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A TRIP TO MUHLENBERG COLLEGE

Venerable Ta Yu

A sincere invitation from Professor William H. Jennings allowed me to have an opportunity to visit Muhlenberg College on November 3rd and to share the Buddha Dharma with the students. Because of the highway construction on Rt. 33 plus getting lost, it took an additional half hour besides the normal one-hour traveling time to arrive there.

Muhlenberg College is located in the western section of Allentown, PA. It is a small sized college and has slightly more than three thousand students. The warm sunshine reflected off the scattered colorful leaves of the late autumn and one by one formed a mysterious puzzle on the earth. The lofty school building looked alive with the shadows of dancing leaves waving in the breeze. Who said that it must be dull in the fall?

I went upstairs to the Department of Religion on the second floor. The secretary escorted me to the classroom. After being introduced by Professor Jennings. I began to share the Buddha Dharma with the students.

Because it was the day after the presidential elections I wasn't surprised when the students wanted to know the political view of

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Buddhism. I informed them that the position of a Buddhist is to be concerned about politics without interfering in it.

A Buddhist pays attention to politics out of concern using wisdom to verify and analyze issues. Interference usually is opinionated one-way action based on an individuals' personal feeling, which triggers aggression and creates chaos. Both attitudes arrive from separate motivation. Therefore, their retributions will also be separate. It is so-called "The results cannot be pure with an impure motivation."



Muhlenberg College

Because of the students' great interest in Zen, Professor Jennings asked one of the students to volunteer to come forward and under my instruction demonstrate how to meditate.

I explained to everyone, Westerners have always had a sense of curiosity about Zen. Practicing meditation will increase our concentration but Buddhism also emphasizes the importance of Discipline and Wisdom. We cannot practice if we are lacking any one of the three vehicles of learning - Discipline, Meditation and Wisdom. Zen

meditation without Discipline and Wisdom is not complete.

Because many of today's young people are reckless with their body, speech and mind, I emphasized the importance of the Five Precepts and the concept of sentient beings. Transmigration in The Six Realms was also included in the topics of discussion. The brief one-hour plus introduction to Buddhism ended quickly with a question and answer session.

Up until now, Buddhism is still in the seedling stage in the western world. Because of culture differences and language barriers, it is quiet a challenge to the Dharma propagators to spread Buddhism in western countries. Wishing that we can do our best in the spirit of "spreading the seeds everywhere on the snow and ice" to share the precious Buddha Dharma with others in our limited lives.

An Invitation Letter from William H. Jennings, Ph D of Muhlenberg College

Dear Ven. Ta-Yu:

I am delighted that you will visit my class on Wednesday, November 3. The class meets from 1:30 to 2:45. There are 26 students, who know very little about Buddhism.

The course is "Religion and Ecology" and we are considering how Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Native American Religions view the natural world. For the section on Buddhism we are reading a book by Thich Nhat Hanh, Living Buddha, Living Christ.

Your visit will be the third class where we consider Buddhism. Before you come, I will lecture on the life of Gautama, the Four Noble Truths, and other basic teachings of Buddhism. We also will discuss some of the points in the book.

For your visit, I would suggest you open with some basic comments (maybe for about 20 minutes) and then let us have a discussion with the students. I have a Buddhist meditation cushion which I would like to bring to class and you can talk about what one does in sitting. Also, I hope you will comment on diet and lifestyle and how these relate to the natural world.

Enclosed is a campus map and instructions.

I am a retired professor and teach only one course, so I am not on campus much. You may reach me at home, if needed.

Looking forward to your visit.

William H. Jennings, Ph D

AZBT'S 2005 ACTIVITIES PREVIEW

AZBT will hold meditation classes, Dharma talks, spiritual ceremonies and one-day retreats in 2005.

Meditation is a very basic but important method to develop compassion and wisdom through concentration. The Tuesday night's meditation class led by Venerable Ta Yu will resume after the winter break on February 1, 2005. This class has become one of the most popular activities for local members. The

class has seen an increase in participants in 2004.

Most of the Saturday's activities will be followed by a Dharma talk the next day on Sunday morning. This arrangement will allow members coming from out of state to attend both activities during the same weekend.

As an AZBT tradition, the ceremonies to purify our body, speech and mind in 2005 are scheduled as follows: Thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony (past, Magnificent Era) in February, Avalokiteshvara (Guan-Yin) Bodhisattva's Great Compassion Confession Ceremony in March, Thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony (present, Moral Era) in April, Sakyamuni Buddha's Birthday Service in May, Medicine Buddha Confession Ceremony in June, Earth-Womb Bodhisattvas Ceremony and Great Mong-Sam Ceremony in August. Thousand Buddha Confession Ceremony (future, Stars Era) in October and Confession Ceremony of Emperor Liang in November.



AZBT's fall 2004

Ten Dharma talks will be held in 2005 on Sundays between 10 AM and 12 PM. The topics will be announced in the future by E-mail before each Dharma talk. Venerable Lama Migmar will continue his teachings at AZBT in April and October 2005.

