism will surely develop into the main current of Buddhism, reserving for us a beautiful existence in this lifetime and in the next.

Chapter
Seventeen



*The Grand Culmination of
Buddha's Light Philosophy*



Buddha's Light philosophy has not only become fully matured in terms of its theoretical framework that is so clearly laid out, but it has also accumulated a rich storehouse of experience in the area of practical application, and has formed close bonds with the needs of social groups.

For more than a half century, Hsing Yun has been working constantly to propound his ideas, giving teachings on the Dharma, establishing schools, training talent, founding temples, building up Buddhist enterprises, and developing the Buddha's Light International Association. It has been through these various direct and indirect means, religious and non-religious activities alike, that Hsing Yun has been able to join with communities, enter society, and move towards globalization. Even though this path has been a long and arduous one, it remains extraordinarily clear, and one can find a common thread that binds it altogether, and that is, to put it simply, "Humanistic Buddhism." Although he never set out to found a new school or sect, scholars who study the development of Taiwanese Buddhism feel that Hsing Yun has already created something entirely new that goes beyond the ideas of the Eight Schools of traditional Chinese Buddhism, and has founded the "Buddha's Light (Fo Guang) School." From now on, the "Buddha's Light School " bases its practice on Humanistic Buddhism and utilizes "Buddha's Light philosophy" as its system of interpretation and understanding. But the question of whether such a Buddhist school so conceived can propel Buddhism to the pinnacle of success in this new century will certainly become the focus of attention for the world's Buddhist and academic circles.

The Six Main Characteristics of Humanistic Buddhism

Just as Hsing Yun himself has said before, "Humanistic Buddhism" is not only something that stays in his mind each and every moment, but it also is present in his actions each and every moment. Having gone through many years of thought and practice,

one could say that over time, Humanistic Buddhism has already reached a stage of mature completeness. The Fo Guang Shan Conference for Young Academics held in 1990 was given the theme of "Humanistic Buddhism" and during the conference Hsing Yun spoke about "The Fundamental Concepts of Humanistic Buddhism." But in fact, it was as early as 1977 that he discussed "how to build a Humanistic Buddhism:"

What is Humanistic Buddhism after all? We all know that the founder of Buddhism, Sakyamuni Buddha, is the Buddha for this human realm. So why didn't the Buddha attain Buddhahood in any of the other five realms? Why didn't he attain enlightenment in any of the other nine dharma realms, but instead was born into this human world where he attained enlightenment? Why didn't the Buddha attain enlightenment in some past eon or some future eon, but instead attained enlightenment in this saha world in which we human beings presently live? What I mean to say is that the Buddha himself was advocating a focus on the human world.

The Buddha of this human world revealed a Humanistic Buddhism that was endowed with the following six characteristics:

1. **Humanistic character:** The Buddha is not some divine being who appears out of nowhere or disappears without a trace; nor is he God created from some illusion. In all respects, the Buddha possessed all human characteristics. He was just like us; he had parents, had a family, had a life; and he lived in this human world just as we do. He demonstrated such human transcending wisdom as his compassion, his practice of the precepts, and prajna-wisdom. This is why he is the Buddha with human characteristics.

2. **Life-oriented character:** The Buddhism that the Buddha developed places an extraordinary degree of emphasis on living. He gave guidance and instruction on every aspect of human life, including how one should eat, dress, act, or rest. He even gave clear instructions regarding relationships between family members and how one should participate in activities on the social or national level.
3. **Altruistic character:** The Buddha was born into this world for the sole purpose of expounding the teachings, as well as the benefits and joy of their meaning and practice, so that he could transform living beings through his teachings and give them what is beneficial. The Buddha's original intent was to be beneficial to others.
4. **Joyous character:** Buddhism is a religion that gives people joy. Its purpose is to relieve people of their suffering and give them happiness.
5. **Timeless character:** Although he was born twenty-five hundred years ago and has already realized parinirvana, the Buddha has given generations of living beings the causes and conditions for obtaining liberation. This is why we still adopt the Buddha's ideas and teachings as our model even today,
6. **Liberation-oriented character:** The Buddha's whole life can be characterized by its focus on universal liberation. There was Liang Shuming (1893-1988) who slowly drifted into Confucianism after being a Buddhist scholar. He felt that Buddhism's humanistic character was not strong enough, and so when Master Taixu invited him to lecture at the Sino-Tibetan College of Buddhist Studies, he wrote the following on the blackboard: "This time, this place, these humans." He explained, "The reason I became a Confucianist is because of these six words."

Master Taixu went on to give his own explanation after Liang had finished his lecture. He said that although Buddhism speaks of the past, present, and future, it places more emphasis on universal liberation in the present time. Although Buddhism speaks of this world, other worlds, and even infinite worlds, it still places more emphasis on universal liberation in this world. And although Buddhism talks about living beings of the ten dhama realms, it places more emphasis on the universal liberation of humanity.

What is Humanistic Buddhism

Buddhism is a religion that is based upon human beings, and the Buddha always emphasized in all the various Buddhist texts that he is not a divine being, but just "one of the host of beings." The *Vimalakirti Sutra* states that one must seek out the Buddha realm as sentient beings, for without sentient beings there is no Buddha, and without the host of living beings, there is no Buddhist path. The Sixth Patriarch Huineng has also said, "As the Dharma is in the human world, apart from this human world there is no enlightenment; to try and seek enlightenment outside of this human world would be like trying to find horns on a rabbit." In order to obtain Buddhahood, one must undergo the arduous practice of spiritual cultivation in this human world, for it is impossible to complete the Buddhist path in any other domain of existence.

During the 20th century, there have been disputes between the reformist wing and the conservative wing of Chinese Buddhism, as well as the distinctions made between monastic Buddhism and lay Buddhism. There have even been the various controversies between the Mahayana and Theravada, the Northern and Southern transmissions, and between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions. Regardless of how these various regional versions of Buddhism were formed based

on differences in geography, climate, culture, and local customs, distinctions only tended to multiply. However, given Hsing Yun's advocacy, Humanistic Buddhism is sure to become the major current of modern Buddhist thought in China. In 1995, Hsing Yun set out his own explanation of what is "Humanistic Buddhism" in a work he himself edited entitled, *Series on Buddhism: Humanistic Buddhism*:

1. The shared teachings of the Five Vehicles constitute Humanistic Buddhism.

The Five Vehicles are: the human vehicle, the heaven vehicle, the sravaka vehicle, the pratyekabuddha vehicle, and the bodhisattva vehicle. The Buddhism of the human and heaven vehicles emphasizes worldly existence, while the Buddhism of the sravaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles emphasize transcendent existence. Bodhisattvas possess both the worldly spirit of human beings and heaven, as well as the transcendent ideals of the sravakas ["voice-hearers" who personally heard the Buddha's teachings] and the pratyekabuddhas ["solitary realizers" who attain enlightenment completely on their own]; this constitutes the bodhisattva path. Humanistic Buddhism has becoming a bodhisattva as its goal, in which one benefits others besides benefiting oneself, brings liberation to others besides liberating oneself, and helps others to attain enlightenment besides attaining enlightenment oneself. By combining the shared teachings of these Five Vehicles, we have Humanistic Buddhism.

2. The Five Precepts and the Ten Wholesome Acts constitute Humanistic Buddhism.

The president of a military academy once asked me: "What contributions has Buddhism made to society and the country? And please be specific." And I replied:

"The sacred scriptures with their three-part canon and twelve divisions are all beneficial to society and the country. But in simple terms, one can govern a country and bring peace to the world by just applying the Five Precepts."

The "Five Precepts" are the precept against killing, the precept against stealing, the precept against sexual misconduct, the precept against lying, and the precept against intoxicating substances. In my understanding, no killing means a respect for the life of others; no stealing means a respect for the property of others; no sexual misconduct means a respect for the body and moral integrity of others; no lying means a respect for the reputation and trustworthiness of others; and no intoxicating liquor or drugs means a respect for one's own health and mental sobriety. Thus, no one will do any harm to others. If an individual is able to observe the Five Precepts, then one will be sound in personal morality and character; if a family is able to observe the Five Precepts, then the family members will be sound in morality and character; and if a group, a society, or a country is able to observe the Five Precepts, then there would surely be a happy and peaceful society and country. As for the Ten Wholesome Acts, these actually represent an extension of the Five Precepts, in which one cultivates the practices related to one's body, speech, and mind, the final goal being to develop the wisdom of one's own self-nature.

3. The Four Immeasurable States of Mind constitute Humanistic Buddhism.

The Four Immeasurable States of Mind are: compassion, loving-kindness, joy, and equanimity. There is a common saying: "In every family an Amitabha Buddha and in every household a Guanyin." Now why does every family

reserve the best place in the main hall to honor Guanyin? They do so because the Bodhisattva Guanyin demonstrates great loving-kindness and compassion. Humanistic Buddhism stresses loving-kindness and compassion because the only way to take a stand in society and receive the respect of others is by having loving-kindness and compassion.

Buddhism possesses a joyous character and the spirit of happiness. The real intention behind the Buddha's teaching on the "truth of suffering" is to enable everyone to recognize the true nature of suffering and to use wisdom as a way of liberating oneself from pain and suffering so that one can be happy. Many people nowadays only seek help from the bodhisattvas when they want peace, prosperity, and happiness. Such a faith that is based upon "greed" is quite incorrect. A faith in Humanistic Buddhism means making contributions and sacrifices; it means benefiting others, for it is built upon "equanimity."

4. The Six Perfections and the Four Embracing Qualities constitute Humanistic Buddhism.

The Four Embracing Qualities of a bodhisattva are: generosity, kind words, altruism and beneficence and sympathy and empathy; while the Six Perfections are: generosity, upholding the precepts, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and prajna-wisdom.

"Generosity" is not limited to money by any means; a smile or a word of praise can all help foster a beautiful world. "Upholding the precepts" means obeying the law and observing the rules, for as the people in the world's democratic countries all appreciate, the prerequisite for freedom is not to violate the freedom of others. When the sacred dignity of the law forms a part of one's personal

life, then one will naturally find a place of happiness. "Patience" means being responsible, for it is a kind of force that leads to positive improvement. "Diligence" means being hardworking, when everyone endeavors to exert themselves as a way of constant self-improvement. By combining patience and diligence, society will then be filled with youthful vitality and vigor. "Prajna-wisdom" is wisdom that is not mere cleverness, for it is not something built upon the exploitation of other people. Wisdom means a win-win situation in which everyone attains the greatest happiness.

It would be better to say that the Six Perfections and the Four Embracing Qualities, as well as all the other Buddhist teachings, are a life preserver for how to conduct oneself and enjoy one's life, for they guarantee that the life of each and every individual is happy and peaceful. This is the goal that Humanistic Buddhism seeks.

5. Karmic retribution through causation constitutes Humanistic Buddhism.

Among all things, the law of cause and effect is the first of which we should be most aware. Cause and effect must certainly remain completely impartial, but there are those who doubt the operation of cause and effect. For example, some people will pray to the Buddhas and divine beings, but the price of their stocks drop and their wealth becomes less and less. Thus, they feel that none of the divine beings and bodhisattvas have protected them. But in fact, the reason for this is very simple, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas are neither their financial advisors nor their accountants, so how can they guarantee that money will be made? Economics has its own causes and effects, as does

morality and ethics. One cannot seek divine guarantees about how to make money, for this is not in keeping with the principle of cause and effect.

Additionally, there are people who wonder why their health is getting worse and worse even though they are vegetarians. If one's health is poor, one cannot blame vegetarian food. One must pay attention to one's nutrition, hygiene, and exercise if one wants to enjoy good health. It is these things that constitute the causal process for a healthy constitution. On the other hand, a vegetarian diet represents the causal relationship related to good moral character. This is why modern people are often confused about the nature of causality.

Causality is quite scientific, rational, and fair, as indicated by the expression "one reaps what one sows;" and so birth, old age, sickness, and death are all bound within the scope of cause and effect. If everyone were to have this concept of causality, it would be like having a police officer present in one's own mind, and society would naturally be harmonious and happy.

6. The Middle Path of Chan and Pure Land constitutes Humanistic Buddhism.

"Chan" here refers to the Chan School [Zen in Japanese], which is the pursuit of something within, where one perceives nature directly by illuminating the mind. "Pure Land" refers to the Pure Land School, which adopts the principle of steady practice that takes no shortcuts. The "Middle Way" is the wisdom of the Madhyamika School, which clearly understands how the human world has both its material life and its spiritual life; that the world has both its obverse and reverse sides; and that Humanistic Buddhism is both the possession of being and of non-

being. The world cannot be made into a beautiful place until everything is blended together through the "Middle Way."

The Four Spiritual Meanings of Buddha's Light Philosophy

From its historical traces and the course of its development, the form and standing of the religious order for Humanistic Buddhism has already been established. This has reached the point where people both at home and abroad continually draw upon it for material and Fo Guang Shan itself has become a topic of research. However, it was not until the thirtieth anniversary of the order's founding that Hsing Yun discussed "*Understanding the Buddha's Light Philosophy*" for the first time. Clearly, the times have spurred Fo Guang Shan in making a planned and systematic codification of all its own ideas and practice over the years. Hsing Yun explains:

Buddha's Light Philosophy has slowly come together bit by bit over the past thirty years. This person has said this and that person has said that, and so there has not been any correct understanding as to what it really means. This is why for a long time now I have wanted to edit and publish the book "Understanding the Buddha's Light Philosophy", which would include such things related to the Buddha's Light Philosophy as its guiding principles and philosophy, its spirit and core ideas, its system of rules and regulations, its historical documentation, and so on. The book would even include a wide selection of readings covering the significance of the Buddha's Light International Association, Buddhist views on contemporary problems, and evidence from the Buddhist scriptures that relate to Humanistic Buddhism. It is my hope that such a book could help the disciples of Fo Guang Shan by providing something that could guide their thought and action. The book would

also give a definite meaning to Humanistic Buddhism and affirm the guiding principles of the Fo Guang Order, so that its members could then aspire to make a vow and commit themselves to undertaking the great task of Buddhism's further expansion and development. This is yet another wish I have cherished throughout my life, and it is also an expression of the deep hope I hold for my disciples.

True to his word, when the twelve-volume set of the *Buddhism Textbook* was published in 1999, the eleventh volume in the series was entitled *Understanding the Buddha's Light Philosophy*. This book clearly sets forth what Buddha's Light Philosophy is all about, everything from the ultimate truth and goodness of its spirit and core ideas, to the profound truth that fosters peace and happiness in the human world, is all contained within the scope of its coverage. Buddha's Light (Fo Guang) Philosophy means:

- * "To carefully obey the Buddhist Teachings and respectfully implement the monastic rules" as its spiritual meaning.
- * "Collective creation and systematic leadership" as its guiding characteristics.
- * "The monastery comes first; the host of beings come first; the devotees come first; and Buddhism comes first" as its cores ideas to be respected by all.
- * "Attribute honor to the Buddha; attribute achievements to the host of beings; attribute benefits to the monastery; and attribute merit to the benefactors" as its basic standard to be observed by all.

What contributions has Buddha's Light Philosophy actually made to humanity? Buddha's Light Philosophy holds that each and every individual can be a bodhisattva, that they are endowed with the

life of prajna-wisdom, that they can possess a harmonious mental state, and can obtain the joy of the Dharma. Hsing Yun is constantly reminding us: "I hope that everyone will not just recognize and discuss Buddha's Light Philosophy, but will also practice it and put it into action." The four spiritual meanings of Buddha's Light Philosophy are as follows:

1. The bodhisattva Monasteries constitute Buddha's Light Philosophy.

These are monasteries that can receive the great host of living beings from all directions in an organized and systematic manner. The word "bodhisattva" is added here to differentiate these monasteries from those that practice the sravaka and pratyekabuddha vehicles that only seek enlightenment for oneself. Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association maintain the heritage of the bodhisattva spirit and cherish the compassionate wish to liberate the world. With their mission to purify the human world, Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association are profoundly committed to cultural education and emphasize accommodation within the group-self relationship.

2. The life of prajna-wisdom constitutes Buddha's Light Philosophy.

Prajna-wisdom is experience that comes from ordinary living, as expressed by the couplet, "That same old moon before the window/ Is now transformed by the plum blossoms./" Once prajna-wisdom arises, that same, ordinary existence can now become a life that partakes of liberating freedom. Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association have always advocated a living

Buddhism, and have often held family fellowship activities. They stress the importance of a fulfilling family life and emphasize a smooth harmony in interpersonal relationships.

3. **The harmony of the Dharma realms constitutes Buddha's Light Philosophy.**

With its founding, Fo Guang Shan instituted the principle of "the simultaneous teaching of all Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism and the joint ownership by the male and female members of the monastic and lay communities." Not only do Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association advocate harmony between male and female, rich and poor, nations and races, and between tradition and modernity, but they also seek a harmony among religions, and a harmony between the Dharma and worldly learning, and between the Dharma and life.

4. **Joy in the human world constitutes Buddha's Light Philosophy.**

Buddhism is a religion that promotes joy. Within Fo Guang Shan's "Work Principles," the spirit of "giving people joy" is the method for cultivating humanistic joy; and "We experience the joy of the Dharma through the eradication of afflictions and ignorance" contained within the "Guidelines for BLIA Members," is precisely that experience of humanistic joy right here and now.

Endowed with a Humanistic Character

When he began his advocacy for Humanistic Buddhism, Hsing Yun was roundly criticized and rebuffed. Yet with the passage of time, there are many members of the monastic and lay communities from religious and academic circles who are now enthusiastically engaged in its research and inquiry: Who is the founder of Humanistic Buddhism? Who is the father of Humanistic Buddhism?

Who is the inventor of Humanistic Buddhism? And who was the earliest person to proclaim the slogan of Humanistic Buddhism? Some people maintain that since the Sixth Patriarch Huineng had said: "as the Dharma is in the human world, apart from this human world there is no enlightenment." Humanistic Buddhism comes from him. There are those that maintain that since Master Taixu had said: "Our respect of the Buddha alone finds completion in our human character;" Humanistic Buddhism derives from him. And there are those who maintain that since the Ven. Yinshun has many writings that mention Humanistic Buddhism, the credit for Humanistic Buddhism belongs to him.

On this point, Hsing Yun points out that Humanistic Buddhism represents the original intent of the Buddha. So whatever helps further the purification of life and any kind of instruction that perfects the path to Nirvana constitutes Humanistic Buddhism. Sakyamuni Buddha was the founder of Humanistic Buddhism, and such individuals as the Sixth Patriarch Huineng and Master Taixu were all advocates of Humanistic Buddhism. In the past, most people thought that in advocating Humanistic Buddhism, Hsing Yun received his inspiration from Master Taixu, but in fact, the one who really inspired Hsing Yun to spread Humanistic Buddhism was himself:

I did have a chance to meet Master Taixu, and the ideals of my younger days just so happened to correspond with Master Taixu's thinking. However, the most important factor in this was my own character and point of view. I was always hoping that other people would be well, that all beings would be well; I was hoping that the development of Buddhism would be able to grow strong and vibrant, hoping that I could exert all my power to give others some benefit, and hoping that if all the right con-

ditions were in place, the ideals of a Humanistic Pure Land might possibly be realized.

As pointed out in the book *Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of Hsing Yun* written by Ven. Man Yi, the source of Hsing Yun's thinking on Humanistic Buddhism was something he "was born with," for it was already readily apparent before he joined the monastic order. Even at an early age, Hsing Yun possessed a generous character (at the age of two or three he would drag out the candy jar and hand out candy for others to eat), an industrious character (at the age of five or six he would go out and gather dog and cow dung that he would exchange for money to support the family's finances), an upright character (his aunt and uncle would be arguing but when they saw him coming over, they would stop on their own), a compassionate character (he lovingly cared for little chicks and small dogs, and would show consideration to old folks), These aspects of his character determined that he would become a practitioner of Humanistic Buddhism, and that from the bottom of his heart, he would love society, the country, humanity, and all living beings.

Let Buddhism Advance Upwards

Currently, Buddhist and academic circles around the globe are all quite interested in Humanistic Buddhism, including both theoretical discussions and explorations into its actual practice. Indeed, Fo Guang Shan itself represents the best possible case study. This is because Buddha's Light Philosophy has not only become fully matured in terms of its theoretical framework that is so clearly laid out, but it has also accumulated a rich storehouse of experience in the area of practical application, and has formed close bonds with the needs of social groups.

As a professor in the Religion Dept. of Beijing University, Lou Yulei feels that the real essence of Humanistic Buddhism is to be

found in its humanistic concern for human beings in society. Along with the development of the social economy, humanity has become enslaved by the material economy and technology that humanity itself has created. Such phenomena as the competition for existence, the pursuit of fame and fortune, and the escalation in material desire have placed increasingly more impediments and restraints upon the spiritual world in which people recognize and elevate their sense of self. People have become trapped by their phenomenal self and are unable to find their true sense of self. This is why there is such a need for a real sense of humanistic concern, as well as an even stronger need for the recognition of one's own original nature. A humanistic concern for living beings can guide us back to a recognition of our originally pure self. This constitutes the compassionate spirit of Buddhism as well as the true mission of Humanistic Buddhism, which points the way toward Humanistic Buddhism's future development. So in recent years, Fo Guang Shan has been training groups of talented academics who can further work on making Humanistic Buddhism more scripturally oriented, more concise, more refined, and more substantial. In this way, the true essentials of the Dharma will be poured into Buddha's Light Philosophy drop by drop, which will provide a basis upon which disciples in the future can further propagate Buddha's Light Philosophy.

Speaking of founding a new Buddhist order, Hsing Yun himself had not intended to found the Fo Guang Order at the present time, and yet he was well aware of the disorderly and incoherent state affecting the traditional Eight Buddhist Schools of China: some were too tedious in practice and others were too renunciative, and still others were no longer a living tradition and were without centers or followers; the restoration of these schools would be difficult indeed. On the other hand, the Fo Guang Order represents the grand culmination of all Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism without making distinctions between them. It has preserved all of their best teachings: those

that are still vibrant in meaning, those that can be applied to a modern society, and those that are in keeping with "Humanistic Buddhism." Humanistic Buddhism should be an activator that drives Buddhism towards making a quantum leap.

Hsing Yun clearly understands that founding an order can only happen when the conditions are right. In Buddhist history, a new Buddhist order was never founded during its first generation, for that was something that later generations of disciples would organize and develop. Several years from now when the banner of the Fo Guang Order flies high, it may be that the first generation of teachers will already be gone, and the ideals of Humanistic Buddhism (Buddha's Light Philosophy) will have to be realized by later generations. Hsing Yun has said:

This is because the establishment of a new Buddhist school or order requires a certain degree of credibility, which must be accumulated over time. It is not something that can be achieved through political power or force, rather, it must rely upon the formless power of faith.

Speaking with a deep sense of earnestness, Hsing Yun further hopes that, "just as the Mainland scholar Fang Lizhi has said: 'We are making history now,' my hope is not for any singular honor for our order, but rather, that the life of wisdom in the Dharma will long endure."

Chapter
Eighteen

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central diamond shape with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs extending outwards.

**Sacred Spirit, Secular
Enterprise**

A decorative background pattern consisting of a central diamond shape with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral motifs extending outwards.

The Venerable Master Hsing Yun has generated a whole series of pioneering efforts for his mission of preaching the Dharma for the benefit of beings by utilizing all of his mental faculties (possibly using the mind in multiple uses) but as for his principle of rejecting anything incompatible with Buddhism, he is single minded, for in this he will never give up nor become discouraged.

The Buddha's edifying teaching originally constituted a "study of life" derived from the grand culmination of all truth in the universe with all its myriad phenomena and conditions. In coming down to the present day, although it has adapted to social changes and is interpreted and disseminated using modern methods, its basic spiritual message is still represented by an unbroken lineage that remains true to itself. In his advocacy of Humanistic Buddhism, Hsing Yun wants to transform ancient Buddhism into a new and effective tool for solving modern problems.

Traditionally (even today this still persists), monastics could make a living as long as they were able to recite the Buddhist scriptures: "As long as one knows how to conduct ceremonials, one can enjoy vegetarian meals anywhere." Those temples that held Dharma assemblies were the ones that prospered. Thus, amassing disciples, visiting families, and seeking donations became the methods upon which the monks and nuns relied to make their living. This then created the phenomenon of Buddhism being unable to support itself, making it impossible for Buddhism to obtain the respect of society as a whole. Hsing Yun believes that Buddhist circles should engage in production and pay attention to business enterprise. Consider how the Catholic and Protestant churches all run religiously affiliated hospitals and schools throughout the world; while Japanese Buddhist circles have opened department stores and hotels; all of which has received the positive affirmation of society. Thus, Taiwanese Buddhism should not frown upon business enterprise; it should have its own financial support, for only then will it be able to advance a

step further in its service to society and its caring for the community. Regarding the development of Buddhist enterprises, Hsing Yun published the article "What to Do" in the *Awakening the World Essay Series* as early as fifty some years ago:

In recent years, there have been a few individuals who are unable to bear the thought of Buddhism on the brink of oblivion, and so they regularly do missionary work of preaching the Dharma, launching magazines, and making radio broadcasts. This is why quite a few young men and women have committed themselves to the Buddhist cause. Yet they often feel perplexed about what they can do for Buddhism and within Buddhism. This truly is a serious problem for Buddhism.

We are deeply concerned that there is nothing young members of the monastic and lay communities can contribute within Buddhism. This is why such an urgent appeal is being made: We hope that the senior leaders of Buddhism will take care of its young people. Please open some more Buddhist enterprises, such as schools, hospitals, factories, farms, corporations, and so on. Providing young people with opportunities to serve would surely stop any decline in Buddhist membership, and those with skill that are useful in society would then come knocking on Buddhism's gate in droves!

In discussing his specific plans for development, Hsing Yun listed the following points in a speech he gave at Fo Guang Shan in 1990 entitled, "Where is Buddhism's Future:"

- * Classsify Buddhist magazines according to the nature of their readership, in order to meet the needs of different readers

- * Establish a resource center
- * Buddhism needs a newspaper, and it should even set up radio and TV stations
- * Publish an academic journal of sufficient quality
- * Make all Buddhist publications more current, more literary, more life-oriented, more artistic, and have more audio and visual materials
- * Hold various international conferences regularly
- * Hold periodic lectures on Buddhist studies
- * In addition to the main shrine, every temple and monastery should have at least a small-scale library and lecture hall
- * Systematically publish books on specialized topics as a way to assist scholars in their research

Buddhism Opens Schools

Today, Hsing Yun's plans for Buddhist enterprises are already slowly being realized. What follows is a brief description of these efforts:

The First Institution of Higher Learning: University of the West

University of the West (formerly Hsi Lai University) was founded in 1991. With its own campus, the university has everything it needs as an educational institution, including classrooms and office buildings, library and auditorium. The university has established the departments of Business Administration, Religious Studies, Continuing Education, and Languages. It is also the site of the International Academy of Buddhism, the Buddhist Psychology and Counseling Research Center, and The Center for the Study of Minority and Small Business.

In 2006, University of the West became a formal member of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and Hsing Yung was very pleased about this. WASC is one of the six regional

associations that accredit educational institutions in the United States. In order to join the association, an institution must undergo a rigorous process of qualification assessment, and University of the West has successfully passed the WASC inspection and evaluation process on two consecutive occasions, demonstrating the association's affirmation of the university's scholastic quality. Colleges and universities throughout the United States accept degrees and course credits from the University of the West. Its students can apply for loans and grants from the United States government, while its faculty can apply for research grants from private organizations. All of this is of major significance regarding the effort to make University of the West a first-class university in the United States.

The Second Institution of Higher Learning: Nanhua University

Nanhua University is the first general education community university that Fo Guang Shan established in Taiwan. Just like the great benefactor of education Wu Shun (1838-1896), Hsing Yun called upon millions of people to join in founding the school (each person would donate one hundred NT dollars each month over a three year period), which was completed through the outpouring of energy from all of these people who contributed their support for each and every brick and tile. In September of 1996, the Nanhua Management College was opened on schedule and Lien Fang-yu, the wife of the former vice president, gave her speech in recognition of something totally unheard-of at the time, that this was the first university in the history of the Republic of China to offer an education free of all tuition and other costs. Officials of the Ministry of Education also displayed a tone of astonishment when speaking of the speed at which this university was set up.

A number of scholars and educators have given their assessment of Nanhua University. The following is an excerpt from an article entitled "An Impressive Feat of Privately-Sponsored Education"

written by Fu Pei-jung, a professor at National Taiwan University, and published in a newspaper column:

The education world rarely hears such news, that a newly founded college is the first to come up with so many unique characteristics, such as four years of free tuition, general education courses for the freshmen and sophomores irrespective of major, and the lowest student/teacher ratio, and so on. With four years of tuition-free education as its general appeal, this institution has actually realized an exalted ideal in the education field; something that the government itself could not do has been accomplished in the private sector. Everything about this development has brightened the eyes and revived the spirits of all of us who care deeply about education. In today's society with its emphasis upon the ratio of capital to profits and the return on investment, what person or what group could possibly attain such a great accomplishment? The answer is very clear: The Venerable Master Hsing Yun of the Buddhist community.

