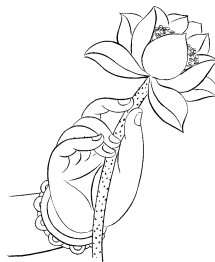


## 竹林記

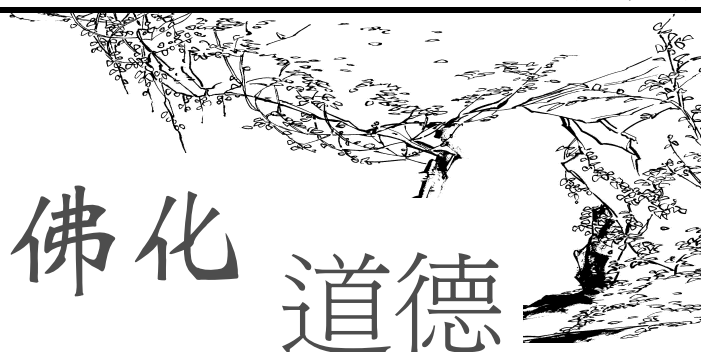
## Bamboo Grove Verse

一片新新的智慧園地，  
金色的陽光，  
春暖花開，  
我們的種子，  
竹林深處，  
迎向覺悟的道路，



等待你我攜手努力，  
清涼的雨滴，  
和風徐徐，  
是緣起的真理，  
法音湧起，  
充滿緣起的法喜！

*A fresh new piece of wisdom frontier , Waiting for you and me to draw near  
The golden-hued of the brilliant rays, The refreshing coolness of the dancing rain  
The blossoming of the warm spring buds, The lightness of the soothing breeze  
Our seeds spring from, The true principle of causes arising and conditions ripening  
The deep Bamboo forest, Is a well-spring for the Dharma sound  
Inviting us on the road to Enlightenment, With Dharma joy brimming in the moment!*



## 與一般道德

## 佛化道德

慈

與悲，佛法中小小有差別。希望他人得到快樂，幫助他人得到快樂，這是慈心慈行。希望他離去苦痛，幫助他解除苦痛，這是悲心悲行。一般人的慈悲，雖與佛法所說的大慈悲，不完全相合，但這是深度與闊度的不同，論性質還是共通的。一切的道德心行，都以此為本。

我們學佛的，首先要受皈依。皈依的願文說：「從今時乃至命終，護生」。進而受戒，先要受持不殺生戒。護生與不殺生，便是慈悲心行的實踐。佛教的一切德行，都是不能離開慈悲不殺的。從佛法看來，眾生的生命延續，雖說是苦痛的根源，但又沒有不貪戀生存。因為眾生所有相對的喜樂，都以生存為先決條件，所以苦痛充滿的眾生，為了愛好不徹底的世樂，都怕自己（一期）生命的毀滅。眾生沒有不是愛生惡死的，厭苦求樂的，佛法的護生與不殺生，以及大乘佛教的不肉食，都契合於眾生的共欲，合情合理的，所以是道德的。這種最一般的道德，在中國文化主流的儒家中，就是仁。德行雖是很多的，如孝弟忠信禮義廉恥等，但仁是最根本的，向來都以仁為德行的核心。此外，如老子所說的三寶中有慈，墨子說兼愛，以及基督教的愛，都無非慈悲的別名。大家都把一切德行，歸納到仁、愛、慈，這可見印度文化中說慈悲為最一般的道德，實在非常確切。因此，道德的基石是仁慈，是「與樂」、「拔苦」。現在有些人，提倡階級的愛，階級的道德。事實上，從仇恨鬥爭的基礎出發，使全人類普遍陷於鬥爭殘殺的恐怖中，這那裡是道德！從不道德--仇恨鬥爭的動機出發，無論怎麼說，那樣做，只是增長人類的苦痛。不但毀滅別人，自己也被毀滅，實是抹煞道德的偽道德。

為什麼仁、慈、愛是道德的根本，是最一般的道德律？我們知道：道德是表現於自他關係上的，而仁就是人與人間的合理關係，發為應有的合理行為。佛法說有「自通之法」，這是從自己要怎樣，推知他人也要怎樣。這是「以己（心）度他心」，就是儒家絜矩的恕道。依

