

# Buddhism and Its Contributions to Culture

By Yung Dong

## ABSTRACT

*Culture and religion concern and deal with some similar human issues in terms of the concept of values, the way of thinking, inner feelings and the method of expression by means of symbolism. Buddhism, in particular, as a spiritual community (Sangha) was quite different from the Christian churches (both Protestant and Catholic) with their centralized organizations and hierarchical structures. Sanghas in other countries were never subordinated to the Sangha in India. This feature gives Buddhism its authenticity and enables those various local talents to express themselves maintaining the essence of the Dharma. While spreading Buddhism from India throughout Asia and to the West during its lengthy history of 2,500 years, Buddhism not only assimilated into local cultures, but also acted as a connector between east and west.*

*Culture includes all areas such as literature, music, dance, drama, printing, painting, architecture and art associated with Buddhism. This paper, mainly focuses on literature, architecture and music, and will be divided into five chapters. The first chapter will examine the definition of culture, the relationship between culture and Buddhism and the characteristics of the Buddhist Sangha. The second chapter will explore the contributions to literature made by Indian, Chinese and Humanistic Buddhism. The third chapter will look into the contributions to architecture made by Indian, Chinese and Humanistic Buddhism. The fourth chapter will explore the contributions made to music by Indian, Chinese and Humanistic Buddhism. The last chapter will make some conclusions concerning the first four chapters.*

## INTRODUCTION

The definition of culture is the system of shared beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that the members of society use to cope with their world and with one another, which are transmitted from generation to generation through learning. This definition points to four important characteristics stressed by cultural relativists: symbolic composition, systematic patterning, learned transmission and societal grounding. Culture, as a body of learned behaviors common to a given human society, acts rather like a template (That is it has predictable form and content), shaping behavior and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation. So culture resides in all learned behavior and in some shaping template or consciousness prior to behavior as well (that is, a "cultural template" can be in place prior to the birth of an individual.)<sup>1</sup>

Robert Bellah defines religion as a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate humans to the ultimate conditions of their existence.<sup>2</sup> Hall, Pilgrim, and Cavanagh give this definition: "Religion is the varied, symbolic expression of, and appropriate response to that which people deliberately affirm as being of unrestricted value for them."<sup>3</sup> Theoretically, both culture and religion concern and deal with some similar issues of humanity such as the concept of value, the way of thinking, empirical feelings and the method of expression. In order to present the significance of art and religion, symbolism is a meaningful means.

Therefore, the relationship and reciprocity between culture and religion, Buddhism in particular, are inevitable. The Buddhist Sangha was quite different from the Christian churches (both Protestant and Catholic) with their centralized organizations and hierarchical structures. Sanghas in other countries were never subordinated to the Sangha in India, a fact equally valid and applicable to the offshoots of the Theravada tradition and of the communities that were inspired by the Mahayanist and Tantric traditions.<sup>4</sup> Sanghas in different countries were never controlled or protected by any centralized organization.

### **Unity in Diversity and Diversity in Unity**

This feature gives Buddhism its authenticity and enables the various ethnic groups to express themselves while maintaining the essence of the Dharma. It was responsible for the fact that Buddhism in various countries had its own schools, besides those it developed during its history in India.

Buddhism has accepted the vernacular languages and elaborated new textual traditions that were added to the corpus of translated texts of Indian origin. The ethics and discipline of the monks were partly adapted to local customs. Some rituals were integrated by transforming the indigenous local gods into personages of the Buddhist pantheon and connecting local festivities to Buddhist holidays. Even the architecture of Buddhist monasteries and the shape of Buddha images are merged with local culture.

Even though this feature gives flexibility to the localization of Buddhism in every country worldwide, however, while localizing, how to decide between its tradition and a local culture is a tough issue. Ernest Cassirer said in 1961, "The truly great works of culture never control as things absolutely fixed and unchanging, shackling and stifling the free motion of the spirit in their fixity. Their contact has being for us only by virtue of the fact that they must be continually possessed anew and hence continually recreated."<sup>5</sup> Buddhism cannot survive without localization on the strength of each culture, and this localization cannot be carried out without modernization and humanism. Buddhism came to China during the first century CE. Later on, it was suppressed by Emperor Tai Wu in 446 CE during the Northern Wei Dynasty and Emperor Wu Di in 573 CE during the Northern Zhou Dynasty due to conflicts with Chinese traditional culture created by Daoist Kou qian-zhi's (寇謙之) and Yun wen-hu's (允文護) influence the Emperors.

