

# Teaching Method of an Enlightened Buddha and Educational System of Humanistic Buddhism

By Jue-Wei

## ABSTRACT

*Jacques Delors, Chairman of the UNESCO International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, said "humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice," and that education is "one of the principal means available to foster a deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war." (Delors)*

*Buddhism, over 2500 years ago, already had the same ideals. Buddha carried out social reform to raise the living and spiritual standards of all by placing significant emphasis on education. Many suttas, including the Avatamsaka Sutta, had stated that "Of all offerings, the offering of dhamma is the highest." (Avatamsaka Sutta, Volume 40, T10, p0845a) The dhamma<sup>1</sup> is an important set of teachings because it helps individuals answer questions pertaining to life and death, and how to live this life on earth without being afflicted with sufferings. The dhamma teaches universal truth. Given that the dhamma is difficult to understand, Buddha has adopted innovative methods of instruction.*

*Today, Fo Guang Shan, a worldwide Chinese monastic order, is propounding the same education ideals through humanistic Buddhism. The founder of Fo Guang Shan, Venerable Master Hsing Yun, emphasizes education as a means to develop society, and to transmit the dhamma in practical form.*

*This paper will study the skillful means which Buddha and Venerable Master used, as well as the systems and the visions that they have developed. This paper will be divided into two parts. The first part studies the conditions and results of the system of instruction that Buddha adopted. The second part studies a modern adaptation of that system through humanistic Buddhism.*

## Buddha's Teaching Method

The humanism of Buddhism can be seen from Buddha's intentions. He set out to solve problems of the time, to alleviate the lives of the suffering, and to help people understand the truth of the world they live in. After his enlightenment, Buddha started to reform society's socially immobile caste system, helping to raise the standard of the oppressed and to correct the methods of the corrupt. He introduced into the spirituality of the time an element of worldly religious practice, which would not discriminate against the lower castes and would not harm other species. Buddha also taught the method of enlightenment, beyond the popular yogic and ascetic practices as well as logical reasoning prevalent then. Since his teachings were beyond what most people could reasonably understand, Buddha employed innovative teaching methods to assist in his instruction. One of the most significant aspects of this innovative method was that his methods were conditional, or situational by today's terminology. The methods were based on the educational and professional background of the students, as well as the ability of the students to comprehend. This points to the wisdom of Buddha, an expert in a repertoire of methods that he could use at ease, and his compassion, in wanting to help everyone.

### **Social Reform**

Buddha lived during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. The Indian society then was characterized by a socially-rigid caste system<sup>2</sup>. A person would be destined for life to lead the prescribed lifestyle of the caste into which he was born. Women and the lower castes were not as well-treated as the upper castes. They could be deprived of education and the right of religious involvement. Socially, their rights were also limited. The enlightened Buddha realized that this was social injustice, and that there were no universal truths governing such practice. Hence, he set about to reform this injustice.

Through education, Buddha taught the correct behaviors of Brahmins, the highest priestly caste, by alluding to ancient exemplary Brahmins (Saddhatissa 32). In the *Brāhmanadhammika Sutta*, Buddha advised some corrupt Brahmins to uphold the five precepts by convincing them that their material possessions and attachment to things of comfort were detracting them from their proper priestly duties. In this way, Buddha effectively communicated to and transformed the minds of those in power.

To help the lower castes, Buddha set an example within his own monastic community. He set up a monastic and education system that did not discriminate against sex, race and caste. All castes, including outcastes, were allowed a place in the monastic. For example, in “Sunita the Outcaste”, Buddha saw that Sunita, a poor outcaste and scavenger of withered flowers, was ready for accepting his teachings (Thanissaro 2002). Hence, one early morning, Buddha sought out Sunita and told the surprised scavenger that his heart was “shining like a lamp in a jar”, and asked him to leave home (Pratt 12). Buddha created the conditions for all people to attain spiritual liberation, independent of their social backgrounds.