自通之法來說：我要解除苦痛，他也同我一樣，那麼我不應增加他人的苦痛，而且應幫助解除他。我要有喜樂，他人也一樣的要喜樂，那麼我不能奪去他人的福樂，更應該協助獲得他。自己要去愚癡，要得智慧，要身體健康，人格健全，都應使他人和我一樣。這樣的以己心度他心，即是慈悲與一切德行的源泉。耶穌說：「你要人怎樣待你，你也要怎樣待人」。我要人待我好，所以我也要待人好。雖近於自通之法，然在自他關係上，還是從為了自己出發。佛法說：我希望如此，可見他人也是希望如此的，所以應該對他人如此，這只是對人的同情，並無功利觀念。儒家說：「己所不欲，勿施於人」；「己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人」。與佛法的精神，更為相合！

眾生的生命，是心色和集，又是自他增上，彼此依存，苦樂相關的。人與人（眾生）間有這樣的關切，所以損害他是不合理的；自他既是相依而存的，害他即等於害己。反過來說：幫助他減少痛苦，也就等於減少自己的痛苦，這當然是合理--善。這利他而後能自利，損他等於損己的道理，一般人不一定清楚地了解，或者還會反對而不願信受道德的法則。可是我們從無始以來，生生不已的活動，不能不受這自他相依，苦樂相關的法則所影響。所以在不離自他依存的生活，中，雖沒有人教導，也會自覺到自他間的同一性，引發他人的需要，與我一樣的意念。見人受苦而生悲惻心，見人得利而生歡喜心，每從無意間流露出道德意識的自覺。這種道德意識，或稱良心，良知，什麼人都是多少有的。不過有些人，為物欲--色情、名譽、利養權勢等所迷覆，道德意識的自覺，不容易顯發，專門為私為己，損他害己。甚至見他失利而幸災樂禍，見他得利而嫉妒障礙。然而窮凶極惡的，在某種環境下，也會良心發現，感到自己的罪惡而痛哭流涕的。

續下期

## Common Morality & Buddhist Moral Ethics

However, in the Buddhist context, there is a slight difference in the meaning of the two words 'loving-kindness' and 'compassion.' The wish for others to be happy and to help them gain their happiness is the ordinary picture of the 'mind and the act of loving-kindness.' The wish for someone to be free from suffering and to consider helping them to achieve this is the 'mind and the act of compassion' in the Buddhist context. Although an ordinary person's loving-kindness and compassion is different from the great loving kindness and compassion described in Buddhism, it is only due to a difference in the depth and scope of practice. The nature of the motivation remains the same. Loving kindness and compassion are the origin of all moral thoughts and acts.

Those who aspire to follow the Buddha's Path, should first take refuge in the Triple Gem, and make a strong determination "to protect all life until the end of their life." They also should try to observe the precepts – the Buddhist code of ethics. The first precept is to abstain from killing. To protect lives, and to abstain from killing, are the practices of loving-kindness and compassion. All Buddhist codes of ethics do not deviate from this very basic principle.

From the Buddhist viewpoint, the continuation of life is considered the root of all our suffering, and yet all beings still crave life. This is because the only way we experience the sensuous feeling of happiness and sadness is through living. Craving for temporary happiness in this lifetime explains why human beings are not willing to lose their lives, and indeed, try very hard to stay alive. All beings love enjoyment, hate suffering, crave life, and shun death. Thus, the Buddhist emphasis of non-killing, and the practice of vegetarianism is in accordance with the common desire of all beings. Therefore, such practices are considered as ethical.

In Confucianism, such basic morality is commonly known as benevolence. Confucianism has many forms of morality. For example, filial piety, dutiful respect, loyalty, trustworthiness, etiquette, righteousness, honesty, sense of shame and others. However, benevolence is still the fundamental principle of this ancient Eastern Ideology. It is the centre of all moral acts. Besides, Lao-tzu (Lao-tze) said that loving-kindness (or kind-heartedness) is one of the three precious jewels. Similarly, Mo Zi (Mo-tze) advocated 'sharing love' and Christianity also professes the idea of love (universal fraternity or brotherhood). Be it benevolence, love or loving kindness (kind-heartedness) – these are just synonyms for loving kindness and compassion. Thus, it is very apt for the ancient Indian cultures to consider loving kindness and compassion as the basis of morality. The cardinal principle of morality is nothing other than benevolence and loving-kindness, which is the provision of 'love and joy' and the 'relief from suffering for others.'