The President of Nanhua University, Chen Miao-sheng, has repeatedly emphasized: "Nanhua is a university founded through the power of Buddhism, but it is not a Buddhist one, instead, it is a university for all the people." What distinguishes it from the many other universities in the country is that Nanhua excels in its graduate programs, while the total number of departments present at the university is thirty-one, including philosophy, literature, history, architecture, computer science, tourism, cultural exchange, theater and music, fine arts, and religious studies, as well as majors in life-and-death studies and future studies. Nanhua provides a refined teaching style in a small class setting, in which courses are offered for as few as two students without any consideration of the bottom line.

By expanding upon the ancient academy tradition of China, Nanhua has rebuilt the humanistic spirit, setting as its development goal the establishment of a new form of university for the 21st century. Within three short years since its founding, Nanhua distinguished itself with its own unique body of principles and an outstanding record of academic operation. It received the approval of the Ministry of Education to be elevated to the status of a full-fledged university. For the academic year 2001, the Education Ministry's Department of Higher Education conducted an assessment of institutions of higher learning in the seven areas of administrative development planning, teaching, guidance, research, extension and outreach, resource investment, and accounting policies, and Nanhua received superior marks in all categories for a private university.

The Third Institution of Higher Learning: Fo Guang University

When he founded the Fo Guang University, Hsing Yun clearly stipulated that they were to establish a university with a humanistic spirit, one that would employ both compassion and wisdom, and place dual emphasis on practice and understanding; it would also be a university linked to society and open to the world, that would become a public university founded by Buddhists. The application process for the institution began in 1993, and by September of that year, permission was granted for funding preparations and construction of the campus to begin. The first incoming class of students was accepted in the year 2000.

Situated in Linmei Mountain, Ilan County, where Fo Guang Shan was born and developed, Fo Guang University has adopted the following as its guiding principles: "To become a university endowed with an international vision; one that promotes the spirit of human culture and leads Taiwan's institutions of higher learning into the period of globalization." Moving from its initial basis of education for the masters degree, Fo Guang University has extended itself upwards

to the doctorate and post-doctorate levels, and has developed downwards to an undergraduate curriculum, online learning, and teacher certification education at the primary and secondary levels. The university now has twenty-four departments, including literature, life sciences, religious studies, philosophy, art studies, sociology, economics, information sciences, and future studies.

On clear days, one can clearly see the pleasant view of Guishan Island and the waves of the Pacific Ocean, while on rainy days, the rolling clouds and the drifting mists make it seem that one is dwelling in a beautiful wonderland. Besides attending class in the classrooms, teachers and students can hold classes under the trees surrounded by mountain forest that encircles the campus. The teacher/student ratio is one per 14.8, the best in all of Taiwan.

During the university administration assessment for August of 2005 covering nine newly built or reorganized private universities, Fo Guang University was rated "excellent" in the humanities, art studies, athletics, and the social sciences (including education). As for the administrative areas such as teaching resources, level of globalization, extension and outreach, general education, civics education, and administrative resources, Fo Guang University exceeded the standard in all categories.

As Hsing Yun pointed out, Great Britain has its seven to eight hundred year-old Oxford and Cambridge universities; the United States has its two to three hundred year-old Harvard and Yale universities; Japan has its two to three hundred year-old Komazawa and Otani universities; and Taiwan has its Tsinghua and Fu Jen universities with nearly a hundred years of history. If Buddhism were able to have institutions such as these, it would then surely be able to continue the tradition of the Buddha's mission and serve its function of transforming society.

Repeated Innovation in the Fields of Fine Arts and Broadcasting Water Drop Teahouses: Fine Food and Restful Surroundings

Taking its name from the expression, "the kindness of a water drop is repaid with a gushing spring," the Water Drop teahouses are not geared towards making a profit. For the past decade, Water Drop teahouses have been established in dozens of Fo Guang Shan's affiliated temples around the world. They offer delicious vegetarian food that is healthy and nutritious, along with a composite business operation that includes an art gallery with a bookstore. Vegetarians and non-vegetarians alike will find complete enjoyment, because the environment is peaceful and comfortable. Inspiring music drifts through these teahouses, giving you a sense of heavenly joy.

As a refreshing break from worldly concerns, small groups of friends can gather in fellowship on holidays and weekends to rest and relax. Individuals can think quietly alone, tasting a healthy snack and soaking in artistic nourishment as they revitalize their spirits. Gazing out the window, the refined touches of greenery that fill one's view can moisten a parched heart, and for a short time, one can forget all the turmoil and clamor of metropolitan life.

Merit for All Times

Publication of the *Merit Times* began in the year 2000, and punning on its name, it is hoped that the publication can "bring merit to the times and a time for all merit." As its founder, Hsing Yun explained the significance of publishing and distributing the *Merit Times*:

- 1. The *Merit Times* represents a wonderful and purified society:**

We hope that as people open their newspapers during breakfast each morning, they will not always be reading reports of desire, hatred, and corrupt ideas; and we

hope that as people watch the news reports on TV before going to bed, they will not always be seeing such barbarous behavior as murder, robbery, and brutality! We know that although this saha world of ours is dark, we can certainly come across some fragrant plants for every ten steps we take; and during each day, the time the sun is out is still more than the night is long. The people who perform good deeds and act generously are certainly more numerous than those who steal. Our lives are surrounded by so many honest gentlemen and virtuous ladies and their good works and kind deeds are worthy of praise.

Therefore, we believe that even though this saha world is a mass of filth, we must still become a pure lotus. We must express those pure and wonderful aspects of human nature, in order to build a wonderful and purified society.

2. **The *Merit Times* represents human life with its wisdom, benevolence, and courage:**

We hope to discover the potential of each individual for wisdom, the innate nature of goodness, and moral courage. Just like the Boy Scouts, we want to ensure that everyone is prepared with the "Three Virtues" of wisdom, benevolence, and courage, and that they will all possess the "threefold undefiled trainings" of precepts, meditation, and wisdom. It is hoped that through our efforts to expand people's intellect, good deeds, benevolence, justice, and courage, everyone will employ wisdom in considering how to treat others, think three times before acting and have the courage to be responsible and accountable in the face of problems. In this way, we can create a life of wisdom, benevolence, and courage; and practice the precepts, meditation, and wisdom in our daily lives.

3. **The *Merit Times* represents the ties across the bridge**

of compassion:

All the myriad phenomena in the world exist through the coming together of causes and conditions. The entire country revolves around relationships and is bound together through causes and conditions. A good effect can only come from good causes and conditions, while bad causes and conditions naturally lead to a bad effect. We hope that everyone in society will endeavor to find connection, communication, and unity together. The Merit Times is a bridge of compassion that ties together each and every heart, so that together we can create a warm and happy society.

4. The *Merit Times* represents reports about causes, conditions, and effects:

We hope that all of our reports will be able to further the tasks of improving social morals and elevating human nature. We hope that our reports will place emphasis on commending the wondrous things that people do, introducing new knowledge and technology from around the world, and maintaining the ties that bind together the world Chinese community; it will also cover the introduction of good people and good works, general knowledge for family life, and positive education for young people. Just like a correspondence school, we will project the classroom of the great Buddha into the living rooms of every family, enabling the Buddha, Dharma teachers and great worthies to employ their eloquence in preaching the Dharma. We also hope to offer our readers daily information about art, travel, medicine, and sports.

The Happy and Joyous Beautiful Life Television

In 1998, Fo Guang Shan's work of spreading the Dharma

entered a new era as "Buddha's Light Television" formally began broadcasting on January 1st. As Hsing Yun explained, there were four important reasons that led to the establishment of Buddha's Light Television, which represented a solid accomplishment that overcame all kinds of difficulties despite the extremely difficult economic conditions and poor media environment at the time; and these four are:

1. Carrying on the principles of the Buddha's Dharma preaching:

The Buddha made it his mission to spread the Dharma and bring liberation to living beings. In carrying on the Buddha's compassionate vow, we hope that the Buddha's Light Television can improve the effectiveness of this transformative power, so that the Dharma can be promoted and expanded, leading to the liberation of even more living beings.

2. Taking on the responsibility of social transformation:

In this age of technology and moral decline, we need positive broadcasters who can awaken positive moral ideas; and in this ever-changing age of information, we need top-quality broadcasters who can pass on top-quality cultural information. Buddha's Light Television is taking on this important task of social purification and transformation.

3. Elevating the quality of the people's faith:

Correct faith makes life more inspiring and makes living more enriching. Buddha's Light Television expounds and propagates the true faith in Buddhism, which elevates the quality of the people's faith and leads everyone to the correct path of Buddhist learning.

4. Promoting harmony within family life:

The family is the foundation for social development. Broadcast media reaches every household, directly influencing family life. Buddha's Light Television broad-

casts the correct knowledge and correct view, promoting harmony within the family through such concepts as happiness, joy, and the Four Immeasurables of loving kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity.

In order to break out of the stereotypical view of religious television, the name of Buddha's Light Television was changed to "Beautiful Life Television in October of 2002. With its spiritual meaning of happiness and joy, Beautiful Life Television [BLTV] is developing forward along four major tracks: "a youthful orientation, an educational orientation, globalization, and a public welfare orientation."

BLTV is the only television station in the history of Taiwanese television that does not accept commercial advertising. With neither income from commercial advertising nor any government funding, all costs are entirely supported by donations to the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Televised Dharma Propagation. The difficulties of such an approach is a long story, but doing it this way has meant that BLTV can offer society a pure channel that remains untarnished. Indeed, one could say that BLTV is a fresh breath of air in a media industry dominated by commercialism.

Since its establishment eight years ago, the scope of its viewership covers twenty-six countries including North America and Southeast Asia, as well as Hong Kong and Macau. BLTV also has its loyal viewers in Mainland China, where the growth of its TV ratings has doubled and tripled. Each year, BLTV is nominated for a Golden Bell Award in the satellite division, and it was ranked third among all the television stations that won the most awards for the entire year of 2003. In January of 2005, BLTV was examined by the authorizing agency and inspected by service providers, which led to its successful bid to obtain channels 7 and 8 of the public service channels. And in July of that same year, the Media Monitoring Alliance designated

BLTV as the one and only quality TV channel. The General Manager of BLTV is Chang Tsung-yueh, who herself is a senior media specialist. According to her understanding, the annual government subsidy for Public TV is around thirty-seven million USD, while most broadcast TV stations operate with a staff that numbers between seven to eight hundred people. BLTV on the other hand only has eighty people on its staff, so that "with the least amount of people and the lowest budget, it can produce the most effective programming."

As statistics demonstrate, more than half of BLTV's viewers are not Buddhists. They watch purely out of enjoyment of the station's programming and because they identify with its principles. One university professor reported that his family had kept the TV turned off for quite a few years, but recently they only turned it on again so they could watch BLTV. A certain hospital worker in Mainland China's Liaoning Province wrote in to express his gratitude, for although he does not understand much about Buddhism, yet he just loves to watch BLTV programs, and likes to enjoy them with his friends. He even donates four hundred RMB each month (a quarter of his salary), making him a "friend of Beautiful Life Television."

The Secret to Successfully Launching Buddhist Enterprises

One must wait for the right opportunity, and develop real strength. Having worked with Hsing Yun since the beginning and personally participated in many projects, the Ven. Tzu Jung is quite outspoken in her candor. When Hsing Yun first broached the matter of a Buddhist-run TV station, everyone outside of Fo Guang Shan thought he was dreaming of some fairy tale from the *Arabian Nights*, and even his close disciples all opposed the move. It was clear to them that their financial resources, manpower, knowledge, and technical skills were insufficient to the task, all of which was made much worse by Hsing Yun's insistence that no commercial advertising be accepted. This was completely contrary to the customs in this industry. They recommended that it would be best if Fo Guang Shan produced the content and let the television companies do the broadcasting.

Tzu Jung recalled:

It seemed that all of these matters were completed in the midst of a difficult environment, but he himself did not feel there was any difficulty. He had the courage to try things that others dared not try, nor did he give up in the face of setbacks. If the conditions were not right, he waited until they were, or created the right conditions. When the master makes his final decision to do something, he will explain the necessity and importance of it all, for he does not easily submit to the opposition of the majority. In fact, our past experience has shown us time and time again, that the master's wisdom is much higher than ours. If he wants to jump in, we're not going to hold him back.

If you ask Hsing Yun how it happens that everything he does in life is so successful, he will tell you that there is no secret, for all it takes is confidence in the power of the mind; thinking in a positive direction every day and night, and believing that the endeavor at hand will turn out successful. If you feel that there is hope when you open your eyes each day and keep on going non-stop, then everything will surely be completed. Hsing Yun excels in conforming to the environment, putting together the right causes and conditions, and exerting his influence. Once, the well-known reporter Lu Keng came for a visit. Everyone knew he was an old friend of Hsing Yun. They all came up to him and said: You have to convince the master that trying to launch a Buddhist-run newspaper is something quite impossible; we simply must not do it. As it turned out over the course of the conversation, not only did Lu Keng fail to dissuade Hsing Yun of his plan, but even he himself was talked into writing a dedicated column for the Merit Times.

Given the grand and impressive scale of these projects, as well as the difficulties surrounding their launches, any other individual would probably have to invest a lifetime of effort into even one of these projects, and yet still be unable to bring it to a satisfying conclusion. But over these dozen years or so, everything has been created by the hands of Hsing Yun, a feat that can be so aptly explained by one of his own sayings: where there's the Dharma, there's a way!

Chapter
Nineteen

Literary Mind, Buddha Mind

Hsing Yun's writing capacity is exceptionally large and some of his disciples have exclaimed: "He writes books faster than we can read them!" In order to expound upon Humanistic Buddhism and propagate the Dharma, Hsing Yun has spent his life like a silkworm, endlessly spinning out thread upon thread of silk to generate a richly colored tapestry of Humanistic Buddhism.

"With a face like a full moon in Autumn,/ And eyes like pure lotus flowers:/ The Dharma is like a great ocean,/ That flows into Ananda's heart./" These words were spoken by the Manjusri Bodhisattva in praise of Ananda, one of the Ten Principle Disciples of Sakyamuni Buddha. Ananda was known for his pre-eminence in hearing, and among all the Buddha's disciples, he had the most majestic features and the strongest memory. After the Buddha's parinirvana, five hundred great bhiksus gathered in Rajagrha [the capital city of Magadha Kingdom] to compile the Buddhist canon, and it was Ananda who would recite: "Thus I have heard: One time the Buddha was" Over the ensuing period that went on for some twenty-seven years, he recited everything he had committed to memory. The earliest Buddhist scriptures like the *Longer Discourses of the Buddha*, the *Miscellaneous Discourses of the Buddha*, the *Sutra in Parables*, the *Dharma Phrase Sutra*, and so on, were all recited by Ananda at the First Council to compile the Buddhist canon.

"I was lost in degradation when the Buddha was in the world;/ And I appeared in this world after the Buddha had passed into parinirvana./" Although Hsing Yun has never personally met the Buddha, his realizations, explanations, propagation, and practice of the Dharma throughout his life have already been conveyed by various means to become an edifying legacy deeply implanted in this human world. In particular, it has been the decades of constant writing in which Hsing Yun follows closely in the tradition of Ananda by expanding and developing the teachings and instructions of the

Buddha.

The Fragrance of Books Opens the Heart Outward

Hsing Yun's literary age is over sixty and he definitely can be considered a "senior writer." There have been times when his disciples asked why he started writing, which brought to mind an incident from his childhood. When he joined the monastic order at the age of twelve, he studied for six years at Qixia Buddhist College. There were quite a few teachers who taught him at the school, but there was one in particular who left him with a somewhat more lasting impression; this teacher's name was "Haishan." So why does he remember the name of this teacher in particular? Hsing Yun explained that on one occasion his teacher Haishan gave an essay assignment on the following topic: "Discuss how enlightenment without inherent nature directly manifests prajna-wisdom." Hsing Yun was still quite young, and although he could not understand the meaning of the topic, he still conscientiously set about writing an essay of several pages. After being graded, the essay was returned to him, and Hsing Yun saw his teacher's critique: "Two golden orioles twitter amid the emerald green willows;/ A flock of white egrets rise up into the blue sky." Upon reading this, Hsing Yun was quite pleased with himself, thinking that the teacher was praising him with this verse. So it was in high spirits that he showed it to some older classmates, and they told him that the verse meant that the teacher was criticizing Hsing Yun for "not knowing what he is talking about." On another occasion, the teacher assigned the topic "Hometown" as an essay topic. Hsing Yun worked feverishly, racking his brains to complete the assignment, and he thought he had done an excellent job. Yet he was surprised to learn that his teacher had critiqued his work with the following couplet: "Just like counting the wealth of others,/ Though oneself has nary a cent of one's own." The meaning here is that his teacher was criticizing Hsing Yun for a lack of real strength in his writing and suspected

him of plagiarism.

Hsing Yun was still a simple-minded youth during his stay at Qixia, but by the time he was studying at the Jiaoshan Buddhist College, he had already matured greatly. But even that was thanks to a miraculous turn of events. It was the 1930s and the tidal wave of Western civilization had reached the East. At this point when culture was undergoing dramatic change, the traditional Buddhist temples and monasteries still maintained their aloofness from the world. Not even a single copy of a newspaper could be found within their doors. This was quite unsatisfactory for a young monk with a passionate desire to learn and who also cared deeply for society. Hsing Yun notes: "I knew from an early age that there was no future without reading, but at the time that I wanted to do so, there were simply no books that could be read, nor did I know how to read either."

But then something occurred around the age of fifteen or sixteen after he had become a monastic. There was a teachers' college on the outskirts of Nanjing that was not too far from Qixia Monastery. Everyone at the school had been evacuated into the hinterland to escape the war, but all the many books kept in the schools library had been left scattered around the building, and so the monks moved these books back to the monastery. The older monastics did not understand what treasures these books contained, but Hsing Yun would often find time to linger among these volumes, and he struggled really hard to obtain the position of librarian over this collection of books. He would make use of any free time he had as he managed the lending, returning, and re-shelving of the books on behalf of others, and began to read large numbers of books within the context of his life at an old fashioned and traditional monastic center. "When I became a librarian, I would at least come to know a book's title and author when people came to borrow them, and if a book was always being loaned out, that told me it was a good book, and I too would take it out and read it. Over time, I understood how to appreciate such

things, and I realized the limitless wonders contained within the world of books." This was the golden age of Hsing Yun's fervent taste for intellectual nourishment. "I would hide under the covers of my bed after the lights had been put out for the night, and there I would read in secret by the light of a glowing incense stick." From this point onwards, Hsing Yun had formed the life-long habit of always having reading material close at hand.

Seeing the Writing Brush as a Way to Clean the Dust Obscuring the Mind

Hsing Yun had never once in his life received any formal training in composition, but he always had a certain passion for writing that was hard to suppress. He saw the writing brush as a way to clean away the dust that obscures the human mind. When he was just eighteen in 1945, he began editing his own exclusive magazine that he published monthly while studying at the Jiaoshan Buddhist College, giving it the name of *My Garden*. Like most other magazines, *My Garden* published the editor's notes, lectures, and essays; it also contained prose pieces, novels, poetry, and literary sketches.

Editing something for one's own amusement is certainly not bad, but having appreciative readers is even more wonderful. At that time, Buddhist college students were not allowed to read newspapers, but the students were always thinking of ways to sneak a look. Seeing how articles by their classmates were being published, they also wanted to try their hand at it. Hsing Yun too submitted articles to various newspaper supplements in the Zhenjiang area, and his success rate was quite high. The first article he submitted was "Money Talk," which described what different people felt when spending their money, such as rich people, poor people, social nonentities, and people of status. This composition was actually published by a newspaper, becoming Hsing Yun's literary debut. With such encouragement, his second piece was "The Sacrifice for Equality," which described

how a mouse would sense the injustice of being eaten by a cat, but it would still be eaten by it in the end. The point being that it is impossible to talk about fairness under inherently unequal positions of power. He then went on to publish a series of articles, including "No Way to Mail this Letter" and "The Self-Realization that should be Present amid the Sounds of Victory," as well as various works of New Poetry.

Jiaoshan Buddhist College has a distinguished reputation as the "Beijing University of the Buddhist community," and the writings of its students possess both the philosophical tenets of the Dharma for content, and the beauty of literature for external form. As such, they were looked upon favorably by the Zhenjiang news circles at the time, which is why they were invited to serve as editors for many newspaper supplements. Hsing Yun also accepted the invitation of the *New Jiangsu Newspaper* to serve as the editor of its "New Intellectual Currents Supplement," and after his arrival in Xuzhou, he edited the "Splendid Light Supplement of the *Xu Bao Newspaper*. He even went on to jointly edit the *Raging Billows Monthly* in Yixing's Liyang County with the Ven. Zhiyong. The publication was distributed as a mimeograph, but since the characters that Zhiyong inscribed on the metal plates were exceptionally fine, the *Raging Billows Monthly* became more popular than certain other publications printed from lead type. Even the *Tidal Sounds Magazine*, the most authoritative publication of its time, introduced the *Raging Billows Monthly* in each one of its issues over a two-year period. Its editor, the Ven. Daxing, also printed the following comment about the monthly in large type: "We now have some more fresh reinforcements!" This was quite an encouragement for Hsing Yun and Zhiyong. The *Raging Billows Monthly* put out a total of twenty plus issues, and it called upon the younger generation to devote itself to Buddhism, and then find ways to reform its corrupt practices, thus enabling Buddhism to advance towards a new state.

The Earliest, Modern Literary Works of Taiwanese Buddhism

Coming from Mainland China to a remote Taiwan, Hsing Yun became a drifting refugee living all alone in a strange land, and yet his will to improve himself remained clear and resolute. He was like a seed cast upon the ground but sure to sprout, and though some rock or other impediment would press down on it, its tender sprouts spreading forth would surely seek some way around and find an opening.

One could say that Taiwan a half century ago was a desert of Buddhist culture. Though certain Buddhist temples and monasteries possessed copies of the Buddhist canon, these were kept locked up in some high chamber. Most Buddhist followers could not even look at them, much less approach them. The Buddhist books available in the marketplace were mainly chanting manuals or texts that exhorted people to do good deeds. There was the occasional copy of the *Amitabha Sutra* or the *Diamond Sutra*, but even these were copies of older editions being circulated. Their content was abstruse and their printing was crude. This is why Hsing Yun tried to write his books on Buddhism in a clear and easily understandable style. For example, his first book, *The Chapter on the Universal Gate of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva*, published in 1953, was translated from Japanese by relying on an elementary Japanese dictionary. There was *Singing in Silence* that enabled people to understand the meaning of the Dharma instruments used in Buddhism. This book was written when he was at Fayun Temple in Miaoli looking after the forest, as he knelt on the ground composing each sentence. His *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* that narrated stories of the Buddha's life and his *Biographies of the Buddha's Ten Principle Disciples* that introduced the Buddha's disciples were both completed during evening writing sessions that went on to daybreak under a solitary lamp.

Hsing Yun's book *The National Master Yulin* has been adapted many times as a theatrical production and as a movie in Mandarin

and Taiwanese entitled "The Maiden and the Monk." The book was even adapted for television as a mini-series entitled "A Romance from Lifetime to Lifetime" (Broadcast by China Television in 1993, the show was an enthusiastic success with every episode re-broadcast during noontime the following day and it had the highest ratings ever for a mini-series.)

There is also a story behind this book about how a bucket full of urine sparked some inspiration. The memory of that is still fresh in his mind as he speaks of it. Once he was going around the island on a preaching tour, and Hsing Yun and his old friend the Ven. Zhuyun had taken lodging in a farmer's house in the mountains near Nantou's Yuchih Township. There are no bathroom facilities in the countryside, and so a urine bucket had been placed in the room. Its noxious, unpleasant odor pervaded the room and made it impossible to sleep. "Hey Zhuyun, I can't sleep. I'd like to listen to one of your stories." The Ven. Zhuyun knew all kinds of literary allusions and anecdotes, and he loved to tell stories most of all. "Then I will tell you the story of the Imperial Preceptor Yulin." When he had finished the story, dawn was breaking over the horizon. "I will certainly not forget the pains you have taken in telling me this story." After returning home, Hsing Yun leaned over the broken-down sewing machine at Lei Yin Temple and wrote down the story, turning it into a book.

By explaining profound ideas in simple terms, these books have broken the old hackneyed mold of Buddhist books of the past, while the sharpness and clarity of their layout and printing gives readers a completely new impression. In this way, at the same time they are reading these books, they will naturally generate a sense of respect for Buddhism, and so raise their opinion of the religion. Editions of both the *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* and *The National Master Yulin* have reached several dozen printings. Readers from grandparents to grandchildren have read these two books over and over again, and they still relish them even today, which makes

them quite worthy of their reputation as some of the best and longest sellers in Taiwan's publishing history. Furthermore, these two books were already circulating fifty years ago throughout such Southeast Asian countries as Hong Kong, the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. They became some of the first works of modern Buddhist literature that any local would encounter. On one occasion, Hsing Yun remarked, "Besides all the assistance from our devotees, most of the funding for building Fo Guang Shan came from the popularity of these two books. This is why I often joke that the land for Fo Guang Shan was bought by *The National Master Yulin*, while its temple shrines were built by the *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha*."

An Unbreakable Connection to Literature

The magazine *Literary News* published an article that revealed Hsing Yun's lifelong connection to literature:

Buddhist scriptures have influenced me the most; for example, the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, which is more than twenty thousand characters in length, has the sublime beauty of a style similar to that of modern poetry; or like the *Flower Adornment Sutra* that narrates the fifty-three pilgrimages of the Youth Sudhana in a way reminiscent of stories from *The Scholars* with its complicated plots and unusual sense of creativity; then there is the *Sutra of Great Treasure* which is like a collection of many short stories with their simple style and unique clarity. In the case of the *Sutra of the Hundred Parables*, we have stories like fairy tales that contain profound moral lessons to be pondered. Collections of Buddhist Chan sayings like the *Jingde Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* and *Pointing to the Moon* not only possess a literary richness in their realistic portrayal of everyday life, but they also have a philosophical richness in their ideas about

the nature of the mind. Even Dr. Hu Shi (1891-1962) has said that the collections of Chan sayings are China's earliest examples of vernacular literature.

Among the many ancient worthies who translated the Buddhist scriptures, the great master Kumarajiva (344-413 CE) in particular is the most outstanding of them all. For example, the *Amitabha Sutra*, the *Diamond Sutra*, and the *Lotus Sutra* that we read and recite today are all his translations. His degree of popularity even exceeds that of the great master of the Buddhist canon in the Tang Dynasty, Xuanzhuang (600-664 CE). Actually, the reason for this is quite simple, Kumarajiva's literary attainments are more profound, while his translations are quite smooth and graceful, just like drifting clouds and flowing water, which makes it so easy on the mouth to chant. Since his writing can express feelings and convey ideas so easily just like modern-day vernacular writing, his translations are proficient and easy to understand, which is why his outstanding literary attainments have also created Kumarajiva's value, both as a translator and literary artist.

Buddhism's transmission to China not only enriched Chinese philosophical thought, but it also added many new terms and words to Chinese writing, such as "karma," "dependent origination," "nirvana," "suchness," "self-nature," and so on. In narrating stories about karma, Buddhism's popular literature such as *Sutra on the Original Vows of the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha* and *Pictorial Depiction of the Eight Stages of the Buddha's Life*, not only enlivens the content of folk literature, but also makes a positive contribution to the moral improvement of the human heart.

At first, the analogy I made between Buddhist scriptures and literature was not easily accepted within Buddhist

circles. Some elders felt that my ideas represented an irreverent attack upon the Dharma, and that I should not associate the Buddhist scriptures with worldly practices. But from the psychological perspective of someone who loves literature, it is clear that these works all share the same qualities of truth, goodness, and beauty. So why can't Buddhist studies be combined with literature?

The author Lin Ching-hsuan (b. 1953) asked Hsing Yun why he keeps on writing. Hsing Yun replied that the written word represents an endless cycle of generations, as well as the material employed in propagating the Dharma, for though the individual is no longer present, culture will still remain. If a single phrase is appreciated an individual may feel good about Buddhism for a lifetime and even on into the next lifetime. It is through the medium of the written word that the people of one time and one region can not only come into contact with the great ideas of the Buddha, but even tens of thousands of years later, living beings on this planet and other planets will be able to experience the profound meaning of true prajna-wisdom through the medium of prajna-wisdom in words.

A Diligent Writer with a Nimble Literary Mind

The written word is a kind of magic show in which practice makes perfect; the written word is a troop of soldiers that must train regularly. The more you write, the more skilled you become, for the non-dual practice for good writing is represented by a single word: "diligence." Hsing Yun has honed his skills at writing both day and night, and has not been delinquent in these efforts. More than fifty years ago, he would be working on his draft until dawn. The first thing he did in the morning was to post his manuscript in the mailbox, and only then would he go back to perform his morning chanting.

Hsing Yun has always enjoyed editing other people's writing. Both the venerables Tzu Hui and Tzu Chuang became Buddhists in

the beginning because they enjoyed writing and also liked to have Hsing Yun edit their work. From the biweekly *Awakening the World* to the *Universal Gate* magazine, he has helped his disciples go over manuscripts for many years, and more often than not, it was just that moment before he headed out the door or just that minute before he went to bed in the middle of the night, that his disciples would come in with a pile of manuscripts in hand. All he could do was to work the night through so as not to leave the readers waiting. But in so doing, he increased the speed at which he read the manuscripts, quickly identifying the articles' main points and giving them titles. Nothing in this world is a complete waste of effort.