Buddha’s method of social reform started with individuals. He would employ different teaching methods based on the circumstances available to him to help individuals better themselves, and eventually achieve enlightenment as arhants. He also encouraged his students to be bodhisattvas, “to make sentient beings aspire towards purity and the wisdom and insight of the Buddhas.” (*Lotus Sutra* 35) Buddha might have started the first missionaries 2,500 years ago when he sent his first disciples out to spread his teachings and hence, helped to enlarge the sphere of social reform. In Some Sayings of the Buddha, Woodward translated the following text:

“Go ye forth, brethren, on your journey, for the profit of the many, for the bliss of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the welfare, the profit, the bliss of devas and mankind! Go not any two together. Proclaim, brethren, the Dhamma, goodly in its beginning, goodly in its middle, goodly in its ending ...” (Humphrey 42)

### **Transcendental Living**

Buddha simplified religious life for the man-in-the-street so that he could understand and tread towards a clear-cut purpose (Humphreys 16). Again, Buddha taught according to the background of the students. For example, for a rich man endowed with worldly pleasures, Buddha taught balanced living. In the *Vyagghapajja Sutta*, he summarized to Dīghajānu the method by which a householder could seek happiness in the following verse:

“Energetic and heedful in his tasks,  
Wisely administering his wealth,

He lives a balanced life,  
Protecting what he has amassed.

Endowed with faith and virtue too,  
Generous he is and free from avarice;  
He ever works to clear the path  
That leads to weal in future life.

Thus to the layman full of faith,  
By him, so truly named 'Enlightened,'  
These eight conditions have been told  
Which now and after lead to bliss." (Narada Thera)

To an obedient young man, Buddha used the opportunity of this filial son carrying out his father's orders of saluting in six directions to teach him how to lead an ethical life. In the *Sigālovāda Sutta*, the young man was taught to abstain from adultery, misconduct, and lying. Buddha also taught him not to be led to cause injustice to others or do evil through greed, anger, ignorance and fear. Buddha was also aware of tendencies of youths to squander away family wealth, and so taught the young man not to indulge in intoxicants, saunter in the streets late into the night, frequent theatrical shows, gamble, keep bad company, or be idle.

Once again, we can discern the wisdom and compassion of Buddha in his use of methods and design of teaching materials, based on the conditions presented to him at the time.

### Intellectual Breakthrough

Buddha's awakening to the truth of the universe and to the method of liberation from *samsāra*<sup>3</sup> were against contemporary thinking. When Buddha first attained enlightenment, he was not keen on preaching the *dhamma* because he envisaged that his realization would not be easy for people to accept. According to the Lotus Sutra, Buddha said, "the *dharma* which the Buddhas have attained is foremost, unique and difficult to understand. No one but the Buddhas can completely know the real aspects of all phenomena – that is to say their character, nature, substance, potential function, cause, condition, result, effect and essential unity." (Kubo 28) The Lotus Sutra continued to say, "this *dharma* is beyond reason and discernment. Only the Buddhas can understand it. (Kubo 35)."

Buddha's realization was a departure from the system of logic then in use. Indian reason admitted four logical possibilities: true, false, both true and false, neither true nor false. Through the Parable of Fire ("*Aggi-vacchagotta-sutta*", LXXII, Majjhima-Nikaya, I, 485), Buddha showed *Vaccha* that one could contemplate beyond these four possibilities. He illustrated that the *Tathagata* was beyond the conventional logic of "reborn", "not reborn", "reborn and not reborn", and "neither reborn nor not reborn." Instead the liberated mind of a *Tathagata* was like an extinct fire, and it would not be fitting to ask which direction it had gone or would go.

Buddha also re-invented the meaning of *kamma* and introduced a revolutionary dependent-origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) model. The prevailing view of *kamma* then was that of a physical process which determined how beings fared on the round of rebirth (Thanissaro 1996:7). *Kamma* meant action, and one would not be able to escape from the fate of effects from earlier actions. The caste system was a rigid form of fate, with no social mobility during the lifetime of a person. Ascetics believed that ascetic practice was a means to rid themselves of the effects of bad

actions done earlier. Buddha set about to reform this social and religious belief (Humphreys 16). According to Buddha, *kamma* was a mental process; it was right and wrong views that determined the quality of *kamma* (Thanissaro 7). If the intentions were correct, feelings would be right, and so our perception and attention would not be colored by ignorance, craving and clinging. Hence, we would be able to unbind ourselves from the cycle of rebirths. The preceding enlightenment formed the basis of much of Buddha's sermons regarding the Four Noble Truths, Noble Eightfold Path, and many other familiar Buddhist teachings.