There are communists who embrace an ideology of materialism, and promote class love and ethics for the different social strata. However, this love that is based on hatred and struggle for power, will eventually lead the society to a horrible state of civil war and killing. This type of belief is definitely not ethical, and will never be. Morality based on hatred and revenge will only result in greater suffering for the people. Besides causing destruction to others, one is also destroying oneself. Materialist morality is thus illusory and non-ethical.

Why are benevolence, loving-kindness and universal love the most fundamental and general guiding principles of ethics? All of us know that morality can only be exhibited when there are two or more interactive parties. Benevolence is this underlying motivation that generates rational actions within human relationships.

Buddhists term this "deduced-way." From knowing what we

ourselves want, we may deduce what others wish for. This is to deduce other's minds with reference to our own mind and feelings. This is similar to the idea of forgiveness in Confucianism. According to this "deduced-way," if I wish to get rid of my suffering, others must be thinking likewise. Hence bearing this is in mind, I should not aggravate another's suffering.

Instead, I should help them to get away from their suffering. Similarly, if I look forward to happiness, others must be wishing for it too. Therefore, I should not deprive others of their happiness, but help them to achieve it.

If we want to get rid of our ignorance, obtain wisdom, maintain a healthy body, and enhance our character, we should help others to enjoy all these virtues as well. This way of helping others, by observing oneself, is the source of loving-kindness, compassion, and all acts of morality. Jesus once said, "Treat others the way you want them to treat you." This is why, if I want to be treated well by others, I should be nice to them. It seems similar to the "deduced-way" advocated by Buddhism. However, if we analyze this form of mutual relationship carefully, we may realize that the ulterior motive is still generated from the love of oneself. It is for the benefit and well being of ourselves that we are motivated to act morally.

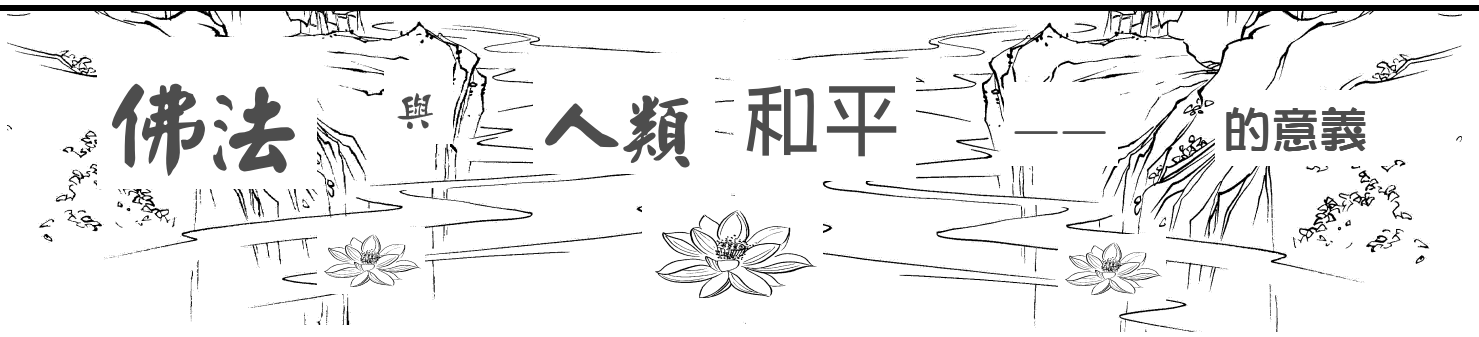
Buddhism, however, takes the position that if we hope things to turn out in a certain manner, others must be expecting the same result also. Therefore, others should be treated in the same way. This show of sympathy towards others is not for the satisfaction of one's own self-benefit and purpose. In Confucianism, it says, "do not force others to accept things which you yourself do not desire. Instead try to see and feel what you desire, and also what others are looking for. When you have achieved what you want, help others to achieve what they want too." This philosophy is very much in line with the spirit of Buddhism.