During the last twenty-five centuries, while Buddhism spreads from India to East Asia and the West, it has encountered a variety of difficulties. Under such difficult situations, Buddhism still took root and grew locally in every country and became a connection between East and West.

### **Buddhism as the Role of a Pan-cultural Mediator**

Since ancient times, Buddhism has been a cultural mediator in Asia. In this century in the West it has gone from being a field of academic study to becoming a source of inspiration for many people wanting to live worthwhile lives. Whereas in Asia Buddhism spread as a living spiritual tradition and philosophy, in the West it

spread mostly as a part of the cultural heritage of Asia. In a way that was somewhat similar to the spreading of the Hellenistic cultural heritage during the Renaissance in Europe.<sup>6</sup> It offered abundant inspiration and presented a challenge in many fields of cultural interest – in philosophy, religion, spiritual practice, the arts and literature, psychology and psychotherapy.

India was often considered as the “holy land” of Buddhism, where pilgrims would come to seek inspiration and “study at the source,” so to speak, especially at the great universities like Nalanda. Some of those pilgrims, like the Chinese Buddhists Xuanzang and Yijing (eighth century CE), have left extensive accounts of their travels and of Buddhist practices and teachings, ranging from China to Java and Sumatra. These events have fostered the role of Buddhism as an inter-Asian cultural connector and a first-rate cultural factor that transcend state borders, political interests, and conflicts, spreading the Dharma from the plains of Central Asia to the rain forest of Java, and from the Himalayan peaks to the coasts of the “Land of the Rising Sun.”<sup>7</sup>

The transnational character of Buddhist teachings has harmoniously intermingled with the national character of the Buddhist Sanghas, a fact that enabled local traditions to find their full expression in the realm of the Dharma. This should be stressed as one of the most important traits of Buddhism in its relation to various cultures. It did not act as a suppressor of cultural values, but rather fostered the character that inspired the talents in each given milieu to express themselves.

Culture includes the various media such as literature, music, dance, drama, printing, painting, architecture, art and so on. In this paper, I will focus on Buddhism in India and China as well as Humanistic Buddhism’s contributions to literature, architecture and music.

## **BUDDHISM AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO LITERATURE**

### **The Value of Buddhist Literature in India**

The Pāli Tripitka covers nine classes of literary forms, that are the Buddha’s teachings (sutras), rhythmic verses (geyas), prophecies (vyakaranas), chants or poems (gathas), impromptu or unsolicited addresses (udanas), narratives (ityuktas or itivrttakas), stories of former lives of Buddha (jatakas), expanded sutras (vaipulyas) and miracles (adbhuta-dharmas). The Mahāyāna Canon includes twelve divisions, cause and condition (nidana), commentary (abhidharma) and analogy (avadana) other than above nine. The Buddhist Tripitaka presented and provided abundant literary genres from Indian early Buddhism to nowadays. Among them, the Vimalakīrtinirdeśasutra 《維摩經》, the Saddharma-pundarikasutra 《妙法蓮華經》 and the Śurajgamasamādhisutra 《楞嚴經》 are well-known literary works. The Sutra of the One Hundred Parables 《百喻經》, translated into various languages, was honored as a unique literary work. The Raktavitisutra 《大寶積經》 is a combination of many small sutras. The Lalitavistarasutra 《普曜經》 is a long story. The Suratapariprcchāsutra 《須賴經》 is fiction. The Viśesacintabrahmapariprcchsutra 《思益梵天所問經》 is a literary work - half fiction and half drama. The Jātaka from which several stories have found their way to Aesop’s Fables and Arabian Nights) are

stories from the Buddha's previous lives. In addition, the Theragāthā and Therīgāthā are ethical teachings taught in verses.

After Mahāyāna developed, the Buddhacarita 《佛所行讚》, written by Aśvaghosa during the second century CE, is a long epic. The Saundaranandakāvya 《孫陀利難陀詩》 is an epic poem about the Buddha's half-brother Nanda while the Sariputrakāvya 《舍利弗之所說》 is a drama on the conversion of Sariputra and Mahamaudgalyayana. These two works were pioneer writings in Indian literature.<sup>8</sup>

During the fourth century CE, the Sakuntala,<sup>9</sup> based on a Buddhist Jataka story (Pali Jataka No.7) and composed by Kalidasa, became well known in Europe in 1789 CE. The contemporary writer Goethe, touched by it, composed four stanzas praising it and cited its prelude in his work "Faust."<sup>10</sup>

During the seventh century CE, King Siladitya composed two Buddhist works – The Dragon's joy and Praise to Eight Great Stupas which played an important role in Indian literary history. Recently, Tagore, a Noble Prize Winning Literary Author, used Buddhist stories to write The Offering to the Dancers and Zhen tuo li 《真陀利》.<sup>11</sup> Buddhist literature indeed plays an important role in the world.