During the lifetime of Buddha, he simplified matters by only dedicating his teachings to ways to solve humanistic problems that would obstruct one from enlightenment. In the *Simsapa* forest in Kosambi, he compared his wisdom to the leaves in the forest, and what he had taught as the leaves in his hand (Rahula 12). Although Buddha's wisdom was wide and deep, he had not elaborated on some truths because they were not useful for achieving *nibbāna*. Buddha refused to answer questions that were not useful towards understanding suffering and deliverance from suffering (Humphreys 16). In the *Potthapada Sutta*, Buddha refused to answer the following ten questions:

1. Is the world eternal?
2. Is the world not eternal?
3. Is the world finite?
4. Is the world infinite?
5. Is the soul the same as the body?
6. Is the soul one thing and the body another?
7. Does one who has gained truth live again after death?
8. Does he not live again after death?
9. Does he both live again and not live again after death?
10. Does he neither live again nor not live again after death?

### **Infrastructural Support**

Buddha recognized that he needed infrastructural support for a good education system. Among other things, the teaching infrastructure included building, teaching staff, and curriculum building.

*Jetavana-anathapindasyarama* (Jeta Grove) was a big Buddhist monastery. In order to accommodate the growing number of disciples, it had seventy-two "lecture halls" (Hsing Yun, 2002:216). Buddha held twenty years of rainy retreats here (Hsing Yun 1995:41). The majority of sermons in circulation as *suttas* today were delivered from this monastery. So it could be seen that from the beginning, a monastery was functioning like an educational institution.

To develop his teaching staff, Buddha often encouraged his better students to deliver detailed expositions of his speech. Maha Kaccana, one of his foremost disciples, spoke eight *suttas* (three in *Majjhima Nikaya*, three in *Samyutta Nikaya*, and two in *Anguttara Nikaya*) (Bodhi).

Buddha taught a practical and diverse variety of subjects. The *sīla* taught was about civic-mindedness, equivalent to the study of law today. *Samādhi* was about mental and physical balance, equivalent to a course in life studies. The systems and precepts taught were equivalent to present-day study of ethics. The six points of reverent harmony<sup>4</sup> were good organizational management materials. The mind-only school was relevant for psychology today. Dependent origination could be life and

death studies. And there were many *suttas* offering prescriptions relevant to today's medical studies.

From the preceding discussion on teaching infrastructure space, manpower and subjects, it could be seen that Buddha employed his own discovery of "dependent origination" in his engagements. He saw what the community needed, such as lecture halls of instruction, train-the-trainers, and relevant teaching materials. He gave his students what they needed, based on the conditions which arose.

### **Conditioned-Arising Method of Instruction**

Buddha's teaching methods were diverse and flexible. He had at least twelve different types of teaching methods, which could be frequently seen in his discourses. He used upaya (skillful means) to guide his students to break old paradigms. For students who were too rigid on following faith, Buddha taught them to disregard authority and to experiment. To students at varying levels of attainment, he had a different curriculum of lessons and practice (much like our current primary, secondary and tertiary education differentiation).

Buddha's discourses employed twelve different techniques (*dvadasanga-buddha-vacana*), based on the needs of his students. According to the Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary, they were prose discourses (*sutra*); verses which repeated the substance of the discourses (*geya*); verses containing ideas not included in the *sutras* (*gatha*); historical narratives (*nidana*); past lives of disciples of Buddha (*itivrttaka*); past lives of Buddha (*jataka*); tales of miracles performed by Buddha (*Adbhutadharmas*); allegories (*avadana*); discussion of doctrine (*upadesa*); statements by the Buddha, which were not prompted by questions from his disciples (*udana*); *sutras* which dealt with broad topics (*vaipulya*); and prophecies of the Buddha regarding the enlightenment of his disciples (*vyakarana*). These different methods were used to strengthen a student's ability to comprehend and remember the unconventional ideas that the Buddha presented.

Buddha frequently used verses in his discourses to help his students remember his teachings. The following verse illustrated the teaching motivation of Buddha and his conditioned-arising method of instruction (that is, teaching based on the circumstances):

"The King of the Dharma,  
The destroyer of delusive existence,  
Appears in the world,  
And keeping in mind the aspirations of sentient beings,  
Teaches the Dharma in various ways  
According to the wishes of sentient beings." (Lotus Sutra 107)

Buddha also used many similes and examples to help his students understand. For example, in the Sutra of Wei Lang, Buddha illustrated Perfect *Sambhogakaya* as a lamp that could break up darkness which had been there for a thousand years (Humphreys 34). This was just like wisdom (often depicted by the symbol of lamp or light), that could illuminate age-old ignorance.