Sentient beings' life is the combination of mind and body (matter). In addition, sentient beings are dependent on each other for improvement and survival. We are responsible for whatever happiness and sadness is created among us. Since the life of one human being is inter-related to others, it is not right for one to hurt another. In order to sustain ourselves, we depend tremendously on others. Therefore, hurting others means creating trouble for ourselves. On the other hand, helping others also helps us to reduce our own suffering. Helping others is therefore wise and wholesome. However, this philosophy of 'helping others which benefits ourselves in return, and hurting others, which results in our own suffering,' is not well understood by most people. Some prefer not to believe or act in accordance with this principle.

From the beginning of our infinite past, it has been impossible for us to be free from this law of inter-dependence in whatever activities we are engaged in. All these take place so naturally, that we need no one to tell us of their significance in order to develop this thought of mutual support. Seeing someone in suffering, we develop a sense of sympathetic love. Likewise, we rejoice when we see someone who is successful. These undetected natural flows of feelings are signs of ethical self-consciousness, known as conscience. These feelings can be found in all of us, some having more or less of them.

However, some indulge so much in the pursuit of materialistic desires like, sex, status, wealth, and power, that it is not easy for them to set free this ethical self-consciousness. They are overwhelmed by selfish and evil thoughts. Worst of all, some of these people rejoice at the sight of another's failure, while some are jealous and angry when others achieve success. Nevertheless, under certain circumstances, the ignorant ones may one day develop a conscience to repent and regret their past evil deeds.

To be continued...



## 二 不和（不平）的心因

人人想望和平，而和平不容易實現。不容易實現的原因，有充分探討的必要。依佛法說：內有不和（不平）的心因，外有不平（不和）的事緣，彼此相互影響，這才興風作浪，造成從來難得和平的局面。

不和，佛典稱之為諍。諍，見於語言文字，見於行動，而實深刻的存於內心。扼要來說：內心的諍有二：一、見諍；二、愛諍。這二者又根源於「受」與「想」，所以稱受想為「諍根」。見，是見解，這裡專指主觀的成見、偏見、倒見、邪見。當人類觸對對象時，必然的攝取境相。所取的境相，有著局限性，片面性；攝取境相時，必覺有異於其他的特性，如此而並不如彼（「取境分齊」），這才成為一個個的心象。從此「構畫名言」表現於思想議論，這是認識過程中「想」的力用。這種有著局限性，片面性，是此非彼個體性的心象，使我們的認識，不能有完整的認識，不能把握真正的事理，不免錯亂，不免矛盾，不免畸輕畸重，自是非他。有了這執一概全，以末為本，以非為是等，一切如盲摸象的異見、異說，世間即由此而糾纏不清。《眾義經》說：「各各自依見，戲論起諍競；知此為知實，不知為謗法。……若依自見法，而生諸戲論，若是為淨智，無非淨智者」。真的，誰不自以所見為正確，誰不執己見而排斥他說。如以成見、偏見為正智，為能得真理，那麼誰都獲得真理了！這種從認識缺陷性而來的見諍，一向就「此亦一是非，彼亦一是非」。「以見欲繫著故，出家（與）出家而復共諍」。宗教與哲學者，由於見執而聚訟紛紜，釋尊早就為我們說破；而到這思想鬥爭尖銳的現代，越

發顯出他的重要性來。

愛，是貪欲。權力、名譽、生命，都是人類所貪著的；而衣食住等經濟生活（及男女性生活），尤為欲界人類貪求的對象。在我們觸對對象時，內心必起反應而領「受」於心。這一內心的反應，有自己主觀的標準，起著合意的，不合意的，或無所謂的領受。合意的樂受，即引起愛欲而戀戀不捨。沒有得到的，一心一意的去追求。得到了，一心一意的希望增多，無限的增多；保有，永遠的保有。所以說：受為愛欲的根元。然經濟生活，本為一切屬於一切，也可說不屬於任何一人。以愛欲的習見，而想攝屬為自己，以為屬於自己，已含有嚴重的錯誤。何況經濟的物質生活，從個人說，決非一人所能完全取得，終不免陷於無限欲求而永不滿足。從大眾說，你以愛欲而想佔有，不斷的佔有，他也想佔有，無限的佔有，當然要引起衝突，而成為不息的鬥諍。這一由於物欲而來的諍競，釋尊更說得分明：「以欲為本故，母共子諍，子共母諍，父子兄弟親族展轉共諍。……以欲為本故，王王共諍，民民共諍，國國共諍。彼因共相諍故，以種種器仗轉向加害：或以手掬，或以石擲，或以杖打刀斫」。這種家庭、社會、國際間的鬥諍，古今有何差別？不過現在多了飛機、大砲、原子彈、毒氣等而已。總之，我們有見解，即使理解到並不完全，並不徹底，而多少希望別人服從自己的意見。我們有物質的需求，即使理解得別人也一樣需要，而多少希望自己得到的勝過別人。見與愛，為精神生活與物質生活中的兩大諍執，而這實根源於認識中的受與想。佛說五蘊，特立受、想為二蘊，即重視他是見諍與愛諍的根源。

