

化世與益人

——二〇〇六年十月國際佛光會第十一次世界大會主題演說

星雲

國際佛光會世界總會會長

副總會長、各位長者、各位理事、各位協會督導、會長、各位貴賓、各位佛光人，大家好！

今年是國際佛光會創會第十五周年，也是佛光山開山屆滿四十週年，在這別具意義的時刻裡，很高興看到這麼多來自全球的佛光人，大家不遠千里回到總本山，共同在這裡召開二〇〇六年國際佛光會世界會員代表大會，心中無比欣慰。

回顧過去十五年來，所有佛光會員分布在世界各地化世益人，大家不辭辛苦地弘法傳教、成立分會、舉辦各類活動，乃至護持佛光道場所推動的各項弘法事業等，不但在生活中參與奉獻，增加很多宗教體驗，同時也為自己與社會寫下無數的歷史，尤其見證了佛光會的成長以及「佛教全球化」發展的成就，因此今天在這裡首先要對大家表示由衷的讚歎，同時藉由這次的因緣，提出「化世與益人」，做為今年大會的主題，也是表示對各位佛光會員的一份期許與希望。

談到「化世」與「益人」，我想到自己這一生，從十二歲出家以來，心中始終只有一個念頭，那就是「為了佛教」。

「為了佛教」，雖然自己從小就在叢林裡過著清苦淡泊的歲月，但是我一點也不覺得辛苦或委屈，因為「為了佛教」。為了佛教，我出家；為了佛教，眼看著同道中有人熱衷於供養優渥的經懺事業，但是我一點也不心動，因為「為了佛教」，我立願將來一定要從事弘法利生的工作。甚至為了佛教，儘管年輕時就不斷有一些來自教內教外的誘惑，例如有人想要請我擔任當家、住持，有人希望我從事有名位、有權利的職務，但是我都斷然拒絕，因為我有另外的想法，那就是「為了佛教」。

什麼是「為了佛教」？其實在當時我只知道為了佛教我要讀書，為了佛教我要參學，為了佛教我要勤勞，為了佛教我要發心，為了佛教我要結緣，為了佛教我要興辦各種佛教事業。所以後來創辦第一所佛教學院時，平常不趕經懺的我，不但主動到太平間為人誦經，甚至通宵念佛，目的就是希望多增加一些辦學的經費，那時我心裡很清楚知道，這才是「為了佛教」。

乃至後來爲了建設佛光道場，爲了推動佛教的文教、慈善等各項弘法事業，雖然種種辛苦，但是「爲了佛教」，我從來不曾心生退卻，甚至在虛度八十年歲月後，至今仍然雲水行腳於全世界，到處講經說法、隨緣度眾，這一切無非都是「爲了佛教」。

爲了佛教，我把自己的一生奉獻給「化世」與「益人」，因爲這才是真正的「爲了佛教」。所以，今天我僅針對「化世與益人」這個主題，提出：

一、以自覺健全來化世益人

二、以發心動力來化世益人

三、以隨眾參與來化世益人

四、以菩提願力來化世益人

等四點意見，提供給佛光會員共同勉勵，希望大家未來都能朝此「化世益人」的方向努力。

一、以自覺健全來化世益人

佛教是個重視「覺悟」的宗教，不只佛陀本身因爲「自覺」、「覺他」、「覺行圓滿」而成就佛道，就是佛陀所說的教法，無非也是爲了引導有情悟入佛的知見，讓眾生「覺佛所覺、悟佛所悟」而能與佛平等，所以學佛主要的目的就是要開智慧，求覺悟。

所謂「覺悟」，「覺」就是證悟涅槃妙理的智慧，「悟」就是生起真智，反轉迷夢，覺悟真理實相。學佛雖然是要向佛陀學習，但是「覺悟」必須要靠自己，不能依賴別人；凡事靠別人幫助終究有限，尤其開悟證果、修行成道，一定要靠自己自覺。例如，自覺人生憂悲苦惱，自覺生死無常，自覺人情多變，自覺世間國土危脆，難以安身立命；有了自覺，才會努力想方法去克服這許多的煩惱妄想，才會發心健全自己，才能獲得自在安樂，如果自己不懂得自覺自悟，即使佛陀慈悲，也不能幫助我們自覺覺他，不能幫助我們開悟成佛。

談到「成佛」，所謂「佛」者，如《佛地論》說：「於一切法、一切種相，能自開覺，亦能開覺一切有情，如睡夢覺，如蓮花開，故名爲佛。」佛陀雖然是覺悟宇宙真理的覺者，也是徹知宇宙真相的智者，但其實「佛是已覺悟的眾生，眾生是未覺悟的佛」，佛是人成，所以人人都有成佛的性能，每一個人的清淨自性本來就與佛無異，只是因爲被無明煩惱所覆而不能顯發，就如明鏡蒙塵，又如明月爲烏雲所遮蔽，因此《法華經》說「懷珠作丐」、「藏寶受貧」，這是眾生最大的遺憾。

吾人發心學佛，最主要的目的就在於去除煩惱、開顯佛性。人的根本煩惱就是貪瞋癡，因此要「勤修戒定慧，息滅貪瞋癡」，只要三毒息滅，三慧明朗，就能破除無始以來的無明，這就是「自覺」，也就是禪宗所說的「開悟」或「見性」。

在中國的禪門一直很著重「自覺」，凡事要靠自己去參，不能說破。當初佛陀在靈山會上「拈華示眾」，迦葉尊者靈犀相應，破顏而笑，於是佛陀把「正法眼藏，涅槃妙心，實相無相，微妙法門，不立文字，教外別傳，付囑摩訶迦葉。」禪因此就在「拈華微笑」、師徒心意相契的剎那之間流傳下來，這就是「自覺」。

「自覺」就是一種自我教育，佛經講：「自依止、法依止、莫異依止」，這就是自我教育。人要靠自我教育才能成功，因為自己的缺陷、自己的無知、自己需要教育的地方，只有自己最清楚，因此要做自己的老師，自己教育自己。也就是說，人要懂得自我要求、自我學習、自我充實、自我反省；凡事能夠反求諸己，不斷自問、自覺、自發、自悟，透過自我的觀照才能找到自己，否則如《遺教經》說：「我如善導，導人善路，汝若不行，咎不在導；我如良醫，應病與藥，汝若不服，過不在醫。」自己不覺，不但佛陀幫不了我們的忙，即使佛教的出版品多如汗牛充棟，佛教的大藏經再怎麼精闢的闡述般若真理，都不能幫助我們覺悟，一定要自我閱讀、深入經藏，透過聞思修才能自覺自悟。

