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By Venerable Ta-Yu

After long anticipation, the construction for AZBT’s kitchen and Master rooms has finally started in the mid September 2006. The entire project needs approximately fourteen-weeks to complete. If everything is on schedule, we will have the new space in the beginning of next year for everybody to enjoy when come here.



*Tearing Down the Old Kitchen*

We have experienced all sorts of difficulties through the entire two years’ planning. It is not easy to accomplish a project in the unpredictable business world. Fortunately, under the blessing of the Buddha and Buddhisattvas, we finally take the first step that was anticipated for a long time. It is also a giant step for Vairocana Monastery. So we can propagate Buddhadharma in the future.

# AZBT Newsletter

There are so many people to thank. These present day living Bodhisattvas support us continuously with their manpower, clever ideas, financial resource, and their hearts without any complaint. They are truly the disciples of the Three Jewels. Each of them has left a precious Dharma mark on the road of establishing Vairocana Monastery.



*The Ongoing Construction Project*

The frequent changes of the economy make the prices soar along with it. Originally, the estimated construction cost was one hundred thousands dollars. But, it was settled at the end with over one hundred fifty thousands dollars. Our temple’s finance is under tremendous strain due to such huge price increase. In order to make the project to be completed smoothly, we expect that everybody as a Dharma protector rejoices, gives some contribution, and plants one’s good fortune. Your support will allow this biggest reconstruction project

since establishing of the temple to be completed as planned. Let Vairocana Monastery, the only retreat monastery in the eastern Pennsylvania, continues its mission to propagate the Buddha Dharma, to insure the Dharma to be everlasting, and to have the lineage of wisdom continuing on forever.

Your donation is tax-deductible. Please make your check payable to AZBT, and mail it to: AZBT, RR3 BOX 3361, CRESCO, PA 18326. We will send you the receipt for your tax deduction as soon as receiving your donation.

**The Abbess of Vairocana Monastery  
Venerable Ta Yu with join palms**



**Taught by Venerable Ta Yu  
Recorded by Wendy Wu**

Living beings' nature is such that nobody likes to look for trouble. We wish everything goes well on the way of practice without any obstructions until attaining the Buddhahood. But, sometimes it isn't that easy. It is very difficult for modern people to cultivate their practice because our habitual patterns are extremely deep. Thus, for modern practitioners, we have to ask, do they have greater merits? Or, do they have greater accumulation of bad Karmas? When the ancient Great Masters practiced in the monastery, their principle is that "there is no crooked tree in the jungle". It

means, "Cultivating the practice in a heavily populated Monastery, it is like in a forest that every tree is growing upright." Because the tree beside me is growing upright, then the tree next to it, which is I, will grow upright along with it. This is the power of the group practice. The same reason, if every tree were crooked, then I would be like them to grow in a crooked way.

We, the modern people, rely on so many things in order to practice. For example, it cannot be too hot or too cold. Someone said that: "Shi-Fu, I cannot go to the temple because there is no air-conditioning so I cannot practice. I will go there next time." Although there is a limit on the endurance of the human body, but the most important thing is how to adjust our attitude and view.

The attitude of our practice is that we should have the spirit to walk the rough roads. We must not be afraid of arduousness on our way of practice. We should choose the easy as well as the difficult ways to practice. After the Buddha became a monk, he lived in a small cave on the snow mountain and ate only one grain of sesame and barley daily. He had practiced rigorous ascetic discipline for six years, which had weakened his body and made him near death. He thought: "I am almost died. How can my practice reach a certain level?" Therefore, Buddha gave up the practice of rigorous ascetic discipline. He accepted the offering from a shepherdess named Suddhartha. His physical strength then restored. After that,

he went to Bodhigaya to practice and attained Buddhahood.



*A Limited Life with Endless  
Compassion*

The Buddha said: "We should neither suffer nor to have pleasure while cultivating our practice." When your practice goes smoothly all the way, it is because that you have enormous merit. But, your merit is impermanent. When you encounter the difficulty in your practice, maybe it is the resisting cause to advance your practice and it is the period that you have the best practice. When you walk on this rough road, you will feel the spirit of pioneer, have awareness, and be awoken. Your awareness is vivid twenty-four hour a day and you know your thoughts clearly. Therefore, when you encounter some difficulties, it doesn't represent that you have the worst practice in this moment. It is very possible that it is the moment for you to get enlightened.