續下期



## 2. The Mental Factor of Disharmony (Inequality)

Everyone longs for peace, but peace is not easily realized. There is a need to fully inquire as to why. According to the Dharma, internally we have the mental factor of disharmony (inequality), and externally, we are faced with unfair (disharmonious) issues and conditions, and these two factors mutually interact, stirring up troubles, giving rise to a situation in which peace is forever rarely achieved.

In Buddhist literature, disharmony is referred to as a dispute. Disputes can be exposed through the spoken language, in writing, or through actions. However, in reality disputes are deeply embedded within our minds. To be precise, the disputes that are embedded in our minds can be put into two categories:

i) Disputes of view: These consist of disputes arising from our views;

ii) Disputes of desire: These are the disputes arising from a craving or greed.

The origins of these two types of disputes arise from 'feelings' and 'perceptions.' Thus, 'feelings' and 'perceptions' are referred to as the 'root of disputes.'

View means opinion and understanding. In this context, it specifically refers to our preconceived ideas that are subjective; prejudices; heretical views and perverted views. When humans come into contact with an object, they inevitably form a view depending on the prevailing circumstances. One's opinions are usually partial or one-sided in nature. In forming an opinion, we will find that certain characteristics are different, and then we compare and discriminate, thus developing different mental images. From then on, we express our opinions based on these mental images. This is how the power of perception works in the process of understanding.

Such mental images, which are partial and one-sided in nature, prevent us from obtaining and arriving at a thorough understanding of the truth of the matter. Consequently, confusion and contradictions prevail, views become unbalanced, and one always considers oneself to be right and others to be always wrong.

When people start to form the view that they have the full story when they have only one part of it, and when they misconceive the end as the beginning, and take the wrong view as the correct view, there will be differing opinions and different theories. This is best illustrated by the varying descriptions of an elephant by a group of blind people when each of them was able to touch different parts of the animal. This inability to gain a full overall understanding of the truth of the matter gives rise to the endless quibbling that exists in this world.

The following is an excerpt from the Zhong Yi Sutra:

"Individuals have their own views, These idle arguments cause disputes and contests (or conflicts), Knowing only parts of the matter but believing that the entire truth is known, Thus, unknowingly, the Dharma (Truth) is slandered. If we cling to our views, as we perceive it, Various idle arguments will arise, If these are considered pure wisdom, Then, there is no one in this world who is ignorant."

It is true that many believe that their views are correct. Who does not hold to one's own opinions and reject the views of others? If preconceived ideas and prejudices were regarded as the right wisdom, and could lead to realization of Truth, then anyone would be able to see the Truth.

The disputes of view which result from the defects in

**Dharma**

**&**

**the Human Peace**



our understanding have always been "untrue either here or there." Due to the binding effects of personal views and desire, "even those who have renounced home life and seek liberation are often involved in disputes among themselves." Sakyamuni Buddha has already disclosed to us that because of the insistence of their different views, religions and philosophers have caused many disputes and many widely divided opinions. In this present era when there is so much incisive philosophical struggle, the importance of the Buddha's teachings is ever more obvious.

Cravings and greed are desires. People crave for power, fame and life. Moreover, clothes, sustenance, shelter and other basic living requirements (which also include male-female sexual life) are the objects of desire of beings residing in the Realms of Desire (s. kamadhatu). As we come into contact with these objects, our minds begin to react and lead us to 'feel' for them in our minds. These reactions that occur within our minds are gauged by our own subjective standards. The resultant feelings may then be either to our liking, not to our liking, or indifference. When the resultant feelings are to our liking, we become desirous of them, and constantly crave for them. If we cannot possess them, we will single-mindedly strive to get them. On the other hand, if we are successful in acquiring them, we will again single-mindedly wish for more and more, never to be contented. Then, we will hoard and hang on to what we already possess.