Buddha recognized that for a student to gain full understanding, the learner had to see its truth and applicability through his own experience (Warder 102). Hence, Buddha emphasized self-enlightenment, beyond mere belief in the words of any sages, including the Buddha. In *Anguttara III*, 65, Buddha advised his students to disregard authority:

“Do not accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in our books, no because it is in accord with your belief, no because it is the saying of your teacher.” (Pratt 15)

Then, Buddha called on his students to begin with no assumptions, examine phenomena for themselves, and to be reasonable (Humphreys 16). Buddha helped every person see the truth from his own standpoint.

Buddha taught at three levels: to the laymen, he concentrated on ethics and moral philosophy (right living and *kamma*); to monastics, he taught deeper spiritual teachings; to outstanding students, he taught spiritual forces (Humphreys 17). Buddha was able to help people with all types of background, be they high-caste brahmins, aristocratic kings and princes, philosophers, warriors, merchants, farmers or outcastes. He had methods of instruction suitable for elders, children, and couples.

In a larger audience, each student could still feel that Buddha was addressing his needs because he could draw what he needed from the same words of the Buddha. Buddha used an analogy of different-sized trees to illustrate this point:

“All the trees, small, medium or large  
Are able to grow in accordance with their capacities.  
The luster and colors of the roots, stems,  
Branches, leaves and flowers  
Are all freshened by the same rain.  
Each of these, although receiving the same moisture,  
Reaches a greater or lesser size  
In accordance with their different  
Dispositions, characteristics and natures.” (Lotus Sutra 109)

In the forty-five years of Buddha’s teaching lifetime, many situations presented themselves. These had made up a very interesting and voluminous *Tripitaka*, which consisted of many examples of conditioned-arising methods of instruction.

### Core Competence

The conditioned-arising methods of instruction mentioned in the preceding section were motivated by skillful means. According to D. T. Suzuki in Essays in Zen Buddhism, skillful means (*upaya*) is the “creation of the great compassionate heart which the Bodhisattva has. When he perceives his fellow beings being drowned in the ocean of birth and death of their ignorance and passionately clinging to a world of particulars, he awakens his great heart of love and compassion for them, and contrives all kinds of means to save them to enlighten them, to mature their consciousness for the ultimate truth.” (Humphreys 150) The driving force behind skillful means is compassion and wisdom.

The Lotus Sutra contained a parable of an affluent father who used skillful means to help his playful children escape from his burning home, by promising the children toys outside (Lotus Sutra 62-67). The burning home was a metaphor for the world that we lived in, and the fire for the suffering of birth, old age, illness, death and other defilements caused by greed, anger and ignorance. The father was wise and compassionate, using skillful means to lead his playful children out of the burning house.

Buddha was an exceptionally compassionate teacher. He had removed himself of all attachments, and hence, was able to give of himself limitlessly (Chen 27). In the *Dacabhumika-vibhara-sastra*, he repeated his teachings three times to four Kings in

their native vernacular language so that each of them could understand him. In the *Iti-vuttaka* 84 of the *Digha Nikaya XIX, 5*, Buddha said that he was

“born into the world for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the advantage, good, happiness of gods and men, out of compassion for the world.” (Pratt 9)

Buddha was also a wise teacher. He recognized that different people needed different paths. The path that worked for Buddha was to bring his mind into the present through meditation, make a calm analysis of the processes of the mind, see the processes as impermanent and self-less, abandon identification with these inconstant states, and cause the processes to disband. *Nibbana* could be reached once all mental processes were disbanded. Hence, the *Diamond Sutta* taught students “on what they should base themselves, and how they should subdue their minds.” (Hsing Yun, 2001:6) However, Buddha did not limit his method of instruction to mental cultivation for the intellectuals only. Instead, he devised many innovative methods for the many different dispositions of students. Buddha had a repertoire of teaching methods and different ways of cultivation for different conditions.

Buddha’s compassion and wisdom were driving competencies behind his ability to design and employ conditioned-arising methods of instruction.

### **Humanistic Buddhism’s Education System**

The humanism in humanistic Buddhism today can be seen from Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s education projects. Like the Buddha 2500 years ago, Venerable Master also set out to solve contemporary problems through education. To attain the ideals of “peace, freedom and social justice” in Delors’ statement, Venerable Master set about to raise educational standards, promote transcendental living, integrate tradition and modernity, and reform Buddhist monastic systems. Venerable Master walked the talk, by implementing his vision in his own monastic order, setting an example for humanistic Buddhism.