《圓覺經》說：「譬如銷金鑛，金非銷故有；雖復本來金，終以銷成就；一成真金體，不復重為鑛。」學佛就如開採金礦一般，雖然佛性人人本具，但若不經過修行，則如金礦未經開採，終不能得。所以，關於如何自覺健全？下列的問題可供大家自我審查：

- (一)我對皈依三寶的信心具足嗎？
- (二)我對受持五戒的觀念清楚嗎？
- (三)我對因緣果報的見解正確嗎？
- (四)我對自己的服務助人真心嗎？
- (五)我對護持正法的方式正確嗎？
- (六)我對參與活動的心地清淨嗎？
- (七)我對佛法的進修日有進步嗎？
- (八)我對佛法道理有融入身心嗎？

以上八點，如果你都有正面而肯定的答案，就表示你有自覺，證明你對佛法的信心堅固，你在學佛的道路上也會自我健全，甚至還懂得發四無量心、行六度波羅蜜，乃至發奮加行，饒益有情，廣度眾生；否則光陰虛度，徒有學佛之名，沒有得到學佛的實益，實在可惜。故此首先提出「自覺健全」的呼籲，因為一個人如果沒有自覺，即使給你再好的東西、教你再

多的道理都沒有用，唯有自己自覺才能不斷進步，唯有自己自覺才能自我健全，唯有自己自覺才能化世益人。

二、以發心動力來化世益人

佛教的百千法門中，「發心」最為重要，如《勸發菩提心文》說：「入道要門，發心為首，修行急務，立願居先；願立，則眾生可度；心發，則佛道堪成。」發心就是開發我們的心地，就是建設自我。佛教將「心」比喻為「田」、為「地」；田地不開發，就無法播種；心地不開發，也無法長養菩提，所以在佛門的修持裡，發心第一，例如發「四無量心」、發「四弘誓願」等，發心才有動力去實踐「四攝法」、「四加行」，才能自度度人。

講到「發心」，十五年來的佛光人，大家在國際佛光會這個教團裡，有的人發心當會長、幹部、檀講師，乃至榮任督導、長者，有的人發心參與讀書會、訂閱佛書、參與印經、推廣福報、勸募會員、捐獻淨財、參與救災、護持道場、帶領朝山、參加法會，或是推動臘八粥運動、雲水佈教、托鉢興學等，甚至有的人到學校、監獄去做公民教育、心靈諮商、佛法開示等，你們以自己的行動，表達今日二十一世紀的佛教徒全部都動員起來了，大家都懂得要走出自我、走出家庭，進而走入社會來與大眾結緣、聯誼。就拿十五年來，國際佛光會召開的世界會員大會、理監事會議、青年會議、金剛會議、婦女會議、童軍會議等，大家就不只十幾次的東西方相互往來、洲際之間彼此互動。這樣的情誼交流，帶動了佛法的傳揚，促進了人際的和諧，這都是由於各位的發心所產生的動力而成就。

發心就是開發心田，學佛首先要學會發心，心的田地如果不開發，縱使外緣具足，福德具足，也不能長出菩提之苗。就像一粒種子，如果沒有好的田地，它就不能結出好的花果，所以我們要開發心中的財富，開發心地的能源，必須從「發心」開始。

世間上，發心有多大，成就便有多大，發心的力量不可思議。過去儒家的學者一直叫人要立志，佛教的行者則要人發願；立志、發願，就是發心，心一發，則志可立，心一發，則願可成。

發心的力量真是微妙，例如：你發心吃飯，飯菜不但可以吃飽，而且味道更加美妙；你發心睡覺，覺會睡得更加甜蜜、更加安然。只要一發心，所做的事情，品質就都不一樣了，正是所謂：「平常一樣窗前月，才有梅花便不同。」只可惜世間上的人大多心外求法，不知道自家裡有無限的寶藏，所以一般人只懂得要把荒地、山坡地，開發成為農地、建地，卻不知道我們的心裡有無限的寶藏、無限的能源。因此，聰明的人應該反求諸己，應該由外向內來開發我們自己心裡的能源和寶藏。

發心是一本萬利的投資，在佛教裡都鼓勵人要發慈悲心，要發菩提心，要發增上心。我們究竟要有什麼樣的發心呢？茲提供幾點方向如下：

(一)我們要有「慚愧自己所學有限」的發心，比方說很多的文學典故我不懂，很多的科技常識我不知道，很多的哲學理論我不明白，甚至於做人處事的道理我都不健全，因而感到慚愧。因為慚愧自己的才疏學淺，才會激勵自己發心學習，所以要廣學多聞，要博覽一切常識，不會駕駛的就去學開車，不會電腦的就去學習電腦資訊管理，不會記帳的就去學習會計帳目，不會音樂唱歌的就去學習各種樂器等。

(二)我們要有「慚愧自己能力不足」的發心，譬如我做事不周全，我教書不能盡職，我領導人不盡圓滿；因為慚愧自己的無能，因此要發心增強自己的能力，以便更能擔當，更能負責。

(三)我們要有「慚愧自己心地不淨」的發心，例如心裡常常充滿貪瞋煩惱，常常有侵犯別人的意念，常常心懷陰謀詭計；因為慚愧自己心地不清淨，因此要發心來改善自己、淨化自己。

(四)我們要有「慚愧自己善念薄弱」的發心，譬如自己不能常常心存善念，不能盡心盡力廣做善事，所以今後要發心多做一點善事，多布施一些善財，多帶給別人一些歡喜。

此外，我們尤其要開發如海、如空、如地、如性的真心：

(一)開發如海的真心：大海不但是魚蝦的宮殿，大海也蘊藏了無限的寶藏，現代人要開採石油能源，不都是往大海裡探勘嗎？大海的資源，往往可以成為國家的財富，所以各個國家都要保護海域，就是保護國家的資源。我們的真心也像大海一樣，蘊藏著慈悲、菩提等豐富的寶藏，所以要開發他。

(二)開發如空的真心：我們的心可以用「虛空」來比喻，所謂「心如虛空，量周沙界」，虛空裡有日月星辰，虛空裡有雷電雨露，虛空裡容納宇宙萬有，所以現代各個國家都想探索太空，希望能在太空裡找到寶藏。我們的心也如虛空，充滿了歡喜、滿足等無窮的寶藏，我們要經過開發，才能找到寶藏。

(三)開發如地的真心：大地是我們的母親，大地孕育了我們的生命，人類不但靠天吃飯、靠海過活，而且靠地維生。大地能成長萬物，地底更蘊藏著金銀銅鐵等各種寶礦。我們的心也如大地，埋藏著佛性、真如等無限的寶藏，懂得開發心地，才能讓寶藏出土。