Thus, feelings are the basic causes of our desires. However, all the basic essentials to sustain life should be everyone's legitimate right, and is not exclusive to anyone in particular. Based on the habitual views formed arising from our desires, we constantly strive to possess more. The thought that we have personal ownership of the basic essentials of livelihood is already a serious mistake (or misconception). On top of that, the material things for our livelihood, can by no means be fully possessed by individuals. Hence, it is inevitable that we are trapped in a constant state of desire and are never be contented. Considering the masses and the issue of wanting to possess more and more, this is certain to lead to conflicts, which will develop into endless struggles and disputes. Sakyamuni Buddha taught us very clearly about these struggles and disputes that originate from our material desires.

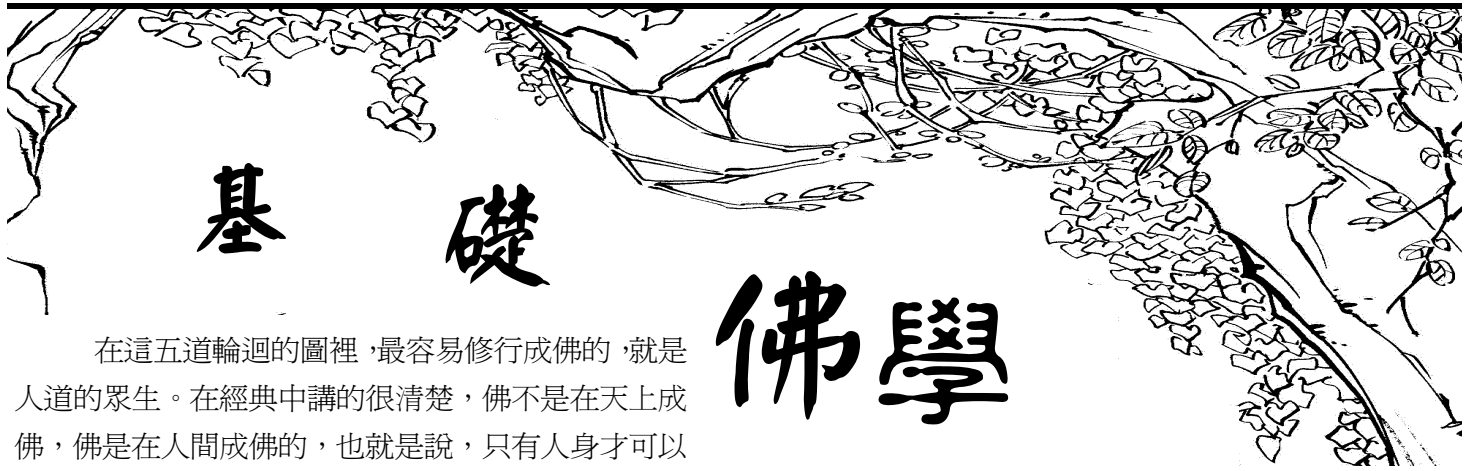
"Because desire is the underlying cause, mother and her children will enter into dispute, father and his offspring, siblings and kinsfolk all enter into mutual disputes. Again, because desire is the underlying cause, it leads to disputes between rulers, between people and between nations. Such disputes lead to the use of various kinds of weapons to inflict bodily harm and damage. Such weapons may be pitchforks, stones for throwing, sticks or knives."

From time immemorial, there is no difference in these conflicts in the family, in the community and between nations. However, in this modern time, we have aero planes, cannons, atomic bombs, chemical weapons etc. Briefly, when we have a personal opinion, even if our understanding is not perfect and not thorough, we still expect others to comply with our opinion. We do have material needs. Even if we understand that others are equally in need, we still would like to possess more than what others have.

Views and desires are the two sources of conflicts that occur in our spiritual and material life. In reality, such conflicts originate from 'feelings' and 'perceptions' in the process of understanding. The Buddha teaches us about the five aggregates (s. Pancaskandhas) and specifically refers to 'feelings' and 'perception' as the two aggregates which are of particular importance because they are the basic causes of the disputes arising from our personal views and the disputes arising from desire.

To be continued...