Hsing Yun's writing capacity is large and some of his disciples have exclaimed: "He writes books faster than we can read them!" In order to expound upon Humanistic Buddhism and propagate the Dharma, Hsing Yun has spent his life like a silkworm, endlessly spinning out thread upon thread of silk to generate a richly colored tapestry of Humanistic Buddhism. Seeing him so busy with all of his travels in recent years, some people doubt that he really has time to write anything himself. The Ven. Man Yi, secretary of the Dharma Hall, can bear witness: "Indeed, every single word came directly from his mouth, I just wrote it all down in a true and accurate fashion."

Man Yi admires Hsing Yun for the nimbleness of his literary mind, which enables him to finish something in one draft. It took him three years to write *Between Ignorance And Enlightenment*, and sometimes as he takes walks or when he is waiting for his plane at the airport, he will suddenly be inspired and dictate an entire article without anything vague or extra hanging on. When typed into the computer, it is already a finished piece; the titles, structure, and paragraphs are all in the right places, so there is no need to move things around or make adjustments. Sometimes he will be dictating and stop halfway to answer the phone. He can pick up right where he left off, for he never forgets what he had just been dictating. Moreover, he is

quite able to utilize any spare moment of time to draw a mental outline, so he can do his writing in the car or on the plane. At any time of the day or night, something is always brewing in his mind, and no matter how busy he gets, he has never delayed work on a manuscript for some idle conversation.

This was how he trained himself in such a skillful ability:

Money was extremely tight during my life of Buddhist training. Writing on a single piece of paper had to be done twice, once using a pencil and a second time with a Chinese writing brush. Once writing had filled up the front of the page, I started writing on the back; once both sides were all full of writing, I then added characters between the lines. Later on in order to save on paper and ink, I simply drafted my composition completely in my head, and then wrote it down directly in my notebook. I even dispensed with doing a rough draft of my essays. On top of all of this, we always had to stand in long lines whenever going to the dining hall for meals or entering the main hall, and so I became adept at using this waiting time to make mental notes about my draft. So I have maintained this practice up to this very day. At anytime and anywhere I am mulling over some manuscript, while the subject matter for my writing is often organized in a round about manner in my head, so that when I am riding in a car or walking, I am thinking about how to compose its structure. It often happens that a stroll outside will mean that an instructional talk will already be thought out, or that a tour around the monastery will result in the drafting of a planning outline. I am often able to dash off an article in no time, going from opening to conclusion.

Indeed, this ability is not some naturally innate gift by any means; all of it came about by overcoming the straightened

circumstances of my life.

Fo Guang Shan's "Mighty Pens" are Like a Forest

As Hsing Yun has said before, the happiest things in his life are: one, being a monastic; and two, writing. But one may ask what the "selling points" are for his books. Why do generations of readers love them so much? Why are they so widely popular for such a long time? The publisher of the magazine *Commentary* Lin Hsien-chang has his own unique perspective. As he interprets it, Hsing Yun is able to combine his own realizations with the eternal principles that stem from the Buddha's enlightenment, something that transcends time and national boundaries. It is just like how Tsai Chih-chung's cartoons are appreciated throughout the world. This is not because of Tsai Chih-chung alone, but is because of Confucius, Mengzi, and Zhuangzi, in that Tsai Chih-chung has found a way to express their ideas in cartoon form. Now Hsing Yun has found his own literary form and style that are easily understandable and warm-hearted, with which he can express himself. Lin Hsien-chang has described Hsing Yun in the following terms:

The majority of people know him as a religious personality first and then as a writer and publisher. But I know him as a writer and publisher first, and then as a religious personality. He brings people together through his creativity and publishing, and then transmits to them the religious principles, using books to communicate the Dharma. Each time I meet with him. I don't feel like it's a master and disciple relationship. On the contrary, I feel like we are professional colleagues.

The renowned scholar Chai Sung-lin has humbly adopted

"the observations of a beginning reader," and has offered the following special characteristics as based on his analysis of Hsing Yun's writings:

The first point: *Hsing Yun does not see himself as great. There have been those eminent Buddhist monks or great writers in history who often saw themselves as surpassing their readers in exalted greatness, which meant that it was impossible for other people to approach them. But Hsing Yun places himself among us, encouraging every ordinary individual with the idea that they all can do fantastic things.*

The second point: *In a period of declining readership, nobody has the patience to read any long-winded essays. None of Hsing Yun's essays exceed four hundred characters (Chai Sung-lin has proven himself as an expert in mathematical statistics). This way, the reader can rest a while upon becoming weary of reading, which is both leisurely and relaxing.*

The third point: *Hsing Yun excels at telling stories. If there is any hint of ridicule, it is always of the self-deprecating sort, for he never ridicules others. He does not want to embarrass his readers by making them feel reprimanded.*

The Fourth point: *Hsing Yun often writes with empathy, and so people reading his books feel that he is very concerned about them and understands their difficulties. He can help them express what they themselves find impossible to do. If you are suffering right now, it seems that he finds that unbearable. The viewpoint he adopts in his writings is very broad, but everyone feels that Hsing Yun shares their viewpoint.*

Personally, Hsing Yun looks upon the tidal wave of praise that has come his way with a sense of detachment. But when it comes to his disciples following in his footsteps by pursuing writing,

publishing their works, becoming a forest of "mighty pens," Hsing Yun is on the contrary extraordinarily supportive and comforting. For the past forty years, he has placed great emphasis on developing literary talent. The first generation of Fo Guang Shan disciples such as Tzu Chuang, Tzu Jung, Tzu Chia, Tzu Yi, and Hsin Ting each have their own publications, while those that came somewhat later to the path have proved to be outstanding in this area, including Yi Kong, Yi Fa, Hui Kai, Yi Yu, Yi Sheng, Yi Chun, Yung Ming, Yung Chin, Yung Chuang, Yung Yun. Some have become luminaries in the area of academic research, while others have become prolific writers in the literary arena. In recent years, succeeding generations have produced a host of talents, including Hui Chao, Man Kuo, Man Chien, Man Yi, Man Chi, Man Kuan ..., these represent Fo Guang Shan's "mighty pens." In order to encourage his disciples with their writing, he will personally write a preface to his disciple's books, regardless of how busy or tired he is. He may even make his own recommendations regarding the book's title and editing. His instructions are like the final masterful stroke that makes everything come alive.

A Tireless Reader even at the Age of Eighty

Life has its limits, but knowledge is limitless. As mentioned before, Hsing Yun formed a unique connection with the library at Qixia Monastery and discovered the pleasure in reading books. Since that time, he has never stopped this self-study approach to gaining knowledge. He bought books whenever he had money, for he preferred to skip a meal, have one less article of clothing made, or take one less bus ride, rather than being unable to buy a book. Today, Fo Guang Shan operates more than twenty libraries, and many of the books stored within them were originally his books for reading on the road or during his travels, and books that he kept in his pocket or at his bedside. These too have become the treasure contained within these libraries. After he finishes a book, his disciples will then read it

in turn, becoming a truly beautiful form of exchange, as the emotional bond connecting master and disciple is expressed through the exchange of books. Indeed, for many years now the most welcome gift between disciples has been the giving and receiving of a good book. Hsing Yun is quite earnest when he says: "In my life, I can never remember who gave me the most in donations of money, but I will never forget who has given me a book."

At the age of eighty, Hsing Yun had already become an eminent monk renowned throughout the world, and yet he was still a tireless reader. Among the baggage that accompanies him each time he goes abroad, there is sure to be a black suitcase that is weighted down by the dozen or so books it contains, which includes some of his most favorite reading material, such as *Biographical Literature*, the *China and the World Magazine*, and *Asiaweek*. It often happens that on the eleven-hour flight from Taipei to Los Angeles, he will spend nearly eight hours reading. The author has personally observed Hsing Yun on a four-hour flight from Taipei to Singapore, during which time he did not eat, drink, nor go to the bathroom, while his eyes never left the page he was reading.

Hsing Yun has his own extraordinarily penetrating understanding regarding reading.

For me, reading puts an individual's heartbeat in sync with the pulse of the world, for all things Chinese and foreign are all laid out before one's eyes, while the past and the present are one continuum of experience. This is why no matter how busy I am I will fill up those free moments during travel by opening a book. The breath exhaled by its pages makes me feel as if I am a current flowing freely in a fragrant ocean with an abundance of dynamic energy.

The ancients have said, "Three days without reading makes one repulsive in appearance." But the way I am today, I cannot go a day without opening a book to read. It seems

that I will almost read any book or flip through any volume I see, for reading books has become my daily habit. In fact, one could say that reading is that activity in the world that gives you a return on the least amount of effort. Ancient sages, writers, or scholars may perhaps dedicate years of effort or the labor of a lifetime to cast their experience, observations, feelings, or thoughts into a brilliant piece of writing that becomes a book, and yet the reader simply spends several days of effort completely absorbing what is written there. Is this not the happiest thing?

Each and every book polishes one bright side after another in our life. The ancients have said, "With a belly full of poetry and prose, one's breath is naturally fragrant. If one has books under their belt, then such a person will have a beautiful radiance. We must make ourselves into a body of light, before we can join in with the splendid radiance of the world.

"Just as the movements of Heaven are ever constant, so the Gentleman strives to improve himself ceaselessly." The brilliant Ming writer Jin Shengtan (1608-1661 CE) once remarked, "With books one is truly a wealthy man; without illness one is a divine immortal." I can truly appreciate the meaning of these words. I enjoy sharing the enjoyment of a book or essay with everyone. I often place books and magazines to face those sitting in front of me, and after many years of practice, I am already able to read books and magazines upside down quite fluently. This is also a way of making connections with others.

An ancient worthy has said, "Having the time to read books is considered a blessing; having the strength to help others is considered a blessing; having the knowledge to write and expound is considered a blessing; not hearing any contention over right and wrong is considered a blessing;

and having knowledgeable and honorable friends is considered a blessing."

To obtain wisdom from books means you can come to know and interact with the great minds of the past and present. Someone in the past once said: "Reading the Confucian Classics and their commentaries gives one a solid foundation; reading Sima Qian's (145-90 BCE) Historical Record and Sima Guang's (1019-1086 CE) Comprehensive Mirror to Aid in Government gives you a complete understanding of human affairs."

An old saying goes, "Live into old age, learn into old age." Only through ceaseless striving over one's studies can an individual make rapid progress. The accumulation of knowledge does not only rely upon the number of one's years, but it also includes the development fostered by reading and thinking. What I read enables me to understand the newest trends in society and the country, and reading also enables me to master the vital pulse of the times.

In my estimation, a thoroughgoing sensitivity is key to reading, while method and technique are secondary; effectiveness in reading is achieved through diligence and practice, while concentration and initiative are its practical application. Don't assume that reading books is simply a matter of reading the text printed on white paper. Reading people, life, and society as books is also a consummate skill, because even though books can provide us with some concepts, it is life itself that makes up the content of what we read. A person may obtain a Ph. D. and yet neither understand life nor appreciate human feelings. Such a person may be said to understand reading but I would not believe it.

There is really no difference between delving deeply into the wisdom of the Dharma and delving deeply into the experience of living. A reader of true ability can read and understand "life," and comprehend such books as "living" or

"human affairs." Naturally, such a reader would be well versed in all aspects of life, for nothing would be an impediment.

Read but Don't Read, Don't Read but Read

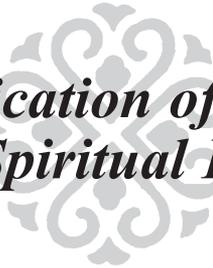
Hsing Yun particularly emphasizes that it is one's "academic attainments" rather than one's "academic record" that matters when it comes to working in society. Being able to read books is not as good as reading human beings; being able to read human beings is not as good as knowing human beings; being able to know human beings is not as good as behaving as a human being should; and being able to behave as a good human being should is not as good as being able to employ people well. Read, but don't read (lifeless books); don't read, but read (perfecting an understanding of the principle of things). Read books with words, but read more wordless books (the great earth with its mountains and rivers, as well as the experience of human life). Hsing Yun often says that reading is a kind of happiness. One should read in ways that make life more interesting and enjoyable, rather than bring more suffering. One should read with a solid understanding of one's own proclivities, and moreover, one should also read and understand the great books of "life" and "human feelings," for only in this way can one become a true reader.

An individual's mental paradigm cannot simply run in a straight line, one must consider things from many angles: front, back, left, right, top, bottom, obverse, and reverse, for this often leads to some new turn. Human life in this world requires that special "wisdom that always considers each possible change in events," for no matter what situation is encountered, if the mountain cannot be changed, then a road can be changed; if a road cannot be changed, then human beings can change their routes; if human beings cannot change their routes, then the circumstances can be changed; if the circumstances cannot be changed, then the mind can change. "When the mind is still, birds read the heavens;/ When the water is clear, fish read the moon./" In reading the Venerable Master HsingYun, both the man and the book, one never tires even after myriad readings.

Chapter
Twenty



*The Unification of Art with
the Spiritual Path*



With Humanistic Buddhism as his starting point, Hsing Yun has further expanded "the eighty-four thousand methods of practice" by employing artistic forms such as literature, fine arts, music, and calligraphy, presenting something new and different to society. In so doing, he has given Buddhism a powerful increase in forward momentum, greatly infusing it with a new sense of vitality.

In this world, anything that possesses aesthetic value is called "art." Art is not simply a painting, a sculpture, or even a poem, a calligraphy work, or a lecture. Whatever can offer a sense of beauty, can strike a sympathetic chord, and is able to elevate and expand the spirit of human beings, constitutes art, for this is where the value of art can be found. The master humorist Lin Yutang promoted the "art of living," in which the act of dressing, eating, walking, standing, sitting, or lying down had its artistic component! Most people drink tea while connoisseurs sip and evaluate; many people love books, but only a small number of people can grasp the wisdom they contain. It all has to do with the art of living.

Religion and art are like a pair of twins who have kept each other company, hand in hand, for millennia, and it often happens that times of peak emotional and religious fervor are also when art experiences a period of thriving growth. Art obtains emotions and inspiration from religion, and much of the world's great architecture, sculpture, music, and painting were profoundly stimulated by religion. Buddhism is one of China's major cultural currents that has permeated all levels of Chinese life, including philosophical thought, literature, art, technology, medicine, music, dance, and so on. During Buddhism's transmission and propagation, art has played the role of a trailblazer since ancient times. In different regions at different times, Buddhism has relied upon art to popularize its teachings and to expand its influence. On the other hand, art has drawn its nourishment from Buddhism, which has enriched cultural aesthetics and the conditions of life. How we reconstruct the tight relationship between

these in modern times so that they can enhance each other, and thereby enable the principles of Buddhism and the cultural arts to step together into the human world and onto the world stage, is truly a huge and complex problem. Under Hsing Yun's leadership, the Fo Guang Shan order not only solved this problem but will clearly and dramatically reveal its answer to the human world.

Artistic Splendor

The Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries

There are altogether ten Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries. Six are located in Taiwan as follows: the Taipei Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery (which includes art classrooms for children), the Fo Guang Shan Cultural Artifacts Exhibition Hall (name has now been changed to the Main Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery), the Fo Guang Shan Museum of Treasures, the Pingtung Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery, the Ilan Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery, and the gallery in Changhua (under planning); and four others are located abroad: the Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery at the Nan Tien Temple and the Melbourne Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery that are both located in Australia, the Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery at Hsi Lai Temple in the United States, and the Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery at the Dong Chan Temple in Malaysia.

The origins of the Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries can be discussed by distinguishing between their distant causes and their immediate causes. The distant causes take us back forty to fifty years. During his missionary work at various places, Hsing Yun kept an eye out for any collectable cultural artifacts related to Buddhism. During this early period, he was constrained by financial difficulties, and would often save on his money for meals so that he would have the resources to buy these objects. He also wanted to save on shipping costs, and so he was always suffering from sore arms and legs as he brought these cultural artifacts and Buddha images over great distances himself. Fellow

Buddhists who thought he was doing business as an "itinerant trader of goods" criticized him. When Fo Guang Shan was first established, Hsing Yun wanted to give devotees visiting the temple the opportunity to learn about the cultural artifacts and Dharma texts of Buddhism, so that they would then gain a better understanding of the specific ideas of Buddhism and come to appreciate the beauty of Buddhist art. In order to do this, Hsing Yun set up some simple cabinets to display these Buddhist artifacts on the site of the present-day Fo Guang Tsung Lin University. In 1983, the Buddhist Cultural Museum (now known as the "Museum of Treasures" began operation, becoming Taiwan's first museum that specialized in collecting the cultural artifacts of Buddhism.

Later on as he traveled around the world preaching the Dharma, Hsing Yun would visit museums in various countries such as Great Britain, France, Japan, and Germany, and he would see how Gandharan art, Buddha images from Central Asia, and Buddhist artifacts from China were being so well preserved. These museums would also regularly hold exhibitions of Buddhist art or install permanent exhibition halls on related subjects, such as the "Museum of Indian Art" affiliated with the National Museums of the Prussian Cultural Heritage in Germany; similar steps have been taken by London's British Museum in Great Britain, the Musée Guimet in France, the Tokyo National Museum in Japan, the Shanghai Museum in Mainland China, Taipei's National Palace Museum, and others. Hsing Yun was quite pleased with all of these efforts.

He also visited China's Buddhist grottoes at Dunhuang, Dazu, Yungang, Longmen, and Maijishan, as well as the eight sacred sites of India and the Buddhist pagodas of Southeast Asia. As a tourist who has gazed intently with his own eyes and lingered there unwilling to turn back, Hsing Yun realized that Buddhist art is truly a treasure to be cherished by the people of the world. In the face of such a cultural heritage on such an extraordinary and magnificent scale, it dawned

on him that not only do these works possess a religious and artistic nature, but they even have educational and cultural aspects as well. He could not refrain from pondering the question: 'Given their extensive and complex content over a wide variety of themes, how could it be made possible for everyone to catch a glimpse of the inner depths of this rich storehouse of art?'

The immediate causes are related to planning for the establishment of the Fo Guang University. In 1994, Hsing Yun made a clarification call for the establishment of Fo Guang University at Linmei Mountain in Ilan. This aroused the interest and support of society as the monastic community of Fo Guang Shan and the Buddha's Light International Association members initiated fundraising events to found the school. At the time, good-hearted individuals of the artistic world began their campaign known as the "Uninvited Friend and Helper" as a positive response to this great endeavor, and together they initiated the "Charity Auctions of Works by Famous Contemporary Artists." Hsing Yun took the lead in this effort by donating what he collected over these many years, including paintings and calligraphy given to him by good friends and devotees who were willing to help; examples included: Zhang Daqian's (1899-1983) "Monochrome Lotus and Guanyin," Pu Xinyu's (1896-1963) monochrome paintings, Huang Junbi's (1899-1991) landscape paintings, as well as calligraphy and paintings by such famous artists as Zhao Puchu (1907-2000), Yu Youren (1878-1964), Lang Jingshan (1892-1995), and Dong Kaizhang (1909-1998). Many internationally known artists and collectors from Taiwan and Mainland China were also mobilized to lend a hand. The success of this charity auction became a celebrated event in artistic and Buddhist circles, which also laid the cornerstone for the "Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries."

The first in a series of charity auctions of paintings, an unprecedented success, created quite a sensation and drew collectors, painters, sculptors, and others who made a series of donations for

more auctions. Many devotees who originally had not appreciated painting became so enthralled by the subject that they eagerly anticipated the second charity auction. Thus, Hsing Yun came to have these connections with members of the literary and fine arts communities, as well as the later activities or enterprises that were instituted for the sake of facilitating the liberation of living beings by providing the conditions for large groups of people in society to come in contact with Buddhism, and these all became known as "Fo Guang Yuan" ["Buddha's Light connections"].

In that same year, the first "Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery" was established at the Taipei Vihara , becoming the first specialized art gallery in the Buddhist community. At the same time, he also continued to hold charity auctions as a way of raising funds for establishing the Fo Guang University. The goals of this art gallery are not limited to the dissemination of Buddhist principles and the propagation of the Dharma, for more stress is placed on serving society and beautifying the human heart by providing a space to open up the spirit. As a cultural and artistic world of participation and interactivity, the art gallery combines Buddhism with art, thereby planting pure lotus flowers across society and making it possible for joy to fill the world. Although its facilities cannot match the excellence of world-class art galleries, since the paintings and cultural artifacts being exhibited are imbued with the inner meaning of the "Dharma," the gallery continues to receive positive reviews.

Jumping ahead more than ten years, the Nanhua University in Chiayi and the Fo Guang University in Ilan are still facing difficulties financially, but they must also support these art galleries as added "burdens of joy." Yet Hsing Yun still remains optimistic as always:

Although keeping up with the huge maintenance costs has put us in a deficit, the appreciative voices and eyes of the masses have confirmed my belief held for so many years. The

"Fo Guang Yuan" program is not only successful in bringing liberation to beings by preaching the Dharma, but at the same time, it is an effective way to preserve the cultural artifacts of Buddhism. This then is what I have repeatedly endeavored to achieve, the hoped for goal of combining Buddhism with art.

Entering for Art, Drawing close to Buddhism

The Ven. Ju Chang, the executive director of the galleries, has carefully considered Hsing Yun's efforts in this area, for it does not matter how many original artworks are collected or how high their financial value, rather, art facilitates contact with groups of people at different social levels. According to statistics, ninety percent of the people visiting the Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries in various places are not Buddhists. They enter the door because of the art, but then they slowly come to understand Buddhism. With sharp powers of observation and a forward-looking vision, Hsing Yun can already predict that there will be two key developments in the area of Dharma propagation over the next twenty to thirty years: one is the replacement of the written word by audio materials, and the other is the rising prominence of the cultural arts as the main Buddha Shrine occupies a secondary position. In this way, monasteries and temples can also function as art galleries.

Hsing Yun believes that it is not necessary to exhibit famous works by renowned artists; any work that contains elements of the Buddha's teachings and can facilitate the liberation of living beings is satisfactory. In particular, Hsing Yun opposes exhibitions that are incomprehensible: "Will people who find it incomprehensible come again for a second time? We want people to understand and enjoy what they see, so that they can calm their minds and attain some realization of human life by viewing the artworks on display." Having graduated from Fo Guang University's art institute, the Ven. Ju Chang deeply admires Hsing Yun's keen sense of insight:

When I took a look at the Buddhist Cultural Museum in the past, I didn't have much of a reaction, but returning for another look after studying at the institute, I was stunned. This was because museum studies is a field that has only arisen over the last few years and the master has never studied the subject, yet the things I am learning now were already implemented by him several decades earlier. For example, the display method using diffused lighting has only become popular in the last few years, yet the master had adopted this approach long ago. Another example is creating a certain emotional atmosphere through a synthesis of visual, auditory, and tactile senses. (On either side of the Buddha Reliquary are pictures of Bodhgaya, with a statue of the Buddha entering parinirvana in front, while in the middle are displayed images of the Buddha's ascetic practices and the begging bowl he would have used, all of which is cast in an interplay of light and shadow by the use of lighting.) These are advanced methods skillfully employed.

Hsing Yun recognized long ago the value of knowledge wealth, art wealth, culture wealth, and creativity wealth, and he knows how to use his unique vision to "manage" this "wealth." Thus, he has accumulated a great number of tangible and intangible assets in this area. As he points out, if Fo Guang Shan were to exhibit its current collection by changing what was on display every month, there would be no problem in having the exhibition last even two years. Such an art collection and network of relationships do not come out of nowhere as some temporary happenstance, rather, they are the result of that old Chinese adage: Everything succeeds with preparation, but fails without it.

Taking the long view of Hsing Yun's life, there are some people who say he had it all planned, while other people believe it was

quite unintentional, but in any event, he has always managed to produce many accomplishments that "unite different elements to become an immediate success." For example, he modestly describes himself as being terrible at music, and yet he brought Buddhist chanting to the international stage; he modestly describes himself as being unable to design buildings, and yet he has built one magnificent temple after the other; and he modestly describes himself as being unable to understand painting, and yet he manages ten art museums. Perhaps it is because he dares to do what he himself is not adept at doing, and is also willing to do what he himself does not like doing. But no matter what he does, he is sure to put all his heart and effort into it.

Celestial Music

Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir

As early as the Buddha's time, music had already become one of the ten offerings in Buddhism, enabling one to attain such unimaginable merit as the power of divine hearing and the Thirty-Two Marks of Excellence. The *Amitabha Sutra* states: "In that Buddha Realm, celestial music is continually being made." Many people have experienced this directly, for whenever they pass by a Buddhist temple or monastery and hear the sounds of chanting issuing from the main shrine, an indescribable sense of excitement stirs in their heart, and their two legs lead them uncontrollably into the inner halls as they seek the source of these sounds. This source is right before our eyes, but also in the sky above, for it represents the celestial music emanating from the vast emptiness of the universe. Only celestial music can bestir the inner recesses of the spirit and moisten the parched field of the heart. This is what Buddhist chanting is all about.

Buddhist chanting is suffused with a rhythmic vitality that is elegant and majestic, and possesses the characteristics of being "morally right, harmoniously refined, thoroughly clear, deeply

profound, and all pervasive." It has the ability to generate purity and grace within the mind of the listener, and to dispel deluded thoughts immediately.

Buddhist chanting made its first contact with the public at large at Taipei's National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in 1979. In blending creative methods, tradition and modernity as well as the East and the West, Hsing Yun adopted the method of preaching the Dharma that employed both narration and singing, and took the chanting used in the Buddhist monasteries and temples to praise the Buddhas and combined it with the Dunhuang style of dance, which was then brought to the national theater in a performance accompanied by the Taipei Municipal Chinese Classical Orchestra.

In March of 1992, the "Heavenly Sounds and Sounds of Sea Waves" was performed under the combined sponsorship of the municipal government of Taipei, the Buddha's Light International Association, and the Fo Guang Shan Compassion Foundation, in order to raise funds for burn victims. This Buddhist music festival showcased the beauty of Buddhist music, which surprised many people with its celestial sounds:

That flowing lyrics of majestic clarity at first gently meanders like a clear stream, but then slowly changes into a rising crescendo which emits a sound that startles the human heart, culminating in booming tones that then come to an end. The audience holds its breath in rapt attention as time and space have seemingly merged. The entire hall is filled with enthusiastic applause; some members of the audience are moved to tears while others shout "encore." The audience files out with experiences that touched their hearts, leaving behind a quiet calmness.

These performances changed people's fixed impression of

Buddhist chanting. No longer was it merely the clear tones of the Buddhist temple or the muttered chants of the Dharma services for liberating living beings. By ascending the stage, Buddhist chanting became a part of the entire world, following the path of peace, tranquility, and joy.

Putting Buddhist Music on the International Stage

In 1995, the "Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir" was formally established. The choir traveled first to Australia for its performance in Brisbane, becoming the first time Buddhist music was put on the international stage. Over the ensuing years, the choir performed a series of concerts in London's Royal Albert Hall and Berlin Philharmonic Hall in Europe; New York's Lincoln Center and Los Angeles's Kodak Theatre in the United States; and the Sydney Opera House in Australia, as well as in such countries as Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, and Malaysia. As Hsing Yun has declared, Buddhist chanting is not performed for the ears of Buddhas or bodhisattvas, rather, it is used to propagate the Dharma, just like the "soaring celestial beings" and the "Pictorial Depiction of the Vimalakirti Sutra's Story" which utilize singing, dancing, and chanting to manifest the Dharma. He hopes that these exchanges employing Buddhist music will enable more countries to learn about Chinese culture and Buddhist chanting, so that the most excellent result of moral transformation can be attained.

In 1999, the "Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir" performed a month-long series of concerts across ten European cities, in which they also performed in some of Germany's and Belgium's oldest churches. The Choir Director, the Ven. Yung Fu, was somewhat surprised to see that eighty percent of their audiences were local people. They neither understood Chinese nor were Buddhists (they should mostly be Christians or Catholics), but upon hearing the chants, they spontaneously broke into tears. After the performance, the entire audi-

ence would stand up of its own accord and applaud ceaselessly, demonstrating that music knows no national boundaries and proving as well that every human being has a Buddha Nature.

The subject of their performance for the year 2000, "A Day of Buddhist Hymns, A Thousand Blessings of Dharma Sounds," was quite unique, in which material for the performance was drawn from an entire day of life for a monastic. Everything, from getting out of bed in the morning as announced by the sound of the wooden block to retiring for the night, was performed onstage. The performance included chanting and movement, as well as all the Dharma instruments used in the temple or monastery, such as bells, drums, chimes, wooden fish, and hand-bells. This enabled the audience to gain a full appreciation and profound understanding of the monastic life at a Buddhist monastery or temple, representing an unprecedented and bold attempt at such a portrayal. This performance of chanting was well received because it possessed the following special characteristics:

- * Multifaceted nature: a varied music program that combined Chinese music with Buddhist instruments and the Dunhuang style of dancing; the layers of richness were worth repeated viewings.
- * International nature: music knows no national boundaries, and even Europeans and Americans can appreciate chanting done in Chinese and Sanskrit.
- * Creative nature: the dynamic use of stage sets, dramatic asides, slides, and computer animation.
- * Traditional nature: morning bells, evening drums, the sound of the wood block, morning and evening services, group work and chores, and sitting and walking meditation enable the audience to understand the lifestyle of the monastic order through the cycle of work, rest, and the

practice of purification.