Buddhadharma is complete and flexible. Because of the impermanence, we will have better chance to practice. And, because of the impermanence, the defilement won't be with us for the whole life. It is like a

traveler; it comes and goes. If we think this way, then our view will be transformed enormously. The good cause or bad condition shouldn't become a hindrance to our practice because the good cause is impermanent and the bad condition is also impermanent. Therefore, our mind should be like the space. The purpose of the practice is to make us have an open mind because our lives are transient and time passes very quickly. It is not important that time passes quickly or slowly; it depends on how we utilize our lives? How are we going to use our limited life to care for others compassionately and to establish good connection with everybody in our transient life? The most fundamental thing is to take care of our families and friends first to make them happy and joyful. If we have more capability, then we should take care of more people. Therefore, we can apply our compassion in many ways. The Buddhadharma is everywhere. And, Zen is everywhere.

May everybody attain the Buddhahood quickly!



**Taught by Venerable Ta Yu  
Recorded by Wendy Wu**

Someone told me that January 24<sup>th</sup> is the most unpleasant day of each year. It is because the many people had purchased lots of presents with their credit cards before Christmas and New Year,

but they are unable to pay the huge bill when their credit card statement comes. Therefore,



*The Gorgeous Season in our Realm*

many people are wretched on that day. Debt issue is only one of the mental obscurations. I went to the bank on January 25<sup>th</sup>, the teller told me: "I was very unhappy last night." I asked her: "Why?" She told me: "Yesterday is the worst day of the year." I thought, how come she said the same thing. She continued on: "Because it snowed a little last night and it was freezing. That's why I was very unhappy last night." I said: "You should think about last year's this day; we were still plowing the snow tiredly. Although it snowed a little last night, but look, it is sunny outside right now. The snow is all gone and you don't need to shuffle the snow." She replied: "Yes, it is much better compare to last winter." Then, I told her: "If you thought and compared to last winter, then you wouldn't be too worry and could sleep last night. We should be like Buddha that we shouldn't ask for too much but be content with just enough - that goes for anything."

A Great Patriarch sang a song: "There are a hundred kinds of

flowers blooming in the spring, a bright moonlight in the night of the fall, cool breeze blowing gently in the summer, and snow falling in the winter. If there is nothing hanging around in our mind, then that is a good time in the world." In America, we are fortunate. When you drive on the road in the spring, the flower garden in front of every house is as pretty as a picture. It is cool and comfortable in the fall, neither too cold nor too hot, which is the best season to take a vacation, etc. The fall is especially beautiful in Pennsylvania. We can appreciate the pretty foliage and be accompanied by the bright moon at night. In the summer, the breeze is cool and it is very comfortable with the breeze. In the winter, we can see pure and white snow once we open the door. How fortunate we are! We have everything that was described in the Great Patriarch's stanza. But, if we are malcontent, then we will be uncomfortable during the spring if it drizzles because our bodies are sore due to the high humidity. We won't dare to go out in the summer because it is too hot and we may get heat stroke. When we see the falling leaves in the fall, we will be anxious and feel that our lives are reaching the end. And, we will feel that the winter is extremely cold and we are miserable when we see the snow. Therefore, we worry in all seasons - spring, summer, fall and winter.

How are we going to choose the direction of our lives? We are all

living in America; the worries and problems we run into in our lives are about the same for everyone. We all have had difficult times in our lives. How come some people can have good lives? It is like human's mind and body that can be divided into two parts. The right side is optimistic that everything is great and peaceful. But, the other side is very pessimistic that nothing works. Therefore, "The Middle Way" is the assertion of the Buddhism. We shouldn't be too happy when we meet fortunate circumstances, because after that you will have lots of worries. Why? Because if one matter makes us very happy and very successful, then we will be attached to it and hope that we would be successful like this for the rest of our lives without any problems; once we run into some problems, we will be overwhelmed. If we were unfortunate for the whole life, then it would make us unhappy to live. Therefore, the direction of our lives should be right in the middle and it shouldn't be extreme.



