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# AZBT

## Newsletter

### Remolded Buddha Hall

When you drive into Mt. Pocono, not far from the town's center on Rt. 940E, you will see the Vairocana Monastery on the left side of the road. The exterior of the newly remodeled Buddha hall is mainly white, which represents purity. At the left and right sides of the main entrance, there are two columns on each side, which represent the four kinds of disciple's support needed to spread the Buddha Dharma -- monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen.



The simple, but graceful design of the remodeled interior Buddha hall makes it suitable as both a shrine and a preaching hall. Near the entrance, there are closets to accommodate clothing. On the adjacent bookcases, there are precious treasures of the Dharma, Tripitaka and other books.



From the entrance to the shrine, there are three levels, which represent the three jewels -- Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. From the Buddha's stature to

the main entrance, there is a long and colorful carpet in the middle of the hall, which represents that the Dharma-water will flow and remain for a long time.



The new Buddha hall is built. Thanks to all for your generosity and caring. In the future, we hope all of you will come and visit the temple more often, join the Dharma activities, and establish the pure land in the human realm together.

### Visiting Buddhist Temples in Massachusetts

Ven. Ta-Yu, Ben and his wife were invited by Charles and Jeannie Chen to visit Buddhist Temples in Massachusetts during the New Year season.

First, they visited Ven. Lama Migmar in Cambridge and Sakya Retreat Center in Barre. At the Lama's residence, they had tea and cookies together and a nice talk. On New Year's Day they celebrated with friends at their house in Shrewsbury, Mass. As a blessing for the New Year, Ven. Ta-Yu led an Eighty-eight Buddha Confession and gave a Refuge Ceremony.

They also visited the Thousand Buddha Temple, founded by Ven. Kuan-xian, in Quincy and Greater Boston Buddhist Culture Center (I.B.P.S. - Fo Guang Shan) in Cambridge.

# Chinese New Year Party at BACP

Shirley Hsi

It was really nice that Jiunn-Ru Huang came down from Albany, NY to join us for the Chinese New Year party at The Buddhist Association of Central Pennsylvania in State College. Also, he was able to stop by Vairocana Monastery and brought Ta-Yu Fa-Shi with him to our party.

We had a great time at the party, we ate a lot (as usual), then we had games and, of course, karaoke. Next morning Ta-Yu Fa-Shi was so kind to give us a lesson in ways to cultivate our dignity of demeanor. Some of us were fortunate to attend the Sunday morning session and receive direct instruction from Ta-Yu Fa-Shi.

the surface. Only after we realize the complete wisdom and have the right view, we will be able to turn our sleeping anger, as the root, into compassion.



The next teachings in "Patience" is on April 7, 2002.

## The Perfection of Giving

Jiunn-Ru Huang

Ven. Ta-Yu preached Dharma on the topic of "Six Paramita – The Perfection of Giving" to a group of practitioners March 10, 2002 at the Vairocana Monastery. The teaching was given in Chinese and was translated into English by Jeannie Chen.

In the teaching, Ven. Ta-Yu told us that "The Perfection of Giving" is of three kinds, categorized by "Giving of Materials", "Giving of Dharma", and "Giving of Fearlessness". To make it easier for practitioners to understand what each type of giving means she gave examples and told us stories from Sutras, as well as some recent stories from Taiwan.

In brief, the chief aim of "Giving of Materials" is to let go the mind of greediness, desire, wanting for more, and our attachment to worldly things, including fame, wealth, material collection, and things that may not lead us to liberation but bring a cause that, in a subsequent process, enables suffering such as miseries of life in oneself or others to arrive.

"Giving of Dharma" can be practiced whenever there is a need. She illustrated this with an example of what Jeannie did today as a translator for the lecture. Jeannie was able to undertake the responsibility directly and her willingness to carry out this non-trivial

work enabled English listeners to gain the merit of Dharma. Jeannie's work is indeed a vivid example of practicing "Giving of Dharma". Her act is highly appreciative and encouraged. Giving of the Dharma is to share the Buddha Dharma with others, but when we introduce the Dharma, we need to be very clear that whatever the Dharma we understood or realized may not be the absolute truth, because we are not Buddha yet.

"Giving of Fearlessness" emphasizes on the practice of no-harming and loving kindness. This practice will bring about a complete change towards our mindset and others regarding fear. A practitioner, who thinks, speaks, and acts out of compassion, will have positive effects on himself and others such as bringing peace to the surrounding environment.