While Buddha was born during a time of social injustice, Venerable Master was born during an age of secularization. Science, technology, economics and politics dominated the global scene. Peace, freedom and social justice were defined by men with wealth and power. Mankind was fast depleting of spirituality. It was in such an environment that Buddhism could re-introduce into mankind his humanistic side.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun believed that the revival of Buddhism depended on Buddhist education, and not on the number of temples built. For example, in Korea and Japan, where we see the popularity of Buddhist research and establishment of Buddhist universities, Buddhism has been an active religion. Hence, Venerable Master focused much of his effort in building secular and monastic educational institutions, as well as in modernizing temples to include educational facilities.

There are two main types of education systems, towards which humanistic Buddhism can contribute. One is monastic education for those who would like to dedicate their lives to the promotion of Buddhism, and the other is secular education for those who would like to dedicate themselves to building an ethical and moral society now and in the future. Venerable Master described that monastic and secular education as the two wings of a bird (Hsing Yun, 2002:231), both of which were needed for a bird to soar in the skies.

### Educational Standards

When Venerable Master first arrived in Ilan, the cradle of humanistic Buddhism in Taiwan, the first problem was that of literacy and poverty. Recognizing that the future of a country depended on its youth, Venerable Master founded the first Buddhist kindergarten in Taiwan in 1956, the *Ci Ai*<sup>5</sup> (Compassionate Love) Kindergarten. In addition, he held Sunday schools for older children, and study groups for young school children and youths. These classes were conducted free, and to entice children to turn up, Venerable Master offered delicacies made in the shape of various Buddhist artifacts. Many aspiring writers were also trained under the personal tutelage of Venerable Master through composition guidance.

As the Taiwanese economic conditions improved and educational standards increased, humanistic Buddhism continued to participate in sowing the seeds of society's progress. Venerable Master started to build schools to match the needs of the people. He laid the foundation for *Juntou* Elementary School and *Juntou* Middle School. He also started the *Pumen* High School for girls and boys. As literacy standards improved, Venerable Master envisaged the need for higher centers of learning. Hence, he started Hsi Lai University in 1992 in the United States, Nan Hua University in 1996 and Fo Guang University in 1999 (latter two in Taiwan). These universities were intended to fill the void of universities grooming well-balanced, morally-upright leaders who placed emphasis on the humanities and the social sciences.

In terms of monastic education, humanistic Buddhism focused on training enough talents (*bodhisattvas*). Against all odds (even without the support and understanding of major patrons), Venerable Master devoted himself to monastic education in 1964, first with *Shou Shan* (Longevity Mountain) Buddhist College, and expanding it into the *Dong Fang* (Eastern) Buddhist College in Kaohsiung in 1967. He believed strongly that he had to give aspiring youths the needed Buddhist education so that there would be talents to promote the *dhamma*, and serve the needs of society. The Buddhist College grew to include graduate school and later a learning-by-travel version for ladies. Today, there are over sixteen Buddhist colleges spread over seven countries worldwide. Talented graduates are given scholarships to undertake graduate and post-graduate programs in reputable universities in Japan, USA, Europe, China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. It is always the belief of Venerable Master that Buddhist colleges offer free education, so that no child will be deprived of spiritual enrichment.

As the number of scholars of Buddhism increased due to the effort of many universities and Buddhist orders worldwide, Venerable Master organized international academic conferences, as well as published journals and dissertations to promote research on Buddhism throughout the world. In particular, he promoted the study of humanistic Buddhism so that scholars would research into the application of Buddhist teachings to solve day-to-day problems of society and individuals.

To assist in research, Venerable Master also published the Chinese Buddhist canon, and Buddhist Dictionary, both of which have turned out to be invaluable research resources. Electronic versions were proving to be popular tools with scholars.

A comprehensive education system was set up, each responding to the calls of society, and each playing a unique role to raise the standard of education of the people. Venerable Master answered the global call for lifelong learning and the knowledge economy by promoting reading clubs for men-in-the-street. The humanism of

Buddhism could be clearly seen through the untiring efforts of Venerable Master, who laid the foundation for future leaders.

### **Transcendental Living**

Humanistic Buddhism is the alignment of Buddha's teachings and spiritual practices into all aspects of a Buddhist's daily personal and social life. By learning and practicing, a Buddhist finds his secular life meaningful and sacred. It is part of a remythologization process to fill the void in many spiritually-destitute hearts.