### **The Value of Buddhist Literature in China**

Since Indian Buddhism came to China during the first century CE, it was influenced by Chinese traditional culture and gradually localized as Chinese Buddhism. Later on during the Sui and Tang Dynasties, Buddhism influenced Chinese traditional culture, especially in Chan poetry and painting which integrated with Chinese traditional art. However, the greatest influence in Chinese literature comes from sutra translations. Buddhist texts inspired the creation of fiction during the Jin and Tang Dynasties and provided the plot to the later novels such as Journey to the West 《西遊記》, The Romance of Three Kingdoms 《三國演義》, Plum Blossoms in a Golden Jar 《金瓶梅詞話》 and Dream of the Red Mansion 《紅樓夢》.<sup>12</sup>

Buddhist literature was created not only for teaching and beauty but also to portray a carefree life by integrating with nature. More and more scholars were attracted to create this type of literature century after century. Some of the contributions made by Buddhism to Chinese literature are as follows.

1. 35,000 new terms which not only uphold the thinking but also express the concept of cause and effect for purifying human minds. Some terms are used as family names, given names or the name of a place.<sup>13</sup>

2. Master Shou-wen (守溫) created thirty-six letters of the alphabet by imitating those in Sanskrit during the Tang Dynasty. Later on, Chinese phonetic symbols were formulated on the basis of them.<sup>14</sup>

3. Study, research and writing, influenced by the Buddhist Tripitaka, became more systematic.

4. Indian lexicology, philosophy, epistemology and critical interpretation of ancient texts influenced Chinese language and logical thinking. The development of phonetic study and the creation of four tone accents beautify the poetry-reading.<sup>15</sup>

5. The sutra translations during the Wei, Jin and Southern and Northern Dynasties influenced the development of Chinese Grammar.

6. Popularized literature with illustrations prevailed.

7. Poetry and vernacular prose flourished as a result of the sutra translations, dialogues between masters and disciples (Koan) and the poetry composed by enlightened Chan Masters. Hu Shizhi (胡適之), a well-known Chinese literary author, said that vernacular prose and poetry originated from a Buddhist monastery and meditation center.<sup>16</sup>

8. In order to promote Buddhism, Buddhist lectures combined with chanting was gradually revised as the singing of stories instead of telling them. This revised material and stories which was easily accessible to everyone, became more popular and was the origin of vernacular literature in China.<sup>17</sup>

9. The method of literary evaluation and critique are more or less based on the philosophy of the Chan School such as “no setting up of words and letters”, “sudden enlightenment”, “direct perception” and “phenomena.”<sup>18</sup>

10. Dr. Qian-mu (錢穆), a well-known scholar of traditional Chinese studies, pointed out that the Six Patriarch Platform Sutra is one of the nine required books to study for reviving Chinese culture.<sup>19</sup>

11. 1,500 years ago, a number of Chinese monks went to India for advanced study. Their journals<sup>20</sup> provide us a way to trace the history of Central Asia, Southeast Asia and India. They were also the beginning of overseas advanced study in China.<sup>21</sup>

### **The Value of Buddhist Literature in Humanistic Buddhism**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun promotes and localizes Humanistic Buddhism by putting stress on literary projects as follows,

1. Compile a complete updated Buddhist dictionary. This dictionary has been translated into Vietnamese and produced as a CD as well.
2. Re-interpret and publish the Chinese Buddhist Canon in vernacular.
3. Collect and publish the Master and Doctorate theses in terms of Buddhism.
4. Publish Buddhist Textbooks.
5. Publish series of children’s storybooks with color-illustrations in several different languages.
6. Set up libraries in every branch temple which are open to the public.
7. Produce Buddhist TV shows, movies, cartoons and dramas.
8. Divide the lectures and Dharma sayings into four elements which are welcomed and used as guidance by ordinary people and businessmen for their employees as well.

## **BUDDHISM AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO ART**

Art is the product of both feelings and wisdom. Cultures are associated with art. Buddhism supports art with its profound philosophy, lengthy history and rich culture. In fact, Buddhism itself is a treasure of art. The influence of Buddhism on art has been manifold, so that we find examples that are not limited to spiritual themes. During the past 2,000 years, Buddhism influenced eight traditional arts, crafts and calligraphy as well. The achievement of art made by Buddhism is a unique treasure for all human beings throughout the world.