Yearly clean up is scheduled from July 4 to July 9, 2005. This is a good opportunity to workout and to accumulate merit at the same time. For the latest update on AZBT activities in 2005, please visit our website at:

<http://www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews>

THE TEACHING ON MIND TRAINING

Taught by Venerable Lama Migmar
Recorded by Wendy Wu

The activities of the mind will continue on after a person's rebirth. Therefore the spiritual practice of Buddhism is emphasized by mental development and mind training. That is why we have mind training practice.

We can't say mind is here or mind is there. Mind is everywhere. Mind is attached to the physical body and the phenomena around it. Mind is not in our physical body. If mind is in our physical body then after we die mind would die. But that is not the case, mind will continue after our death.



The Teaching on Mind Training

Buddhists believe that mind can be trained and mind can be trained in the right way. If a human's mind is an undisciplined mind then that mind is

always pulled by anger, by desire, by jealousy, by confusion and by all of the negative emotions. That mind is continuously pulled in the wrong way. And when the mind is pulled in the wrong way, we have more mental pain, mental sufferings or sufferings of negativity's. So the Buddhist mental development is on how to pull the mind in the right way.

Who is the great tamer of the mind? It is the mind itself. So, the mind should train itself. If your mind is wild like an untamed horse it will be hard to train your mind in the beginning stage. Through all the sensual organs, the mind is trying to see through the eye, hear through the ear and talk through the mouth. The mind is trying to get out and trying to be free. It is so undisciplined, wild and restless. So we are never at peace. Our mind is scattered jumping from one thought to another. Whatever you have at present you are not happy with. You are always looking for something and even after you find it you are still not satisfied. That is our life.

We get tired very easily because our mind is so restless. Mind is never at peace. And we have such a mind. Although it is hard and a challenge to train our mind, it is possible. And it is possible because in Buddhism we have a method. Buddha used his own training of the mind and gave his method to others. All Buddhist training is like that, both the mental training and mental development.

When the mind is possessed with desire and passion we cannot recognize any other object. We cannot see other friends. We cannot find other relationships. Because of our intense desire and passion we

cannot see things clearly. Instead of being healthy and independent we become unhealthy and dependent. The Buddha said: If you have desire and with that desire you attach it to the wrong object. The best thing is to rely on something that is not based on desire. Therefore, we should follow the Buddha's method to train our mind.

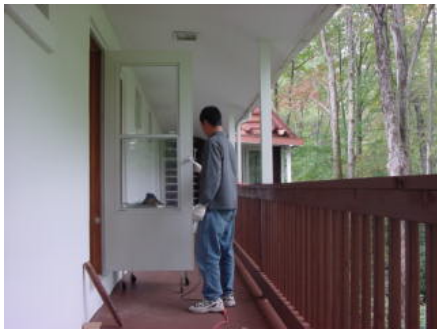
To cleanse the mind we must know the object that our mind is clinging to. This object continuously deceives the mind. If we know the object our mind recognizes it and becomes clearer. Buddhism teaches us that knowing the truth and knowing the object of our desire lessen the increase of desire. Once we recognize these objects we can then transform our mind.



*Confession Ceremony of Empire
Liang, November 2004*

Buddha gave many teachings on how to tame our mind. If we don't discipline our sense organs then our mind will become wild. To lead the mind in a peaceful way we need to have discipline. Buddha said: if we discipline our mind by only thinking good thoughts and if we discipline our fear by embracing good thoughts and rejecting that fear or doing good and rejecting evil that is discipline. The more good we do at the physical, verbal and mental level the more peace we will have. Peace is necessary. Peace is the foundation of freedom.

Using Buddhist methods to train the mind is a very effective way to tame the mind. It is the mind that creates anger and all other negativity's. Buddhism's method of cultivating mental and spiritual developments is based on the responsibility of your actions. The best way to tame the mind is discipline based on the Buddha's teaching of mental, verbal and physical action. This is the first step to taming the mind. Only through discipline can we achieve patience. Patience is the key to peace. Buddhist discipline is the key to patience to achieve diligence and meditation.



Installing retreat rooms' storm doors

Meditation is necessary because through discipline we become patient and meditation completes that patience. By doing meditation one will become less stressful. Meditation is a method to calm the mind and free the spirit. When we see things clearly for the first time through meditation, that mind has power, some purity and some curative abilities. Objects can no longer completely overpower a trained mind. Therefore, the mind has some understanding of the object and can face the object without wavering. These three, discipline, meditation and clear insight are the main trainings that Buddha has given to all the people. By using these three methods via the mind can the mind tame itself. Only these methods can

go beyond the emotions to cleanse the mind.