Worldly understanding includes finding pleasures in materialistic desires, fulfillment in fame and glory, longevity in just one lifetime, and truth in superstition (Hsing Yun, 1982:11-16). The common characteristic is that such an understanding involves "acquisition"—acquisition of money, fame, time and space. Humanistic Buddhists are taught that religious faith is based on giving and helping (Hsing Yun, 1982:19). It is the inculcation of the value of compassion and giving that enable humanistic Buddhists to transcend beyond worldly living to care for others less fortunate. In this way, they contribute actively to society, for example, from providing aid to disaster victims worldwide, to building international universities to groom future leaders.

Since being the first-ever monastic to deliver a public lecture in Taiwan in 1975, Venerable Master had given many public lectures and written many books. Over seventy of his books and lectures had been translated into English. Venerable Master was ingenious in his methods of teaching and inspiration. He was adept at using sound and stage designs; he was also able to select topics that pertain to some aspect of everyday life and human psychology. His audience usually left each lecture with practical ways for maintaining their spiritual well-being; Venerable Master knew how to give society what it needed (Fu 82-83).

In addressing a large audience of lay devotees in 1992, Venerable Master offered twelve guidelines for protecting the environment, each being a simple way for any modern individual to live transcendently in this world. The twelve guidelines were to speak quietly so as not to disturb others, keep the ground clean by not littering, keep the air clean by not smoking and polluting, respect oneself and others by not committing violent acts, be polite by not intruding on others, smile so as not to face anyone with an angry expression, speak kindly so that no abusive words are used, follow the rules by not asking for exemption, not violate rules of ethics, consume conscientiously and not waste, be grounded by not living aimlessly, and practice kindness (Hsing Yun, 1992:7-8).

For the future, Venerable Master emphasized university education as the birthplace of people who would know how to handle worldly matters transcendently. He envisaged university professors to walk the talk by being exemplary "university men," and be of strong character, morals, warmth and scholarship. Venerable Master hoped for university graduates to focus on development of their character, and thinking. He wanted to groom students to be concerned about national and societal contributions. He often encouraged university students to participate in student activities, volunteer time and effort for good causes and join reading clubs. (HsingYun 2002:231-232) In a commencement speech, Venerable Master reminded graduates to return what they had learned to society and be an accomplished person with high morals (Cheng 331).

### **Integrating Tradition and Modernity**

In order for Buddhism to be humanistic, it had to meet modern needs and match the modern environment. Venerable Master took many creative risks in order to adapt the spread of the *dhamma* to the times and in following the prevailing culture in explaining his innovations (Fu 73). For example, he started youth choirs at a time when only traditional Buddhist-style chanting was acceptable, Buddhist weddings when Buddhist rituals were only associated with funerals, and floats parade on Buddha's birthdays when such gaiety was only reserved for national events. Venerable Master was astute in using projection technology and the mass media to enhance teaching effects. He also recorded Buddhist music for wider circulation. Venerable Master's pioneering efforts won over many young converts, and hence, started the possibility of reviving Buddhism, the humanistic way.

Venerable Master hoped that Buddhist monastic and secular education could teach students to melt down barriers between tradition and modernity. One often finds in his speeches a call for students to live with tradition as guidance and think with modernity as means. For example, the Merit Times newspapers and Beautiful Life Satellite TV Station were means to teach humanistic Buddhism. Recognizing the arrival of the electronic age, university dormitory rooms had direct internet access and Buddhist colleges had computer classes.

Universities and Buddhist colleges should help students think globally. Venerable Master set up Hsi Lai University in the United States to serve as a cultural exchange center of eastern and western values. Hsi Lai was the first university in California to be set up by a Chinese Buddhist organization (Cheng 323). To Venerable Master, humanistic Buddhism is multi-lingual, and he often encouraged his students to learn many different languages and to be exposed to be varying cultures. Venerable Master planned learning from travel and visits into the monastic curriculum to expose students to variety. (Hsing Yun 2002:235)

The continued growth of Buddhism depends very much on the ability of Buddhism to adapt to the modern needs of a population more at ease with computers than people, with material than with spirit, and with economics than with humanities. Humanistic Buddhism is about re-introducing into the lives of this generation the humanism to balance their growth.

### **Infrastructural Support**

Venerable Master believed that Buddhist universities should be built in cities for convenience, and in scenic mountains for inspiration and cultivation. The site of Fo Guang University on *Lin Mei* Mountain in scenic Ilan, and overlooking the Pacific Ocean, was the site of choice for inspiring researchers and for freeing the spirit.

To support research, Venerable Master placed special emphasis on the library. In traditional Buddhist monasteries, there would be a building dedicated to the housing of *suttas*. That building functioned as a library. Since in today's academia, one often evaluates a university's and even a nation's research capability by assessing the university library collections, Venerable Master emphasized that universities should have a good collection of books for its staff and students.