Since the Han and Wei Dynasties (206-265 CE), Chinese art has yielded unusually brilliant results influenced by Buddhist architecture, art and music. Architecture is an art of profound creativity. We frequently find equally impressive paintings, sculptures and landscaping throughout an architectural creation.

Architecture is a visual representation of culture. Through architecture, one can understand a certain culture's environment, climate, societal priorities, characteristics, dynamics of human interaction, customs, beliefs and living habits as well as the relationships among these qualities. The beliefs and spiritual traditions of a culture cannot be separated from architecture. Buddhist architecture emphasizes monasteries, stupas and caves.

### **The Value of Buddhist Architecture in India**

Buddhism is a tradition that honors nature. Most Buddhist practitioners seek to transcend worldly, material desires and try to develop a close kinship with nature. Especially during the time of the Buddha, disciples often lived in very simple thatched houses and were able to develop and maintain a peaceful and joyful mind. Whether dwelling in a suburban area, a forest, by the waterside, in a freezing cave or under a tree, they were always comfortable in their living situation. However, as Buddhist disciples grew in number, it was proposed by King Bimbisara and a follower named Sudatta that a monastery should be built in order to allow practitioners to gather in a common place and practice in a more organized manner. After the Buddha deeply considered and then wholeheartedly agreed with this idea, he gave his approval for devotees to make donations to monasteries. As a result, the Jetavana Monastery, the Bamboo Grove and the Mrgara-matr-prasada Lecture Hall were constructed. This was the beginning of Buddhist architecture in India. Some of these monasteries become historical sites and have attracted countless visitors and pilgrims.

The early purpose of a stupa was to provide a place to enshrine the Buddha's relics and people could come and make offerings to the Buddha. Later on, it shifted to a memorial building for offering sutras and things left behind by the Buddha. The Golden Age of stupa construction was during King Asoka's reign. He created inscriptions on 84,000 rocks and pillars for promoting the Dharma.

### **The Value of Buddhist Architecture in China**

In China, in 67 CE, there was a debate between daoists and two Buddhist monks from India named Ksayapa-matanga and Gobharana. Due to this lively

dialogue, the emperor's interest and belief in Buddhism was stimulated. Although Daoism was quite popular at the time, the emperor accepted and honored Buddhism. Later construction of a center outside the city was constructed. This was the birth of Chinese Buddhist architecture.

In the early period of China, stupas were the main architectural structures being built. A stupa, sometimes referred to as a pagoda, can be considered the "high rise" of Buddhist architecture due to its tall, narrow shape that reaches toward the sky. They gradually developed, localized and split into three types: 1. Lama stupas located in the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries 2. Myanmar stupas erected in the monasteries of Theravada tradition 3. Multistory pagodas of Chinese traditional architecture.<sup>22</sup> Later on, Indian stupas merged with surrounding Buddhist monasteries and became typical Chinese Buddhist complexes.

The Buddhist architecture of every region has its own unique characteristics due to differing cultural and environmental factors. Buddhist temples in China are commonly built in the emperor's palace style, categorizing them as "palace architecture." This layout is designed with symmetry in mind, with the main gate and main hall in the center and other facilities – including the celestial beings hall, the lecture hall, the patriarch hall and the abbot's quarters – lined up on either side. On one side, a ceremonial drum is placed and on the other, a ceremonial bell. Behind there is symmetrical line of structures are guesthouses for lay visitors and the Yun Shui Hall for visiting monastics to reside during their stay.

Temples are often the center of cultural activities. From a modern viewpoint, temples can be compared to a museum, for they contain precious and spectacular art forms and in fact, are beautiful art forms themselves. Like art museums, they are a combination of architecture, sculpture, painting and calligraphy. Temples offer a harmonized environment and a spiritual atmosphere that allows one to become serene and tranquil. They are valuable places for stressed-out persons to lay down their burdens, soothe their minds and achieve a sense of peace.

In the history of Chinese Buddhist art and architecture, the most important link is cave temple. Within these caves, there are ornately carved statues, sculptures and colorful paintings of the Buddha, bodhisattvas, arhants and sutras. This artistic practice was started in 366 CE by a monastic named Le Zun and continued until the fifteen century. In some places, entire mountainsides are decorated with innumerable cave temples and gigantic carved statues. These caves such as Dung huang, Yun gang, Long men and Mai ji san, were constructed by combining the model of an Indian monastery and a Chinese Palace Museum. Dung huang Caves, with its innumerable artistic treasures, is considered a "museum on the wall." They are filled with Buddha statues, murals, sutras, paintings of Buddha, Buddhist altars, monastery archives and miscellaneous decorations that are not only treasures of Buddhism, but also are cultural, artistic and architectural history.