(四)開發如性的真心：每個人都有一顆自性真心，當我們開發了如海的真心、如空的真心、如地的真心以後，如果能再開發自己的性天，把本性的天地加以開發，就能發掘自己的真如自性，就能見到自己的本來面目，就能找到自己的家鄉，就能尋回自己的所有了。

總之，凡能幫助我們完成「自利利他，自覺覺他」之學佛最高目標的願心，諸如感恩心、慚愧心、向道心、功德心、深信心、尊敬心、廣大心、忍耐心等，都是學佛者不可一刻或忘的發心。

發心，就是立志，就是發願；發心是動力，無論什麼機器都要講究它的動力有多少。我們每一個人也要自問自己的能量、動力有多大？能量、動力來自於發心，你所發的心願有多大，動力就有多大，所以關於如何「化世益人」的第二點，我希望未來全體佛光會員都能以「發心動力」來化世益人。

三、以隨眾參與來化世益人

世間萬法，都靠因緣和合才能成就，所謂「緣聚則成，緣滅則散」，缺少因緣，不但諸事難成；離開因緣，個人也無法生存，所以人不能離開大眾。大眾就是我們的因緣，大眾就是幫助我們生存的條件，故而佛教講究「緣起」，講究「集體創作」，講究「眾緣所成」。

佛教把人稱為「眾生」，意即「眾緣和合而生」。世間上沒有個人單獨存在的時空，要存在，一定要靠大眾相互依存；有了大眾的因緣成就，個人才能存活。因此，我們要把這些因緣聚集起來，再分享、利益給大眾，千萬不要做離群的自了漢，因為「佛果在眾生身上求」，離開大眾，固然生命無法生存，失去大眾，也無佛道可成。

眾，實在是一個非常美好的意思，像「眾生平等」、「以眾為我」、「大眾第一」、「眾志成城」、「眾望所歸」、「眾擎易舉」、「眾星拱月」等，乃至佛經所說，任何一個法會，任何一個事業，都需要「眾成就」，因此和合隨順眾生才能成事，這是不容置疑的真理！

談到「眾」的重要，在自然界裡，樹木都要叢生成林，花草也講究簇生聚集，動物也都是「物以類聚」。人也不例外，我們每個人來到這個世間，都是雙手空空而來，雖然在世間建設了家庭，有了眷屬、家人、財產、事業，最後還是得空空而去，因此人生最好就是擁有佛法、擁有功德、擁有福田、擁有大眾、擁有未來，這些才是永恆持續的資產，才是生命的最高價值。

尤其，世間上最寶貴者，並非黃金白玉，也不是汽車洋房；最可貴的是「緣分」。人與人要有緣分才能和好；人與事要有緣分才能成功；人與社會，乃至事事物物、你、我、他等

等，都要有緣分才能圓滿功德。因此，在人世間有許多的好事值得我們去做，例如布施、守法、奉獻、服務等；在眾多的善法之中，沒有一樣比「給人一些因緣」更為重要。

「緣」不是佛教的專有名詞，緣是宇宙人生的真理，緣是屬於每一個人的。人的一生都是在「緣」中輪轉，例如機會就是機「緣」；世間凡事要靠眾「緣」和合才能成功，建房子少個一磚一瓦，都不算完成。在人生的旅途上，有的人碰到困難就會有貴人適時相助，這都是因為曾經結緣的緣故，所以今日結緣就是為來日的患難與共做準備，「結緣」實在是人世間最有保障的投資。

人既然是依靠因緣而生存在這個世界上，因此今後佛光人應該隨眾參與各種活動，多多廣結善緣，因緣愈多，成就愈大；尤其我們要創辦各種佛光事業，有了事業才能利益大眾。過去一般人以為佛教的事業，無非就是誦經祈福，喪葬超渡；或是深入山林，農耕自足，過著離欲清淨的生活。事實上，千百年來佛教一直為人間提供各種醫療救濟、社會公益、教育文化等事業，不遺餘力的造福社會，利濟群生。

例如：北魏的僧祇粟與僧祇戶，幫助政府解決人民的飢饉；南北朝的寺庫、唐代三階教的無盡藏院，以及歷代所從事的油坊、當舖、旅店、茶館、食堂、碾磑業等，都是繁榮經濟、便民利國的福利事業。尤其隋唐佛教之所以興盛蓬勃，寺院發展佛教事業來利濟蒼生，可以說是主要的原因之一。其中磨坊、碾廠、倉庫促進民生的發展，宿坊、車坊便利商旅的往來，義學、私塾、藏經閣、譯經院提昇社會的文教，僧祇粟、寺庫穩定國家的金融，病坊、當舖照顧貧者的需要。

其實更擴大開來看，歷代的寺院無不興辦許多利濟群生的事業，包括植樹造林、墾荒闢田、鑿井開渠、興建水利、維護泉源、築橋鋪路、興建公廁、建立涼亭、利濟行旅、經營碾磨、設置浴室、賑饑濟貧、施醫給藥、養老育幼、急難救助，乃至開辦義塚、義學等。也可以說，佛教自從傳入中國之後，一直隨著時代的發展，從農業生產到工業參與，從旅遊服務到臨終關懷，從當舖油坊到倉庫碾磑，從慈善工作到文教事業，不但帶動經濟的蓬勃發展，更是提昇了社會的人文素養。

一直到了現在，我們以實踐「人間佛教」為目標的佛光會員，更要有計畫地興辦各種佛教事業來化世益人，福利社會。例如可以設立佛教文物流通處，讓佛教徒及社會人士方便獲得各類佛書、法物、佛教錄音帶、錄影帶等，以帶動佛教文物流通，使佛教文化得以弘揚。或者在各地成立佛光緣美術館、滴水書坊、語言翻譯中心、醫療護理中心，乃至成立讀書會、推動人間音緣、提倡心靈環保、重視生態保育等，透過語文、講說、音樂、藝術、護生、救濟、醫療等，都可以提供廣大群眾接觸佛教的因緣，藉此利樂十方眾生。

甚至佛光人爲了發展慧學，將來你們也可以進入佛光山創辦的各級學校教書，或是加入佛學研究中心來深入經藏，專心研究、推動人間佛教的思想、經論，或是到佛光山的禪堂、淨業林，體驗禪淨雙修，落實解行並重，乃至加入佛光教團，支薪工作等。