- * Harmonious nature: each individual chants according to the length and strength of breath, and yet the voices produce a harmony like the sound of ocean waves as they rise and fall.

Using Music to Bring Universal Liberation to Living Beings Sounds of the Human World Music

"Buddhist songs soar into the heavens;/ Dharma sounds disrupt deluded dreaming./" Twenty-five hundred years ago, Sakyamuni Buddha used music to transmit his teachings, inspiring many peoples near and far to take refuge in Buddhism. Buddhist music can transport people into a positive state. This is because amidst the tranquil, fresh, refined, and natural notes, one can realize the essence of the Dharma and the spiritual meaning of the perfect inherent nature of human life. Indeed, music is a Buddhist practice for bringing universal liberation to living beings.

In 1953, Hsing Yun lived in Ilan as he preached the Dharma, and in order to attract young people to Buddhism in such a conservative and inflexible society, he employed music as a bridge for reaching them. After the establishment of the "Buddhist Youth Choir of the Ilan Buddhist Chanting Association," Fo Guang Shan launched many activities that were interwoven with Buddhist songs, their purpose being to use the all-embracing power of music to touch the human heart as a way of transmitting Buddhism's compassion and wisdom. This also marked the beginning of using sound to preach the Dharma. Such successful experiences have proven that the spread of Buddhist music and song will have an inspirational impact on people regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, age, or sex.

Besides using the Buddhist choir to preserve traditional Buddhist music, Hsing Yun also hoped to create Buddhist music and

song that was more in keeping with the spirit of the times. Such new compositions would arouse the youthful spirit of Buddhist young people with profuse and innovative energies. For example, the words to "The Song of the Dharma Preacher" and "Ode to the Triple Gem," and others were personally composed by Hsing Yun. But his most unforgettable memory in this area occurred as he rode in a car. He had been invited to chair a conference on Buddhist studies at a newly opened high school. His car was speeding down the expressway when quite by chance an entire set of lyrics praising the Triple Gem appeared in his mind as a sudden flash of inspiration. He immediately had the Ven. Tzu Hui who was also riding in the car write the words down. This then was the origin of the "Ode to the Triple Gem" that everyone regularly sings now during Fo Guang Shan's ceremonial assemblies around the world.

In 2003, the Ven. Tzu Hui, who was one of the original members of the Ilan Buddhist Youth Choir fifty years earlier, in order to commemorate Hsing Yun's fiftieth anniversary of his arrival in Taiwan to preach the Dharma, launched "The Sounds of the Human World--Master Hsing Yun's Buddhist Song Festival." All of Hsing Yun's poetry and Buddhist verse that he had composed over these many years as a way of bringing wisdom, compassion, and purity to the human heart, were to become the lyrics to the songs, and music lovers from around the world were invited to compose the melodies.

In just three short months, more than three thousand pieces were created for the competition, representing the work of more than one thousand composers from a dozen or more countries and regions, including the United States, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Taiwan. They wrote in various languages such as French, Portuguese, English, Japanese, Cantonese, Hakka, Taiwanese, and Mandarin. The music style of these compositions included folk songs, light rock, R&B, and lyrical ballads. From among these eighty compositions were selected

as finalists for the competition. The various regional organizations sent groups to Taiwan to attend ten performances that were held at the three separate venues, Taipei's National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall, the Kaohsiung Culture Center, and the Tainan Municipal Arts Center. The event created quite a sensation around the world, truly underscoring what Hsing Yun said himself during his remarks delivered at "The Sounds of the Human World" competition in 2004:

Fo Guang Shan's branch temples on five continents of the world are realizing Humanistic Buddhism's practice of "becoming involved," and at the same time, they are also driving the development of the social economy. The Sounds of the Human World event has brought music lovers from various regions here to Taiwan to participate in this music composition competition. Both music and religion know no national boundaries, and Buddhist music is playing an important role in fostering world peace and promoting racial harmony.

Prize-winning pieces from years of "The Sounds of the Human World" competitions have already been published and circulate widely and young people have come to enjoy them. They have also enabled Buddhism to become infused into the human heart by means of this easily approachable form.

In August of 2005, the third "Sounds of the Human World" festival opened at Taipei's National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall with competitors from a total of twenty-four countries, including Catholic youths from the Philippines and Catholic nuns from Australia. Whether it was traditional songs of India's Ladakh region, the beautiful voices of Korea's singers, drumming from Africa that makes one's heartbeat quiver, R&B so popular among present-day youth, or the delicate symmetry of the Japanese shamisen, ... they all use sound to express the sincere feelings of Humanistic Buddhism.

The entire performance lasted three hours, which culminated in uninterrupted and enthusiastic applause. The event organizers had prepared something quite original for this occasion, for they had extended a special invitation to the members of the Buddhist Youth Choir of the Ilan Buddhist Chanting Association from 1953 to ascend the stage once more and sing "The Song of the Dharma Preacher." Even Hsing Yun along with Tzu Hui and Tzu Jung also got up onstage to join in the singing. Time and space interwoven over fifty years enabled the audience to experience a passage of time spanning half a century. The Sounds of the Human World has been so well received because it possesses the following unique characteristics:

- * International orientation with a mass appeal
- * Songs easy to learn, remember and sing clearly to others
- * Audience participation

As the Director of the Fo Guang University's Art Institute, Lin Ku-fang points out, Fo Guang Shan has the strongest cultural attributes among all the Buddhist Temples in Taiwan. Its cultural activities often serve as an indicator for those outside of Fo Guang Shan who wish to observe the development of Humanistic Buddhism. Cutting across the great abundance of such activities is "The Sounds of the Human World--Master Hsing Yun's Buddhist Song Festival," which has the greatest potential for becoming the future model for art in Humanistic Buddhism, one that "starts small but grows big."

Turning the Writing Brush into a Buddhist Activity

Prof. Fu Shen of National Taiwan University's Graduate Institute of Art History has given his assessment: Having been born in the early part of the 20th century during a time of war and social strife, Hsing Yun is definitely different when compared to the host of eminent monks in history who excelled at calligraphy. This was so

because as a young man he was busy with Buddhist studies and practice, and then he was busy with preaching the Dharma for the benefit of living beings, which is why Hsing Yun has said of himself: "Where can I find the time to practice calligraphy!"

On this point, the intentions behind Hsing Yun's later practice of calligraphy were quite different. First of all, with his focus on promoting "Humanistic Buddhism" and "Living Buddhism," Hsing Yun's life and travels became very hectic, not a life that most monastics could imagine. Hsing Yun did not have the time to practice calligraphy, nor did he feel that the Chinese characters that came from his brush were any good. This is why his aim in doing calligraphy was much simpler, for it was not something he did for himself at all, on the contrary, he did it purely to "make others happy," which is the only reason he did calligraphy for his devotees. At the same time, Hsing Yun also understood that through the blessing of his calligraphy, he would also help his devotees in "sharing their interest in the Buddhist path!"

During the lunar Spring Festival of 1994, Fo Guang Shan's Taipei Vihara held a series of "charity auctions of selected art from the Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries" in order to raise money for the Fo Guang University building fund. In one of these, a piece of Hsing Yun's calligraphy was included in the charity auction.

Twenty thousand, sixty thousand, one hundred thousand, the bids called out shot up as excitement grew within the auction hall. Having accompanied his father to this grand charity auction, a little boy named Wang Bing was clutching all the money he had, a one hundred NT dollar note. Anxiously he turned his head as what seemed like astronomically high bids echoed throughout the hall.

Just as a bid for "two hundred thousand" was called out, suddenly the tender voice of a young boy yelled out "one hundred dollars." Instantly, all the commotion of the place was silenced.

Hsing Yun spoke, "I won't sell for two hundred thousand, but

I will sell it to our little friend here for one hundred dollars."

Wang Bing smiled exuberantly, while the crowd broke into a resounding applause.

Later on, someone asked Hsing Yun: "Some of your calligraphy has sold for one million and this one went for one hundred dollars; what's the difference?"

Hsing Yun replied, "For me, one million and one hundred are the same. I only consider the motivation and not the amount." He also said: "I have great respect for the little guy." Such words reflect how his mind holds to an equality that knows no distinctions.

With generosity of spirit that "surpasses others in compassion," Hsing Yun has "turned the writing brush into a Buddhist activity," and in so doing, he leaves behind these treasures of calligraphy that help him to expand that imperceptive energy to transform the human spirit, so that when people view his calligraphy they will obtain the Dharma immediately! Therefore, every piece of calligraphy by his own hand is unquestionably a manifestation of Hsing Yun himself, one that can bring joy to human beings and enable the Dharma to expand far and wide. This is why those who can obtain an example of Hsing Yun's personal calligraphy should certainly treasure it like precious jade.

Historically, Buddhism's impact on the arts has been both widespread and profound, and during this process of mutual acceptance, propagation, evolution, and absorption, works of art that proclaim Buddhist principles have deeply influenced the human heart as a part of our daily lives. With Humanistic Buddhism as his starting point, Hsing Yun has further expanded "the eighty-four thousand methods of practice" by employing artistic forms such as literature, fine arts, music, and calligraphy, presenting something new and different to society. In so doing, he has given Buddhism a powerful increase in forward momentum, greatly infusing it with new sense of vitality.

Chapter
Twenty One

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*Auspicious Coexistence with
Affection and Devotion*

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Hsing Yun's grand vision of "auspicious coexistence" breaks down the boundaries that divide territories, religions, sectarian groups, and even those regarding social status, male vs. female, or monastics vs. laity, just like a dazzling beam of light shining throughout our world today.

The former president of the United States, Bill Clinton, visited Taiwan in February of 2005. When a reporter asked about the future development trends for the world, without any hesitation Clinton pointed out that he would not use the word "globalization" to describe it, because in the future, the relationship among the various countries of the world and humanity itself would be one of "interdependence." It was also by coincidence that several days later, the then newly-elected Premier of Taiwan, Frank Hsieh, expressed in his remarks how "coexistence through reconciliation" would become the guiding principle of his administration.

That same year, the Venerable Master Hsing Yun conveyed his hopes and blessings for the coming new year in a letter to the host of lay followers using these exact two words: "auspicious coexistence." This phrase was hand written by Hsing Yun as a traditional New Year's decoration, which was then joyously hung above doors and windows of homes in the hundreds of thousands. In the political world, to create a new slogan or develop a new issue is both customary and necessary. However, whether or not such slogans have any real substance to them, and whether they can be implemented in some concrete way or not, are questions that must often undergo careful scrutiny and examination.

The Rise of Buddhism and Internal Cooperation

The Buddha had long ago proffered his idea that "All rivers lose their separate names when they flow into the sea; when members of the four castes join the monastic order, they all become part of the Buddha's family." It was precisely because of its egalitarian quality of

"mutual respect between self and other" and its advocacy of the oneness between self and things, that Buddhism was most able to treat people with respect and equality regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, social class, sex, or age. The Buddha tells us that we must consider things from the perspective of others as if we were them or they us, for that is the only way to achieve equality between self and other. If there is equal treatment, then how could the world not be at peace?

Does the Buddhist teaching of egalitarian coexistence really stand up to scrutiny and examination? Of course the answer is an affirmative one. In the history of religion, Buddhism is the only major faith never to have provoked a war of aggression or spilled blood on the battlefield during its process of propagation. It is just that in accordance with the cultural environment and the slow evolution of social conditions, different forms of Buddhism were produced at different times. In China, the Eight Schools rose to prominence during the Sui-Tang Period (581-907 CE), creating a civilization of multifaceted splendor. Furthermore, the various schools and sects are tolerant toward one another and mutually respectful without engaging in factional strife or retaliation.

In modern times, some of the Eight Schools of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism have grown to even greater prominence, while others have slipped into obsolescence. A gradual separation had also occurred between the Northern and Southern transmissions and between the Chinese and Tibetan traditions of Buddhism, due to differences in geographical and cultural factors. This resulted in a sense of alienation, which weakened the development of Buddhism as a whole. Hsing Yun's lifelong wish has been to lay out a modernized broad highway for Buddhism, for he deeply appreciated the principle of "a pair of chopsticks is better than a single chopstick." Not until Buddhism is united will it have any power. Thus, he has been promoting internal unity and cooperation within Buddhism for many years, generating a record of repeated success stories.

Coexistence and Co-prosperity for Every Buddhist Group

Hsing Yun has always believed that, given the shared acceptance of the Buddha as founder, every school and sect should be as close as brothers and sisters so they can look after and care for one another. There should be unity and cooperation, rather than accentuating differences, for only in this way can Buddhism exert any influence. This represents an important turning point in the revitalization of Buddhism today, "for in short, there is only one Buddha!"

Although there are those who have criticized the Buddhist community for its "mushrooming of temples" in recent years, Hsing Yun does not consider this as something negative but something to be interpreted in a positive manner. As he sees it, the growth in temples indicates how well Buddhism is flourishing, which makes it better able to adapt to various needs. This is comparable to China's Four Great Mountains that symbolize four great bodhisattvas; does the existence of Mt. Wutai mean there is no place for the other three: Jiuhua, Emei, and Putuo? Then again it's like a university with its different departments, which is a perfectly normal situation. Thus, all disciples of the Buddha are transmitters of Buddhism, and though there are different schools and sects, there should be no sectarian disputes. "At least no sectarianism exists in our Fo Guang Shan," Hsing Yun firmly declares.

Each time Hsing Yun conducts the Triple Gem Refuge Ceremony, he also instructs the devotees that taking refuge does not mean worshipping the teacher, rather, one is taking refuge in the Triple Gem of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, through which one becomes a Buddhist devotee. He also emphasizes that conducting the refuge ceremony increases the number of devotees in Buddhism; it is not intended as a way for one individual to collect more devotees. Hsing Yun compares the different Buddhist groups to multicolored flowers, that when gathered together in profusion create a beautiful bouquet of flowers. "A room has four corners, and a tripod has three

legs; we are here to foster a tradition, not fight over it."

This was no empty promise; for indeed there was also concrete action. When funds were being raised for the construction of Venerable Cheng Yen's Still Thoughts Abode, Hsing Yun made a connection with this project through his assistance in the form of one hundred thousand NT dollars; at the ground breaking ceremony for Cheng Yen's Tzu Chi Hospital, Hsing Yun was invited to speak on behalf of all Buddhist orders. In 2002, he visited the Tzu Chi Foundation in Hualien, and Cheng Yen personally welcomed him. In 1995, the Fourth General Conference of the Buddha's Light International Association was held in Sydney, Australia, and during the conference, the representative from India, the Ven. Sanghasena, submitted a proposal signed by many other representatives, that nominated Hsing Yun as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize, but Hsing Yun politely declined. In fact, these representatives had already made such a proposal two years earlier, and at the time, Hsing Yun responded in writing, asking them to jointly nominate Cheng Yen of the Tzu Chi Foundation.

News of serious natural disasters has been frequently reported in recent years. The disaster relief work of the Tzu Chi Foundation has been carried out very systematically. Many people have heard with their own ears on more than one occasion, how Hsing Yun would speak to his disciples in glowing terms of the Tzu Chi Foundation's actions, and that they should keep an open mind and learn from the foundation. During the Taiwan earthquake disaster of September 21st, 1999, besides the injuries suffered by most victims of the disaster, many temples and monasteries were either completely or partially destroyed, including Ling Yen Shan Temple in Puli. In such difficult situations when even the Buddhists themselves are suffering, Fo Guang Shan acted out of a concern for their coreligionists and offered them financial assistance in varying amounts of one million, five hundred thousand, and two hundred thousand NT Dollars,

respectively, to support their reconstruction fund.

On a day when the cold air penetrated deeply, it was as warm as spring within the Pu Hsien Temple in Kaohsiung. In the twilight of the evening, four senior bhiksunis from the Buddhist Association of Keelung had traveled all the way from Taiwan's northern tip to its southern end to visit the Abbess of Pu Hsien Temple, the Ven. Man Yi. Observing that they all voiced their concerns and amiably chatted around the warm stove in an obvious expression of true fellowship, one can well imagine how Man Yi must have made broad and positive connections during her tenure as abbess of Keelung's Chi Le Temple, forming a bond of friendship with these four visitors. "This is predicated on the idea that we develop Buddhism together, for Fo Guang Shan is not going to be monopolizing all the credit," said the Ven. Man Yi, reiterating one of Hsing Yun's instructions.

Exchanges between fellow temples have been an important focus of development for Fo Guang Shan over the last dozen or so years. This has included taking an active role in visiting local temples and monasteries, and having Fo Guang Shan devotees work as volunteers to help with the cleanup whenever construction on a Dharma center is completed. It is also quite commonplace for other Buddhist groups to borrow personnel from Fo Guang Shan when they are short-handed. For example, there is a temple in Hualien that holds a Dharma assembly every year during the seventh lunar month. As this event always conflicts with Hsing Yun's birthday, each time there is always some difficulty in sending help, since the devotees are unwilling to go. So Hsing Yun himself has to appear and make an earnest and kind request: "Go and serve others. That's more important than staying behind to celebrate my birthday." As Hsing Yun has said, "The development of Buddhism is not something that I, Hsing Yun, can do much about as an individual, for this is a collective creation." The two words "collective creation" look quite simple, but to really do it is not easy at all. It must be specifically and practically manifested every

day by every person in every place and everyone at all levels of Fo Guang Shan truly and sincerely believes in the power of collective creation.

Selflessly Offering Information and Experience

Beginning in 1993, a series of academic gatherings entitled "International Monastic Seminar" were held at such places as Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan, I.B.P.S. Vancouver, and Sydney's Nan Tien Temple in Australia. More than a hundred members of the monastic and lay communities from more than twenty countries around the five continents of the world were in attendance. Buddhist temples and monasteries are the home of wisdom and monastics are the teachers of lay people, which is why it has been so important to conduct these International Monastic Seminars. During these seminars, modern principles for the monastic community are disseminated, raising the quality of monastics. As Hsing Yun clearly indicates, "Every individual has an equal share in the truth, and all the Buddha cared about was for each and every individual to become enlightened as soon as possible."

Beginning in 1998, the "Seminar on Buddhist Temple Administration and Management in Taiwan" has been held once or twice each year to advance discussion and exchange between the various temples and Dharma centers. Not only is room and board prepared for the care of participating monastics from fellow temples, but books, monastic robes, and monastic sandals are generously presented as gifts as well. Hsing Yun personally presides over these workshops, and he gives a complete and open presentation on the methods for temple operations and management that have been categorized into eighteen subjects, including funding sources through donations, the fostering of talent, and the organizational structure. Nothing is held back, which has led some of his disciples to jokingly remark, that Hsing Yun has actually given away all the "trade secrets" to others,

while the Ven. Hui Te has said mischievously, "He has never explained things so clearly even to the members of his own monastic community!"

Fo Guang Shan has accumulated much information and experience over the past forty years, but "we are not self-centered, nor do we have any concept of intellectual property rights. We cannot act selfishly over information, but we should share it with everyone. I believe this world is a oneness of coexistence, for only when you are doing well, I am doing well, and everyone together is doing well, are we able to create a happy society collectively." This is how Hsing Yun put it. Thus, no matter which Buddhist college asks him to teach, he always feels that the students there are his own students, and he gives his all to help them; no matter which fellow temple invites him to conduct a workshop, he will always teach without making any distinctions and offer innumerable teachings. Hsing Yun's lifelong concern has been the betterment of Buddhism, and he once said, "The reason Buddhism has declined over the last one hundred years is because schools and sects have been making foolish distinctions among themselves." As for when others are not able to accept such gifts with gratitude or doubt his intentions, Hsing Yun says that it does not matter if Fo Guang Shan is treated fairly or not; all that matters is that Buddhism prospers.

A Devotion to International Buddhist Exchange

Hsing Yun has constantly reiterated, "Throughout all my days as a Buddhist monastic, my consistent concern is how to make Buddhism something universally present in every region of the world, so that it receives recognition in terms of faith." On this point, the historical record proves that this is no empty expression. As early as 1963, Hsing Yun had already organized the "Buddhist Visiting Delegation from the Republic of China" along with the Ven. Pai Sheng and others. The delegation visited such places as Thailand,

India, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, and Hong Kong, and they were received by the President of the Philippines Diosdado P. Macapagal, the Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru, and the King of Thailand, Bhumibol Adulyadej, among others.

Later on, there were follow-up contacts with Japan beginning in 1969, when close contacts were begun with Nara's Todai Monastery, Myoshin Monastery, Hanazono University, Eihei Monastery of Soto Zen, and the Buddhist Youth Association of Japan. In 1974, becoming president of the "the Sino-Japanese Buddhist Association," Hsing Yun visited Japan, and in recent years he has conducted many Sino-Japanese Buddhist academic conferences, in which academic representatives from both sides were invited to attend.

Exchanges with Korea go back thirty years to the establishment of the "Association for Promotion of Sino-Korean Buddhism" in Seoul. In 1982, a sister temple relationship was established with Korea's ancient monastery of Tongdo Temple (since Tongdo Temple houses true relics of the Buddha's body as well as his monastic robe, it is also known as the "Jewel of the Buddha" Temple.) In 1990, Hsing Yun was invited by the Guryong Temple to participate in the consecration ceremony for an image of the Buddha, at which time he also gave a Dharma talk. In 1998, the traditional Buddhist college of Korea's Songgwang Temple with its twelve hundred years of history became a sister institution of the Fo Guang Tsung Lin University. In 2003, Fo Guang Shan signed an agreement for cultural exchange with the more than twelve hundred year old Haein Temple (Since Haein Temple houses the eighty thousand wood blocks of the Great Buddhist Canon, it is also known as the "Jewel of the Dharma" Temple), and the two institutions have been actively engaged in exchanges in such areas as cultural education. Hsing Yun personally went to Korea to conduct the signing ceremony for this agreement, and conducted a workshop at the Fo Guang Shan branch temple in Seoul as well. When the abbot of Songgwang Temple in Suncheon,

the Ven. Boseong heard this news, undeterred by the inclement weather produced by a powerful typhoon, he rode the train for more than five hours to Seoul in order to see Hsing Yun. Though these two senior monks, one Chinese and one Korean, could not understand each other's language, the joyous feelings upon seeing each other were clearly manifest.

At the end of 2004, a delegation of more than twenty people, including the abbot of Haein Temple made a visit to Fo Guang Shan. During their discussions, the Korean monastics were very interested in such issues as how Fo Guang Shan had developed into a huge organization and how it maintained itself financially. Such questions were eagerly posed to Hsing Yun, who answered them one by one. It was concluded during these discussions that Fo Guang Shan would be willing to offer all its experience and methods to Haein Temple, a decision that was met with enthusiastic applause on the part of the Korean delegation.

During these years, due to the active efforts of the Ven. Yi En, who studied in Korea, several dozen Korean Buddhist groups have visited Fo Guang Shan and its branch temples. Yi En has observed how the indigenous Korean Buddhist community capitalizes on its long and ancient history and keeps up a grand appearance, and yet here comes Fo Guang Shan with its magnificent buildings and prosperous and successful enterprises that are both humanistic and modern in orientation. Everyone speaks in one voice in a deep sense of admiration: "With Fo Guang Shan, we now see the future of Buddhism."

As for Southeast Asia, Hsing Yun has been long-time friends with several prestigious Buddhist leaders in Malaysia and has a profound connection with the country. They all understand and respect one another in the fellowship of the Dharma, and they do not allow time or distance to create any sense of separation. In 1996, a BLIA board of directors meeting was held in Malaysia, and Hsing Yun's

schedule only permitted a short, six-hour stay in Penang, and yet the abbot of Beow Hiang Lim Temple, the Ven. Kuang Yu, hurried back to see him; nor did Hsing Yun forget to pay a call on the Ven. Chuk Mor of the Triple Wisdom Hall. The respect Venerable Chuk Mor has for Hsing Yun and the care and concern that Hsing Yun holds for Zhu Mo are clearly displayed by their words and manner. That same year when a large Dharma talk was held at the National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, the Prime Minister and follower of the Islamic faith Mahathir Mohamad quietly donated fifty thousand Malaysian dollars in support. Two years later, Dr. Mohamad had a meeting with Hsing Yun, and according to reports, this was the first time during his eighteen-year tenure as prime minister that he met with a foreign religious figure. More than that, most of his meetings with guests do not last more than fifteen minutes, but the meeting on this occasion actually lasted a record breaking forty minutes.

For its international exchanges, Fo Guang Shan emphasizes equality, respect, and tolerance, much to the widespread approval of the Buddhist community. In the year 2000, the Twenty-first World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference was held in Bangkok, Thailand, in which the Prime Minister of Thailand Chuan Leekpai personally presented Hsing Yun with "The Greatest Contribution to Buddhism Award."

The Beauty of Harmony among Religions

Not only does Hsing Yun promote internal harmony within Buddhism itself, he also spares no effort in joining with other religions to advance the cause of world peace. As early as 1965, the Buddhist Chanting Association of Ilan had conducted religious dialogues among Buddhists, Catholics, and Christians. By the time Fo Guang Shan was established, more than eighty priests and nuns from the Dominican Order of the Catholic Church around the world had already visited the main temple to seek more information about

Buddhism. Upon the invitation of the *United Daily News* in 1989, Hsing Yun and the Catholic Archbishop Lo Kuang (1911-2004) carried on a remarkable dialogue entitled "The Mind that Strides across the Universe," in which they exchanged views on a broad range of issues covering religion, philosophy, life, and faith. They both felt that religious groups should be tolerant of one another in the spirit of "keeping diversity within consensus and seeking consensus within diversity." These two compassionate and wise men manifested the religious attitude of caring concern for the times and for the purification of the human heart, and their mutual respect and affirmation generated a wonderful record of their talks. Later on, Hsing Yun was also invited to give a talk on "Wonderful Use of Chan" at the Catholic Fu Jen University, for which Archbishop Lo Kuang personally gave the welcoming address.

People can Believe in Two Religions

Our former Ambassador to the Vatican, Tai Jui-ming, has personally experienced the profundity, the broad-mindedness and magnanimity of Hsing Yun, which contains not a hint of religious prejudice:

Whenever I lead dignitaries from the Vatican or other foreign guests on a visit to Fo Guang Shan, we are always treated quite warmly. The First International Buddhist-Catholic Colloquium was held at Fo Guang Shan in 1995, and during the four day event, Fo Guang Shan provided a large hall for the exclusive use of the Catholic delegation for their daily prayers and the conducting of Mass. One could perhaps say that this was the first time in history that a temporary Catholic church was installed inside a Buddhist temple or monastery. There were also Catholic priests and nuns who recited Buddhist scriptures and sat in

*meditation with Buddhist monks and nuns, truly realizing
a dialogue in terms of life and mind.*

It could be said that this meeting constituted a prelude for Hsing Yun's visit to the Vatican in 1997, when he met with the late Pope John Paul II. It was truly a moment in history when these two world religious leaders shook hands.

In March of 2003, The Catholic Diocese of Kaohsiung held a foundation laying ceremony for She Fu Community complex on Mt. Chenfu in Kaohsiung County's Shanlin Township. Appearing at the venue for the ceremony was a Dharma master wearing a monastic robe in apricot-yellow with an impressive dignity and bearing, something that astonished the host of people there. During the ceremony, this individual was accorded a place on the speaker's platform, where he sat with the Vatican's representatives and Catholic bishops as a VIP. During his speech, he addressed Cardinal Paul Shan Kuo-Hsi and the four other bishops, expressing his willingness to donate five million NT dollars in installments over a period of five years. (In fact, he had already given a cash donation in the amount of one hundred thousand NT dollars, representing a total of 5.1 million NT dollars.) This was the first public donation the project had received, and the donor was none other than Fo Guang Shan's Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

Afterwards, Cardinal Shan wrote a letter expressing his thanks:

*Although Master Hsing Yun has been very busy, for
even the night before the foundation laying ceremony for the
She Fu Community, he was in Changhua preaching the
Dharma, and yet he still thought of phoning me to say that he
would arrive on time the next day. Indeed, the Master was*

true to his word and arrived exactly on time.

At a time when many regions around the world are experiencing serious religious conflict, not only can Buddhism and Catholicism in Taiwan coexist peacefully, but they also are able to respect one another and cooperate, forming a deep bond of friendship. Although the teachings of these two great religions are not completely the same, yet through such activities as contact and exchange, the two have learned much about spiritual practice from each other, and in the areas of education, culture, charity work, relief work, and medical care, the two religions have already begun to take the first steps towards cooperation. I often say to others, that if religious people around the world had the open mindedness of Master Hsing Yun, there would be no religious conflict, much less any religious wars.

In recent years, Hsing Yun has taken quite a "courageous" stance by saying that people can believe in two religions:

When all is said and done, people who worship any god can also say that they believe in Buddhism, while those who are true to their own faith need not reject those who meander between different religions. It's the same for a person fond of literature, who can also be fond of philosophy. There's no need to brush aside anybody's original faith. My tendency is to treat Buddhism like a philosophy or a certain view of life and explore it that way. There is really no need for everyone to come worship at the Buddhist temple. This is what "having numerous expedients" means. There is only one way back to the source; therefore one must not become attached to any particular time, occasion, or place. The form really doesn't

matter; no one should criticize others indiscriminately.