The development of cave temples occurred over thousands of years, spanning several dynasties, and unlike wooden temples that suffer destruction from the elements, are sheltered by massive rocks and therefore remain standing as remarkable and majestic testimonials to Buddhism flourishing throughout China. The magnificence

and grandeur of Buddhist art within these caves has awed the world and has captured the essence and detail of the teachings for all visitors to behold. In the eyes of artists and archaeologists, this type of Buddhist architecture is especially full of life and beauty and is evidence of the evolution of Buddhist art throughout time. The Chinese culture often uses architecture to preserve an historical legend or to commemorate one's ancestry, a specific event or a particular person, especially an emperor. Many Buddhist monasteries, over a thousand years old, preserve extensive murals, sculptures and landscapes. They present an historical background and influences of local culture.

### **The Value of Buddhist Architecture in Humanistic Buddhism**

The Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order has developed more than two hundred monasteries either in urban buildings or in rural forests worldwide. The architecture and landscape of those modernized and localized monasteries, are for integrating the cultures of both east and west. Fo Guang Shan seeks to be a place that everyone can use and where everyone can gain knowledge, find spiritual guidance and receive various forms of assistance. The following are the contributions to architecture made by Fo Guang Shan, the promoter of Humanistic Buddhism and founded by Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

1. Build a Pure Land Cave for presenting the world of Pure Land.
2. Set up a museum in every monastery.
3. Display a variety of art-works everywhere in the monastery.
4. Establish Tea Houses for integrating tea with Chan.
5. Construct a pagoda with ash niches in order to advocate cremation.
6. Erect a "Famous Writers" Stone Wall.

Temples have gone from the mountains to the urban culture, from a passive and self-centered focus to actively benefiting others and from offering very few services to being accommodating to the needs of a diverse population. While not compromising any of the original teachings, Buddhism adjusts and adapts to every era. In this manner, regardless of the time, temples can serve as places of spiritual refuge and guidance for everyone.

### **BUDDHISM AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO MUSIC**

Music is the world's common language reaching far and wide unrestricted by time, space, political boundaries, ethnicity, or tradition. It expresses the emotions of the human spirit. A song or a sincere praise to the Buddha can often raise the human spirit to a sacred realm. Music plays a very important role in spreading Buddhism.

In Buddhism, music is one form of offering amongst many and an important part of Buddhist cultivation. In order to express devotion, Buddhists chant praises to buddhas and bodhisattvas, gaining limitless merits in the process. The Saddharmapundarikasutra indicates that, "With a joyful heart, we chant the merit of the Buddha, even with just a few short notes, all can attain Buddhahood."<sup>23</sup>

In order to promote Buddhism, sutra recitation, chanting and lectures are usually advocated. Among them, sutra recitation and chanting are called Buddhist music.

### **The Value of Buddhist Music in India**

Buddhist music originated from the age of the Vedas in ancient India. It was popular to chant sutras and gathas, the practice of which was one of the five branches of the great classical studies of India concerning sound and music.<sup>24</sup> During the Buddha's time, chanting was employed as a skillful means to spread the Dharma. The teachings were expressed in verses or gathas which were passed on through chanting. This practice made it easy for disciples to remember and recite. Monks were especially encouraged to conduct or compose music for chanting.

During the time of King Asoka, Buddhist music was played with musical instruments made of leather, shells and so forth. During the second century CE, Asvaghosa composed the Praise for the Buddha based on the life and times of Sakyamuni Buddha. He later rewrote it as a play, *Rastrapala*, which was performed in the City of Pataliputra. As a result, many people were moved to become followers of the Triple Gem. During the sixth and seventh centuries CE, King Siladitya supported his leadership by using Buddhist music in order to give the people peace.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Value of Buddhist Music in China**

Buddhist music was called *Fan-bai* (bhasa 梵唄) in China. However, when Buddhism was first introduced into China, focus was placed primarily on the translation of sutras. In order to popularize Buddhism, monastics made use of recitation of the sutras and chanting. Recitation and chanting have developed into today's Buddhist music. Some monastics have even adapted classical folk songs along with some music which was commonly played for royalty and officials in the imperial court. This explains the unique flavor and tradition of Chinese Buddhist music.

The earliest collection of Chinese Buddhist music dates back as far as the Wei Dynasty. Cao shi, son of the emperor, was renowned for his singing and compositions. According to legend, he was passing through the town of Yushan, in Shandong Province, when he heard a song apparently emanating from the sky. Touched by the song's beauty, he committed it to memory and later wrote it as a melody entitled, "The Yushan Fanbai," the first Buddhist song constructed in a Chinese style. This song served as the foundation for the development of Chinese Buddhist music.