以下茲就適合佛教徒從事的事業，列舉數十種，提供佛光會員發展事業之參考：

(一)**文化事業**：報社、電台、電視台、書局、唱片行、佛教文物流通處、美術館、文化廣場、出版社、印刷廠、翻譯社、劇場、音樂廳、會議中心等。

(二)**教育事業**：各級學校、幼稚園、補習班、外籍新娘識字班、長青學院、才藝中心、信徒大學、社區大學等。

(三)**社會福利**：醫院、復健中心、洗腎中心、療養院、安養院、老人俱樂部、托兒所、育幼院、兒童之家等。

(四)**服務業**：旅行社、葬儀社、花店、托運公司、顧問公司、律師事務所、保險公司、職業介紹所、技能訓練班等。

(五)**工商類**：超級市場、佛教百貨公司、大飯店、素食館、物流中心、室內設計公司、園藝設計公司、電力公司、自來水廠、農場、工廠等。

以上所舉之外，只要是能化世益人，只要對國家民生、對社會大眾、對經濟利益、對幸福快樂生活有所增益的事業，佛光會員都可以視自己的專長、興趣和經濟能力，實際投入參與。另外，未來佛光會員還應致力於傳統與現代的融和，要將古老的東西改良成爲現代人可以接受的方式，例如集會的改良、共修的改良、活動多元化的舉辦等。尤其要鼓勵青年團、童軍團的發展，以便接引更多的青年人共同參與佛教事業，相信必能更有助於發揮佛教化導俗世、利益大眾之功。

四、以菩提願力來化世益人

佛教講究智慧，但尤重慈悲；重視慈悲，更重行願。佛教的諸佛菩薩，都是依靠悲智願行而成就道業，因此前面提到，學佛首重發心立願，如《大集經》說：「發願能摧伏煩惱魔軍。」《大智度論》也說：「作福無願，無所標立；願爲導御，能有所成。」由此可見，入道之由莫不行願，因爲「果」雖然是由「行」所招感，但是如果沒有「願」力，即使是行，也無法到達所期望的目的，所以學佛要發菩提心，立菩提願。

菩提心就是指自覺覺他，就是「上求佛道、下化眾生」的大願心。過去佛教所以衰微，就是因為佛教徒悲智願行的力量不夠，例如「四弘誓願」，大眾敢唱不敢講，敢講不敢做，敢做做不到。所以今日佛教要興隆，佛教徒必須要有悲智願行，應該要效法古聖先賢，發大菩提心，例如佛陀在菩提樹下金剛座上立願「若不成佛，誓不起座」，阿彌陀佛發四十八大願成就極樂淨土，藥師如來發十二大願莊嚴琉璃世界，乃至文殊、普賢、觀音、地藏，也是以慈悲行願做為實踐的行門。

此外，玄奘大師西天求法，鑒真大師東渡日本弘法等，他們化世益人的精神都值得我們學習；乃至「四弘誓願」更是每一位大乘行者所應奉行的功課，所以發心奉行菩薩道的佛光會員，都應該以「菩提願力」來化世益人，因為「人間佛教」一旦離開了菩提心，那就是世間法，就會遠離佛道。

因此，我們要如何發菩提心，如何發大願才有力量呢？如《楞嚴經》說：「因地不正，果遭迂曲。」發心立願要合於《大乘起信論》的「大」、「正」、「圓」、「真」，要有「假使熱鐵輪，於汝頂上旋，終不為此苦，退失菩提心」的發願，如此才不會偏離正道。

以下茲舉數例，提供佛光會員發願之參考：

- (一)我願作一個正信的佛子，用佛法分享世人。
- (二)我願將正信佛教，傳之於世界。
- (三)我願到邊遠落後的地方，傳揚佛法。
- (四)我願到苦難的地方，施與愛心。
- (五)我願將產業交給佛教團體，永續經營；我願將遺產交與佛教團體，利益群生。
- (六)我願建立正知正見的佛化家庭，重視信仰傳承。
- (七)我願奉行一師一道，護持正法。
- (八)我願發心著書、說法、修行、傳教。

此外，現代佛教徒應該以現實人生的需要，幫助社會解除苦難為自己的願行，例如：

(一)成立「電話法語中心」，讓求助無門的苦悶者，用電話訴說心事，給予一些佛法的指導和慰問。

(二)成立「救苦救難中心」，讓徘徊在人生十字路口的人，及時得到救助，免於誤入歧途。

(三)成立「佛法諮詢中心」，為社會上一些有疑難的人，給予佛法的心理輔導，助其解決生活、職業、家庭、感情上的問題。

(四)成立「老人俱樂部」，提供一般老人聚會、喝茶、下棋、閱報、念佛等，不但藉機聯誼，同時可以從佛法裡獲得身心的安頓。

(五)成立「大同養老之家」，發揮「老吾老以及人之老」的精神，照顧社會上許多獨居老人，使其免於孤單無依之苦。

(六)成立「收容之家」，對於一時因故無家可歸的貧病孤弱，給予暫時收容，以便重新調整身心，再創前途！

(七)成立「婦女求職中心」，提供鄉村婦女到都市求職時，解決其求職前的食宿問題，讓他有一個緩衝時間，以免遭到壞人所騙。

(八)成立「病患慰問團」，有組織、有計畫的到醫院，或到病患家裡慰問，為其誦經祝福，贈送佛書，以慰病苦。

(九)參加「送醫藥到偏遠地區」活動，如佛光山雲水醫院，讓健康的人出錢，為窮苦的人看病。

(十)組織「急難扶持會」，對一些遭受重大天災人禍而流離失守、生活無著的人，及時施以救濟，此即一般所謂「救急不救窮」也。

(十一)發心將個人薪水所得，撥出十分之一做為布施之用。

(十二)每週安排數小時的時間，為信仰或慈善而加入義工服務。

其實發心立願並不是佛教徒的專利，社會上任何一個人都應該發心立願，發心，才能把事情做好；立願，做事才有目標。尤其今日社會亂象紛陳，很多人在為世風日下、道德淪喪而感到憂心不安之際，如果人人都能發心立願，例如：身為警察的，發願克盡職守，除暴安良，打擊犯罪，消除社會的歪風邪道；身為家庭主婦的，發願孝順公婆，教育兒女，體貼丈夫，確保家庭的倫理道德、和諧美滿；身為學生的，發願用功讀書，孝順父母，尊敬師長，和睦朋友，做個品學兼優的好學生。甚至舉國上下，如果人人都能發願，願於每日把歡喜布施給別人，把快樂分享給大眾，相信必能使社會充滿祥和之氣。

總之，發願就像開採能源一樣，心裡的能源是每個人取之不盡，用之不竭的最大財富。唯有人人經常立志發願，才能為自己留下歷史，為家庭留下貢獻，為社會留下慈悲，為世界留下光明！