Ven. Ta-Yu exemplified "Giving of fearlessness" with a story: in ancient times there was a master who lived in a cave on a distant mountain. He was very old and the fact that he lived in such a wild area alone made one of his disciples very worried about the master's safety. However, one time when this disciple came to visit the master, he realized that the master lived safely and peacefully in this remote region and was surprised even more by the truth that the master was able to share his life in the cave with two wild animals; the master had two wild lion companions. Evidently, the master's realization of Buddha's teaching of putting love and compassion into-practice enabled him to convert these two wild lions into his safeguards.

The merit accumulated by the giving is based on how pure our mind is when we give. The pure giving is empty the three wheels in our mind which are no giver, no giving object and no receiver.

## Dharma Activities

### Patience

Starting in February this year, Ven. Lama Migmar will give teachings in "Patience" based on Bodhicharyavapara by Shintideva.



The stanzas explain how happiness and other good results come with patience. Anger is the worst emotion that burns up all merits, creates bad enemies and destroys good relationships. Patience is the antidote of anger. To have patience, we need to practice meditation and wisdom. The meditation will keep us clam and away from the active anger on

Because of nonattachment, just like the space without boundary, the merit generated by the pure giving is also unlimited.



p.s. Ven. Ta-Yu has been invited to give monthly Dharma teaching in Buddhist Association of Lehigh Valley.

## The Journey to the Heart

This year we arranged for several laypersons to take turns sharing the Dharma with us. Some of them have already practiced for more than twenty years. Coming on June 9, we are very honored to have Mr. Miin-Ron Lin to give a talk on “The Journey to the Heart in Spiritual Practice and Daily Life”.

Miin-Ron Lin has been a member and the secretary of the Board of Directors of the AZBT since 2000. Miin-Ron was born in Taiwan and received the B.S degree in Physics from the National Taiwan University and the M.E and PH.D in Electrical Engineering from Stanford University. Miin-Ron and his wife, Shiang-Hua, moved to the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania when he joined the AT&T Bell Laboratories in 1980. Currently, Miin-Ron is an engineering director at the Agere Systems, a soon to be spun off division of Lucent Technologies.

Miin-Ron and Shiang-Hua have two children, both born in the Lehigh Valley. Cynthia is a junior at Princeton University in New Jersey and Benjamin a freshmen at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Miin-Ron enjoys the interactions with people of different cultural background in his business travels around the world and the exchanges with the friends through the activities at AZBT and the spiritual practices that he shared with a group of

his friends. It is his belief that through these interactions, an individual can begin to understand himself in his spiritual journey to the heart and the realization of the ultimate truth.

## Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony

During the Chinese New Year, Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony it is a traditional practice to purify our body, speech and mind as a good start of every year. The Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony includes three thousand Buddha’s name from the past, present and future eras and there are one thousand Buddha in each era (countless time).

According to the Sutra, the present era is Xian Jie (Moral era) and Sakyamuni Buddha is one of the thousand-Buddha in the present era. The past era before the present era is Zhuang-Yan Jie (Magnificent era) and the future era after the present era is Xing-Su Jie (Stars era). From the beginning less to the endless time, there are countless eras.



As last year, this year we separate the entire Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony into three sections and practice Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony together in three weekends, at the beginning of the Chinese New Year in February, Memorial Day long weekend and at the end of September.

Ven. Ta-Yu led us to prostrate to the thousand Buddha in the past era on February 23 and 24. Along with the rhythm of the beautiful chanting accompanied by the Dharma instruments, we took turns doing the prostration to each Buddha. The prostration started from the people at the east side of the shrine after they

## Coming Events

**Every Tuesday**  
7:00 p.m.  
**Group Meditation**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

**4/7/02, Sunday**  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Patience**  
Ven. Lama Migmar

**4/27/02, Saturday**  
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

**5/11/02, Saturday**  
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**Sakyamuni Buddha’s Birthday Service**  
**Diamond Confession Ceremony**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

**5/25/02, Saturday**  
10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
**5/26/02, Sunday**  
10 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
**Thousand-Buddha Confession Ceremony Present - Moral Era**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

**6/9/02, Sunday**  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**The Journey to the Heart in Spiritual Practice and Daily Life**  
Mr. Miin-Ron Lin

**6/22/02, Saturday, 10 a.m. – 6/23/02, Sunday, 12 p.m.**  
**One Day Zen Retreat**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

**7/7/02, Sunday**  
10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
**Patience**  
Ven. Lama Migmar

**7/27/02, Saturday, 10 a.m. – 7/28/02, Sunday, 12 p.m.**  
**One Day Pure Land Retreat (Eight Precepts)**  
Ven. Ta-Yu

chanted the first Buddha's name. While the people at the east side were prostrating, the people at the west side continued the chanting to the next Buddha's name and followed by a prostration. Then, the people at east sides continued the chanting and prostration to the next Buddha.