Not Abandoning any Single Person

Mt. Tai does not reject a clod of dirt; and the great ocean can receive a hundred rivers. Hsing Yun has spent half of his life uniting the various Buddhist schools and fostering harmony with other religions and social resources. From this experience he has established the very model of multifaceted tolerance. He is like a fixed star within the Milky Way, a luminous body that is forever warm and inviting, while the stars large and small that surround him are all able to find the course that is most suitable for themselves. How can Hsing Yun act so much like a "magnet," attracting friends from all walks of life, while he himself likes making such connections in the human world? Because in his heart, everyone from high-ranking officials to the man in the street is one member of the masses, who likewise is deserving of respect: "I would never abandon any single person."

Wu Poh-hsiung is a representative figure among the millions of Fo Guang Shan members, for he is perfectly happy to call Hsing Yun his master and offer his support with such sincere earnestness because he is so inspired by the "priceless value of friendship:" "Whether there is an agreement or not with respect to each other's views on certain issues, between us as master and disciple, we know what the other is thinking and can still happily share in the exchange of ideas." The Wu family has had a connection with Buddhism for three generations, and with the depth of connection comes a depth of feeling as well. Wu Poh-hsiung carefully observes his role as a disciple, while Hsing Yun is neither a stickler for conventional forms, nor does he put on the smug superiority of a master. By not caring about external forms (for example, the etiquette of a handshake, joined palms, or a simple bow being substituted for kneeling prostration), the relationship between them goes beyond master and disciple, becoming something more like "a friendship between monks."

Wu Poh-hsiung has an intimate understanding of what he finds so likable about Fo Guang Shan: Everyone there is polite and courteous, treating others with great respect. Everyone is always looking on the good side and this creates a place of positive energy. He says that being in such an environment is far happier than being a part of the political scene. With his rich storehouse of life's experiences, Wu Poh-hsiung has served as presidential secretary and minister of the interior, and now serves as chairman of the KMT, while personally he has been generally recognized as a charismatic figure. But when interviewed, Wu will repeatedly praise Hsing Yun for his charisma, his moral prestige, and sense of appeal that no one can match: "For a person like me to find a master who can win me over is no easy task!" As these words were spoken, Wu's open and high-spirited laughter filled the room.

The Vice President of the Buddha's Light International Association World Headquarters, Yan Kuanhu came to know Hsing Yun forty years ago through his work with publishing the Buddhist scriptures. With his kind and dignified manner, Yan speaks of the most unforgettable day in his life, which occurred on September 12th, 1963. On that day, Hsing Yun was assisting in publicizing the printing of the *Buddhist Canon* and had come to Hong Kong. Hsing Yun had passed on a banquet hosted by the Buddhist circles in Hong Kong, and went instead to Yan's house for a family meal of fresh vegetables and bean curd. This event marked a crowning honor in his life:

I deeply admire and respect the master, and although even now I have yet to undergo the formalities of becoming a devotee, yet in my heart the master is my honored teacher. And I will follow this teacher and this path for the rest of my life without any regrets.

During a trip to Taipei in May of 1993, I was suddenly

struck down with a serious heart attack and entered Cathy General Hospital for emergency surgery. Death could have come at any moment. But Hsing Yun bestowed his compassionate care upon me, and informed the various Fo Guang Shan centers to recite scriptures as blessings on my behalf, so that my condition would take a turn for the better. At the same time, he shortened his trip to the American continent and hastened back to Taiwan in order to comfort me, all of which has caused me to feel an endless sense of gratitude. Fo Guang Shan is my home; it is what I will rely upon till the end of my days.

People have been saying for a long time that Hsing Yun "always remembers you," and once the author personally witnessed this in Malaysia, where his calligraphy was being exhibited at the National Art Gallery. The opening ceremony had concluded, and Hsing Yun was heading towards the car for his departure. There was an older person standing by the main entrance, respectfully waiting with palms joined together, and it seemed that this person had been anxiously waiting there for quite some time. Upon seeing this person, Hsing Yun immediately called the person's name without any hesitation, and greeted him as well: "Long time no see; how have you been?" The old gentleman was deeply touched and began shedding tears right then and there. It turned out that the person was an old devotee living in Malaysia, who Hsing Yun had not seen in more than twenty years.

It could be said that the Sino-Japanese devotee is a loyal member of Hsing Yun's "constant entourage." If you ask him why he so willingly sets aside his own work time and time again to join Hsing Yun's entourage as he travels to the far corners of the world, he will answer without a moment's thought:

Hsing Yun is like a magnet, candy, or honey, and no matter where he goes, he is always drawing me towards him. I know too well how stubborn I am, and no other venerable can lead me to liberation. But Hsing Yun's sense of tolerance is quite substantial, and he really knows how to evaluate people and utilize their skills in the best possible way. I have an image of him holding the universe in the palm of his hand; all he has to do is wave his hand, and anyone will offer him allegiance.

This is no idle metaphor, for indeed the reach of Fo Guang Shan's membership is exceedingly broad and includes senior citizens, workers, university professors, intellectuals, the social elite, leading industrialists and ordinary people. Even mafia bosses come to hear the Dharma and like to be near him, and the strange thing is, once these tough types appear before Hsing Yun, their violent tempers are completely disarmed. People have also asked Hsing Yun why he wants to have contact with such people. Wouldn't it be better to keep one's distance from them? Hsing Yun's answer is also quite surprising: "If I don't help them to find liberation, who will?"

Making Auspicious Connections Everywhere

It seems that nearly everyone who has encountered Hsing Yun has the same feeling, that any casual remark or action on Hsing Yun's part can give one an extraordinary sense of warmth. Chien Chih-chung, the CEO of the Eurasian Press, has had his own personal experience of Hsing Yun's kindheartedness, one that is so nurturing and empathetic. This took place in 1993 when he met Hsing Yun for the very first time at Pumen Temple:

I recall that on that occasion, I was in the company of my Chief Editor, Ms. Tsao Yu-fang, and we had arranged

to meet the master at Pumen Temple. By the time we arrived, it was already past noon, and I knew that Buddhist temples generally have lunch at eleven o'clock. We didn't want to inconvenience anyone there, so we decided to tell the master that we had already eaten. But to our surprise, when the master saw us, he told us that he hadn't eaten, and asked us if we could join him for a meal. At the dining table, the master had arranged a complete luncheon for us, and it was only after the dishes had been put on the table, that he told us to enjoy our meal, for he had already eaten; and that he would be waiting for us in the reception hall later. At the time, I felt a deep sense of warmth, as I came to a profound realization of this master's integrity and magnanimity.

Dr. Chang Yen of the Department of Cardiac Surgery at Veterans General Hospital performed heart surgery on Hsing Yun in 1995. He had the following recollection:

Before the surgery, I only knew that the master was a religious figure and merely had a passing understanding of his words and deeds. But there was still quite a bit of doubt in mind, given that the tremendous pain and suffering most people endure while undergoing surgery will show on their faces. Yet during my care before and after the surgery, I was surprised to discover that the master's powers of concentration, his manners and wisdom were something I had never seen before, for truly his outer demeanor is consistent with his inner nature. After the surgery, the master would jokingly say that I was the one who really "knew his heart." Before the surgery, I treated him like any ordinary person as I made my incision, but not until two years later did I discover that I was the real ordinary person.

Through my contacts with the Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the most positive result for me has been the change in my attitude, and these words in particular: "We must be put to some use for others, for only that shows how we are useful. If people do not use us, then how can we be considered useful?" Therefore for me, helping others by performing surgery to remove the pain of illness is the practice of compassion, and not just a job.

The Publisher of the magazine *Commentary* Lin Hsien-chang puts it this way:

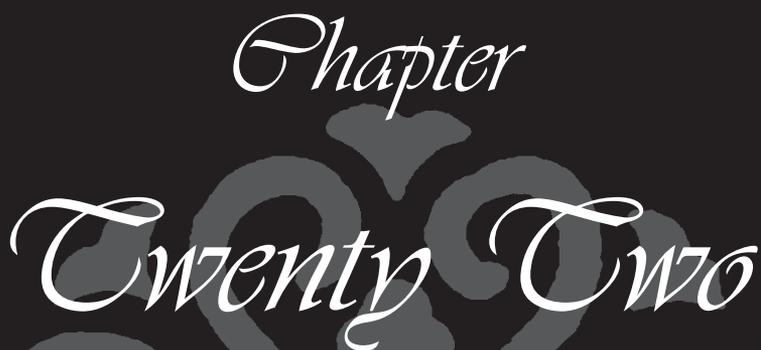
Each time I see the master, he doesn't talk about how things are going with Fo Guang Shan, instead, he's always talking about how the magazine "Commentary" could be made better. In my mind I am thinking, gosh, you have so many devotees and I am just one among the great host of devotees, and yet he makes me feel so extraordinarily important. But I am definitely not the only one who feels this way. Everyone has felt the master's love and concern for them; that's really amazing. Most religions will either try and convert you, or will ask you to make a donation, yet the master is not like that at all. If you try and give him a donation, he will often refuse it!

Hsing Yun says it all when he comments:

I feel that being able to use the money people give is second-rate; knowing how to employ others is middling; while knowing how to recognize talent in others is first-rate. But the highest level of all is developing people's sense of devotion.

These are the times when everyone is clamoring for openness, freedom, and democracy, but in fact reality is filled with the strong bullying the weak, the center marginalizing the periphery, and the rich gouging the poor. Hsing Yun's grand vision of "auspicious coexistence" breaks down the boundaries that divide territories, religions, sectarian groups, and even those regarding social status, male vs. female, or monastics vs. the laity, just like a dazzling beam of light shining throughout our world today.

Chapter
Twenty Two



*A Wandering Monk in this
Human World*



The length of one's life is limited, and yet there is no limit to its breadth and depth. The Venerable Master Hsing Yun has a mind that remains eternally fresh, with a heart like a bright star [hsing], he moves about like drifting clouds [yun]. Transcending time and space, as well as the limitations of material form, he has been able to develop the energy of life to the highest state of attainment.

If we wish to understand the development of Buddhism over the past half-century, then we must have an understanding of Fo Guang Shan; and if we wish to understand the development of Fo Guang Shan, then we must have an understanding of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun. In considering the eighty some years of his life, we see that he has had both an active and quiet life, has lived in isolation and as a member of a group; there is the world in front of him and the world behind; and there is the secular world and the spiritual world. Hsing Yun is an eminent monk who has been developing and expanding Buddhist endeavors, and he is also a thinker who has mastered secular learning and Buddhist studies, as well as an artist of life who experiences and practices "Fo Guang Chan [Zen]."

Great Order in the Midst of Much Work

Many people have been trying to persuade Hsing Yun to rest more now that he is more advanced in years. They ask him why must he be so busy. Hsing Yun replies, "Being busy is like the sharp sword of wisdom that can cut down the entwining vines of delusion; being busy is having the Midas touch that can transform what is decayed and corrupt into something miraculous; and being busy is a sort of nutritional supplement that can fill one's life with vitality." Busily doing things does not mean the individual is busy; even if the individual is busy, the mind is not. There are so many people coming and going and so many things going on at the same time, and yet his mind remains calm and quiet, great order in the midst of much busyness.

Chen Chiu-chin, the principal of the Chinese School at

Australia's Chung Tian Temple, has nothing but the greatest admiration for Hsing Yun's ability of "keeping his physical self busy, though his mind is not." She recalls how she and several other devotee representatives went to seek advice from Hsing Yun concerning the plans for Chung Tian Temple; before the temple had been built. As they discussed the project, a monastic handed Hsing Yun a note and upon reading it, he said in a slow and congenial manner: "Later there will be a guest arriving from Hong Kong who needs to see me." He then continued with our previous discussions. Principal Chen recalled that at the time, she felt she could no longer remain just sitting there as all kinds of thoughts began appearing in her mind:

Should we get up and take our leave? If we don't take our leave, then how will we make room for the guest around the table when that person arrives? If we give up our seats, wouldn't that create some confusion. At the time, the master then gave some instructions regarding the plans and then casually remarked, "The garden at the Residence of the Founding Master was personally designed by the Ven. Hsin Ping. Have you seen it yet? Let me take you there to have a look." After strolling around for a few minutes, the guest from Hong Kong arrived, and the master said, "I will speak with this guest now for a while, but please stay and look at the flowers. We'll have dinner together this evening." I just have to laugh thinking about it now. I was caught up in all the worrying for nothing; for he had it all worked out in his mind beforehand and had calculated the time to such perfection. We were able to enjoy the garden as much as we wanted, while he could speak with his guest without worrying about us. The perfection of his methodical approach left me deeply impressed, something that I will never forget.

A certain disciple tells of another story that also left a deep impression. One day after the noon meal, a group of disciples were accompanying Hsing Yun on a stroll about the temple. They came across a flight of stairs, and after everyone had gone down them, Hsing Yun then turned around and asked them how many steps did this flight of stairs have altogether. For an instant, all the disciples were dumbstruck. They looked at each other and remained speechless. The person telling this story also recalled that each time Hsing Yun passed an electric utility pole, he would always recite the name of the Buddha, and so this person came to realize that this was how one can cultivate the practice in daily life. From that point onwards, whenever he took a flight of stairs at Fo Guang Shan, he would have a completely new experience. Therefore, real leisure in this human life is the carefree state of mind, a sense of leisure in which the mind transcends the realm of worldly things. If the mind is not attached to anything, so that one is neither ensnared by one's daily life nor caught up in the win or lose struggles between self and others, one can settle down into a calm and leisurely life.

One day, Hsing Yun was lying in bed, when some thoughts suddenly appeared in his mind. He then casually set about writing these down. Perhaps these can represent his earnest hopes for life:

*A half room, a six-foot bed, may not be wide or
roomy but are comfortable enough.
Cotton for batting and cloth for quilting provide a
seat for the day and a place to sleep during the night.
With one chair and one table, manuscripts are piled
high and scriptural books fill the shelves.
Not seeking completeness, not desiring perfection, I
care not for gain or loss and keep my conscience clear.
I go when free and come when busy, as a member of
this global village I am carefree in the Buddha's light.*

The Samadhi of Cultivation in Daily Life

To understand another person is quite difficult, but to try and understand someone like Hsing Yun who is a world-class, eminent monk of this age is much harder by far. Although many of his colleagues have talked about him and many reporters have interviewed him, still he is now eighty some years into his life, and regardless of whether it is the wisdom of his learning or the breath of his experience, he has already reached the stage when all the impurities have been burned away. This is why people are really hoping to see what he is truly like. What follows here is a look into Hsing Yun's "Samadhi of cultivation" in his daily life.

Food and Drink

For decades now, he has been constantly receiving guests from morning to night, causing him to miss his mealtime, so that he often has to make do with just hot rice soaked in ice water or hot tea over cold rice for a meal. Sometimes, a guest will arrive to meet with him just as he is raising his chopsticks, so that all he can do is pick up the bowl and no matter what it contains, be it piping hot soup or steaming noodles, he would gulp it down ignoring how it burned his tongue or even whether it filled his stomach or not. One of his former attendants, the Ven. Chueh Nian, has remarked, "The master eats very simply. He only wants two dishes, one is marinated bean curd and the other is pickled cucumbers, and along with a bowl of noodles or rice in tea broth, serves him as a meal.

As one who has often arranged meals for him, Chueh Ju points out that Hsing Yun is not into "eating," "When he sees me busily going in and out, he will say some kind words to comfort me, telling me not to be so busy; and that it would be better to cook more food at a time, so that I can simply take it out of the refrigerator and warm it up for him to eat." He is not picky about his food, and eats

simple home-cooked fare. He will eat whatever you give him, for he does not make any demands. Many people say that older folks should not eat this or that, but he almost never refuses anything that comes, except for the fact that he rarely eats fruit or other snacks, and he never takes vitamins or other supplements.

Perhaps it was a habit he formed early in life, but he eats very fast and can finish his meal in five minutes. He spends the rest of the time serving food to his guests, inviting them to eat more. He finishes whatever he has to eat, for he is not one to waste something he tastes but finds not to his liking. When he has noodles with sesame oil, he will eat every single noodle, but besides that, upon finishing he will pour some hot water in to mix with the sesame oil and then drink that. His purpose is to avoid troubling anyone over making an additional soup, as well as to save on the use of dishwashing detergent.

When his disciples make a special effort to prepare a certain dish for him, even if he does not like it that much, he will praise it as quite delicious. He could not have guessed that everyone would think he likes such a dish, and so that same dish appears wherever he goes. But he is willing to put up with it and he does not reveal his true likes and dislikes. Chueh Ju tells the following story:

Having heard that he likes to eat noodles (because eating noodles does not require any accompanying dishes, which makes it convenient), a whole series of places he visited ended up serving him noodles. He returned one day and asked for rice, and so I guessed that everyone had been serving him noodles. What made it all much worse was that they all served the same noodles with tomatoes.

Clothing

Having left his family at an early age, Hsing Yun not only learned to mend clothes, but can also make his own clothing. He often wears clothing and sandals that have been mended. Since he cares for things just like he does for his own body, the things he uses are particularly long lasting. "New for three years; old for three years; and mended here and there for another three years." Glancing down at his feet, you will see a pair of monastic sandals that he wears for five years. Although the tops have been mended and the bottoms resoled, he is never quite willing to toss them aside. Devotees have presented him with simply dozens of robes and monastic dress, but he will in turn give them to other people, one after the other. If one looks at the old clothing that are meant to be replaced, one will notice how all of them bear the marks of repeated mending, and yet these clothes have been with him over these decades as he preached the Dharma around the world--their contribution must not be allowed to disappear. His attendant often asks him how many new garments should be ordered, and he will always reply, "When I touch my clothing, I am reminded of events past, and that gives me a certain feeling; how can I bear tossing away the old ones and replacing them with new ones?"

Living Accommodations

Hsing Yun once said of himself that his life exhibits a unique trait: he does not get up once he sits down, nor does he move around once he settles in. Whether on a transpacific plane or in a car on the expressway, he can fall into a tranquil sleep. And no matter where he goes, he is always "returning home." When he goes to the United States, he will say "returning to the States;" when going to Paris, he will say "returning to Paris;" when going to Australia, he will say "returning to Australia;" and of course when he gets to Fo Guang Shan, he is "returning to Fo Guang Shan." This kind of free and easy wandering as conditions arise is the life of a monastic who "is home-

less, and yet has a home everywhere." This is something that the laity cannot truly appreciate. Sometimes Hsing Yun will visit a branch temple if it happens to be on his way, and just before they arrive, someone will ask whether they should phone ahead to notify the abbot and director. He will say, "I am not some sort of VIP, so why put everyone into a tizzy just to greet me. Besides, I like the feeling of returning home in an easy and natural way."

People may find it hard to believe, but despite the great size of the monastery of Fo Guang Shan, Hsing Yun once moved into a thirty-six square foot room made by partitioning off a corridor, and in the blink of an eye, he ended up living there for some ten years. It was not until the Residence of the Founding Master that the second abbot Hsin Ping had built for him was completed, did Hsing Yun have his own residence. Yet several years later, he wanted to ensure that all land at the temple complex was being fully utilized, and so he offered the Residence of the Founding Master so that it could be rebuilt as the Dharma Transmission Center, where monastics and benefactors alike could hold meetings and practice.

Through his travels around the world spreading the Dharma, Hsing Yun has developed amazing powers to adapt, and yet he is still unaccustomed to staying in luxurious accommodations. One year when he went to Korea to give a talk the Korean monks, in order to express their respect, had reserved the presidential suite at a five-star hotel for his stay. It was said that the room cost several thousand dollars per night. When he saw how the room had been decorated in such a rich and impressive way, he could not bear using it, so he sat up (a kind of Buddhist practice in which one does not lie down and sleep) all night on the couch until dawn. He still remembers how on his fiftieth birthday, a certain lay disciple had presented him with an expensive Simmons mattress bed. But alas, he had grown accustomed to sleeping on a wooden plank bed since childhood, and yet he just could not be frank about it either, as that would hurt the devotee's

feelings, and so all he could do was treat the bed as decoration, while he himself continued to sleep on the floor. On another occasion, Hsing Yun was invited to preach the Dharma in Vancouver, where the devotees had graciously arranged for him to stay at a villa owned by a certain Buddhist follower who was surnamed Zhang. The villa's bathroom was fashionably well appointed, and included new style on and off switches, thick carpeting, and a sumptuous bathtub and shower curtain. But because Hsing Yun did not know how to use these complicated fixtures, all he could do was patiently wait until the trip was finished, so that he could happily take a bath upon his return to Fo Guang Shan.

Although I am afraid others will criticize or discriminate against me, I am more afraid of others treating me with respect, and most of all, I am afraid of socializing at dinners and banquets. I am afraid others will invite me to dinner, for I am not used to that. Most of all, I am afraid of appearing in public, and each time a large hall of devotees bows to me and makes prostrations, I feel totally uncomfortable. I like to feel that the devotees are offering their respect to the Triple Gem, not to me. I like to preach the Dharma and make connections, but am afraid of putting on a show to attract attention. Whenever I see the devotees lining up to offer flowers or bring banners, I really find it quite difficult. All of these farewells and greetings, all of this showy behavior to attract attention, are just so many complicated formalities and fancy rigmarole.

I dread of sitting on the fancy seat of honor, which is why there has never been such a thing at Fo Guang Shan, but when I go to other branch temples, I simply have to sit on the fancy seat of honor whenever Dharma assemblies or meetings

are held. I always feel extremely helpless. I am afraid of being photographed or signing my name, but in order to make others happy, I simply have to force myself to get through it all.

When riding in a car, Hsing Yun does not like to waste a seat, so the car does not move until the seats are filled. Throughout his life he has always like vans, because they save on gas and you can hold a meeting in them.

A Master who Loves Basketball

Hsing Yun is quite the sports enthusiast, and basketball is his favorite sport, a passion that has followed him from his youth into his old age. He once recalled that during his time of study at the Buddhist colleges in Mainland China, the teachers there were conservative and kept themselves closed off from the world, and so they did not allow the students to play basketball. Hsing Yun put in a lot of effort trying to figure out ways to play the game. He ended up taking the do-it-yourself approach: he cut down two trees to serve as stands, and using wooden planks he nailed up the backboards. He carried twenty bundles of wood over to the ironsmith in exchange for the basket hoops, and then laid out the basketball court using fine gravel stone. He even raised funds from more than thirty people who donated all their income from conducting Buddhist services for the seventh lunar month, so that they could buy a basketball together. Each time they played, their classmates took turns acting as lookouts, but once they became too involved in the game and were caught red-handed by the teachers. This almost led to their expulsion from school.

In 1963, Hsing Yun accompanied a delegation on a visit to the Philippines, during which time they passed by the country's largest basketball arena. A thought suddenly arose in Hsing Yun's mind:

I felt that if Buddhism is to be propagated in this day and age, one should start with many different approaches, and so it seemed that organizing a basketball team could indeed be an acceptable and skillful approach to spreading the Dharma. Just look at how the Catholic Basketball Team has played in competitions around the world and built a reputation that stretches to all corners of the globe, which has brought a lot of glory and new converts to the Catholic Church. Therefore, I hope that the Buddhist community in the future will also organize a basketball team as a way of making friends in various countries and indirectly facilitate the spread of Buddhism. We know that at any given Dharma assembly on the Buddhist scriptures, there are at most five hundred attendees, but a single basketball game can attract twenty to thirty thousand spectators. It is entirely possible that some people attending such games might see Buddhism in a different light, or perhaps become transformed into a believer in the Dharma because of it.

After he had his own monastery, his greatest wish was to build a basketball court.

In the early phase of Fo Guang Shan's construction, a basketball court was built on the eastern hill. Hsing Yun once said that the fondest recollections of his life were not the magnificent buildings of Fo Guang Shan but those connected to this basketball court. At the time, the main focus of Fo Guang Shan was the Buddhist College, and since there were few visitors, master and disciples could live a simple life enjoying a warm and close relationship. Each day after classes ended at three o'clock in the afternoon it was time for basketball for the master and his disciples. As long as any of the students and staff of the entire monastery had an interest in playing, they could all come to the basketball court and join in at anytime, and they

could leave at anytime as well. That period of time left behind happy memories in the minds of the disciples. The Ven. Man Chien spoke of that time with rapt attention:

The master's skill at basketball was wonderful, which made him both accurate and fast. He would often shoot the ball from a distance, hitting the hoop dead center and through the basket, much to the endless admiration of every one watching. When playing basketball, the master was able to consider the whole team, and tried to give everyone a chance. For those disciples who rarely got the ball, the master would create opportunities for them to play. Looking at how he played the game, one could see the master's compassion, how he cared about everyone and neglected no one.

After finishing the game, everyone would sit on the ground and talk, and Hsing Yun would give instruction on Dharma essentials whenever possible. Many principles of Humanistic Buddhism were formulated during that time.

This went on until 1992 when Hsing Yun slipped in the bathroom and broke his leg. After the operation, the doctor ordered him to stop doing any vigorous exercise, and yet his feelings for basketball remained as strong as ever. On one occasion, he was strolling about Fo Guang University after his meal, and seeing the large basketball courts lying empty, he could not refrain mumbling to himself with a strong sense of regret: "How come students today don't like to play basketball?" Turning around, he looked inquiringly at the disciples in his company, as if he were saying, "How about we go play a game!"

Using Basketball to Give Instruction in Buddhist Teachings

Besides strengthening the body and improving health, his love for basketball has helped him learn the following from the basketball court:

- * Fairness, justice, openness, progress, bravery, and striving to be that second quicker.
- * Group spirit, group honor, and group cooperation.
- * Be open and aboveboard; be willing to admit mistakes; accept the referee's decision; be compassionate; and do not break the rules out of a sense of spite.
- * Respect your opponent, for without the other team you cannot play basketball.

Hsing Yun once gave the following instruction: the ways that a person practices spiritual cultivation, conducts scholarly work, and treats people and handles matters are just like playing basketball. One must be able to cooperate with others, not just go about fighting one's own battles, for one must pay attention to team spirit. When one has control of the ball, one must look for the opportunity to make a shot. Upon breaking the rules, one must also raise one's hand and admit the fault. In playing basketball, one must have the spirit of the Six Perfections: one must pass the ball to one's teammates and help them to score points on a basket (generosity); one must obey the rules of the basketball court (morality or keeping the precepts); it is hard to avoid bumping into others or feelings of unhappiness during the heat of the basketball match, so one must treat everything with forbearance (patience); one must diligently practice the skills of basketball on a regular basis, for one cannot just work by fits and starts (perseverance); and besides the skills of basketball, one must have wisdom and strategy in order to play a winning game (*prajna*-wisdom).

The Great Man does not Lose the Heart of a Child

Many people have said that Hsing Yun has the appearance of the Buddha Maitreya and the heart of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva;

by nature he is soft, honest, and sincere. His heart can contain everything in the world. In his presence one feels so comfortable and warm, like being in the sunlight, enabling one to cast off those outer garments so hard and stern, so that one can bare one's true heart. Because of his thoughtful and caring attitude, Hsing Yun is universally accepted as the finest host. When he leads people on a tour, he will make sure beforehand that all the lights are on and that all the access ways are clear of impediments. Before any meeting begins, he will check beforehand that the tables and chairs have been arranged, and see whether the air conditioning has been turned on, or whether there is enough tea. He wants to ensure that all guests will feel at home in their surroundings.

* The Ven. Yung Ping admires how Hsing Yun never forgets to make connections at every moment. For example, whenever he sees the volunteers, he will always chat with them for a while and give them some encouragement. Whenever his group was about to leave the temple, Hsing Yun would repeatedly ask around while on route: Was so-and-so picked up? Did so-and-so eat? He is really quite concerned that someone will be left behind or end up going hungry.

* During the lunar Spring Festival of 2005, Hsing Yun was riding in an electric cart on his way to tour the flower show behind the temple. When the visitors saw him, they laughed and called out, giving cheers of excitement. He is quite understanding, and so ordered the driver to slow down a bit so that he could have a chance to get closer to the people. He waves to the visitors in acknowledgment, as he calls out to them: "Just wait a while and stay for a meal!"

* One year, during the end of term travel for students of the Buddhist College, the whole group was touring the island as they visited the various branch temples. Forgoing

the ride in his own car, Hsing Yun joined the students by riding in the big bus instead, taking in turn each bus from the first one to the fourth one. He did this because he wanted to have the opportunity to speak with everyone, so that all the teachers and students would be happy.

* The Ven. Man Yi once experienced an unforgettably pleasant surprise: While preparing to leave the country, Man Yi had to take out her identity card in order to apply for a passport, and it was from the identity card that Hsing Yun discovered that the next day was Man Yi's birthday. So Hsing Yun brought back a bowl of noodles and a Buddhist rosary from the Water Drop Teahouse in the Yung Yo Temple as a birthday celebration. Hsing Yun is often able to pull off such wonderful things as opportunities arise and without any fore thought.

* *Hsing Yun's Diary* records how he once personally went to Four Seas Soy Milk Store to buy some soymilk. Upon bringing it all back to the main cafeteria on the 12th floor of the Taipei Vihara, he invited all the staff from the Taipei Vihara, the Buddha's Light International Association, the Fo Guang University, the Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery, the Buddha's Light Publishing, and the *Universal Gate Journal* to come and enjoy it together.

* As he rushes about here and there on business, Hsing Yun often returns to Fo Guang Shan well past midnight. Returning to the temple so late each time causes trouble for the old gatekeeper who must open the gate for him. He feels sorry for causing such trouble and so he always brings along some snack to give to the gatekeeper, whose facial expressions of joy and relief makes Hsing Yun feel happy as well.