因此，希望未來所有佛光人等，不分男女老幼，人人都能擁有悲智願行，都能以菩提願力來化世益人，則佛教普及社會，深入人心，自是指日可待。

國際佛光會的成立，不但有助於提昇信眾信仰的層次，同時也是佛教史上革命性的創舉。十五年來，在佛光會員們共同推動「人間佛教」的努力下，已逐漸實現佛教的生活化、現代化、本土化、國際化。未來更期許每個會員，都能本著佛教慈悲、智慧的特質，人人自覺健全，同時以發心為動力，隨眾參與、護持佛教的弘法事業，更以菩提願力為後盾，一起為佛法的弘傳，為世界的淨化，為人類的幸福安樂而奉獻心力。

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

Venerable Master Hsing Yun

11th BLIA General Conference

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

October 4-8, 2006

English Translation: Ven. Miao Guang

Revised by: Ven. Miao Hsi & International Translation Center

Vice-Presidents, Elders, Directors, Chapter Elder-Advisors, Chapter Presidents, Distinguished Guests, Buddha's Light Members, greetings to you all!

This year marks both Buddha's Light International Association's 15th anniversary and Fo Guang Shan's 40th anniversary. I feel much joy and delight in seeing so many of the world's Buddha's Light members gathering at Fo Guang Shan Headquarters for the association's 2006 General Conference.

Throughout the past fifteen years, BLIA members around the world have been striving to change the world and benefit humanity. Everyone has devoted tireless efforts to propagating Buddhism, establishing sub-chapters, organizing a wide range of activities and even supported and helped promote the events and undertakings of Fo Guang Shan's branch temples. Not only have you dedicated your time and built upon your religious experiences, you have also created history for both yourselves and society. As I witness the growth of BLIA and your achievements in the globalization of Buddhism, I offer my most sincere praises and admiration to all of you today. At the same time, I would also like to use this opportunity to propose "Change the World and Benefit Humanity" as the theme of this year's general conference, which is also my expectations and wishes for every Buddha's Light member.

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

Speaking of “Change the World” and “Benefit Humanity,” I am reminded of a thought that has existed in my mind ever since I became a Buddhist monk at the age of twelve, that is, “it is for Buddhism’s sake.”

It has all been for Buddhism’s sake. Despite having grown up inside a monastery living a frugal and simple life, I never for a moment felt mistreated or deprived, because it was all for Buddhism’s sake. I became ordained for Buddhism’s sake; I remained firm against temptations of rich offerings from conducting chanting services, because I had resolved to devote my life to propagating the Dharma and benefiting sentient beings for Buddhism’s sake; I declined positions of abbot and those of authority and fame from a young age, because I had my own thoughts and directions, and it was “all for Buddhism’s sake.”

What do I mean when I say “It is for Buddhism’s sake”? I knew that for the sake of Buddhism, I had to study, travel and learn, be diligent, resolve to make things happen, develop good connections, and establish all kinds of Buddhist undertakings. For this reason, I broke my commitment to never be trapped by an endless array of chanting services and offered to chant for people in the morgue and even agreed to conduct over-night chanting services just to raise funds for the first Buddhist College that I established. I was very clear with what I was doing, because it was all for Buddhism’s sake. Even when faced with all kinds of hardships and difficulties in my attempts to establish Fo Guang Shan temples and to promote Buddhist culture, art, charity and other Dharma propagating events, the thought of giving up never for once crossed my mind, because it was all for the sake of Buddhism. For the same reason, I have continued traveling around the world on a hectic schedule to give Dharma talks despite being eighty years old. Everything I have done is for Buddhism’s sake.

For Buddhism’s sake, I have dedicated my whole life to “Change the World” and “Benefit Humanity,” because these are the true meanings of “It is for Buddhism’s Sake.” Therefore, I propose today, the following four suggestions based on the topic “Change the World and Benefit Humanity.” May all Buddha’s Light members find mutual encouragement and future directions in them:

1. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Self-Awareness and Integrity
2. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Resolve and Energy

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

3. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Participation and Involvement
4. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Bodhi Wisdom and the Power of Vows

1. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Self-Awareness and Integrity

Buddhism is a religion that emphasizes the pursuit of enlightenment. Prince Siddhartha reached buddhahood not only by becoming enlightened himself, he also enlightened other beings and perfected his own practice and wisdom. This is exactly what his teachings embodied, “to guide sentient beings in becoming enlightened to what the Buddha was enlightened to, and awaken to what the Buddha awakened to” so as to help them realize that they are on equal terms with the Buddha. Therefore, the main purpose of learning Buddhism is to seek wisdom and pursue enlightenment.

Enlightenment consists of two parts, first it is the wisdom that enables one to become awakened to the wondrous truth and nirvana, while the second means to allow true wisdom to arise and convert illusion into truth. Although learning Buddhism requires us to learn from the Buddha’s thoughts and conduct, enlightenment must be attained by our own effort. By relying on others, our achievements will be very limited; especially when it comes to enlightenment and spiritual practice, these can only be accomplished by self-awareness. For example, we must be aware of the worries, sorrows and distress of life; be aware of the fact that life and death are both impermanent; be aware of the fact that people change very quickly; be aware that our world is subject to dangers, can be very unstable, and that it is not the ultimate place for us to settle our body and mind. Only with self-awareness will we find the strength to deal with these worries and illusions, resolve to maintain our integrity, and find peace and stability. Without self-awareness and self-awakening, even Buddha cannot help us attain enlightenment or attain buddhahood.

Speaking of “becoming a buddha,” the word ‘buddha’ as described in *Treatise on the Buddha-bhūmi*, as some thing that “under any circumstances or form, is able to enlighten oneself and others. A buddha is like someone who has awakened from a deep sleep, or a lotus flower that has come into full bloom.” While the Buddha is enlightened to the truth of this universe, he is still an enlightened sentient being, and sentient beings are buddhas-

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

to-be. Since a buddha originates from a human being, every human being has the potential to become a buddha, because his or her pure nature is no different from that of a buddha. For this reason, *The Lotus Sutra* uses examples such as a beggar carrying a priceless pearl in his sleeve without knowing so, and a poor man unaware of the treasure that he owned to explain the greatest pity of humanity.

When we resolve to learn about Buddhism, our most important objective is to eliminate our worries and uncover our Buddha Nature, and the way to do so is to observe the precepts, practice meditation, and cultivate our wisdom in order to extinguish the flames of greed, hatred, and ignorance. Once we eliminate the Three Poisons and allow the Three Wisdoms to shine, we will be able to put an end to our beginningless ignorance, and this is what we mean by self-awareness. In other words, it is what the Chan School means by enlightenment or realizing our true nature.