Venerable Master envisaged that future university curricula could incorporate Buddhist methods, for example, the study of Philosophy could include in-depth analysis of Buddhist thought; the study of Art could include global Buddhist art and architecture; and the study of Business Administration could include Buddhist

monastic systems. In particular, he emphasized self-enlightenment, that is, students should be taught self-education and self-awareness. This would represent a breakthrough in university education, towards which humanistic Buddhism could lead. This breakthrough would contribute greatly towards human and societal development. (Hsing Yun 2002:218-231)

In terms of monastic education, Venerable Master proposed that it should be divided into basic, intermediate, advanced and graduate levels. Students can be better deployed to each level, based on his background and needs. He called for Buddhist colleges to have appropriate teaching materials, qualified teachers and administrative staff. He also hoped to see inter-college associations formed to organize seminars, get-togethers, and friendly matches. He advised colleges to set up scholarship and bursary funds to assist financially needy students. Venerable Master sees the purpose of monastic education as the grooming of leaders with compassion and benevolence. (Hsing Yun 2002:233)

For humanistic Buddhism to be relevant to the growing intellectual and cultural needs of the population, Venerable Master is starting to convert temples into cultural and educational centers. He designed his newer temples to include libraries so that people could read Buddhist materials), audio-visual rooms and information centers to introduce Buddhist history and culture, meeting and conference rooms for seminars, workshops and meetings, and lecture theaters for Buddhist as well as community talks and activities. (Hsing Yun 2002:237) Temples are rapidly being turned into schools to help raise the cultural and religious standards of the community. The cradle of humanistic Buddhism began in a run-down *Lei-Yin* Temple; almost fifty years later, standing in its place now is a towering seventeen-storey multi-purpose cultural and educational center. In answering to the times, infrastructural upgrades and re-designs have taken place.

### Conclusion

Education is a mission that cannot be undertaken by the faint-of-heart. It is *bodhisattvas*, who have the compassion, wisdom and courage to change contemporary mindset and lay the foundation for a better future. One way of improving the living conditions of man is to educate them on the right ways to think, act and speak.

Buddha sought to liberate the minds of the Indian society from the rigidity of the social caste system and its blind faith to authority. Through his teachings and his conditioned-arising method of teaching, he convinced many students to learn experientially, to liberate their minds from sensual pleasures and sufferings, and to maintain good intentions. In this way, society could improve with every capable person having equal opportunities to learn and contribute. In every moment of his daily life, a Buddhist would be able to cultivate good spiritual and physical seeds. Buddha built an infrastructure that became an example for the world, across space and time.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun sought to liberate minds from secular tendencies. He called for the modernization of Buddhism in order to adapt to the needs of modern man. He showed how adaptation could be done based on the conditions presented, while at the same time, teaching his students the value of traditional thinking, actions and speech of the sages.

Indeed, the educators of today can take many lessons from Buddhist masters who had invested their lifetimes on the grooming of talents, as well as in setting examples for the future.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The *dhamma* is the set of teachings of the Buddha, which sprang from the enlightenment of the Buddha (Humphreys 7).

<sup>2</sup> The caste system consisted of Brāhmana (priest), Kṣatriya (warrior), Vaiśya (trader), and Sūdra (workmen).

<sup>3</sup> *Samsara* is the cycle of births and deaths, to which many branches of Indian philosophy subscribe.

<sup>4</sup> The six points are bodily unity by living together, verbal unity by not criticizing others, mental unity through a shared joy, moral unity by upholding the same precepts, doctrinal unity in views, and economic unity through sharing.

<sup>5</sup> All Chinese transliterations in this paper will follow the international Han Yu Pin Yin system.