* Each time he goes abroad on a mission, he always

remembers to buy some gifts along the way. Upon his return to the temple, he immediately brings together everyone at the temple so that he can share the various experiences and interesting news he had during his trip. Later on, he will hold a lottery so that everyone will receive some small souvenir. Although none of these things are very expensive, through this relaxed gathering in fellowship, he hopes that everyone will be able to be happy together.

* One year he went to Thailand to preach the Dharma. During the trip he saw some local minority groups who had spread their mats around a Buddhist stupa (a circular one) to sell souvenirs. He went clockwise around the stupa, making a connection with each one of these sellers along the way. To his surprise, these small peddlers knew a good thing when they saw it, and as soon Hsing Yun stepped forward to the next peddler, the one behind him would circle around to line up on the other side. Hsing Yun saw what was going on but did not say anything, and continued as before, stopping to shop with each peddler along the way. This went on until no one had anything left to sell, and Hsing Yun even gave the gift of one hundred US dollars to each peddler. Hsing Yun remarked, "I didn't feel that there was anything annoying in what they did. Aren't these poor people here to make a little money? There was nothing sneaky going on, and actually they appeared all the more genuine and adorable."

Making Several Trips to Death's Door

Although he is already beyond the age of eighty, in order to strengthen the good roots of those who have gained access to liberation and to generate the causes and conditions for those who have yet to gain it, Hsing Yun has long since forsaken any thought as to his own life and death. It often happens that in order to make others

happy, he just has to trouble himself by returning to his residence late at night and sleeping with his clothes on, so that when he wakes up he has no idea where he is. His disciples could not stand it and tried persuading him to rest, and they mocked him as well for "going out the door like a tiger but returning home like a mouse."

Beginning with his early youth, Hsing Yun never paid much attention to his physical body. At about the age of ten, he went through all the exploding bombs and shells of WWII, and once slept in a pile of dead bodies. When he was between sixteen and seventeen, he came down with malaria and suffered through abscesses over his body, which was the first time death's door flashed before him. At the age of twenty-three, he was suspected of being a Communist spy, and was nearly hauled off in bonds to the execution ground to be shot. In the year he turned twenty-eight, he almost had his leg amputated. At about the age of fifty, an x-ray revealed a shadow on his lung, which they thought might be cancer. The doctors announced that he did not have that many days to live. (This incident was suddenly recalled many years later, when a typhoon blew down one of the large trees at Fo Guang Shan. Hsing Yun had been standing on top of a railing trying to hold the tree in place when he was knocked down with a thump, hitting his back on a large rock, which created a big bruise inside his chest)

Before the age of sixty, it seemed that Hsing Yun was completely estranged from all forms of medicine, but after sixty, he has had to enter the hospital on an average of once a year; and after the age of seventy, he has had to show up at the hospital at least every month. But even so, he has never become saddened over sufferings that make a day seem as long as a year, or worry about gain or loss that confuse the mind. Instead, he feels grateful for being able to understand so much more about medical treatment because of his illnesses, and to make new friends in the medical world. He still never fails to make fun of himself as a way of dispelling the concerns his

disciples and devotees have regarding his health. In 2003, he wrote a letter to hosts of Dharma protectors, stating:

Looking back over the past year, as the orioles were taking wing and the grass was growing in March, I entered the emergency room of Taipei's Veterans General Hospital for treatment due to an acute attack of my "chronic inflammation of the gallbladder." My gallbladder was removed, and henceforth I am no longer a person with any "gall," and although my time on this earth grows short, yet in this complex human world, "it's better to be careful" and act with "less gall."

His casual words gloss over the seriousness of the matter, for in fact, he had already suffered several bouts of tug-of-war with the Grim Reaper.

In August of 1994, Hsing Yun made his first trip to South Africa to preach the Dharma, and there he conducted a refuge ceremony, gave lectures and Dharma instruction, met with guests, made family visits, and got on and off planes, so he was a lot busier than normal. One night, he felt a series of sudden chest pains, and each time he was about to fall asleep, he would suddenly be awakened by the pain. All he could do was walk around a bit, which is how he suffered through the night by walking for a while and then sleeping a bit. Upon his return to Taipei, he asked Dr. Kong Chi-woon of Veterans General to give him a coronary angiogram procedure which verified that the three coronary arteries of the heart were already seriously blocked, something that required immediate surgery.

At the time, Hsing Yun thought about how the trip to Europe and America had already been set, and especially in the case of Europe, there were many Buddha's Light International Association local chapters that were expecting him to come and preside over their

founding. Consequently, he undertook the perilous journey by flying back and forth for dozens of hours, which put off the operation for nearly half a year. But by the New Year, his physical condition was exhibiting danger signs, and he really felt that even speaking had become too strenuous. Any further delay in treatment would have a serious impact on his life. However, the 6th Board of Directors meeting for the Board of Directors of the Buddha's Light International Association being held in the Philippines was to open in April of that year, and according to the doctor's advice, Hsing Yun would have had to rest for six months after having surgery. Once under the knife, it would probably be impossible for him to fulfill the pledge he had made to personally attend the meeting. Summoning all his strength, he still took the flight to the Philippines.

He finally entered Veterans General Hospital in 1995, and underwent coronary bypass surgery because of his blocked coronary arteries. The procedure required that his chest be cut open as he lingered between life and death. Even now, his body still bears a long, long scar where he was sewn up, like the meandering of a miniature "Great Wall" that crawls across the center of his chest. Upon leaving the hospital, he wrote his own "Record of Open Heart Surgery at Veterans General," in which he recorded all that happened before and after the open-heart surgery:

At exactly seven o'clock and under the watchful eyes of a dozen or so people, including Tzu Chuang and Hui Lung, the nursing staff took me into the operating room. I really wanted to tell everyone: "Don't worry; I will return triumphant!" But a door had already separated me from them, putting me into a world that seemed like outer space, a new world that was foreign to me!

This was the first time in its history, that Veterans General performed open-heart surgery on such a monk as me.

It was said that the hospital's vice director, Chiang Pi-ning, took an apologetic tone when informing Dr. Chang Yen: "I am really sorry to have you shoulder so much pressure by having you perform surgery on the Venerable Master." To which Dr. Chang replied:

To be able to perform surgery on the master is the greatest blessing for me! This all comes as an answer to my regular chanting of the "Mantra of Great Compassion"!

The moment I faced the main scalpel, all I could do was to treat the master as an ordinary individual, for only then could I make the incision, otherwise, I would have been so nervous I wouldn't have known what to do!

I am the only person in the world to have truly "touched" the master's heart! I performed "open heart" surgery on the master to cure his coronary disease, while the master "opened his heart" to me, forming a bond with me, and curing my spiritual problems. When my children grow up, I hope that they can be so blessed as to join the monastic order and become spiritual doctors for all of humanity, rather than just doctors of physiology.

Then there was the following dialogue that took place between Hsing Yun and the anesthesiologist, Dr. Chen Jui-hsiang: "Master, do you fear death?" A question that the young Dr. Chen suddenly asked Hsing Yun, to which the latter replied:

Actually, I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of pain. When a person is healthy, they can follow all the rules of deportment by walking like the wind, sitting like a bell, and

sleeping like a log, and speaking in a poised and orderly manner. But once they get sick, especially when in pain, they can't help calling out or even crying in tears. At such times people are much worse than cowards!

Master, please do not put it that way. Naturally, healthy people have their dignity, but for people who have gotten sick, it is the weeping, the yelling, and the screaming in pain, ... that represent the dignity sick people possess!

Oh, that's wonderful, Dr. Chen. What you have said here is a clear explanation of what it means to be sick, enabling the sick person to feel their pain without any qualms or shame. This is much better than merely trying to tell someone who finds the pain unbearable: "You have to endure it!"

Clearly Recognizing the Laws of Nature

After the coronary bypass surgery, the doctor gave his orders, repeatedly stressing over and over again, that Hsing Yun was not to go on any long airplane trips, and that once he arrived at a new place, he must rest for a week; and each day he was to sleep at least eight hours a night.... However, all of his attendants spoke unani- mously: "We all knew, including the master, that this was impossi- ble." During the ten years since the operation, he has been on not less than several dozen or so long airplane trips, and arriving early and leaving late has also become his standard approach. The amount of sleep he gets each night is probably not more than five hours.

After suffering two mild strokes in 1998, he then received angioplasty treatment. Within the span of a single year, he was in and out of various major hospitals in America, Australia, and Taiwan a total of eight times in treating his physical body and its blood vessels. This has left him feeling deeply grateful to the nursing staff: "You have helped my "broken-down ox cart" of a body, for just like a wind-blown candle at night, it still struggles on to shine its light."

We all know that the laws of nature cannot be contravened and by clearly recognizing life and death we have nothing to fear. In speaking of an individual's physical health, Hsing Yun just has a few short words: "For each individual, there is one life and one heart." He goes on to explain further:

Now, I eat no more than a half bowl of rice, nor have I ever developed the habit of snacking. If I don't wear my glasses when reading, the text becomes blurry and unclear. I walk slowly now with a cane, and can only go about five hundred steps. I am acutely aware that time once past will never return, so how can the physical body last forever? But even so, I have never forgotten the promise of "three hundred years of life," for I always hope that during my journey in this life, I can plant flowers and trees all along the way, so that passers-by can enjoy their shade.

I honor the Buddha and have learned from him, but I do not hope to become a Buddha or patriarch. I give generously and do good deeds, but I do not want to go to Heaven. I recite Amitabha Buddha's name and maintain that practice, but I have no desire to gain rebirth in that Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. My aim does not lie in transcending life and death, but rather in cultivating more resources for the Buddhist path. My only wish is to be reborn in this human world lifetime after lifetime, so that I can be just an ordinary monk.

Chapter
Twenty Three



*A Billion Worlds within
the Mind*



Ultimate enlightenment is very difficult, but it is quite possible to have some small realizations every day. I am working hard every day as I try to understand some small principle. Throughout my life I have been constantly working towards enlightenment every day.

Entering the long corridor of Hsing Yun's life, one often pauses to linger awhile. The system of thought pervading the course of Hsing Yun's eighty some years of life is both long and well established, undulating in constant motion. This system of thought is quite unique and very thought provoking, and forms the basis for Hsing Yun's views on life, money, dealing with the world, and the question of life and death.

A View of Life that Sees the Many as Oneself

When discussing the formation of one's character and ideas, there is the "nature theory" that believes that all these are present at birth. Even Buddhism believes that one's character and ideas are formed over a series of lifetimes. Then, there is the "nurture theory", which holds that everything is a product of environmental influence, and that one's character and ideas are slowly formed and changed in stages over the course of one's lifetime. There is also the synthesis of the two, which holds that the process of both nature and nurture are mutually involved. We can conclude from Hsing Yun's views on life that the two levels of "unchanging principle and conditional methods" are operating mutually. Hsing Yun always puts the host of many beings first and himself second, and he once said that he and the entire universe with all its worlds are both present: "All living beings are the living beings of my mind; and the world is the world of my mind."

Chien Chih-chung, the CEO of the Eurasian Press, recalled how he once paid a visit to see Hsing Yun in the spring of 2003. At the time, Hsing Yun was browsing through a collection of old photographs covering his fifty-year preaching career in Taiwan, and invited Chien to sit down with him:

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The master master picked up each photo so happily, and explained to me with much enthusiasm who the individuals in the photos were, what good people they were, and how they helped support his work in those years The expression "good causes and conditions" were ever on his lips. As I followed his gaze, I was stunned to discover that the master looks at photos differently from most people. Most people will first look at themselves, but the master looks at the other people first. His gaze never lingered over his image in the photos. This discovery deeply moved me, for is this not an apt portrayal of the master's entire life?

Hsing Yun has spent his life building temples, securing the monastic order, instructing his disciples, and teaching living beings. He has also occupied himself with such Dharma preaching work as cultural education, Dharma Service, charity, and community education. Throughout all of these activities, he remains ever interested in and concerned about each and every matter. The reason he broke his leg was because he heard the phone ringing, and being concerned that the caller might be anxious trying to reach him, he hurriedly dashed out of the bathroom and accidentally slipped and fell. Even with this accident serving as a cautionary warning, he still tries to answer the phone before the third ring.

More than twenty years ago, the Yuanfu Temple in Chiayi became a branch temple of Fo Guang Shan because Hsing Yun's connection with the lay Buddhist Lin Tzu-chao. Later on, her son Nishihara Yuichi planned and organized a Buddha's Light International Association in Tokyo and served as its first president. When Mrs. Lin passed away in 1995, Hsing Yun made a special trip all the way from Taipei to Chiayi by passing cars on the expressway,

so that he could conduct the memorial service as a way of expressing his gratitude to the entire family for their solicitude towards Fo Guang Shan over such a long time.

Huang Ying-chi, the principal of Szu Wei Senior High School in Hualien, spared no effort in promoting the Buddha's Light International Association in the local area. Hsing Yun was recuperating in Taipei under the doctor's orders, having just undergone heart surgery in June of 1995. But when he heard that Mr. Huang's son was going to be married in a Buddhist ceremony at Fo Guang Shan, Hsing Yun immediately came to officiate despite his weakened physical condition. He did so because he also wanted to thank Principal Huang for his loyal support for Buddhism.

After his heart surgery, Hsing Yun's doctor repeatedly reminded him that he must rest quietly. When guests arrived, his attendants suggested that it would be best to talk for only ten minutes, but Hsing Yun would ask his attendants on behalf of the guest for the "favor" of allowing him to converse for at least a half hour. He felt that since these guests had come such a long distance, he could not disappoint them. When letters came, his attendants volunteered to respond on his behalf, but Hsing Yun insisted that he personally make the phone call.

He looks after the needs of each individual with a sense of compassion and equality. For example, if a visitor brings their children along, he will immediately think that the children would most likely not drink tea, and so he would arrange to have sodas on hand. He always has an idea as to what food his guests will like or what meaningful souvenir to give. For example, the veteran journalist Lu Keng likes to eat potatoes and beancurd; Mr. Yang Dong, a devotee from Hong Kong, likes to eat noodles. It may even be that Hsing Yun understands them better than they do themselves.

Throughout his entire life, Hsing Yun has always treated each and every devotee in a cheerful and amiable manner. He also

repeatedly exhorts his monastic disciples to never ever offend a lay devotee, for as the expression goes: "Don't damage a tree by damaging its roots; don't hurt people by hurting their heart." Before his birthday one year, someone asked him what kind of gift he would most like to receive from his disciples, he replied without hesitation: "Be good to the lay devotees, for in being good to them, you are treating me well." One of Hsing Yun's former attendants, the Ven. Chueh Nian said in a tender way that what Hsing Yun gives to others is certainly the best, while what he gives to himself is just so-so: "He doesn't pay attention to his own health that much, and finds taking injections and medication annoying; but he is extremely patient when it comes to educating the monastics. When working on an official document he will make changes over and over again."

Coming from their sense of concern, many people are always inquiring into Hsing Yun's health. This person says one thing; that person says another. Sometimes he feels somewhat harassed, and complains that there are too many "managers." He has spent his life being accommodating to others, unconcerned about his own likes and dislikes. But when he thinks, "who asked you to become a monk," he will immediately feel at ease and smile.

A View of Money that Treats Nothing as Something

Throughout his life, Hsing Yun has insisted on the notions of "treating nothing as something" and "treating not wanting as something." He has explained that human beings are greedy, and if they have money, they will think of depositing it in a bank where it will collect interest; in this way they are unable to launch any new enterprise. But Hsing Yun himself does not want money and does not possess money. Money comes from the generosity of all the devotees, and he will fully utilize it, for only in this way does the money have any value. As he puts it, "What comes from all directions supports undertakings in all directions; the generosity of people in their

thousands creates connections for thousands of people."

The Ven. Tzu Hui published an article in the *Universal Gate Journal* entitled, "Twelve Questions for the Venerable Master Hsing Yun." In that article she wrote that if the monastery needed to buy some land and it was not clear at the time under whose name the purchase should be made, the disciples felt that the purchase should be made under Hsing Yun's name. In order to avoid the traditional corrupt practice of having all power concentrated in the hands of one person, Hsing Yun has made a conscious effort to reject this approach: "If there is ever any dispute regarding the land, do you want me to go to jail?" Sometimes an automobile needed to be purchased, and since Hsing Yun was in charge, the temple's business manager would register the vehicle in his name, to which Hsing Yun would also say, "If the car is ever involved in an accident, do you want me to be responsible?" Beyond this, whether it was bank deposits or temple registration, he tried as much as possible to avoid using his name.

Hsing Yun has said that what hurts him the most in his life is for people to say that he has a lot of money. The reason for this is clear, for if a monastic is wealthy, would anyone want to come and help out? However, as a part of his character, Hsing Yun possesses an extraordinary sense of dignity. He does not like to complain or cry about being poor, nor does he like to talk about money. There are even cases where people try to give him a cash donation on their own initiative, and yet he will decline. As for the question of whether Fo Guang Shan has any money or not, Tzu Hui explains in her article that Fo Guang Shan does not feign any disdain for money as some sort of evil, but neither does it waste money, nor store it away as savings, for doing so would indeed make money the source of evil. Making use of money is not a question of how much, but rather whether one's view of money is correct or not, and whether it can be used in an appropriate way or not. Although it is a hard day every day at Fo Guang Shan, it knows how to use money, so that one dollar is as effective as ten:

“Any money we have must be used for Buddhism and society; it must not be kept as savings. Over these forty years, the master is happiest not when he uses money to build temples, but rather when he can foster talent, and make Buddhism globalized, modernized, more life-oriented, and systematized. This then is how Fo Guang Shan cherishes wealth, an attitude of which it is justly proud.”

Hsing Yun has lived quite frugally his whole life and the material conditions of his life are quite simple and plain. He neither saves money nor does he have the habit of buying things. He did not use an electric light until the age of twenty-six, and he was twenty-eight before he had his first suitcase. In his youth, if he obtained any money from his writing fees, he would spend it on buying books. Since he began his travels to preach the Dharma, every so often devotees would make small donations or present offerings for the refuge ceremony, but he would turn these over to the monastery. For example, the lay Buddhist Lin Ching-chih in Ilan would send in a donation on time every month of every year, just like a child supporting their parents. Hsing Yun has never sent back a note of thanks. He just turns the donation over to the treasurer of the monastery for disposition, and at the very most asks the treasurer to write a letter of thanks. The Ven. Yung Kuang remembers an incident as if it was yesterday. More than twenty years ago when Hsing Yun retired from his position as chief abbot, rumors were circulating outside the monastery that he had taken all the money to Las Vegas:

When I heard this I was quite upset, and angrily went off to the Office of the Founding Master. I saw that the master just happened to be there eating, and so I asked whether he had heard about those rumors. He told me not to be angry, and that they had overestimated him, for how did he have the ability to do that. And then he continued eating just as calmly as before.

Hsing Yun's views on spending money are: he does not mind spending thousands of dollars on something that is appropriate, but he will not spend a dime for something that is inappropriate. For example, in starting universities or launching newspapers, Hsing Yun is never fainthearted, and yet when it comes to water and electrical resources, he quibbles over the smallest amounts, for as the saying goes, "For the Buddha, a grain of rice appears as large as Mt. Sumeru." He will even keep the paper napkins provided during meals on board the plane and use them over and over again, for he is unwilling to throw them away. On one occasion, his disciples discovered that his pocket was bulging and so they asked him what he was keeping there. He stuck his hand into his pocket and pulled out a thick wad of all kinds of paper napkins, much to the surprise of everyone. This provoked some laughter at Hsing Yun's expense, noting that he had left the temple with pockets full of cash and returned bringing paper napkins. As Hsing Yun has personally stated:

I am quite able to figure my accounts when it comes to life. The time and energy I have invested in Buddhism will certainly bring a return. I cannot simply give up on a whim, for that investment will make a lot more in interest. Even if there are some temporary setbacks, I cannot make any compensation by surrendering my faith, for such a loss would be far too great.

There are some people who compare Hsing Yun to the billionaire Wang Yung-ching. Hsing Yun says of himself that he is richer than Wang Yung-ching, for although Wang Yung-ching's factories are worth several billion dollars, he embraces a great thousand thousandfold chiliocosm: "Of the sun, moon, stars, and the universe of

space itself, which of these does not belong to me?"

A View on Dealing with the World through Patience

When this author interviewed Hsing Yun for the first time some ten years ago, he had written in large print on the blackboard located in a conference room at Fo Guang Shan's Bamboo Grove the following words: "The patience of sentient beings, the patience of phenomena, and the patience of the non-arising of phenomena." The *Sutra of the Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha*: "Those who are able to practice patience can indeed be known as great and powerful ones. Those who cannot happily endure the poison of calumny, ridicule, or harsh insult like the drinking of sweet dew, cannot be called wise ones who have entered the path." Not only does patience constitute the most powerful force in the world, but it is also a kind of ultimate wisdom. Buddhism divides patience into three levels: the first is the "patience of sentient beings," in which one recognizes the conditions for existence and possesses the power to deal with them; the second is the "patience of phenomena," in which the understanding of all phenomena in the universe functions to transform the mental state by taking direct responsibility; and the third is the "patience of the non-arising of phenomena," the world view in which one truly knows and understands how all phenomena neither arise nor pass into extinction, that then leads one to freely and easily liberate living beings in all the various countries.

These three forms of patience may indeed be a kind of key that can open a door to Hsing Yun's spiritual world. At this point, it is probably best to let Hsing Yun explain it himself:

I have more than a thousand monastic disciples and more than a million lay devotees, and yet when they are happy, they won't think of looking for me. Once they arrive at my door, it's because they are in trouble, and the majority of

them announce that they are coming in for "emergency treatment." No matter how busy or tired I am, all I can do is go along with them. I meet with them and listen to their problems; I console them and give them some encouragement. With all my experience and training these many years I have indeed solved quite a few difficult problems and hard cases. However, my disciples will also turn to me and say, "Master, you only tell us to be patient, but does that mean these is nothing else we can do besides beings patient?" I have never practiced Qigong, nor have I done any Shaolin martial arts, but I do have this "Fo Guang technique."

I remember how I became a sramanera [novice monk] at the age of twelve and then received full monastic ordination at the age of fifteen. That was when the incense sticks marking my monastic ordination were burned into my scalp, and at the same time, I lost my memory. At the time, many teachers, senior students, and classmates would often point a finger in my face and rebuke me: "Oh, you want to be a success; that will happen when the sun rises in the west!" I didn't feel bad about that, nor did I blame and censure myself. In my mind, whether or not I was to be a success was not something that could be determined right at that moment. Time would give me strength, for who knows what will happen in twenty to thirty years. "One day" I myself would make that break through and find my own way in the world!

When I look back now and think about it, I can see that what gave me the strength to undertake all that I have done was the Dharma. Although at the time I did not quite understand what the patience of sentient beings, the patience of phenomena, and the patience of the non-arising of phenomena were all about, I at least appreciated the "paramita of patience." Now "paramita" means "transcending

perfection." Patience is something that can lead one to "transcend" the afflictions; it can "transcend" any injury and any setback.

Since I was good at accepting things from an early age and I was able to realize "transformation," I could transform the afflictions of suffering into strength. This was how I developed an internal ability to become braver the more setbacks I encountered, and I was able to develop this in terms of physical stamina, so that the more I walked, the stronger I became. This also represents an important aspect for the practice of Humanistic Buddhism. From time to time in our daily lives, there is always some countervailing force that can annoy and upset us, but it also gives us the energy we need to grow. I hope that each person can have such a "Buddha's Light transformer" in their own minds, so that they can practice transforming themselves from time to time in their own daily lives. This is also how one's potential can be developed.

Indeed, Hsing Yun says that the one and only method and power in this human life is patience. Patience is not weakness, nor does it mean doing nothing. Patience is a kind of power, a form of compassion and wisdom, as well as a kind of art. Patience means acceptance, accountability, and reconciliation, as well as the ability to deal with situations. The Buddha has said, "Those who cannot endure calumny, ridicule, or harsh insult like the drinking of sweet dew, cannot be known as great and powerful ones." Buddhism considers patience as the greatest practice of all. Limitless wrongdoing lies in anger alone; while immeasurable merit lies in patience alone. Although Hsing Yun has simply practiced patience throughout his life, he has awakened so many living beings who were lost and perplexed, and has helped them toward realization. Therefore, it is his

wish to return to this saha world ("saha" means "to endure patiently") lifetime after lifetime, so that he can benefit sentient beings through his enduring patience as a bhiksu.

Although the contributions of Fo Guang Shan are plain for all to see, prominence attracts criticism, and so there are some people who misunderstand or are prejudiced against him as typified by the expression: "Wherever fame goes, calumny is sure to follow." Here is an apt comparison: when other people do things, they are judged as if seen through a telescope, but when Hsing Yun does things, he is judged as if seen through a microscope. Once Ms. Chang Yao Hung-ying was speaking of Hsing Yun, and mentioned how "breadth of the mind " and "vision" are key factors as to whether a person is successful or not. She explained:

I first visited Fo Guang Shan more than thirty years ago .I could see the Venerable Master's right knowledge and understanding, as well as his great vow of compassion. I could also appreciate how he was able to apply skillful means and adapt to conditions in order to preach the Dharma to living beings. He has adopted innovative methods for combining the traditional model of Buddhist monasticism with a modern society. I even asserted at that time, that nobody else besides him would become the future leader of the Buddhist world.

Hsing Yun constantly encourages everyone to remember that if the mind of an individual can embrace a single family, then such a person would be the "head of the family;" if it can embrace a single village, then such a person would be the "village leader;" if it can embrace a single county, then such a person would be the "county magistrate;" if it can embrace a single country, then such a person would be the "king;" and if it can embrace all living beings, then such

a person would become a Buddha. This kind of capacity can be developed in the following ways:

- * Let others have their way in small matters, and forgive others for their mistakes; but one cannot be careless about important matters, but one must have the understanding of right and wrong.
- * When disappointments appear, if you can remain calm when dealing with them and are not dragged down by them, then your capacity for tolerance will naturally become enlarged.
- * When you are ridiculed or attacked by others, you should examine yourself and refrain from striking back, then your capacity for tolerance will grow night and day
- * Learn to suffer loss, and as time passes, you will be able to increase your own capacity for tolerance.
- * Focus on an individual's single good points and forget about all their faults. Only seeing the shortcomings of others but not their strong points will never develop one's capacity for tolerance.

A View of Life and Death that Commands the Present Moment

In looking over the various Buddhist groups, many people have the same feeling: the Fo Guang Shan order has always demonstrated an exuberant vitality, with enough freshness and a long shelf life. Upon hearing these comments, the disciples of Fo Guang Shan generally agree that it is Hsing Yun himself who has the longest shelf life and the highest degree of freshness. Wu Po-hsiung has even made this dramatic comparison: "The master is like an old rabbit (he was born in the year of the rabbit) that just keeps on going and going, and this encourages me greatly since I am also a rabbit born one cycle earlier."

On the question of life and death, Hsing Yun is quite noncha-

lant and looks upon it with indifference. The question arose as to how Hsing Yun would prioritize the question of life and death within an ordered list of issues about which he remains concerned. A disciple standing beside him jumped in with an answer: "Surely it would be listed last!" Hsing Yun looked at everyone around him for a moment and stated in clear and certain terms: "It wouldn't even make my list!" Hsing Yun explains:

Birth, old age, sickness, and death are not matters we can decide for ourselves. You are born when you should be born, and die when you should die. So be happy when you are born, and nonchalant when you die. Birth and death are merely phenomena, for only life is eternal. One's life is turned over to the guardian spirits and one's birth and death is turned over to the sentient beings. One's emotions in the face of death should be as natural as a leaf reverting to its roots, as happy as a traveler returning home, as free as a prisoner being unshackled from chains, and as clear as a bright moon rising over the mountains.

Hsing Yun often likes to use "changing one's clothes" as an analogy for one's death. When the clothes become old and ragged, one changes into new ones. When this body becomes old and decrepit, of course one will want to change to a new body. He also tends to use "moving one's home" as an analogy for this transition in life. When this house becomes old and broken-down, one moves into a new house and lives there. The question is whether or not you have enough capital. If you have money, you can change into a set of beautiful clothes, or move into a gorgeous apartment in a tall building. Capital is an analogy for one's "merit," for if one has no capital, this means that one has not accumulated that much merit. This is comparable to pawning your original clothes or selling your old house, in

which case you can only wear a set of tattered clothes or live in a simple and crude dwelling. It is said that "the chance of obtaining a human life is as small as the dirt under one's fingernails, while the chance of losing it is as large as the earth itself," and so it is important that we take charge of this lifetime, and do the best we can.

Having long ago recognized clearly that "birth and death are the same in essence," we should know that when we are born, there will be a day we will die. Birth and death are like the four seasons, for spring comes when winter departs; birth and death are like a clock, that goes round and round in a never ending circular motion. With birth, there will be death; and death itself means another birth. Birth and death are natural events, for birth means there must be death and death leads to another birth. Therefore, death is not something fearful, for it does not represent annihilation. Hsing Yun once told a story about a family that was blessed with a son late in life, and being really happy, they set out lamps and festooned the house with silk to celebrate. Just at that time, there was a Buddhist monk at the door crying bitter tears. The family was outraged by such behavior and came out to beat the monk. A bystander asked the monk why he had been so unlucky as to bring such misfortune upon himself. The monk replied, "I just couldn't stop myself from feeling upset that now another dead person has been added to this family."