*The trouble is like the mist which blocks us from seeing the flourishing flowers*

Many people say: "We are anxious for our lives, starting from our childhood to grown up and until

we are employed." Especially, the mothers who put all their energies in her children, but, after the children graduate and get married, they moved from east coast to west coast to work and only come back for Thanksgiving and Christmas. The mothers only see them two or three times a year. If the mothers couldn't accept this fact, so it becomes a huge burden for their minds. In "The Path of Becoming Buddha", it teaches us that, "People will be separated after being together for a while." Our relatives and good friends, who are with us now, will ultimately be apart from us one day. It is impermanent. We should think of "people will be separated after being together for a while" when running into this kind of anxiety. The awful circumstances will also leave us eventually. We don't want to let go when the good connection ends; when an awful circumstance leaves us, we will be very relaxed and it is like we have been liberated. Therefore, "The Impermanence" that asserted in Buddhism is such subtle. Thus, we shouldn't worry while we are struggling the hardest in our lives because the worst circumstance is also impermanent and it might be gone soon. Therefore, we should create a four-season garden in our mind and make the garden to be delightful in the spring, summer, fall and winter. We are the gardener of this garden and we should take a good care of it. If we don't enrich and fertilize our garden in the mind and just let it overgrow with weeds, then we won't be able to see the flowers bloom and fruitful.

If we have a grateful mind and we know how to cherish things, then

we will have a great day every day. No matter how the external environment changes, we will always know how to live a good life. Taking the Buddha as an example, his food, clothing, and his way of living and traveling were all very simple. He didn't take anything for granted or have a luxury life after becoming a Buddha. He was still the same living a simple life. His mind is richer than ours. The more you have let go the more you will gain. If your mind is as wide as the space, then your merit will be as large as the sky. It all depends on what we do on the path of practice.

## ZEN SECT PART IV

**Taught by Venerable Ta Yu  
Translated by Wendy Wu**

There were two Zen Masters. They lived in the mountains that faced each other. If they wanted to talk, then they would shout from one to the other. One day, a woodcutter was working on the mountain. He heard two Zen Masters were shouting and talking to each other. The Zen Master on the east mountain asked the Zen Master on the west mountain: "How is your achievement this year?" The Zen Master on the west mountain said: "I had a large piece of land last year, but, this year, I only have a small place to stick an awl." The Zen Master on the east mountain said: "Congratulations!" The Zen Master on the west mountain then asked the Zen Master on the east mountain: "How are you doing this year?" The Zen Master on the east mountain said: "I had a place to stick an awl last year, but I have nothing this year." The Zen Master

on the west mountain said: “You won!” The woodcutter heard their conversations and he thought what are these two lunatic persons talking about?



*The Zen Meditation Centre*

The land that these two Zen Masters were talking about it wasn't the land as real estate. Having a large piece of land last year means there is still a lot of attachment. Having only a place to stick an awl means that there is still a small bit of attachment, which has not been put down yet. The other Zen Master has nothing that means he doesn't have any attachment at all. Therefore, this is a good thing and he should be congratulated. This doesn't mean we shouldn't have anything; it means that we shouldn't have any attachment. You can have something but you shouldn't be attached to it.

If our mind is not pure enough, even we become a homeless, can we say that we don't have any attachment? Actually, those homeless people, who only have one box to sleep in, they are fairly attached to this box. If you wanted to take their box away, they would fight for it with their lives. Therefore, we cannot say that we don't have attachment because we don't have material things. Some people ask that: “What is the practice like?” The practice is we should plant the flower when spring comes, mow the lawn in the summer, clean up the fallen leaves

during the fall, and plow the snow in the winter. That is Zen.

The Great Virtuous Patriarch had said that: “I would not eat if I did not work today.” Therefore, the monks and nuns they do lots of works. It was after I became a nun, then I realized that the practice is in my daily life. If we cannot take any pain from this physical body within thirty minutes of meditation, then how can we attain the stage of concentration? Therefore, we should have confidence and patience while doing chores. The practice should be selfless. If we have a big attachment to self, then we cannot accomplish many things. Practice is a promise life after life.