During the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties, Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty was a devout Buddhist motivated to write Buddhist music in order to spread the teaching of the Dharma. He set the precedent for collecting children's Buddhist songs. In addition, he established ceremonies such as *Wuzhe Dah* (held for confession and repentance), *Yulanpen Fahui* (Dharma function), morning and evening recitations and chanting of the teachings. All these were instrumental in blending Buddhist music with that of the mainstream classical Chinese traditions. Temples and monasteries had, thus, become the centers for preserving and spreading traditional music.

Since the Tang and Song Dynasties, Buddhist temples were able to gradually develop and popularize a new style of giving Dharma lectures that featured public

talks on Buddhist teachings sung to fanbai melodies. Such “speaking and chanting” (說唱藝術) used for spreading the Dharma are known as Verse for the Common People and were the first Chinese Buddhist compositions to adopt a more folk-like style and flavor. This style was successful in attracting the attention of vocal music. Documents containing historical details concerning these developments were discovered among hidden pieces of art found in the Dunhung caves.<sup>26</sup> They also contained depictions of auspicious ceremonial dances, orchestra instructions and elegant, ceremonial dance postures. Today these documents are highly valued as being priceless pieces of historical Chinese literature and underlie an important aspect of Buddhist music’s enormous cultural contributions.

Buddhist chanting is today an important part of practice in any Dharma function – making praise, offerings, cultivation, teaching and liturgies. The profundity, sacred pursuits and compassion and wisdom of Buddhism are clearly expressed through music. Over the past two thousand years, Chinese Buddhist music had developed into many schools and traditions delineated by geographical regions or practices. It has integrated with the music of the common folk, the imperial court and other spiritual tradition, each influencing one another and developing together. This long history of its development and the process of its inheritance have made Chinese Buddhist music invaluable and impressive.

Since the 1980s, Chinese Buddhists and music professionals have worked together in discovering, classifying and preserving many traditional Chinese Buddhist Music compositions that were almost lost in history. These precious gems have been performed on the world stages - in England, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong - mingling with cultural treasures of other music traditions. Currently, what is preserved includes this concert’s presentations of Buddha Hall chanting and the Buddhist music traditions of Mt. Wutai Shan and Laboleng Temple. They are the essence and the core of Chinese Buddhist music and gradually influenced Chinese folk music, phonology and intonation.

### **The Value of Buddhist Music in Humanistic Buddhism**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun has put forward the following five guiding principles<sup>27</sup> to further the modernization and popularization of Buddhist music in order to bring harmony and joy to the world through its pure sounds, rhythms and melodious tunes.

1. Buddhist music should not be something unique to temples and monastic life but be widely and readily accessible to the general public.

2. In addition to Buddhist verses and chants, there is the need to continue creating more and more new musical pieces.

3. Those teaching Buddhism should from now on do more to activate the use of music and should use music to attract the public to study Buddhism.

4. Buddhists can form bands, choirs, orchestras, classical music troupes and so forth in order to use music to spread and teach the Dharma.

5. It is hoped that there will be new music making a mark in Buddhist history in the same manner of the likes of Asvaghosa Bodhisattva and Venerable Master Hongi (弘一).

In order to fulfill his wish, Venerable Master aggressively promote Buddhist music by the following means,

1. Established a Youth Choir - BLIA choirs and a Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Choir. More than 40 years ago, Venerable Master Hsing Yun established a Youth Choir to attract them through song. The Youth choir followed him whenever he toured to spread the Dharma. Later songs by the choir group were broadcast by the Taipei Chinese Broadcasting Company.

In 1979 Fo Guang Shan Buddhist College was made responsible for fostering talent through Buddhist Music concerts. They first performed at the Taipei Sun Yat-sen Memorial Hall and Taipei Cultural Hall followed by many more concerts held at various public theatres and in different countries in order to introduce oriental Buddhist music to the world.

2. Published the first Buddhist songbook in 1956. "A Collection of Buddhist Sacred Songs".

3. Produced and published gramophone records "Completer Works of Fan-bai" in 1957. Recorded and published cassette tapes on "The Buddhist Sacred Songs" to present the peaceful, serene and exquisite Buddhist music to the world in 1979. Published and issued a complete collection of "The Sound of the Truth – the Sutrapitaka of the Mahayana Buddhist Music" containing 22 CD's in 1998.