### References

- |                              |               |   |
|------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Bodhi Bhikku                 | 1995          | " <i>Maha Kaccana: Master of Doctrinal Exposition</i> ", Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publications Society. < <a href="http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/bps/wheels/wheel405.html">http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/bps/wheels/wheel405.html</a> >  |
| Chen, B.D.                   | 1987          | <u><i>Buddha's Character and Education</i></u> , Taipei: Tian Hua Publishers.   |
| Cheng, An-Hsi                | March<br>2002 | "Fo Guang Shan's First University: The Hsi Lai University." <u><i>Universal Gate Buddhist Journal</i></u> , Issue 8. Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education.   |
| Delors, Jacques              | 1998          | "Education: The Necessary Utopia." <u><i>Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century</i></u> . Paris, UNESCO Publishing. < <a href="http://www.unesco.org/delors/issuesandprospects.htm">http://www.unesco.org/delors/issuesandprospects.htm</a> > |
| Fu, Chi-Ying                 | 1996          | <u><i>Handing Down the Light: The Biography of Venerable Master Hsing Yun</i></u> . Translated by Amy Lui-Ma. California: His Lai University Press.   |
| Gard, Richard A.             | 1961          | <u><i>Buddhism</i></u> . New York: George Braziller.  |
| Guruge, Ananda W.P.          | 1990          | "Buddha As A Teacher", <u><i>Encyclopaedia of Buddhism</i></u> , Volume V, Fascicle 1: Earth-Extrasensory Perception, Sri Lanka: Government of Sri Lanka.   |
|                              | 1999          | <u><i>What in Brief is Buddhism?</i></u> Monterey Park, California.   |
| Hsing Yun (Venerable Master) | 1998          | <u><i>A Discussion on Perception and Understanding</i></u> . Translated by Amy Lam and Susan Tidwell. California: BLIA. Speech was delivered in 1982.   |
|                              | 2000          | <u><i>Protecting the Environment</i></u> . Translated by Jayde Lin Robert. California: BLIA. Speech was delivered in 1992.  |
|                              | 1995          | <u><i>Jiao Shi</i></u> . Kaohsiung: Fo Guang.   |

- 
- |                                       |                |  |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|--|
|                                       | 2000           | <u>Lotus In A Stream</u> . Trumbull: Connecticut: Weatherhill.   |
|                                       | 2001           | <u>Describing the Indescribable</u> . Translated by Tom Graham. Boston: Wisdom Publications.   |
|                                       | September 2002 | “A Historical Perspective and Prospects of a Buddhist-Founded Educational Institute.” <u>Universal Gate Buddhist Journal</u> . Issue 11. Taiwan: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture and Education.                        |
| Humphreys, Christmas                  | 1960           | <u>The Wisdom of Buddhism</u> . London: Michael Joseph.  |
| Kubo, Tsugunari, and Yuyama, Akira    | 1993           | <u>The Lotus Sutra</u> . Translated from the Chinese of Kumarajiva. T9, 262. Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research.  |
| Malalasekera, G.P.                    | 1973           | “Buddha”, <u>Encyclopaedia of Buddhism</u> , Volume III, Fascicle 3: Buddha- Burlingame, Ceylon: Government of Sri Lanka.  |
| Narada Thera (trans.)                 | May 2001       | “ <i>Vyagghapajja Sutta</i> – Conditions of Welfare.” <i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> VIII.54. <a href="http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/anguttara/an08-054.html">http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/anguttara/an08-054.html</a>       |
|                                       | September 2001 | “ <i>Sigālovāda Sutta</i> – The Layperson’s Code of Discipline.” <i>Digha Nikaya</i> 31. < <a href="http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/digha/dn31.html">http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/digha/dn31.html</a> >                 |
| Nyanatiloka                           | 1970           | <u>Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines</u> . Third edition. Taiwan: The Corporate Body of The Buddha Educational Foundation.   |
| Pratt, J.B.                           | 1928           | <u>The Pilgrimage of Buddhism</u> . New York: MacMillan Company.   |
| Rahula, Walpola Sri                   | 1978           | <u>What the Buddha Taught</u> . London: Gordon Fraser.   |
| Saddhatissa H. (trans.)               | 1985           | “ <i>Brāhmanadhammika Sutta</i> – the Good Conduct of Brahmin.” <u>The Sutta-Nipāta</u> , London: Curzon Press Ltd, pp 32-35.  |
| Thanissaro, Bhikku (Geoffrey DeGraff) | 1996           | <u>The Wings of Awakening: An Anthology from the Pali Canon</u> . Massachusetts: Dhamma Dana Publications.   |
| Thanissaro, Bhikku (trans.)           | April 2002     | “Sunita the Outcaste.” <i>Theragatha</i> XXII. <u>Khuddaka Nikaya</u> . < <a href="http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/khuddaka/theragatha/thag12.html">http://www.accesstoinsight.org/canon/khuddaka/theragatha/thag12.html</a> >. |
| Warder, A.K.                          | 1980           | <u>Indian Buddhism</u> , Delhi: Banarsidass Motilal.   |
|                                       | 1999           | <u>Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary</u> . Japan: Daito Shuppansha.   |