In the beginning stage mind is confused, mind has all these negative emotions, mind is wild and mind is unbalanced like a wild monkey. When we apply self-discipline then we will have a less unbalanced mind. If we see the object clearly, then we will not be restless. We chase the object because we can't see the object clearly. If we apply these three methods in our lives then our lives will be painless. These three methods are more powerful than happiness. The more faith you have in these methods the more effective they become. When you have faith in these methods, then you will develop commitment to practice these methods everyday.

Buddha had guaranteed these teachings Himself. If you discipline your mind, body and speech by abandoning negativity's and non-virtuous actions and adopting and doing more virtuous actions then you will develop more faith and gain more happiness.

As of now, we have suffering and because of these sufferings we have less freedom. We are miserable because we physically, verbally and mentally do more non-virtuous rather than virtuous actions. If we want real freedom, real freedom comes from the mind and not from drugs, alcohol or a gun. If you discipline yourself by not doing bad things then your mind will be transformed and if you discipline yourself your meditation will deepen and you will develop a clear mind. So the essential teaching of Buddhism is training the mind in the right way. And when the mind is trained in the right way you will achieve happiness and freedom.

Coming Events

January 2005

Winter Break – No Activities

Every Tuesday

7:00 p.m.

Group Meditation

Ven. Ta Yu

2/12/05, Saturday

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

2/13/05, Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Thousand-Buddha
Confession Ceremony
Past, Magnificent Era
(Chinese)**

Ven. Ta Yu

2/27/05, Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dharma Talk

Ven. Ta Yu

3/26/05, Saturday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Avalokiteshvara (Guan-Yin)
Bodhisattva's Birthday
Great Compassion
Confession Ceremony**

Ven. Ta Yu

3/27/05, Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dharma Talk

Ven. Ta Yu

4/9/05, Saturday

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

4/10/05, Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Thousand-Buddha
Confession Ceremony
Present, Moral Era
(Chinese)**

Ven. Ta Yu

4/24/05, Sunday

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Dharma Talk

Ven. Lama Migmar

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:

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The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu

Edited by Toni Kenyon

The Road of Practice

Walking on the road of practice, it's like climbing a mountain. We climb and pant for a long time; we get tired, still there is no top in sight. Some people consider the illusory phenomena on the trail, hesitant to advance and maybe stop climbing. Therefore, they will never reach the top of the mountain. Practicing Buddhism is analogous of going up an incline. Some people carry heavy backpacks crammed with big self-perspective; many tiers of greed, hatred and ignorance; and grudging habitual pattern from the previous existences. It is very difficult for them to climb up to the mountain with these heavy burdens on their back.

A true climber will fully understand the route and have clear direction in advance. He will bring compass for direction guidance and some climbing necessities and inviting several trusty good friends to climb together. It is the same for practice. We should clearly understand the route and the method of our practice equipping with some mandatory supplies, such as, Three Studies, Four Bodhisattva Virtues, Five Powers, Six Paramitas, Seven Characteristics of Bodhi, and Eight Right Paths etc. without missing any one of them. Moreover, we need mutual assistance from the great virtuous and knowledgeable Friends and the guidance of our teacher on our journey in order to attain the Buddhahood. President Kennedy once had said:

"Under a lot of circumstances, we have to do certain things. It is not because it's very easy but because it's very difficult."

The joy in conquering a mountain is its indomitable spirit. The extraordinary aspect of the practice is about the ability to overcome what is difficult. But, the hero is always alone. It is not easy to find a companion who has a common goal on the journey of the practice. Therefore, we should have the spirit of endurance while practicing. The poet, Robert Frost, once wrote:

"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and I took the one less traveled by. And that has made all the

difference." - THE ROAD NOT TAKEN ~ROBERT FROST

The ancient saints and sages also encouraged us:

"Before the superior gives a person great responsibility, he must first try this person's will, put this person in hunger, and test this person's physical body to increase this person's endurance."

Taking great responsibility with endurance is the most glorious in our lives! Only experiencing suffering can let us realize Bodhisattva's great compassion.

But, loving leisure and hating work is the habit of the sentient beings. We always expect that good luck descend from the sky. People want to practice with ease and relaxation and without any sacrifice. They said that enjoying the beauties of nature is a way to experience Buddha Dharma. They mistake that eating, drinking, and having fun is inquiring Zen and practicing the path. If loose self-control and acting based on emotion were practices, then why did our original teacher, Sakyamuni Buddha, abandoned his enjoyable life to practice on the road covered with thorns?

Practice cannot be separated from your daily life. Walking, standing, sitting, and sleeping are a part of Buddhist activities. Talking, laughing, and playing are nothing but Zen. Taking this easy way out, the ultimate fulfillment will not be revealed. The concept of practice really should not be misinterpreted by any individual's view.

In the process of practice, we see mountain is mountain and river is river at the beginning stage. Then, gradually, we see mountain is not mountain and river is not river. Finally, we see mountain is still mountain and river is still river. The only thing is that the recognition of the mountain and river now is not the same as the recognition of the mountain and river as before.

I asked myself: What I am seeing today, is it a mountain? It's not a mountain!