There were five sessions and in each session we prostrated to two hundred Buddhas. Each day, after the grand offering, Ven. Ta-Yu gave a Dharma talk to inspire our practice.

Confession Ceremony is a powerful method to purify our Karma. During the ceremony, our body is prostrating to the Buddha, preventing us to engage with bad actions. Furthermore, prostration is a good way to turn our elegant into humble and to transform our self-attachment to selflessness. The chanting is our speech, which replaces the possible lies or bad words spoken by us. And, our mind is thinking about Buddha's compassion and wisdom, watching each and every movement generated by our body and speech, visualizing all sentient beings prostrating with us, and paying our highest respect to all Buddhas. It is an effective way to purify our desire, anger and ignorance. With our relaxing body, speech and mind full of the unlimited Dharma joy, we rest in all these positive actions. Step by step and little by little, gradually, we are getting closer to our goal - realizing the perfect Buddhahood.

# The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta-Yu

Translated by Jeannie Chen

Edited by Betsy Pross

## Spreading the Delicate Scent Far and Wide

In a corner of the Buddha Hall, there is a sweet osmanthus tree.

Even when the tree has the fewest leaves, it's natural delicate and graceful curve and shape, always wildly catches people's eyes.

Enter the fall, which is famous for its full moon in Chinese tradition, it is also the blossom season of sweet osmanthus. Its green and vigorous leaves illustrate the great and powerful life force. Lively and outrageously little white flowers, jumping out one by one between the leaves, as if, they want to compete with the surrounding colorful autumn-leaves, contesting their shades and beauties.

When I was young, I liked to read Ms. Qi-Jun's articles. Small things, looking too worthless to mention, through her vivid and active style of writing, turned out to be outstanding. The brilliant and interesting scripts of her childhood, again and again attracted me, who was brought up in a gray and bare city building.

Among her articles, there was one story that described the sweet osmanthus tree grown in the front yard of her house and how her family made sweet osmanthus cake when she was little. Her rich and lively description, made it so delicious even on white paper with black words.

After I became a nun, there were several big sweet osmanthus trees in front of my resident temple. Every morning after breakfast, my duty was to clean up the large front yard. Every time, the sweet osmanthus flowers covered the entire ground, I was always unwilling to sweep them away. Under my sweeping broom, flowers blossom and wither, countless summers and winters, passed by momentarily.

Over ten years ago, under the perfect causes and conditions, I visited Gui-Lin (name of a county, means sweet osmanthus forest in Chinese), famous in all of China for the magnificent scenic mountains and lakes. It was in August, the sweet osmanthus trees gathered to form a beautiful forest. It was so beautiful and unforgettable.

Vicky asked me about sweet osmanthus flowers, based on my tiny knowledge that accumulated in the past, I told her: "The flowers coming out from the sweet osmanthus trees has a very delicate scent. Even when it dropped down on the ground, the scent still remains. Dried sweet osmanthus flowers, can make tea, saturating people's heart. Also, it can be used to prepare the delicious sweet osmanthus cake and the tasty sweet osmanthus source." After my explanations, Vicky had a very high regard for the Chinese art of eating.

I told Vicky, Buddhist practitioners should be also like sweet osmanthus flowers, maintaining the Bodhicita in different environments and beneficial to sentient beings all the time. Their virtue, like the delicate scent, makes people joyful. Their graceful attitude makes people comfortable. An honestly practicing Bodhisattva, even he or she is in the dark corner, still he or she will not forget the Bodhisattva's vows, beneficial self and others. In this dustily ordinary world, why don't we learn to be a Bodhisattva, cleaning up our self-attachment and sprinkling a drop of delicate scent to make people joyful?