4. Established a Youth Symphony Orchestra and a Monastic Chinese Music Orchestra.

The Buddha's Light Youth Symphony Orchestra of Hsi Lai Temple was established in 1993. Its purpose is to rely on the beauty of Buddhist music to overcome discrimination and to dissolve national boundaries. Their aim is to use western musical instruments to interpret traditional dharma chanting and modern dharma sound. Also, it gives people joy, calms people's spirit, defuses the violence in society and helps make the world a better place through regular performance to the public.

5. The International Monastic Choir with a Chinese Classical Orchestra or Western Orchestra utilizes traveling Performances in order to bring Buddhist music and peace to everywhere in the world.

6. Composing Buddhist music competition. This contest is open to all the languages. All the awarded songs are produced as CD and disseminated around the world.

7. Combine lectures with chanting.

8. Performing poetry singing in traditional Chinese opera tone instead of chanting.

Buddhist fanbai has continued presenting a unique style of chanting to the world of music. Characterized by a relaxed and easy pace, soft tones and a dignified, solemn manner, Buddhist fanbai gives elegant expression to the five virtuous qualities of sincerity, elegance, clarity, depth and equanimity. According to the Vinaya in Ten

Recitations 《十誦律》, regularly listening to Buddhist fanbai can give the following five benefits: a reduction in bodily fatigue, less confusion and forgetfulness, a reduction in mental weariness, a more elegant voice and greater ease in both personal expression and communication.<sup>28</sup> The Nanhai Ji Gui Zhuan 《南海寄歸內法傳》 also says that there are six kinds of merits that can be obtained from chanting fanbai. They are knowledge of the depth and extent of the Buddha's virtue, an intuitive realization of the truths of the Dharma, a reduction in negative or harmful habits of speech, a clear and healthier respiratory system, a mind free from anxiety and longevity and improved health.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Culture – the compilation of the Tripitaka, sutra translation, sutra-curving, sculpture, writing, painting and literary - is conducive to the development and extension of Buddhism. After World War II, the interest in the general Buddhist attitude to life and meditation came to the forefront. More people shared a nonacademic interest in Buddhism. They were not professional historians of religion and philosophy, nor philologists, and for them Buddhism was not an object of study but an inspiration that presumed personal involvement. The previous presentation of Buddhism in terms of teachings or philosophy was followed by a new perspective. Generations of Buddhologists tried to interpret and understand nirvana from various standpoints, but the psychology of nirvana has become a recent item in writings (Johansson, 1970), and early Buddhist psychology has been included as one of the standard presentations of the theories of personality (Hall and Library, 1978) under the title "Eastern Psychology." By means of culture, Buddhism improves its contribution to the humans world.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Definition of Culture <http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/anthrology/course/122/module1/culture/12/25/2004>

<sup>2</sup> Joel Elliott, slide set on "Defining Religion," at: <http://www.unc.edu/>

<sup>3</sup> David Carpenter of Saint Joseph's University has a list of definitions at: <http://www.sju.edu/>

<sup>4</sup> Dusan Pajin "The Fourth Turn of the Wheel of the Dharma" *The Wisdom Torch* V.376 p.74

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.75

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> The *Saundaranandakāvya* 《孫陀利難陀詩》 and the *Sariputrakāvya* 《舍利弗之所說》 see Master Hsing Yun. *Fo Guang Textbook (8) Buddhism and Worldly Study* p.p.125, 137-8

<sup>9</sup> This work used Kimmara, the *Mahāvastu*, the 7<sup>th</sup> story of Pali *Jataka*, the 83<sup>th</sup> story of *the Six Perfection Sutra* and stories of V.13-14 the *Mūlasarvastivadavinayaksu-drakavastu*.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 8 pp.138-9

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139

<sup>12</sup> Fang li-tian (方立天) *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* Issue 3 May 1, 2001 p.39

<sup>13</sup> Liang Qi-chao (梁啓超) *Eighteen Researches on Buddhism* p.15

<sup>14</sup> Master Hsing Yun "The Development of Chinese Buddhism" *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* Issue 1 January 1, 2001 p.11