The lineages of Chinese Chan schools have always placed much emphasis on “self-awareness,” we must do all the inquiries and thinking by ourselves, because no one can offer us specific instructions. When the Buddha picked up a flower on Vulture Peak to show the assembly, only Mahakasyapa knew what he meant and smiled back, therefore the Buddha announced, “I have the Right Dharma-Eye Treasury, the wondrous mind of nirvana, the reality beyond form, the wondrous method without written language and not to be transmitted externally. The Dharma-door of mind-to-mind transmission has been entrusted to Kasyapa.” With a flower and two smiles, Chan was transmitted from a master to his disciple the moment an unspoken agreement was established between the two. This is also what we mean by self-awareness.

Self-awareness is also a way of self-education, and this also refers to what is mentioned in the sutras, “Rely on yourself, rely on the Dharma, and rely on nothing else.” Self-education is the key to our success, as we are most clear of our own faults and ignorance, we must educate ourselves and teach ourselves how to rectify our shortcomings. In other words, we must be demanding of ourselves, and attain the ability for self-learning, self-enrichment, and self-reflection. We need to learn to seek the cause in ourselves and make consistent effort in questioning ourselves, be self-aware, be one with our own initiative, and enlighten ourselves. Through continued self-reflection, we are able to find our true self. Otherwise, it will be as *Sutra of Bequeathed Teachings* indicates, “I am but a guide

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

that points out the path to you; if you do not follow, it is not the guide to blame. I am but a good doctor who prescribes the medicine for your illness, if you do not take the medicine, the fault does not lie with the doctor.” If we do not even attempt to enlighten ourselves, not only will the Buddha not be of help to us, even a world of books on Buddhism will not help us gain understanding of the profound prajna wisdom. Therefore, we must read extensively and study deeply the Buddhist texts; the process of listening, thinking, and practice will enable us to be self-awakened and self-enlightened.

The *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* says, “The gold does not come into being because it is smelted, but its form of gold is perfected by the smelting, and after refinement, will never revert to being ore.” The process of learning Buddhism is like excavating a gold mine; although Buddha Nature is an intrinsic part of us, without spiritual cultivation, it is like gold buried deep within a mine that is never discovered. The following are some methods of self-assessment that should enable us to know whether we do or do not have self-awareness and integrity:

1. Do I have confidence in taking refuge in the Triple Gem?
2. Am I clear about the concept of the Five Precepts?
3. Do I possess the right understanding of causes, conditions, and effects?
4. Am I sincere in serving and helping others?
5. Am I protecting the Dharma in a proper manner?
6. Am I participating in activities and events with pure intentions?
7. Are my practices of Buddhism improving by the day?
8. Have the theories of the Dharma assimilated into my thoughts and actions?

If we have positive and confident answers to the above eight questions, then it means not only do we have self-awareness and firm belief in the Dharma, we also have the ability to maintain our integrity on the path of spiritual cultivation and a mind open to the Four Immeasurable States of Mind and the Six Paramitas. We may even progress at a very active pace and help all sentient beings to be liberated from suffering. Otherwise, our life will have been lived in vain, because we will have never really benefited from being a

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

Buddhist. For this reason, I have proposed self-awareness and integrity as the first point, because without self-awareness, no matter how precious the treasure we are given, how many theories are taught to us, they will all be useless. Only with self-awareness will we see the need to keep improving, maintain our own integrity, and then change the world and benefit humanity.

2. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Resolve and Energy

Among the thousands of ways of Buddhist practices, to resolve is the most important, just as it is said in *An Inspiration for the Bodhicitta*, “The key to entering the Way is having resolve; the essential for cultivation is making vows. With a firm vow, then sentient beings can be saved; with resolve, the path of Buddhahood is attainable.” To resolve is to cultivate our mind and to construct a more complete self. Buddhism uses a field or a ground as a metaphor for the mind, and no seeds can grow in an uncultivated field. Similarly, without first developing the field of the mind, bodhi wisdom cannot be cultivated. Hence, resolve becomes the first step to practicing Buddhism; for example, resolve to develop the Four Immeasurable States of Mind and the Four Universal Vows. Only by then will we be equipped with the energy to put into practice the Four Means of Embracing and the Four Good Roots so as to enlighten ourselves and others.

Speaking of resolve, Buddha’s Light members have for the past fifteen years, resolved to take on the roles of presidents, executive members, Lay Dharma Lecturers, elder advisors, and elders; some have resolved to participate in reading clubs, subscribe to Buddhist publications, sponsor the printing of sutras, promote the *Merit Times*, recruit members, donate money, take part in relief programs, support temples, lead pilgrimages, attend Dharma services, distribute “la-pa congee” on Dharma Day, propagate the Dharma, take part in alms processions to raise funds for Buddhist education institutes, and reached out to schools and prisons to provide civic education and spiritual counseling and give Dharma talks. You have proven with your actions that Buddhists in the 21st Century are on the move, that they now know how to make themselves heard, and that they have extended their influence outside their families and connect with society, conducting exchanges with the community. Take for example what has taken place in the past fifteen years, the BLIA has organized General Conferences, Board of Directors’ Meetings, International Young

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

Executive Conferences, Men's Fellowship Conferences, Women's Fellowship Conferences, Scouts Meetings and so forth. Having encouraged exchanges between East and West, and between continents, these events have spread Buddhism far and wide, and enhanced interpersonal harmony. These can only be accomplished because of the energy that all of you have exerted from your resolve.

To resolve means to cultivate the field of your mind, which is also the first thing we have to learn as Buddhists. Without cultivating and developing the field of our mind, no matter how good the conditions we may possess, or how much fortune and merits we may have, the sprout of bodhi wisdom will still not grow. This is similar to a seed without a good and fertile land, no good flower or fruit will ever grow out of it. Therefore, if we wish to open up and develop our spiritual wealth or utilize our energy, we must begin by resolving.

In this world, the bigger your resolve is, the greater your success will be, because the power of resolve is indeed inconceivable. While Confucians urge people to have aspirations, practitioners of Buddhism encourage people to make vows. Aspiration or vow, both of them are in fact resolve. Once you resolve to do something, you will have an aspiration; once you resolve to do something, your vow will be accomplished.

The power of resolve can indeed be wondrous. For example, if you resolve to eat, not only will you be full from the food, you will also find it extra tasty; if you resolve to sleep, not only will you get a good night's sleep, it will also be extra peaceful. Once you resolve to do something, the outcome of your endeavors will be very different. Just as the verse, "The same moon outside the window becomes different when plum blossoms are present." However, it is a pity that most people tend to search from without rather than from within, and end up neglecting the endless treasure hidden inside. While they know the need to cultivate the wastelands and hillsides in the physical world and turn them into plantations or construction sites, they have failed to utilize their inexhaustible inner treasures and energy. Therefore, the wise learn to seek from within. We should turn away from the external and develop our inner treasure and energy instead.