# 基礎佛學

在這五道輪迴的圖裡，最容易修行成佛的，就是人道的眾生。在經典中講的很清楚，佛不是在天上成佛，佛是在人間成佛的，也就是說，只有人身才可以修成佛，所以我們要非常珍惜這個人身。上次我們提到，人道的眾生有三種殊勝，是其他道的眾生所沒有的，這就是憶念勝、勇猛勝、梵行勝。學習佛法，也就是幫助我們認清楚做為人而努力向上提昇的一條正道，佛也就是在告訴我們，每一個人道眾生，都有成佛的希望。不但如此，進一步說，每一個人道眾生，都應該負起責任，什麼樣的責任？負起認識真理、實行真理及弘揚真理的責任。談到要怎麼負責，首先必須要學習面對現實，而不是躲避現實，無論這人間的真相是好是壞、是善是惡。我們應該了解事實，並且盡力解決問題，以佛法的慈悲及智慧，結合更多善的因緣，一起將世界眾生的苦難，儘可能做到相對的改善，這是人類社會無可推托的一個基本責任。學佛不是叫我們去躲，躲進天國，躲到一個安全的地方，不看眾生的苦樂，不管有情的死活，只求自保，獨善其身，這不是佛法的真義。如果是這樣子，那佛自己開悟證道後，就自己躲起來，馬上入涅槃了，那我們怎麼辦啊？同樣的道理，我們學佛的人，要真正認識清楚，一個很重要的觀念，修行人是勇於面對現實的，不是逃避現實。而且我們更需學習運用智慧的方法，來面對人間，護念一切生命的尊嚴。

面對這條修行的路，要深入思惟，考慮明白，這是自己選擇的？還是父母師長要我走的？鄰居朋友要我走的？有沒有是這樣子？我們來學習佛法，是不是某人強迫我來的？或是某人拐騙我來的？我們應當明白，生命的路要我們自己去選擇，選擇之後，我們要自己負責，勇於擔當。不要只是隨便走一走，走到後來有困難了，就怨天尤人，都是我爸媽害的，都是我朋友害的，就不說是自己害的，這叫不負責任。所以，在選擇

之前要看得很清楚，先做比較全面性的認識，之後再選定目標。結婚這條路很苦，面對家庭，有很多責任。就是出家修行這條路也很苦的，面對眾生，有更多的工作。甚至，修行人必須先面對自己，改造自己，做一個新人，發揮新生命的意義。

一般人以為佛教與神教差不多，什麼是神教？早期社會的民間信仰大多屬於多神教，西方的天主教、基督教是一神教，他們認為有個神、有個上帝，祂創造這個世界及所有的眾生，這獨一無二的神是萬能的，不但創造一切，而且主宰一切，掌握生殺大權，順祂者昌，逆祂者亡。只要信祂，你就可以上天堂，你不信他，那就只好下地獄。人不如神，永遠只能做上帝的奴僕，服從神的旨意，讚仰神的權力。在神教中，人的生命、意志是不能自主的。那麼，佛教是不是神教？有人說佛寺裏有這麼多的佛像、菩薩像、護法善神像，這些不是神，又是什麼？事實上，佛是由人所修成的，而且，佛不是萬能的神，他不是世界、眾生的創造者，也沒有能力主宰人類上升或下墮。佛是澈見生命真理，透達緣起實相的覺者，一個活生生的人。他將自己親證的境界，經由語言傳播，極平實而有次第的教導當時的人，每個人都有同等的機會，透過正確的修學方法而成佛。沒有任何階級意識，沒有任何權力控制，人的生命是平等自主的，上升或下墮操之在己，不在佛陀。佛只是一位老師，尚未成佛的凡人則是學生，所有學生都可因為如實用功，終而成為老師，如佛一般，知法見法，了無疑惑。