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40

<sup>16</sup> Hu Shi-zhi. *Hu Shi Wen Chun* V.1 p.144

<sup>17</sup> See footnote 8 p.131

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 12

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Fa-xian (法顯 340-?) composed *Fo guo ji* 《佛國記》 covering more than 30 countries in Central Asia and India he had visited between 399-413 CE. *Fo Gaung Da Ci Dian* p.3435 ; Xuan-zang (602-664) composed *Da tang xi yu ji* 《大唐西域記》 including 138countries in Central Asia(西域) India and Sri Lanka he had visited between 629-641 CE. *Fo Gaung Da Ci Dian* p.2024c ; Yi-jin (義淨 635-713) composed *Nan hai ji gui nei fa zhuan* 《南海寄歸內法傳》、*Da Tang xi yu qiu fa gao seng zhuan* 《大唐西域求法高僧傳》 which dealt with his journey to thirty countries via maritime route between 671-688CE. He was also the first person to advocate phonetic transcription (拼音).- *Fo Gaung Da Ci Dian* p.5571 ◦

<sup>21</sup> See footnote 12 p.42

<sup>22</sup> Bao Jia-seng & Hsiao Tong. *Architecture, The Encyclopedia of Chinese Buddhism* P.15

<sup>23</sup> Taisho *Tripitaka* T262 V.9 p.9a

<sup>24</sup> See footnote 8 p.160

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p.161

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p.129

<sup>27</sup> Hsi Lai Temple. *Chinese Buddhist Music Concert* 2004 p.15

<sup>28</sup> Taisho *Tripitaka* T1435 V. 23 p.269c, also see footnote 22

<sup>29</sup> Taisho *Tripitaka* T2125 V.54 p.227c

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary Sources (Buddhist Texts)

Taisho Issaikyo, published from 1924 to 1934, is a Japanese scholarly rearrangement of the canon, which includes critical notes and punctuation (not consistently correct), it is reference to as the "Taisho". All references to a Chinese Buddhist text should give the Taisho source. T262, T1435, T2125

### Secondary Sources

- |                              |      |   |
|------------------------------|------|---|
| Bao Jia-seng /<br>Hsiao Tong | 1999 | <i>Architecture (9): Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia</i> Taipei: Fo Guang Publisher                                 |
| Herbert J. Gans              | 1985 | <i>Popular Cultural and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste</i> Taipei: Yunchen Industry Co.        |
| Hsing Yun<br>Venerable       | 1998 | <i>Fo Guang Ta Ci Dan</i> 《佛光大辭典》 KHS: Fo Guang Publisher   |
|                              | 1999 | <i>Buddhim and Worldly Study (8): Fo guang extbooks.</i> Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Publisher                            |
|                              | 2001 | <i>Universal gate Buddhist Journal</i> Issue 1. Taipei: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Education |

	2001	<i>Universal gate Buddhist Journal</i> Issue 1. Taipei: Fo Guang Shan Foundation for Buddhist Culture & Education
Jiadizheding	1993	<i>Chinese Buddhist Literary.</i> Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Publisher
Trans. by Liu Wei- xin, Liang Qi-chao	1971	<i>Eighteen Chapters of Buddhist Study.</i> Taipei: Taiwan Zhong-hua Bookstore
Zhang Hung-sheng	1999	<i>Poetry and Verse (7): Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia</i> Taipei: Fo Guang Publisher
Zhang Li-guo	1999	<i>Painting (8): Chinese Buddhism Encyclopedia.</i> Taipei: Fo Guang Publisher
Kanata, Shigeo (鎌田茂雄), trans. by Guan Shi-qian	1986	<i>General History of Chinese Buddhism</i> Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Publisher

#### Internet Sources

David Carpenter of Saint Joseph's University has a list of definitions at: <http://www.sju.edu/>

Dusan Pajin "The Fourth Turn of the Wheel of the Dharma" *The Wisdom Torch* V.376

Joel Elliott, slide set on "Defining Religion," at: <http://www.unc.edu/>

"The Definition of Culture"

<http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/anthrology/course/122/module1/culture> 12/25/2004

According to the sutras, there are four kinds of friends: friends who treat you like a flower, friends who act like a balance, friends who are like the mountains and friends who are like the earth.

We all enjoy flowers, especially when they are fresh. We put them in vases to decorate our homes, we give them to our loved ones to express our affection, and we may even wear them in our hair. However, when the flowers wilt, we toss them out like trash. Some people treat their friends like this. They are delighted as long as their friends can fulfill certain needs of theirs, but when their friends outlive their usefulness, they toss them out like wilted flowers. When their friends are prosperous and thriving, they treat them with reverence. When their friends are down on their luck or losing their vitality, they distance themselves from their friends and their misfortune. This can be seen in the saying, "The poor live in the city without anyone asking after them. The rich live in secluded areas and distant relatives come calling." It is so habitual for us to love what is beautiful and scorn what is not. Curbing this tendency is a significant step in making and maintaining friendships that will last a lifetime.

-*Living Affinity*, Hsing Yun, p.27