*To Possess of but NOT Attached on*

Buddhism also teaches Zen in actions. The Zen in actions means that we can practice within every action. Therefore, Zen is very simple yet very complicated. Zen is wisdom. If you practice diligently, then your wisdom will be revealed. Our society needs people who have wisdom. We need more people who have wisdom because our society has many problems. If a leader didn't have wisdom, then we would be very worried. When we are dissatisfied with our leader, we should blame ourselves because he was elected by us - the people. Therefore, I hope everybody practice well to elect a good leader, who is full of compassion and wisdom to help our country and the world. *(Finished)*

## Coming Events

**May to November  
Every Sunday**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Group Meditation  
Sharing the Dharma**

*10/14/06, Saturday*

**9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Thousand-Buddha  
Confession Ceremony  
Future, Star Era  
(Chinese)**

**Ven. Ta Yu**

*11/23/06 - 11/25/06, Thu. ~ Sat.*

*11/26/06, Sunday*

**9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.,**

**9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

**Confession Ceremony  
Of Emperor Liang  
(Chinese)**

**Ven. Ta Yu**

*12/16/06, Saturday*

**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Eighty – Eight Buddha  
Confession Ceremony  
(Chinese)**

**Ven. Ta Yu**

### Meditation Class at AZBT

AZBT offers meditation classes every year from May to November.

Classes are held every Sunday morning from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. One on one private classes are also available.

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:  
<http://www.azbt.us>

# The Enlightened Garden

Venerable Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu

Edited by Toni Kenyon



It is a type of grass that I have never seen before.

People said that "During the cold winter, when myriads of living things on the earth are die out, this grass still stands. Spiritedly standing to greet the chilly snowstorm. They grip their roots on the ground in the innumerable puoins to endure the bitter cold and the test of the storm, and face the direction of warm spring breeze that will arrive soon with determined mind."

Its name is winter-endurable grass.

When I first heard the story of winter-endurable grass, I was astonished by it's robustness. There is a warm spring as well as a radiant summer in a human's life. But, a succession of vicissitudes - birth, aging, sickness and death bring helplessness and roughness into one's life. It is like the cold winter with the northern wind howling, which makes one shiver and freeze the heart and to the bone.

When I think of winter-endurable grass, it makes me think of her story as well.....

Although my hometown's scenery is lovely; but it had become distant, blurry, and hard to distinguish to Hui Fen long time ago. She was given away when she was nine years old to a neighboring village to be an adopted daughter grudgingly because her family was poor. Fortunately, she was wise and gentle enough to face this huge transformation with her sensible mind. In her wealthy new home, the adopted parents doted on her. They let her enjoyed the warmth and care of the family daily.

Unexpectedly, the building materials business run by her adopted father was affected by economic depressions. The factory gradually had excessive inventory and it was heavily in debt. The tense atmosphere at home made her extremely frightened. Her adopted mother, who was always affectionate to her, became unstable. Her adopted mother would slap her face for a slightly distasteful thing, which built a very deep gap between them. She was more intimate to her adopted father. As her young age, she was unable to understand the reason of her adopted mother's behavior. She had an inauspicious premonition while seeing at her adopted father drank all day long.

Unfortunately, this premonition soon happened. In a winter night that everybody was sound asleep, her adopted father took a large dose of drug to commit suicide. It was too late when family member found him dead on the bed. He had ended his premature life and also taken away the happy dream from Hui Fen.

Her adopted father's death put her adopted mother in deep sorrow. She blamed all the disasters to Hui Fen. Her adopted mother cursed her frequently. Moreover, she threatened to turn her out. Shortly, she was compelled to leave that home to tread on a more sorrowful road.

She was only fifteen that year.

She lived an inhuman life when she was still in the innocent age. Those days were an endless nightmares. Everyday, she sold her body to a variety of strangers in a dimly small room. A cloth of curtain could not stop the noisy footsteps from outside. Every time when the curtain was lifted, an ugly face of a stranger suddenly appeared, which made her whole body shiver. She was like a pitiful floret that couldn't endure the attack of the rainstorm.

She had tried to escape. But, she failed again and again, which only traded her numerous wounds and the burnt scars by cigarette butts. She could only clench her teeth to face each horrible day. But, she didn't give up hope. She truly believed that someday she could certainly release from the abyss of misery. And, it really happened. One day, a large-scale raid rescued Hui Fen from the fiery pit.

She was only twenty-two years old that year. But, she was like a hobo who had experienced vicissitudes and didn't have a home to evade the rainstorm. She wanted to end her life several times but accidentally discovered that she was pregnant. For the sake of the innocent little life in her belly, she had to encourage herself to stand up again to face everything. Providentially, she bought a house under the assistance of Zhen Zhu and other friends. Temporarily, she had a place to live and Xing Er was born in a late silent night.

Xing Er (lucky baby) is the name that she gave to her child. She hoped that because of the birth of her child, it would bring brightness and sweep away the haze from her unfortunate destiny. (To be Continued)