As to the question of longevity, how long should a person really live? Hsing Yun feels that we should live freely according to causes and conditions, and not worry about longevity. It is enough that we live to the appropriate moment, living a human life that is proper for a human being. It is not important how long one's life-span is, because besides the life of the physical body, there is also the life of one's words, the life of one's faith, the life of one's merit, and the life of one's work. An individual's accomplishments are not achieved because of one's age, nor does one's determination depend on how old one is. What is important is the legacy of one's moral character,

the legacy of one's accomplishments, and the legacy of one's words. An old saying goes: "Since ancient times, those reaching the age of seventy are rare." So how does the eighty year-old Hsing Yun face death? "I have been content and at peace my entire life, for I have neither indulged in deluded craving nor felt plagued by suffering. I will face death unafraid, for when that day truly arrives, I will greet death happily with a smile on my face, and I do not want to disturb others that much."

Working Towards Enlightenment Every Day

Having seen through more than half of this transient life,
Half of its enjoyments are more than limitless.
The months and years with this half have been completely carefree,
Within this half, heaven and earth are spread wide and clear.
Villages are half town and half countryside,
Fields are half mountain and half water;
Half farming, half reading,
Families are half like kin and half like friends.

Hsing Yun read this "Half-half Song" by Li Mi-an, and became quite inspired by it, and he also realized that this world of ours is a half-half kind of place. Since nothing in this human life has ever been completely perfect, people are only able to fulfill their ideals within the midst of imperfection. During an interview, Hsing Yun admitted that he had perfectionist tendencies in his youth, and he would feel people were being unfair when they criticized him: "I was already working so hard and being so patient. What did they want me to do before they would be satisfied?" But as he gradually grew older, he came to understand that the world is a half-half place, in which success and failure is a half-half kind of thing. Instead, people should

not seek perfection, because no matter how perfectly you do something, someone will always come along and criticize it. Just do the best you can, and you will have nothing to feel ashamed about.

Hsing Yun once wrote in his *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha*, that the Buddha did not set out to change other people's lives externally, but to change his own life internally. "I too have been doing this internal revolution by changing my own ideas and habits, and through this constant process of renewal, I have a sense of myself slowly making progress. In the preface he personally composed to his Pearls of *Wisdom- Prayers for Engaged Living*, one can see how human life has its different stages due to the expansion and elevation of one's mental state:

Ordinarily, when people pray they only pray for themselves. Before I was twenty years old, I did the same and always prayed to the Buddha for blessings, for him to allow me to be intelligent, to progress, to overcome obstacles, and to study Buddhism and smoothly pursue the way.

After I turned twenty and graduated from the Buddhist College, I suddenly felt that what I had been praying to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas for every day was only myself. Was I too selfish? From that moment on, I changed and have since been praying for the health and safety and advances in merits and wisdom of my parents, teachers, relatives, friends, and even some Buddhist devotees.

One day, after turning forty, I paused and reflected upon the past. I discovered that my praying was still a type of selfish, covetous desire, since whatever I had been praying for was "mine": "my" teachers, "my" parents, and "my" friends. My prayers were incomplete, according to the Dharma. Therefore, from the age of

forty to the age of fifty my praying experienced another breakthrough. I began to pray for world peace, for the wealth and strength of our nation, for the safety and happiness of our society, and for the liberation of all beings. During that time, I felt that I myself was practicing what was said in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*: I pray for all beings to be free from suffering, and not merely for my own safety and happiness.

When I turned fifty, a thought suddenly occurred to me: if I needed to pray every day for society and the world to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, what had I actually done for the world and society? Since then, I have prayed to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas to let me shoulder karmic hindrances and sufferings for all beings of the world, to let me put the great compassion of the Buddha into practice, and to let me learn from the proclamation, instruction, blessing, and joy of the Honorable Tathagatha.

Nowadays, when he hears people say that Fo Guang Shan is big, he not only does not feel self-satisfied, but will he even ask: Big how? His mental state has long ago transcended the concerns of appearance and form as to the number of temples and the development of business concerns. He has entered a state akin to the order of the world, the laws of the universe, and the ethical relations of self and other, a state of understanding that self and other are the same in essence, being at ease in life and death, becoming liberated and free and not attached to a single object. "Although I began learning Buddhism well before the age of seventy, such learning didn't reach maturity until I became seventy. Many of these principles have been with me all this time, it's just that before I only saw it vaguely, whereas now I have found the original nature."

His subtle description of these feelings is like a lamp that becomes slowly brighter. Some of these were already present in him while others have been slowly enticed into making their appearance.

"Ultimate enlightenment is very difficult, but it is quite possible to have some small realizations every day. I am striving hard every day as I try to understand some small principle. Throughout my life I have been constantly working towards enlightenment every day."

Self-Awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way

The topic for the BLIA's World Conference in 2004 was "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," something Hsing Yun had been pondering in his mind for quite some time. "What is most important to Humanistic Buddhism is practice, and I believe that the movement of practicing the Buddha's Way will become a popular trend." Four yards of spiritual talk are not as good as a foot of practice. Hsing Yun points out, that in the Buddhist scriptures, every sutra begins with the words "Thus I have heard," and ends with the words "receive the teachings with conviction and understanding, and then truly practice them." To be able to receive the Dharma with conviction and understanding and then truly practice it is Buddhist practice. Therefore, the disciples of the Buddha should make "practicing the Buddha's Way" the goal of their spiritual cultivation. Practicing the Buddha's Way means engaging in true practice according to the Buddha's teachings. Usually we call people who are learning Buddhism "practitioners," because they are "practicing" the Dharma, and acting as the Buddha said and did. Therefore, a true practitioner must "practice the Buddha's Way " and not just merely "learn about the Buddha."

Speaking of "Practicing the Buddha's Way ," Hsing Yun can provide an excellent example. Mr. Tsao Chung Gih is the founder of Taiwan Lifeline International and his wife is a devout Buddhist, who had taken refuge in the Triple Gem at Pumen Temple some forty years earlier. She was completely captivated by Hsing Yun's conception of the ideals for Humanistic Buddhism. Since then, she had been constantly persuading her husband to become involved in Buddhism and

to listen to sermons and teachings. At the time, Mr. Tsao was not a Buddhist, but followed his wife's wish to visit temples and monasteries out of his love for her.

At the end of a particular Dharma service, Mrs. Tsao took her husband's hand, walked up to Hsing Yun and said, "Master, will you please enlighten my husband, so that he will believe in Buddhism and be able to bow to the Buddha?" Hsing Yun could see that Mr. Tsao was quite embarrassed. To ease the awkward situation, Hsing Yun said, "It is not necessary for Mr. Tsao to bow to the Buddha, it will be fine as long as he is practicing the Buddha's Way. Mr Tsao was delighted when he heard that. Afterwards, he would say to everyone he met that "Master Hsing Yun told me that I do not have to bow to the Buddha as long as I am practicing the Buddha's Way."

As a consequence, Mr. Tsao has untiringly participated in many charitable and benevolent social activities. For example, he has established the Tsao Chung Gih Foundation to provide education subsidies to needy students, and to supply wheelchairs to tens of thousands of handicapped persons. Each year he donated millions of dollars to disaster appeals. In addition, he helped support the construction work for Fo Guang Shan, Hsi Lai Temple in the United States, and the Paris temple in France, as well the Dharma propagation activities of BLIA. He has also given generously to the installation of multi-language plaques around sacred sites in India and Sri Lanka that commemorate historic Buddhist events. Many would praise him on his well-known good reputation that he has gained for his good deeds, but he would invariably reply: "Reciting Buddhist scriptures is not as good as listening to Buddhist teachings. Listening to the teaching is not as good as putting it into practice. I am merely practicing the Buddha's Way."

Long ago the Buddha spoke of "belief, understanding, practice, and realization." Without practice there can be no realization, which just so happens to match perfectly the ideal of "practicing the

Chapter

Twenty Four

*Beacons of Light Shine
Throughout the Five Continents*

Everything I had known is forgotten in one strike of brick on bamboo;
I need no longer rely on forms of cultivation.
In an instant, I am awakened to the age-old Truth
Without becoming trapped in subtle formations.
Realization comes without trace anywhere,
And does not rely on the display of external appearance.
Words uttered by all the enlightened ones
Are those of complete and ultimate wisdom.

Each age has its individuals that stand above the waves of history, and the same is true for our age. Having lived nearly a century, Hsing Yun can be called one of the Buddhist world's shining beacons of wisdom. With his great vow of compassion, he is making vigorous efforts to turn the tide of Buddhism, and with his prajna-wisdom, he illuminates the future course of Buddhism.

In the 1950s, a young bhiksu from Mainland China came all alone to Taiwan. From a position of incomparable obscurity, he accumulated and created the causes and conditions he needed step by step. A few decades later, the sacred mission that the Buddha had consigned to him gradually began to manifest itself, and that mission was to spread Buddhism to the Western world with its sense of modernity. Such a new undertaking that would mark the coming of a new age, while still in its infancy, was treated with complete disdain by others and there were even those who thought it laughable. Such people were blinded by their poor vision and lack of broadmindedness, for they believed that such an undertaking was impossible, because it would have to come face to face with the implacable force of Christianity.

However, his diligent efforts over half a century have proven the self-confidence, the charisma, and the wisdom of Hsing Yun, for hidden within him was a great source of energy and power. The significance of Hsing Yun's contributions to world Buddhism is quite profound, and he can indeed claim supreme credit for the development of Buddhism in terms of its systemization, its modernization, its globalization, and its orientation towards humanity. The Humanistic

Buddhism that he has been practicing and spreading has truly become synonymous with Buddhism itself, for it has not only entered the human world, but it has become a part of the human heart.

Four Major Directions of Future Effort

Upon the fortieth anniversary of Fo Guang Shan's founding, there was the commemoration of all the difficulties associated with this pioneering effort. But besides that, what was more important was the recapitulation of all the experience at each stage along the way, so that energies could be organized with a look towards continued development into the future. Hsing Yun's thinking and openness of spirit are not only grounded upon one religious order, one nation, and one race, but they also play out upon a stage that encompasses the entire globe within a whole period of time. On more than one occasion, Hsing Yun has spoken to the members of the Buddha's Light International Association:

As we enter this 21st century of instantaneous change, if Buddhist followers continue to maintain a lackadaisical and uninspired attitude, then it will be impossible for Buddhism to adapt to conditions in the world, much less to develop its noble teachings to a higher level and bring benefit to living beings. Therefore, I call upon all members of the Buddha's Light International Association to pay attention to future trends in the world. The world of the future is full of danger and opportunity, which encompasses such areas as society, technology, the environment, economics, and politics. Each of these areas impacts and influences all the others and can change rapidly. Only our active effort to understand thoroughly these variables so that we can adapt to any change will make it possible for us to master the future. The development of Buddhism must keep pace with the times, for only then can it function effectively to liberate beings as opportunities arise. This is why we should make a positive effort to study the direction of Buddhism's future

development, and we should also engage in overall planning, in order to ensure that Buddhist resources are effectively utilized.

Hsing Yun is ever mindful of this issue, and has offered four directions for future effort:

- 1.) **Humanize Buddhism:** No matter what beliefs one has, they all must be able to help people deal with the problems of daily life, for that is the only way they can rally support from the people. The reason Buddhism still remains deeply rooted in the human heart after more than twenty-five hundred years is because of the Buddha's focus on the human world. Whether in terms of individuals, families, societies, or nations, the Buddha was able to offer the correct guidance. Future members of the Buddha's Light International Association must seek a greater transcendence of national boundaries in order to ensure that the spirit of Humanistic Buddhism is spread throughout and will forever remain in this human world.
- 2.) **Culturally improve our lives:** It is our hope that in addition to using the Dharma to purify themselves, members of the Buddha's Light International Association will also dignify themselves with the "fragrance of books." Reading books and good literature can help us reduce our distracting thoughts, train our thinking, nurture our innate qualities, and elevate the cultural standards of society and the nation.
- 3.) **Install equality in monastic and lay societies:** The monastic and lay communities are like the rivers and streams that flow into the great ocean and end up having the same taste. The attainment of Buddhahood does not lie in external appearance, since spiritual practice purifies one's own character, for there are no distinctions of time, place, or status within the purification of personal

character. We hope that the monastic and lay communities around the world will unite their strengths in a complementary fashion to bring Buddhism to a higher and more profound state.

- 4.) **Promote localization of monastic establishments:**
Buddhism is a religion that has the broadest of world views, and so it should employ positive effort to train missionary talent from all countries of the world. We hope that within the next ten to fifty years all of the various temples and monasteries built by Fo Guang Shan will be managed by local monastic and lay communities.

Outlining the Prospects for Buddhism

In addition, Hsing Yun has outlined the ideal prospects for Buddhism:

- 1.) **Buddhism in the Future must be more Unified in Terms of its System:** This topic covers the style of temple buildings, monastic dress, forms of address, monastic precepts and rules, Dharma assemblies, Dharma Service, and morning and evening chanting. Although in the past China's Chan School had its Five Houses and Seven Schools, the use of bell and wooden block to signal the orders of the day constituted a unified system; and although each Chan center had its own temple rules and regulations, each school and sect maintained a unified style of Chan Buddhism. Because of this unification the Chan School was able to attain its brilliant flowering during the Sui and Tang Dynasties. But now the methods of practice for each school and sect diverge widely; monastic dress can be in as many as different six colors; forms of address and etiquette are changed by caprice; while the procedures for Dharma Service exhibit too many differences.... Not only does the lay community not know what is right, it also makes it easy for corrupt and

heterodox teachings to take advantage of the situation. For Buddhism in the future, the content of the morning and evening chanting should be unified; the rules of daily living should be unified; the rules and practices for the Chan meditation, the Pure Land recitation and the repentance services should be unified; the ceremonies for conducting marriages and funerals should be unified; and even the veneration of Buddhas and bodhisattvas in Buddhist halls should be unified; the etiquette regarding the forms of address should be unified; the qualifications for the various levels within the monastic order should be unified; and the rules and regulations for lay devotee practice should also be unified.

- 2.) **Communication among the different Buddhist traditions in the Future should be much Stronger:** As in the case of Chan, Pure Land, and esoteric forms of Buddhism, the Northern and Southern transmissions, and the four groups of Buddhist disciples, in local regions and on to the entire world, communication and understanding should be achieved through the convening of meetings. Nowadays each sect maintains that what they do is the highest, the best, the most authoritative, and the most consistent with the Dharma, but all such assertions are not useful if Buddhist followers as a whole cannot identify with them. How to unify Buddhism is a goal requiring diligent effort in the future. Hsing Yun hopes that eventually Buddhism will have a world Buddhist headquarters, just like the Catholic Church's Vatican.
- 3.) **Buddhist Enterprises in the Future must be further Popularized:** Devotees are encouraged to operate businesses that are vitally connected with life. Examples include: farms, orchards, banks, shopping centers, department stores, supermarkets, insurance

companies, and tourist businesses; the management of student loans, financial capital for commercial enterprises, and retirement funds; the establishment of groups for emergency support as well as professional training centers; the organization of Buddhist sports teams, Buddhist music groups, and Buddhist art studios; and so on. Buddhism in the future will not only have fields that produce agricultural products, but also factory equipment; there will not only be libraries, magazines, newspapers, and television stations, but also sports teams that represent Buddhism, including base ball, basketball, and soccer, that will bring glory to the world's sports arenas.

- 4.) **For Future Buddhism, Temples will not be Located in Remote Areas, but will be Found on City Street Corners:** Inside such temples, there will not only be main shrines, but also large assembly halls; not only Buddha images, but also the monastic and lay communities; not only kitchens, but also conference rooms; not only meditation halls, but also Buddhist colleges; and not only places for prostrations, but also discourses on the Dharma teachings.

To Come and To Go for the Sake of Living Beings

The master of the Danish folktale, Hans Christian Andersen, once said that in life there are times when the snow piles up, and there is the season for velvet carpets of green grass; there are smiling faces of joy and faces bathed in tears; there are necklaces of luck, as well as the devil's hand of cruelty.... Having experienced a life of surprising ups and downs with its endless array of twists and turns, does Hsing Yun have any conclusions about life, like Hans Christian Andersen? Hsing Yun speaks from the heart:

At first, I actually felt no great calling to spread Buddhism throughout the world. All I thought about was doing the best I could to not be blinded by delusion and

not act presumptuously. But as I slowly started doing things, I didn't feel I was anything great either. It's just like climbing stairs; one goes up step by step, for one cannot climb up to heaven in one leap.

Like many other visionaries in their day and age, Hsing Yun walks alone along a solitary path, as he climbs a mountain no one has ever climbed before. Now that he stands upon the mountain peak, we can ask him what that journey was like. Hsing Yun speaks in an earnest and profound tone:

When I started I was unafraid, but now that I look back I do feel afraid. Because actions make an impression, I had to go cautiously as if treading on thin ice, and I was left with the feeling of isolation in such a high position. I was not worried about how I personally would be praised or blamed, but I was concerned about how my every move and action would impact this religious order.

At eighty some years, Hsing Yun still keeps a busy schedule for the sake of the Dharma, but he does so happily:

This is a responsibility I cannot possibly discharge. I must still undertake this task for the sake of Buddhism's future. It is Humanistic Buddhism that must embrace living beings, for the way to Buddhahood can be found in living beings. For the sake of living beings and their happiness, I must put up with ignoring my own likes and dislikes on whether I have eaten enough or am warm enough, for only then can I ensure that everyone will be happy.

To come for the sake of living beings and to go for the sake of living beings; in this, greatness and ordinariness are neighbors. A

Buddhist scripture states, "One who has the Dharma will be respected; the place that has the Dharma will be treasured." Hsing Yun commented on his own feelings:

Looking at my external appearance, you will see just an old man, but when everyone sees me, they will respond with enthusiastic applause. The reason for this is none other than the fact that the Dharma is within my heart. This is why I appear so highly respectable and revered.

In this life of mine, there are many people who revere me, but only a few who understand me. Many people would say that for a monastic to have reached such a stage should be really gratifying. But that is not something I want. How does having such a following or having all that adoration and praise really subtract or add anything to me? The greatest happiness in my life was that I was able to become a monastic. Such a connection and roots of goodness are an extremely rare occurrence. Because I joined the monastic order, I had the opportunity to further my studies and engage in practice; because I joined the monastic order, I have been able to interact with outstanding individuals throughout the world; because I joined the monastic order, I had the opportunity to teach at universities; because I joined the monastic order, I have been able to train more than a thousand disciples; and because I joined the monastic order, I have been able to travel to all parts of the world. These are the things that hold the most significance as well as the most happiness in my life.

We conclude here with the following verse by the Chan Master Xiangyan Zhixian as quoted by Hsing Yun at the age of eighty:

*Everything I had known is forgotten in one strike of
brick on bamboo;*

*I need no longer rely on forms of cultivation.
In an instant, I am awakened to the age-old Truth
Without becoming trapped in subtle formations.
Realization comes without trace anywhere,
And does not rely on the display of external appearance.
Words uttered by all the enlightened ones
Are those of complete and ultimate wisdom.*

The Venerable Master Hsing Yun does not just belong to Fo Guang Shan, nor does he only belong to Taiwan; he has already become a precious treasure for the entire world and all of humanity.

Glossary

Agama: The *Agama* consists of the *Long Discourses of the Buddha*; the *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*; the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*; and the *Gradual Discourses of the Buddha*.

Amitabha Sutra: One of the three sutras that form the doctrinal basis for the Pure Land School of Mahayana Buddhism. It is also known as the *Smaller Sutra on Amitayus*.

Avatamsaka: See *Flower Adornment Sutra*.

Arhatship: Arhat literally means "being worthy of." Arhatship refers to the state of having eliminated all afflictions and passions, which will never arise again.

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva: Literally, "He who hears the sounds of the world." In Mahayana Buddhism, Avalokitesvara is known as the Bodhisattva of Compassion and can manifest in any conceivable form to bring help to whoever is in need. In Chinese Buddhism, Avalokitesvara is one of the four great bodhisattvas and is usually portrayed in the female form known as "Kuan Yin" (Guanyin).

Bodhi: Enlightenment. In the state of enlightenment, one is awakened to the true nature of self; one is enlightened to one's own Buddha Nature. Such a person has already eliminated all afflictions and delusions and achieved prajna-wisdom.

Buddha: Literally, "awakened one." When "the Buddha" is used, it usually refers to the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni Buddha.

Buddhahood: The attainment and expression that characterizes a Buddha. Buddhahood is the highest goal of all beings.

Buddha Nature: The inherent nature that exists in all beings. It is the capability to achieve Buddhahood.

Buddha's Light International Association (B.L.I.A.): A worldwide Buddhist organization dedicated to the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism; it was founded by Master HsingYun in 1992. Today the B.L.I.A. has over one million members.

Buddhism: One of the Eastern religions, founded by Sakyamuni Buddha around 2,500 years ago in India. There are three major schools-Mahayana, Theravada, and Vajrayana. Mahayana is also known as Northern Buddhism, prevailing throughout East Asia (China, Japan, Korea, etc.). Theravada is also known as Southern Buddhism, spreading over South and Southeast Asia (Burma, Kampuchea, Laos, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc.). Vajrayana is also called the "Diamond Vehicle," popular in Central Asia, India, and Tibet, as well as in China and Japan.

Cause and Condition: Referring to the primary causes (cause) and the secondary causes (conditions). The seed from which a plant or a flower grows is a good illustration of a primary cause; the element of soil, humidity, sunlight, and so forth, can be considered secondary causes.

Cause and Effect: This is the most basic doctrine in

Buddhism, which explains the formation of all relations and connections in the world. This law means that the arising of each and every phenomenon is due to its own causes and conditions, and the actual form, or appearance, of all phenomena is the effect.

Chan: Chinese transliteration of the Sanskrit term "dhyana"; meditation.

Chan School: One school of Chinese Buddhism, founded by Bodhidharma, emphasizes the cultivation of intrinsic wisdom, and teaches that enlightenment is clarifying the mind and seeing one's own true nature. The Chan School emphasizes the direct mind-to-mind transmission of the Dharma.

Chapter on the Universal Gate of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara: A Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*.

Connected Discourses of the Buddha: Sanskrit: *Samyuktagama Sutra*. Pali: *Samyutta Kikaya*; Chinese: *Za Ahan Jing*.

Dharma Phrase Sutra: Sanskrit: *Dhammapada Sutra*; Chinese: *Faju Jing*. The Chinese translation consists of 2 fascicles with 34 chapters for a total of 759 verses.

Diamond Sutra: Sanskrit: *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra*; Chinese: *Jingang Jing*. There are several versions, translated into Chinese by Kumarajiva, Bodhiruci, and Zhendi (T: vol.8, no.235, 236 & 237). "Vajracchedika" means the diamond that

cuts through afflictions, ignorance, delusions, or illusions; "prajnaparamita" is the perfection of wisdom, and it brings sentient beings across the sea of suffering to the other shore.

Dharma: With a capital "D": 1) the ultimate truth, and 2) the teachings of the Buddha. When the Dharma is applied or practiced in life, it is 3) righteousness or virtues. With a lowercase "d": 4) anything that can be thought of, experienced, or named; close to "phenomena."

Diamond Throne: The seat upon which Sakyamuni Buddha attained his enlightenment.

Dragon Tripitaka: Published in Beijing at the command of Emperor Shizong of the Qing Dynasty during the 13th year of his Yongzheng reign (1735 CE).

Dunhuang: A famous Buddhist site, located on the Silk Road in Gansu Province. There are over four hundred thirty caves in which thousands of Buddhist paintings are carved on the walls.

Eight Schools of Chinese Buddhism: Huayan School, Chan School, Pure Land School, Sanlun School, Tiantai School, Vinaya School, Yogacara School and Tantric School.

Five desires: The desires for wealth, beauty, fame, food and drink, and sleep.

Five Precepts: The five basic precepts of Buddhism, which are no killing, no stealing, no lying, no sexual

misconduct, and no intoxicants.

Flower Adornment Sutra: Sanskrit: *Avatamsaka Sutra*; Chinese: *Huayan Jing*. It is one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. The major teachings in the Huayan School are based on this sutra.

Guanyin: Or "Kuan Yin," also known as "Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva."

Huayan School: One school of Chinese Buddhism, its founder was Chan Master Dushun in the Tang Dynasty; and its teachings rely on the *Flower Adornment Sutra* (*Avatamsaka Sutra*). Another one of its major characteristics is its emphasis on doctrinal classifications.

Huineng: The Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Chan School. The biography and teaching of Huineng was recorded in the 'Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch' by his disciple.

Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of Hsing Yun: Book written in Chinese by Venerable Man Yi and published by Commonwealth Publishing Co. Ltd. in 2005.

Jiaoshi: A male lay disciple of the Sanga who also maintains a celibate life.

Jingde Records of the Transmission of the Lamp: Chinese: *Jingde Chuan Deng Lu*. It was written by Daoyuan during the Song Dynasty and is one of the historical books of the Chinese Chan School. It records

the Dharma legacy since the seven ancient Buddhas, which includes a total of 52 generations and 1701 figures.

Ksitigarbha: One of the great bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva vowed to remain in hell until all sentient beings are released from it.

Kumarajiva: [344-413 C.E.] One of the four great translators in the history of Chinese Buddhism. His numerous works include the *Treatise on the Middle Way (Mulamadhyamaka Karika)*, the *Sutras of Prajna-Wisdom*, the *Diamond Sutra*, the *Lotus Sutra*, the *Amitabha Sutra*, and many others. He also systematically explicated the philosophy of the Middle Way.

Linji School: One of the Chan Schools in Chinese Buddhism, also known as Rinzaï School in Japan. It was founded by Chan Master Linji Yixuan [?-867 C.E.] of the Tang Dynasty.

Long Discourses of the Buddha: Sanskrit: *Dirghagama*; Pali: *Digha Nikaya*; Chinese: *Chang Ahan Jing*.

Mahayana: Also known as "Great Vehicle." Literally, it means the vehicle that can carry many people. It is one of the Buddhist traditions, and its main characteristic is its teaching that aiding others to achieve liberation is as important as self-liberation. Mahayana prevails throughout East Asia.

Maitreya Bodhisattva: The future Buddha. It is said that he currently presides over Tusita Heaven, where he is expounding the Dharma to heavenly beings in the inner palace.

Maudgalyayana: One of the Buddha's ten great disciples. He is well known as the foremost in supernatural powers.

Manjusri: Manjusri Bodhisattva represents great wisdom, which empowers one to cut through all illusions. According to many Sutras, Manjusri Bodhisattva was the teacher of seven Buddhas before the time of Sakyamuni Buddha.

Nanjing Massacre: When the Japanese Empire invaded China in 1937, Nanjing was completely destroyed. In this invasion, Japanese troops massacred many innocent citizens and raped many Chinese women.

National Master Yulin: Also known as Yulin Tongxiu [1614-1675 C.E.]. He was a Chan master in the Qing Dynasty who belonged to the Dharma lineage of the Linji School. He was appointed the National Master during the reign of Emperor Shuzu.

Nirvana: Pali, "nibbana." The original meaning of this word is "extinguished, calmed, quieted, tamed, or ceasing." In Buddhism, it refers to the absolute extinction of all afflictions and desires; it is the state of liberation, beyond birth and death. It is also the final goal in Buddhism.

Parinirvana: Literally, "complete nirvana." This term usually refers to the passing away of the Buddha.

Pearls of Wisdom, Prayers for Engaged Living: The Chinese book was published in 2000 and the English version in 2003 by Buddha's Light Publishing. There are 100 prayers for Buddhists to use in their daily lives.

Pictorial Depiction of the Eight Stages of the Buddha's Life: The eight stages are: the descent from Tusita Heaven, entry into the womb of his mother, birth, leaving home, defeating Mara, attaining enlightenment, preaching and parinirvana.

Pointing to the Moon: This book collected the brief life stories and teachings of seven ancient Buddhas and Chan patriarchs, including Chan Master Tahui Zhonggao. Pointing to the moon means to point a finger at the moon where the finger represents the sutras and the moon represents the understanding and practicing the Dharma.

Prajna: Literally, "wisdom." Prajna is the highest form of wisdom. In Buddhism, it is the third of Three Studies, which include precepts, concentration, and wisdom. It is also the last of the six perfections, called prajnaparamita. Prajna is the wisdom of insight into the true nature of all phenomena, arising from the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path and the six perfections.

Pure Land: Another term for a Buddha realm that is established by the vows and cultivation of one who has

achieved enlightenment.

Pure Land School: One school of Chinese Buddhism, its main aim is to be reborn into the Pure Land by the practice of reciting the Buddha's name. Its founder was Master Huiyuan in Eastern Jin Dynasty, who spent his lifetime promulgating the belief in Amitabha.

Relic: Sanskrit: Sarira. The material that remains after the cremation of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, or highly cultivated people. Relics have been revered in Buddhism since ancient times.

Sala Tree: Teak tree. Sakyamuni Buddha entered parinirvana under a pair of sala trees on the outskirts of Kusinagara.

Samantabhadra: He represents the transcendental practices and vows (ten great vows). He is usually depicted seated on an elephant with six tusks (symbolizing the six perfections).