# The Buddhism

Jorge Luis Borges

Translated by Miin-Ron Lin

## The Enlightenment

We have to renounce the passion. Suicide does not help because it is a passionate act. The man that commits suicide is always in the world of the dreams. We must come to understand that the world is an apparition, a dream, that life is a dream. Because of it, we must feel it profoundly, realizing it through the meditation exercises. In Buddhist monasteries one of the exercise is this: the neophyte has to live each moment of his life living it fully. He must think: "now is the midday, now I am crossing the patio, now I will meet with the superior", and at the same time he must think that the midday, the patio and the superior are not real, they are as unreal as I and as my thoughts, because Buddhism denies the self.

One of the major disillusion is that of the self. There is not a subject, but a series of mental states. If I say, "I think", I am incurring a mistake, because self suppose a constant subject and then the work of that subject, which is the thought. It is not like that. One should not say, "I think", but "think", as one says "rain". When saying *raining*, we do not think that the rain performs an action; no, something is happening. In the same mode, as one says hot, cold, rain, we should say: think, suffer, and avoid the subject.

In Buddhist monasteries, the neophytes are submitted to a very tough discipline. The neophyte enters the monastery and they assign very tough jobs to him. He sleeps and in fifteen minutes after they wake him up: he has to wash, he has to sweep; if he is sleepy, they punish him physically. In this way, he has to think all the time, not of his guilt, but of the

unreality of everything. He has to make a continuing exercise of unreality.

Now we come to the Zen Buddhism and to Bodhidharma. Bodhidharma was the first missionary, in the sixth century. Bodhidharma moves from India to China and meets with an emperor that had fomented Buddhism and he lists for him monasteries and sanctuaries and informs him of the number of Buddhist neophytes. Bodhidharma tells him: "All that belongs to the world of illusion; the monasteries and the monks are as unreal as you and as I." Afterwards, he leaves to mediate and sits against a wall.

The doctrine branches out to different sects and arrives to Japan. The most famous is Zen. In Zen, a method was discovered to reach the enlightenment. It only works after years of meditation. Enlightenment arrives suddenly; it is not a matter of a series of syllogism. One must intuit suddenly the truth. The method is called satori (enlightening) and consists of a sudden event that is beyond of the logic.

We always think in terms of subject, object, cause, effect, logic, illogic, some thing and its contrary; we have to reduce these categories. According to the Zen Doctors, the truth is arrived by sudden intuition through an illogical answer. The neophyte asks the master what is Buddha. The master responds to him: "The cypress is the garden." A response so illogical that it can wake up the truth. The neophyte asks why Bodhidharma came from the West. The master may respond: "Three books of linen." These words do not contain an allegorical sense; they are a silly response to wake up, suddenly, the intuition. It can be a sudden smack also. The disciple may ask something and the master may answer with a smack. There is one story – of course it has to be legendary – over Bodhidharma.

Accompanying Bodhidharma a disciple asked questions and Bodhidharma never

responded. The disciple tried to meditate and at the end of a time cut off his left arm and presented to the master as a proof that he wanted to be his disciple. As a proof of his intention he mutilated himself deliberately. The master, without noticing the happening, that after all was a physical event, an illusory event, told him: "What do you want?" The disciple responded to him: "I have been searching my mind for long time and I have not found it." At this moment the disciple understood the truth, understood that the self does not exist, understood that everything is unreal. There we have, more or less, the essence of the Zen Buddhism.

It is very difficult to expound a religion, above of all a religion that one does not profess. I believe that the important is not that we may live the Buddhism as a set of legends, but as a discipline; a discipline that is within out reach and that does not demand us of the asceticism. Neither does it allow us to abandon ourselves to the license of the carnal life. What it asks us of is the meditation, a meditation that does not have to be about our guilt, our past life.

One of the themes of meditation of the Zen Buddhism is to think that our past life is illusory. If I were a Buddhist monk, I would think in this moment that I have begun to live now, that all the previous life of Borge was a dream, that all the history of the universe was a dream. Through exercises of intellectual order we will free ourselves of the Zen. Once we understand that self does not exist, we will not think that self can be happy or that our duty is to make him happy. We will arrive to the state of calm. That does not mean that the nirvana is equivalent to the sensation of thought and the legend of the Buddha could be the proof of it. The Buddha, under the BODHI Tree, arrives to the nirvana, and, however, continues to live and preach the Dharma for many years.

(To be continued)