To resolve is like a small investment that brings a ten-thousandfold profit, therefore, Buddhism encourages people to resolve to be compassionate, resolve to develop the bodhi mind, and resolve to develop the adhicitta, a state of mind that promotes calmness. Now, how exactly do we make such resolves? The following are some suggestions:

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

1. **We need to feel shamefulness for how little we know.** For example, we need to admit that there is a lot of literature and there are many classics that we have not yet understood; there is still much about science and technology that we do not know; there are still philosophical theories that we are unclear about; and there are still many ways of interpersonal interactions that we have yet to master. We must feel shamefulness for our incompleteness; when we feel shame for having little talent and insufficient learning, we will be inspired to learn and absorb as much knowledge as possible. We would encourage ourselves to learn how to drive, how to use a computer to manage information, how to keep the books, or learn to sing or play musical instruments if we cannot do any of the above.
2. **We need to be ashamed of how limited our abilities are.** For example, I feel ashamed for not being thorough enough in completing a task, for not fulfilling my duty as a teacher, or for not being accomplished enough as a leader. As we have shamefulness for our incompetence, we will resolve to strengthen ourselves in order to become more dependable and responsible.
3. **We need to have shamefulness for how impure our minds are.** For example, we are ashamed for minds that are often filled with greed, hatred, and defilement, that are filled with thoughts that offend others, or that are full of schemes and conspiracy. As we feel shamefulness for the impurity of our minds, we will resolve to improve and purify ourselves.
4. **We need to be ashamed of how weak our good thoughts are.** For example, we feel shamefulness for not being able to maintain kind thoughts, or for not devoting all of our energy into doing the good. For these reasons, we will resolve to do more good deeds, give more generously, and bring more joy to others.

Other than the above, we also need to develop our true mind in the following four ways:

1. **Develop a true mind that is as vast as the ocean:** Not only is the ocean a palace for aquatic animals, it is also a place filled with inexhaustible treasures. Take a look at oil drillers today. Don't they always dig deep in the ocean for the oil? The ocean's resources are usually what supports and makes a country wealthy; this is why every country protects its water rights, because to them, they are protecting their national property. Our mind is also like the ocean, it is a womb that nurtures the treasures of

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

compassion and bodhi wisdom awaiting us to uncover.

2. Develop a true mind that is as immense as space: The universe can be used as a metaphor for our mind, “the mind is like the universe; its capacity immeasurable like grains of sand.” Within the universe exist the sun, moon, and stars; within the universe exist thunder, lightning, rain, and dew. Every phenomenon is embraced within. Therefore, the nations of the world are all interested in exploring the universe, hoping to discover treasures from within. Our mind too is like space filled with limitless treasures of joy and contentment. It is only through development that we can discover the treasures.

3. Develop a true mind that is as boundless as the earth: The earth is our mother that nurtures our life. Not only does the human race depend on the sky and the ocean’s resources for food, they also depend on the earth to survive. The earth supports all forms of life that grow on it, while underneath it there are mines of gold, silver, bronze, and all kinds of minerals. Our mind too, is like the earth in which our Buddha Nature and true nature lie deeply within. We must know where to dig and how to develop in order to uncover these treasures.

4. Develop a true mind that is as intrinsic as our nature: Each one of us possesses an intrinsically true nature. Once we uncover the true nature that is like the ocean, like space and like the earth, we can take one step further and uncover our original face, return to our native home, and retrieve what has been ours from the very beginning.

In general, anything that enables us to accomplish the ultimate goal of benefiting both oneself and others as well as enlightening both oneself and others must never be lost or forgotten by learners of the Dharma. These include gratitude, humility, determination for the Way, merit, deep belief, respect, magnanimity, and endurance, all of which are the resolves that Buddhists cannot do without.

To resolve means to have goals, in other words, it is to make vows. Resolve is energy. Regardless of any kind of machine, the capacity of its energy output is crucial. We must also ask ourselves what is the capacity and strength of our energy. Energy and power come from our resolve; the greater our resolves are, the more powerful we will be. Therefore, I hope all Buddha’s Light members will strive to be resolved and use the power gained from such resolve to change the world and benefit humanity.

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

3. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Participation and Involvement

Every phenomenon in the world depends on a set of causes and conditions for its existence. “Everything exists when the conditions gather; everything ceases to exist when these conditions cease to exist.” Without the necessary causes and conditions, not only will it be difficult to accomplish a goal, individual survival is also at stake. Therefore we cannot survive if we move away from people, because they are our causes and conditions; they are the criteria for our survival. This is why Buddhism emphasizes that dependant origination, collective effort, and conditions are the backbone of our achievements.

In Buddhism, human beings are referred to as “sentient beings.” In other words, they are beings that come into existence once the necessary conditions gather together. In this world, there is no such space or time that enables an individual to exist alone, because beings must depend on each other in order to survive. Only when the conditions around us gather together will we be able to live. For this reason, we must allow these conditions to gather together, and then share them with others, and allow other people to benefit from them. We must never leave the crowd and become selfish practitioners, because buddhahood can only be attained by interacting with sentient beings; without them, not only are we no longer able to survive, buddhahood will also be out of reach.

The word ‘beings’ has a very wonderful meaning, for example, “all beings are equal,” “treat other beings as you treat yourself,” “make other beings the top priority,” “unity of all beings,” “will is an impregnable stronghold,” “the hands of many beings make easy work,” and so on. It is also said in the Buddhist sutras that every Dharma gathering or undertaking requires the presence of an assembly of beings to happen. Therefore, the only way to success is by working side-by-side with other beings. It is an undeniable truth!

Speaking of the importance of ‘multitude,’ if we look at nature’s kingdom, we will see that trees also grow in ‘multitudes’ to make a forest; even flowers, plants and animals grow and flourish in ‘numbers.’ Therefore phrases such as “birds of a feather flock together” exist. Human beings are no exception. We all come into this world empty-handed, and even though we may have had a family, assets, and a career while we were alive, we still have to leave empty-handed in the end. Therefore, the best assets we can ever own in life are the Dharma, merits, virtues, fields of merit, the multitude, and the future. These are

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

the resources that can be sustained over time, and these are also of highest value in life.