Sanlun School: A school of Chinese Buddhism founded by Master Jiexiang Jizang during the reign of Emperor An of the Eastern Jin Dynasty [397-419 C.E.]. This school emphasizes the doctrines of emptiness.

Sariputra: One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha. He is well known as the foremost in wisdom.

Shigu: A female lay disciple of the Sangha who also maintains a celibate life.

Stupa: A religious monument built to commemorate the historical Buddha or other enlightened ones.

Sudhana: The youth who visits one teacher after another to learn the conduct and practice of Bodhisattvas. He eventually sees a total of 53 teachers. His awareness is deepened by each teacher. His search is described in the final chapter of the *Huayan Sutra*.

Sutra of Great Treasures: Sanskrit: *Maharatnakuta Sutra*; Chinese: *Da Baoji Jing*. The Sutra emphasizes the bodhisattvas' cultivation methods and the records that predicted their progress in attaining Buddhahood.

Sutra of the contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life: Sanskrit: *Amitayudhyana Sutra*; Chinese: *Guan Wuliangshou Jing*. It describes 16 methods of contemplating the Western Pure Land. It is one of three sutras of the Pure Land School.

Sutra of the Original Vows of the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha: Sanskrit: *Ksitigarbha prandidhana*; Chinese: *Dizang Benyuan Jing*. It describes the merits and virtues of the Bodhisattva's past vows. It also states that the recitation of this Sutra can eliminate unwholesome karmas.

Sutra of the Teachings Bequeathed by the Buddha: This sutra describes the Buddha's last teachings before he entered parinirvana. These teachings instruct the disciples to uphold the precepts, see them as the teacher, and rely on them for guidance to regulate the mind and the five sense organs, eliminate afflictions and attain Buddhahood.

Tathagata: One of the ten titles of Buddha, literally translated as "Thus-Come One," meaning the one who has attained full realization of suchness; i.e. the one with the absolute, so that he neither comes from anywhere nor goes anywhere.

Ten directions: In Buddhism, this term is used to refer to everywhere, indicating the eight points of the compass (north, west, east, south, southeast, southwest, northeast and northwest) plus the zenith and nadir.

Ten Wholesome Acts: They are: no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, no duplicity, no harsh words, no flattery, no greed, no anger and no ignorance.

Three poisons: Greed, anger, and ignorance, which are the fundamental roots producing all afflictions, sufferings, and the cycle of rebirth.

Three realms: The realms where sentient beings reside and transmigrate: 1) the realm of sense-desires, 2) the realm of form, and 3) the realm of formlessness.

Three time periods: Also known as "three periods of time," indicating the past, the present, and the future.

Tiantai School: One school of Chinese Buddhism, founded by Master Zhiyi in the Tang Dynasty. Its name was taken from the site of the head temple, Mount Tiantai in Zhejiang Province. Its major teachings are based on the works of Master Zhiyi, including the *Great Techniques of Stopping [Delusion] and Seeing*

[*Truth*], *Profound Meanings of the Lotus Sutra (Fahua Jing Xuan Yi)*, and *Explanations on the Passages and Sentences of the Lotus Sutra (Fahua Wen Ju)*.

Treatise on the treasury of the Abhidharma: Sanskrit: *Abhidharma-kosa-bhasya*. This is Vasubandhu's auto-commentary to his *Abhidharma-kosa*, in which he criticizes the interpretations of the Vaibhasikas and others of the tenets he presented in that book.

Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

Tripitaka: Literally, "Three Baskets." The Buddhist canon in three categories, the sutras (teachings of the Buddha), the vinayas (precepts and rules), and the abhidharma (commentary on the Buddha's teachings).

Tzu-Chi Foundation: One of the most acclaimed Buddhist charitable organizations in Taiwan. Its founder is Venerable Chang Yen.

Venerable Master Taixu [1889-1947 C.E.]: Usually known as "Taihsu." He is the reformer of Chinese Buddhism in the late 19th and early 20th century. He is also the pioneer who propagated Humanistic Buddhism. His works are included in the set of the *Complete Works of Taixu*.

Venerable Master Xuanzhuang: [602-664 C.E.] A great master of the Chinese Tang Dynasty. He is one of four great translators in Buddhist history. He studied in India for seventeen years and was responsible for

bringing many collections of works, images, pictures, as well as 150 relics to China from India. One of his most famous works is the *Buddhist Records of the Western Regions*.

Vimalakirti: A famous lay disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha and an elder of the City of Vaisali. Although he was a layperson, he was an expert on the Mahayana doctrines and had already achieved high cultivation. An associated sutra, known as the *Vimalakirti Sutra*, discoursed by Vimalakirti, emphasizes the practices of the bodhisattva path.

Vinaya: Literally, "precept, rule, or discipline." In Buddhism, it not only means precept, but also refers to one of the three groups of the Buddhist Canon (*Tripitaka*).

Vinaya School: One school of Chinese Buddhism, founded by Master Daoxuan in the Tang Dynasty, specializes in the study of all aspects of the *Vinaya*.

Wooden Fish: A type of musical instrument commonly used in Buddhist chanting. It is made of wood and shaped like a fish.

Yogacara School: One school of Mahayana Buddhism; also known as the Mind-Only School (*Vijnanavada*). It was founded by Maitreyanatha around the 4th or 5th century, and emphasizes the teachings of the *Commentary on the Stages of Yogacara Practitioners (Yogacarabhumi)*. After the founder, the famous masters included Asanga and

Vasubandhu; both of whom accomplished great works on the Yogacara philosophy, for example the *Summary of Mahayana Doctrines* and the *Thirty Verses on Mind-Only*.

*C*hronology of Events in the Life of
Venerable Master Hsing Yun



1927

Born on the twenty-second day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar in Jiangdu, Jiangsu Province, in China. Named Li Guoshen. Father is Li Huicheng; mother is Liu Yuying. Hsing Yun is third of four children, with an older brother and sister, and a younger brother.

1931

Becomes vegetarian along with maternal grandmother, a Buddhist.

1934

Enters rural school.

1937

Father disappears while on a business trip to Nanjing.

1938

Goes midway to Nanjing with mother in search of his father. Tonsured under Venerable Master Zhikai at Qixia Temple; given the Dharma names Wuche and Jinjue. Becomes a disciple of the forty-eighth generation of the Linji Division in Chan School of Buddhism.

1941

Is ordained at Qixia Temple.

1944

Studies at Tianning Temple, Changzhou.

1945

Transfers to Jiaoshan Buddhist College.

1947

Arrives in Dajue Temple, Baita Mountain. Becomes principal of Baita Elementary School. Founds monthly, *Raging Billows*, with schoolmate Master Zhiyong. Is arrested by the Communists.

1948

Becomes director of Huazang Temple in Nanjing. Edits *Splendid Light*, supplement of newspaper Xu Bao.

1949

Arrives in Keelung, Taiwan, with a monastic relief group.

Is arrested with Master Cihang and others on allegations of subversive activities, and is incarcerated for twenty-three days.

1950

Takes shelter at Yuanguang Temple in Chungli, under Master Miaoguo. Stands guard in the mountains around Fayun Temple in Miaoli, where he authors *Singing in Silence*, his first work.

1951

Takes charge of academic affairs in a Buddhist seminar conducted by Venerable Daxing. Edits *Life Monthly* and learns Japanese.

1952

Is elected to an executive post in the Chinese Buddhist Association. Raises emergency relief funds for victims of the flood in Hualien.

1953

Speaks on the Dharma at Leiyin Temple in Ilan at the invitation of Li Juehe. Publishes *Discourse on Avalokitesvara's Universal Gate Chapter*.

1954

Is stationed at Leiyin Temple and starts teaching in rural areas and prisons. Venerables Tzu Chuang, Tzu Hui, and Tzu Jung take refuge in the Triple Gem.

1955

Teaches throughout Taiwan while promoting the reprinting of the Buddhist Tripitaka. Suffers severe arthritis in his legs. Publishes *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha*, one of the the first hardbound Buddhist texts published in Taiwan.

1956

Construction of the lecture hall for the Ilan chanting group is completed. Founds the first kindergarten, Ciai, and tutors arts and sciences at Guanghua. Teaches in prisons.

1957

Publishes *National Master Yulin*. Founds and becomes chief edi-

tor of *Awakening the World*, a magazine which is published three times a month.

1958

Conducts the Dharma function for the preservation of the nation held by the Chinese Buddhist Association in Taipei. Venerable Hsin Ping is tonsured.

1959

Supports the Tibetan Buddhist Movement against Communist suppression.

Organizes the first float parade in celebration of the Buddha's birthday. Establishes a Buddhist cultural service in Sanchung, Taipei. Publishes *Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha's Ten Great Disciples*.

1960

Publishes the *Enlightenment Sutra*.

1961

Becomes publisher of *Buddhism Today*. Heads the Ilan youth choir and releases the first six Buddhist records in Taiwan.

1962

Takes over the publishing of *Awakening the World*.

1963

Organizes a Buddhist tour group with Venerable Baisheng, visiting India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, and Hong Kong. Meets with King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, President Diosdado Macapagal of the Philippines, among others. Petitions for the release of seven hundred Chinese prisoners and rescues two fishing vessels in Kaohsiung.

1964

Shoushan Temple in Kaohsiung is completed, followed by the founding of Shoushan Buddhist College. Establishes a school of commerce named Zhihguang with Venerables Wuyi and Nanting. Publishes a book of travels and a range of bilingual Buddhist texts in Chinese and English.

1965

Publishes a series of lectures entitled *Awakening the World*.

1967

Construction begins on Fo Guang Shan. Shoushan Buddhist College renamed Dongfang Buddhist College. Takes over a Christian mission building, which is turned into a home for the elderly and poor.

1969

Holds the first Buddhist summer camp for college-level students. Founds the first Buddhist Sunday School for children. Builds Pilgrim's Lodge at Fo Guang Shan.

1970

Founds the Daci Nursery. Establishes a pilgrims' group.

1971

Great Compassion Shrine is completed, followed by the blessing of the Buddha's image. Founds Pumen Vihara in Taipei, which later becomes Pumen Temple. Is elected president of Sino-Japanese Buddhist Association.

1972

Introduces the constitution of Fo Guang Shan's Religious Affairs Committee.

1973

Chiang Ching-Kuo, head of Taiwan's Executive Council, visits Fo Guang Shan for the first time. Basketball court at Dongshan is officially opened. Fo Guang Shan Tsunglin College is founded, which is later renamed Chinese Buddhist Research Institute.

1974

Groundbreaking for Fushan Temple in Changhua.

1975

The foundation is laid for the Great Welcoming Buddha and the Main Shrine. Conducts a three-day lecture at the National Arts Hall, which is the first Buddhist lecture ever held within the halls of government.

1976

Attends the U.S. bicentennial festivities and gives his first Dharma teaching in the United States. Runs a Buddhist summer camp for senior citizens and starts an English Buddhist Center. Is founding publisher of Fo Guang Scholarly Journal. Launches Pumen Hospital as well as a clinic at Shoushan Temple in Kaohsiung.

1977

Lectures at Zhongshan Hall in Taipei. Finds Pumen High School. Establishes the editing and publishing center for the Fo Guang Buddhist Tripitaka. The Chinese Buddhist Research Institute and University of Oriental Studies in the United States become sister schools. Ten-thousand Buddhas Triple Platform Ordination is deemed a preceptorial model.

1978

After becoming president of Taiwan R.O.C., Chiang Ching-Kuo visits Fo Guang Shan again. Holds Dharma function for the preservation of the nation in Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall. Raises funds for the establishment of a Chinese Buddhist Youth Association. Receives honorary Ph.D. from University of Oriental Studies. Becomes the first president of the International Buddhist Progress Society. Raises funds for the establishment of Hsi Lai Temple.

1979

Holds a Buddhist concert at Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in light of strained diplomatic ties between Taiwan and the United States to raise funds for a national foundation of self-sufficiency. Launches *Universal Gate* magazine. First Buddhist program, "Sweet Dew", is televised. Leads pilgrimage to India. Holds first Buddhist summer camp for children. *National Master Yulin* is adapted for the stage at the National Arts Hall.

1980

Produces the first set of Buddhist bookmarks and a calendar. Becomes director of Chinese Culture University's Indian Research Institute. Telecast of the program "Gate of Faith".

1981

Holds Buddhist summer camp for mothers. Teaches Buddhist philosophy at Tung Hai University.

1982

Fo Guang Shan becomes brother temple with Tongdo Sa, Korea. Conducts the fifth International Buddhist Scholars' Conference.

1983

Is honored by the Ministries of Legal Affairs and Education for outstanding educational achievements.

1984

Meets the Dalai Lama. Establishes a mobile clinic offering free medical care. Founds the first Buddhist City College at Puxian Temple in Kaohsiung.

1985

Holds the World Buddhist Youth Scholars' Conference. Passes the abbotship of Fo Guang Shan to Venerable Hsin Ping. Cultivates in isolation at Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles. Serves as Executive Officer of the Chinese-Tibetan Cultural Association of the Republic of China. "The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch" is televised, as well as "Venerable Master Hsing Yun's Lecture Series", which is honored by the Department of Information of Taiwan.

1986

The World Sutric and Tantric Buddhist Conference is held at Fo Guang Shan. Takes office as Advisor of Nationalist Party Affairs. Launches a new annual lecture series at Kaohsiung Zhongzheng Cultural Center.

1987

Becomes founding president of the American Buddhist Youth Association. Visits Chinese Buddhist Temple in Sarnath, India. "Hsing Yun's Chan Talk" is televised.

1988

Inauguration of Hsi Lai Temple where the Sixteenth World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference and the Seventh World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth Conference are held. Conducts Purifying Service for the openings of the California State Legislature and City Council of Los Angeles meetings. Teaches in Hong Kong for the first time at the City Hall. Holds the first alms-round fundraising event for the Fo Guang

Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education. Travels to Northern Thailand with a medical team and teaches there. *Fo Guang Encyclopedia* is honored by Taiwan's Department of Information.

1989

Holds International Chan Conference at Fo Guang Shan. On his first homecoming in four decades, pays homage to ancestral stupas in Qixia and visits his mother in Jiangdu. The Dalai Lama is a guest at Hsi Lai Temple. "Hsing Yun's Chan Talk" the television series and the book upon which it is based, are honored by Taiwan's Department of Information. Speaks on the Dharma to the armed forces and their respective academies.

1990

Is invited to attend the inauguration of U.S. President George Bush. Receives his mother at Fo Guang Shan. Begins an annual three-day lecture at Hung Hom Coliseum in Hong Kong. Goes on lecture tour through England, Holland, Belgium, France, Switzerland, Austria, Yugoslavia, and Italy. Plans for the construction of the International Buddhist Association of Australia underway on a thirty-six acre property donated by the city of Sydney, Australia.

1991

Hsi Lai University, temporarily housed at Hsi Lai Temple, opens. Founds the Buddha's Light International Association, Chungwa Chapter and raises funds for floods on the Mainland. Is hospitalized for a broken right thigh. "Hsing Yun Dharma Words" is televised. Establishes a branch temple in a chateau outside of Paris and begins spreading the Dharma in Europe.

1992

Buddha's Light International Association is established and its first meeting is held at Hsi Lai Temple. Devotee Zhang Shengkai donates his own residence for the establishment of the first branch temple in South America, I.B.P.S. Do Brasil. Is requested by Dr. Hennie Senekal to start a temple in Johannesburg, South Africa-the first step in spreading the Dharma in Africa. For the second year, is honored by Taiwan's Ministry of Education for outstanding educational achievements. Fo Guang Foundation of Buddhist Culture and Education is also honored.

1993

“National Master Yulin” is televised on CTS. The second B.L.I.A. World Conference is held in Taipei. Registration of Fo Guang University is officially approved by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, followed by a groundbreaking ceremony in Linmei, Jiaoxi, in Ilan County. Buddha's Light International Association is named the most outstanding social organization in Taiwan.

1994

Extensive fundraising for Fo Guang University is done through art auctions. Taipei Vihara is inaugurated. Receives key to the city and honorary citizenship from Austin, Texas. Third B.L.I.A. World Conference is held in Vancouver, Canada. Fo Guang Shan provides emergency relief for the massive floods in August at the request of President Li Teng-hui. “Hsing Yun Says” opens on TTV. *Diary of Hsing Yun* is published in twenty volumes. Ten monastics of African descent are tonsured. Holds honorary presidency of World Fellowship of Buddhists and presidency of B.L.I.A.

1995

Handing Down the Light: The Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun is authored by Fu Chi-ying and is published by Commonwealth Publishing. Receives a special award, the Buddhist equivalent of the Nobel Prize, at the "National Indian Buddhist Ceremony." Venerable Hsin Ping passes away. Presents copies of *The Buddhist Volumes* to devotees, Dharma lecturers, and benefactors of Fo Guang Shan.

1996

Is invited to preside over the Candlelight and Triple Gem Refuge Ceremony, held at Shah Alam Stadium in Kuala Lumpur and attended by at least 80,000 people. Hosts U.S. Vice President Al Gore when the latter visits Hsi Lai Temple. Taiwan's President Li Teng-hui presents congratulatory gift to commemorate Fo Guang Shan's thirtieth anniversary. Mother, Madame Li, passes away at Hsi Lai Temple at ninety-five years of age. Founds Nan Hua Management College.

1997

Has the "Religious Dialogue of the Century" with Pope John Paul II in Vatican City, Italy. Presides over the official installation ceremony of Venerable Hsin Ting as the third abbot of Fo Guang Shan. Is honored by both Taiwan's Internal Affairs, and Foreign Relation Ministries with special awards of recognition. Official release of *You Qing You Yi*. Selected as one of the ten most influential people by the Canadian 1470 AM Chinese radio station's Sunshine Project. *National Master Yulin* and *Handing Down the Light* selected as two of the ten best publications of the year. Receives the "Hua Xia" first class scroll.

1998

Retires as B.L.I.A., R.O.C. President. Wu Pohsiung is formally appointed as new president of B.L.I.A., R.O.C. Presides over the first combined Theravada, Mahayana, and Tibetan Triple Platform Ordination Ceremony in Bodhgaya, India. Visits Thailand to officially receive the Buddha's Tooth Relic. Officiates at Hsi Lai University's first Commencement Ceremony. First official meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohammad in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Groundbreaking ceremony in Houston, Texas. Mayor of Houston declares June 20, as Venerable Master Hsing Yun Day. On his seventy-second birthday, is presented with a special birthday gift by Taiwan's Vice President, Lian Zhan.

1999

President Li Teng-hui visits Fo Guang Shan to officially mark the start of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Music Concert tour in Taiwan. During his visit, President Li also announces that the Buddha's Birthday, April 8, will be a national holiday in Taiwan. Leads the Buddhist Music Concert tour in Europe for a month. Conducts prayer and memorial services for victims of the Taiwan 9/21 earthquake, which occurs during the European tour. Initiates the establishment of Emergency Relief Centers around the world. Publishes *Hsing Yun's Hundred Sayings Series*, and *The Buddhism Textbook*.

2000

Debut of *Merit Times Daily News* in Taiwan; its American edition is also published in the same year. Commencement of Fo Guang University with permission to recruit students for six research institutes; the university receives government subsidy in its first year of operation.

An eighty-acre property is donated by the Wollongong City Council for Nan Tien Temple to construct Nan Tien University and Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery. Is awarded the Buddhist Great Contribution Award by the Prime Minister of Thailand, Chuan Leekpai.

2001

Leads the Fo Guang Shan Choir on tour around the United States and Canada. Arrives at Ground Zero of the September 11 terrorist attacks for a Purification Ceremony, and reads a prayer for victims inside the New York Lincoln Center. Hosts an Inter-Religious Dialogue at University of Toronto on the topic of "How Would Religion Face Globalization?" Establishes the Humanistic Buddhist Reading Association. International Buddhist Youth Conference is held in Malaysia by B.L.I.A.-Y.A.D. World Headquarters to promote exchange between Buddhist youths worldwide; over a thousand delegates from twenty-six countries attend. Completion of Fo Guang Shan Nan Tien Vihara and Melbourne Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery in Australia.

2002

Is authorized by the Chinese government to escort the Buddha's finger relic from Famen Temple in Xian, China to Taiwan. Arrives in Malaysia to propagate the Dharma in Penang, Kuantan, and Ipoh. Presides over the ninth General Conference of B.L.I.A. in Tokyo, Japan and gives keynote speech "To Resolve and To Develop." Establishes Motosu Temple near the foot of Mt. Fuji in Japan as a center for cultural and educational activities as well as training center for monastic and lay Buddhists. Hsi Lai University is granted candidacy by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). Goes on a South East Asia Charity Tour (Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Thailand). Conducts wheelchair donation ceremonies and enhances exchange between Northern and Southern Schools of Buddhism. Presides over the Buddha's Light International Young Executive Conference. Establishes the Fo Guang Shan Devotee's University at Jin Guang Ming Temple in Sanshia, Taipei.

2003

Presides over a Northern and a Southern School Buddhist Exchange Symposium. Conducts a Refuge Taking Ceremony for 700 Buddhist youths from Malaysia visiting Taiwan for the "Searching for Our Roots in the Monastery" trip. *Merit Times Daily News* celebrates its

third anniversary, and is extended from twelve to sixteen pages. Attends the groundbreaking ceremony of Catholic Zhen Fu Shan Community Monastery at the invitation of His Eminence Paul Cardinal Shan, SJ. Announces "A Prayer to Stop SARS" and accepts interviews with the media to speak on his thoughts about the SARS epidemic. Is awarded an Honorary Ph.D. by Maha Chulalongkorn Buddhist University of Thailand. *Cloud and Water: A 50 Year Anniversary Photobiography of Master Hsing Yun*, the first photo-biography of a master in Buddhism-is published.

2004

* At the invitation of the BLIA's Youth Conference, conducted a "Dialogue on Wisdom for Human Life" at Fo Guang Shan with the leading criminologist, Dr. Henry Chang-Yu Lee.

* Celebrated the ninetieth birthday of Thailand's Supreme Patriarch. The Dhammalaksana Monastic Order headed by the Supreme Patriarch has cast nineteen large golden statues of the Buddha on behalf of all Buddhist groups, and will present these to nineteen Buddhist countries. As Buddhism is flourishing in Taiwan, it was honored by inclusion in this list of nineteen countries, and the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand has designated Fo Guang Shan as the site to receive this large golden statue of the Buddha. The Vice Patriarch of the Dhammalaksana Monastic Order, Somdej Phra Yanvarodom, led a delegation to bring the statue to Fo Guang Shan. A "Welcoming and Installation Ceremony for the Golden Buddha" will be held at the venue reserved for this event in the Buddha Memorial Center.

* Presided over the opening and welcoming ceremonies for the "2004 Asia Fellowship Conference of the Buddha's Light International Association" held at the Motosu Temple in Japan.

* Served as delegation leader for the "Chinese Buddhist Musical Tour" which was jointly organized by the Fo Guang Shan Choir and five major monastic centers affiliated with the Buddhist Association of China that covered three major language systems and included more than one hundred monastics from both sides of the Straits. The group gave a series of performances as they toured such destinations as Macao, Hong Kong, Kaohsiung, Taipei, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver. This

tour marked a new chapter in cross-straits Buddhist exchange.

* Published the article, "Greater Reconciliation to Save Taiwan."

* Attended the graduating ceremony of Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles as the school's founder, and presented an honorary doctorate in Buddhist Educational Studies to the Ven. Hyun Hae, the board chair for Dongguk University in Korea.

* Published the article "My View on Succeeding Generations," which expressed the view that only through the earlier engagement of the younger generation, can they keep up with the times and remain closely involved.

* Attended the "Installation Ceremony for the President of the Fifth Presidency of BLIA, Chungwa Headquarters General Conference, in which President Wu Po-hsiung turned over his position to the new president, the Ven. Hsin Ting.

* At the invitation of Taiwan National University, gave a lecture entitled, "The Chan School's Education of Self-Realization."

*A series of community colleges was established in such areas as Fusan Temple in Changhua, Guangming Academy in Taichung, Yuanfu Temple in Chiayi, and Lanyang Hall.

*Published the *Dharma Archives: Academic Papers on Chinese Buddhism* in one hundred and twenty volumes.

*Attended "The Sounds of the Human World-- 2004 Master Hsing Yun's Buddhist Song Festival."

* Received a certificate of honorary city residency and key to the city from Leonard L. Scarcella, the mayor of the City of Stafford, Texas.

*Presented the keynote address, "Self-Awareness and Practicing the Buddha Way," at the Tenth BLIA General Conference held at Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan.

*Supervised the publication of the *Illustrated Collection of World Buddhist Art*, deluxe edition.

* Published *Between Ignorance and Enlightenment* as a hardback edition, electronic edition, and a special PDA edition.

* Received honorary city residency and key to the city from Oscar B. Goodman, the mayor of Las Vegas, Nevada.

* Taught a distance learning course from University of the West entitled, "An Inquiry into Contemporary Social Issues," for the first time; the program was simulcast to Montreal and Vancouver in Canada, and San Francisco, Fremont, and San Diego in the United States.

* Conducted the "International Three Platform Full Monastic Precept Ceremony" in the Southern Hemisphere for the first time in the history of Buddhism; the venue for this event was Nan Tien Temple in Australia.

* Met with H. E. Cardinal Crescenzo Sepe, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, as well as Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia and his Secretary Giuseppe Noto at the Dharma Transmission Center.

* Gave a lecture entitled, "Life--Birth and Death--Living" at the Hong Kong Coliseum and the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei respectively, injecting new meaning into Humanistic Buddhism and strengthening the subject matter for life education.

* After the tsunami that hit Southeast Asia, BLIA was conducting first responder disaster relief, and also sponsored the "Prayer Service for the Dead as BLIA Members Worldwide Chant the Name of Amitabuddha Together."

2005

* The installation ceremony for Fo Guang Shan's seventh head abbot was held, in which the sixth Head Abbot Hsin Ting transferred authority to the seventh Head Abbot Hsin Pei.

* Sent the educational units to go alms begging to collect donations throughout Taiwan out of concern for the children orphaned by the Southeast Asian tsunami of Dec. 26th; altogether more than fifty thousand members of the monastic and lay communities participated in the campaign.

* Instructed that five hundred thousand US dollars be allotted for India as

the second-stage planning began for tsunami disaster relief and the building of orphanages .

* Presided over the installation of the main beam for the Chin-lien Fo Guang Shan branch temple on Kinmen.

* The Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery published the two-volume set, *Realization for Sentient Beings--the Calligraphy of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun*.

* Attended the fifth anniversary celebrations for the Merit Times, which included a symposium on "Develop the Media and Guard Taiwan" that was conducted by the national policy advisor, Prof. Chai Sung-lin.

* The Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education and the Chinese University of Hong Kong jointly establish the "Centre for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism."

* Accepted the invitation of the Ven. Wei Yan, president of the Singapore Buddhist Federation and abbot of Lianshan Shuanlin Temple, to give a lecture entitled, "Chan Talk on the Buddha Mind," at the auditorium of the Singapore Buddhist Federation's Bodhi Primary School.

* "Realization for Sentient Beings--World Exhibition Tour of the Calligraphy of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun" held its initial opening at Malaysia's National Art Gallery; this exhibition was planned by Fo Guang Shan's Main Fo Guang Yuan Art Gallery in joint cooperation with Fo Guang Shan, Malaysia Temple.

* Presided over the foundation laying ceremony for Fo Guang Shan, Singapore.

* As chief preceptor, gave instruction to the eight hundred novitiates receiving the Three Platform Full Ordination at the Main Buddha Hall of the Gaomin Temple in Yangzhou, China.

* The U.S. Library of Congress formally establishes an independent classification number for Fo Guang Shan and Hsing Yun's works; this classification number is sub-listed under the library's classification heading for Buddhism.

* Composed the "Prayer for Flood Victims of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans," to bring blessings to the disaster victims.

* Received an honorary doctorate degree from Griffith University in Australia.

* Participated in the "World Buddhist Leadership Conference" at the invitation of the Dharma Drum Mountain Cultural and Educational Fund, and presented a lecture entitled, "An Overview of Global Problems."

* *Humanistic Buddhism in the Style of Hsing Yun*, written by the disciple, Ven. Man Yi, was published; the work discusses the principles, practice, life, and mission of Humanistic Buddhism in a profound and detailed manner.

* The Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education sponsored a three-part lecture series entitled, "When East Meets West," in which Prof. Goran Malmqvist, member of the Swedish Academy selecting the Nobel laureates in literature and the Swedish sinologist Prof. Torbjorn Loden engaged in a dialogue on the topics of "Buddhism and Chinese Literature" and "Buddhism and World Peace" respectively.

* Presented lectures on the topics of "Ten Questions on Buddhist Management," "Ten Questions on Buddhist Vegetarianism," and "Ten Question on Buddhist Environmentalism" at the Hong Kong Coliseum and the National Dr. Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall in Taipei respectively.

2006

* Presented the opening remarks for the "Academic Symposium on the Chan School and Humanistic Buddhism" sponsored by the Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education.

* Gave instruction to the five hundred disciples and devotees of Fo Guang Shan who participated in the "New Years Fellowship Party for Disciples with Doctorate and Masters Degrees."

* Presided over the opening of the "Realization for Sentient Beings--Exhibition Tour of the Calligraphy of the Venerable Master Hsing Yun" at the Hunan Museum; invited to lecture at the Yuelu Academy.