續下期

# The Basics of BUDDHISM

very clearly indicated in Sutras that Buddha attained Buddhahood in the realm of human beings rather than in the realm of the heavens. In other words, only one who possesses a human body could cultivate to the level of Buddhahood. Thus, we have to cherish this human form. We mentioned last time that human beings have three kinds of supreme qualities while there is none in other paths. These are the qualities of memory, the qualities of fearlessness, and the qualities of pure conduct. Studying the Buddhadharma is a proper way to help us to recognize clearly in improving ourselves as human beings. That is, the Buddha tells us that each and every one has a chance to accomplish Buddhahood in the realm of human beings. Not only like this, further more, every single living being in the realm of humans ought to take responsibility. What kind of responsibility? It is the responsibility to understand true knowledge, to practice true knowledge, and to propagate it. How shall one shoulder this responsibility? He must learn to face the reality instead of avoiding it. No matter whether the reality is good or bad, wholesome or evil, we shall comprehend the facts and try our best to solve the problems. We have to use kindness and compassion, and the wisdom of Buddhism, combining many good causes and affinities together, and try to improve and change any disasters and sufferings of living beings in the world. This is a basic, inescapable responsibility of living beings in society. To study Buddhism is neither asking us to hide in the heavens, nor to find shelter in a safe place, disregarding the sadness and happiness of living beings and ignoring the birth and death situation of sentient beings. We shall not merely care for or value our own safety. That is

not the true meaning of Buddhadharma. If it were like this, then Buddha would hide himself and enter Nirvana right away after he became enlightened. What will become of us then? The same principle can be applied to all the followers of Buddhism. We all have to recognize clearly one very major concept, that is, as a cultivator, we must be courageous enough to face reality instead of escaping it. Moreover, we ought to study how to use the methods of wisdom to face the world and how to protect and regard the

dignity of all lives.

When facing the path of cultivation, we must contemplate and understand thoroughly whether this is our own choice or something our parents or teachers want me to do. Or is this a way my neighboring friends persuade me to walk on? Is it anything like that? Is it someone forcing me to study Buddhism? Have I been abducted to do so? We should understand that we have made our own choice in our way of life. After choosing it, we have to be brave enough to shoulder any responsibility. We shall not walk on life casually, and then blame on parents and friends rather than yourself when facing difficulties. This is irresponsibility. Therefore, we have to see very clearly and have thorough understanding before we set our goal. The road of marriage is full of sufferings. There are so many responsibilities involving family. The path of cultivation as a left-home person is full of sufferings too. There will be more duties involved concerning living beings. Moreover, a cultivator must face and reform himself or herself so as to create a new person and to carry out the meaning of a new life.

In general, people think Buddhism and theism is about the same. What is theism? In the society of the olden days, the faith of the ordinary folks may be classified as *polytheism*. The Catholic and the Christian religions of the West is *monotheism*. They believe there is only one god -- the almighty God that created this world and all beings. This unique god is omnipotent. Not only that he has created everything, but he also controls everything. He has the power to cease or to revive lives. Those who obey him will be prospering while those who revolt against him will die. If you believe in him, you can go to heaven; otherwise, you will fall to hell. People never can compare to him. They can only be his slaves obeying orders or extolling his authority. In theism, people cannot control their own life or mind. Then, is Buddhism theism? Someone says there are many statues of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Dharmaprotecting deities in temples, who are they if they are not gods? As a matter in fact, Buddha cultivated from a human body, and Buddha is not an almighty God. He is not the creator of the world and people, and has no power to control people's falling to hell or ascending to heaven. Buddha is the Enlightened One who thoroughly comprehends the truth of life and understands the reality of all phenomena. He was a live person. In straightforward and systematic words and speech, he promulgated his personal realization experience and taught people who were living at that time. Every one has the same equal chance to become a Buddha through a proper method of cultivation. There were no consciousness of social classes and no exertion of power. The lives of human beings are equal and are controlled by us. Going to hell or heaven is up to the individual. It is not up to the Buddha. Buddha is merely a teacher; those who have not yet realized Buddhahood are students. All students will finally become teachers by really studying hard. Like Buddha, they will understand all dharmas with no doubt as they see them.

To be continued...





## 共修時間表 Schedule of Activities



每星期日下午阿含經研究課  
潛修期間，對外開放之法會預告

如下所示——

Sutra discussion class on weekends (Agama Sutra)  
On latent period, please refer to below schedule for  
Ceremonies which open to public.



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## 法會預告 Dharma Activities- Advance Notice



### 參加觀音菩薩成道法會

Celebration of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva's Enlightenment

8/1/2004 Sunday 八月一日 星期日



### 慶祝盂蘭盆法會

Celebration of Ullambana

8/29/04 Sunday 星期日



法會詳情請連路竹林精舍，電話 Tel# (510) 883-1801