In particular, the most valuable things in this world are neither gold nor jade, nor houses nor cars; it is our conditions or affinities with others. There need to be good conditions between ourselves and others in order to have harmony; there need to be good conditions between ourselves and a matter in order to have success in what we do; between people and society, between matters, or between ‘you,’ ‘me’ and ‘him’ or ‘her,’ there has to be the right conditions in order to achieve fulfillment and merit. Therefore, there are many good deeds worth doing in this world, for example, giving, abiding by the law, contribute to others, or serving others. Amongst all the virtuous practices, there is nothing more important than “giving others some positive conditions.”

‘Condition’ is not a special Buddhist term; rather, it is the truth of the universe and life. ‘Condition’ is a part of every one of us; it is what keeps us moving in life. Take ‘opportunity’ as an example. In simple words it means the right condition; everything in this world depends on a set of ‘conditions’ to happen. A house short of as little as a brick or a tile is still deemed incomplete. On the journey of life, some people have come across another who offered a hand in times of difficulty. This is because of a good connection made in the past. Therefore, developing good connection or affinities today may be helpful to us in times of need in the future. It can be said that making good connections or affinities is the safest investment one can ever make.

Since human beings depend on causes and conditions to survive in this world, I hope Buddha’s Light members will collaborate with the multitude and get involved with different activities, so that we can all develop wide and good connections. The more connections we have, the greater our success will be. In particular, we must establish various types of Buddha’s Light undertakings in order to benefit humanity. In the past, people used to think that Buddhist undertakings were nothing more than chanting sutras or holding services for the dead, or it was a lifestyle that takes place deep within mountain forests where Buddhists remain self-sufficient by farming. The truth is, Buddhists have for the past thousand years remained connected to society by providing medical treatment, social welfare, educational, and cultural undertakings, dedicating themselves to the well-being of society and the benefit of humanity.

For example, Sangha Accounts and Sangha Granary during the Northern Wei Dynasty

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

(386-534) assisted the government in ending a famine. The Buddhist temple banks from the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589), and the “Inexhaustible Storehouse” owned by the Three Stages Sect of the Tang Dynasty had all very successfully established oil mills, pawnshops, hostels, tea houses, refectories or watermills to make life more convenient and the nation more prosperous. In particular, the temples that knew how to develop Buddhist undertakings to help and benefit people were the main reason why Buddhism was able to flourish and prosper during the Sui Dynasty (581-618) and Tang Dynasty (618-907). The grain mills, rice mills and warehouses set up by Buddhists enabled people to develop their livelihood; the hostels and stalls for horses and donkeys made traveling convenient for merchants; the tuition-free schools, private schools, Buddhist text repositories, and sutra translation centers enhanced society’s level of culture and education; Sangha granaries and temple banks stabilized the nation’s finance; while the clinics and pawnshops helped take care of the needy.

On a broader level, all Buddhist temples and monasteries over the ages had established undertakings to help and benefit living beings. For example such undertakings included plantation and wasteland cultivation; digging wells and ditches, irrigation projects, water conservation; construction of roads, bridges, public toilets and pavilions which made traveling convenient; mills, public bath houses, famine and poverty relief, medical treatment and supplies, care for the young and old, emergency relief, free schooling, and even free graves. It can be said that ever since Buddhism came to China, it has kept up with the changing times and contributed to developments from agriculture to industry, from travel services to hospice care, from pawnshops and oil mills to warehouses and watermills, and from charity to culture and education. Not only had Buddhism contributed to the development and prosperity of the economy, it had also enhanced society’s level of education and culture.

Today, as Buddha’s Light members with the objectives of realizing Humanistic Buddhism, we need to continue to establish all kinds of Buddhist undertakings under a well-structured plan in order to benefit society. For example, we can establish a Buddhist artifacts circulation department to provide Buddhists and members of society access to a variety of Buddhist publications and Dharma instruments, as well as audio and visual products in order to enhance the propagation of Buddhist culture. We can also establish Fo Guang Yuan Art Galleries, Water Drop Tea Houses, translation centers, and medical cen-

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

ters in different places. Even the promotion of Reading Clubs, Sounds of the Human World Music Competition, spiritual conservation programs and environmental protection projects can enable us to establish a connection between people and Buddhism through the use of language, public talks, music, art, life protection, relief programs and medical treatment in order to bring benefit and happiness to all.

Buddha's Light members also have the opportunity to study at different levels at educational institutes established by Fo Guang Shan or join the Buddhist Studies Institutes to study Buddhist texts and do research so as to promote Buddhist thought texts on Humanistic Buddhism. You can also go to Fo Guang Shan's Meditation Hall or Amitabha Chanting Hall to experience the dual practices of Chan and Pure Land, and actualize the ideal of equal emphasis on Buddhist understanding and practices. You can even join the Fo Guang Shan Order or get a paid job within the organization.

The following are some examples of undertakings suitable to Buddhists for the reference of Buddha's Light members:

Culture: Newspaper, radio station, television station, book store, record company, Buddhist artifact circulation department, art gallery, cultural square, publishing house, printer, translation office, theatre, concert hall, and conference center.

Education: School, kindergarten, tutoring classes, reading class for foreign brides, Evergreen College, talent and skills center, devotee's university, and community university.

Social Welfare: Hospital, rehabilitation center, dialysis center, sanatorium, retirement home, senior's club, childcare center, and children's home.

Service Industry: Travel agency, funeral parlor, florist, shipping company, consulting service, law firm, insurance company, job center, and training center.

Industry and Business: Supermarket, Buddhist department store, hotel, vegetarian restaurant, product distribution center, interior design company, landscaping company, power company, water works, farm, and factory.

Other than the above examples, as long as it is an undertaking or a career that helps

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

change the world and benefit humanity, contribute to the well-being of the country, its people, society, economic prosperity, and bring happiness of the general public, Buddha's Light members are most certainly encouraged to take part according to their own field of expertise, interest, and financial resources. In the future, Buddha's Light members will also need to strive for the integration of tradition and modernism, and reform conventional methods into something acceptable to today's people. For example, the manner of gatherings, chanting services, and activities need to be reformed. Extra attention needs to be paid to young adults and scouts so as to attract them to Buddhist undertakings. This will certainly contribute to Buddhism's role in changing the world and benefiting humanity.

4. Change the World and Benefit Humanity by Bodhi Wisdom and the Power of Vows

While Buddhism emphasizes wisdom, it also values compassion, practice and vows. All buddhas and bodhisattvas have perfected their paths by cultivating compassion and wisdom, making vows, and putting all of the above into practice. That is why it has been said earlier that to resolve and to vow are the first step to learning Buddhism. Just as said in the *Mahāprajñāpāramita śāstra*, "Mere accumulation of merits without vows will find one no goals; only with the superior guidance of vows will success be achieved." The *Sutra of the Great Gathering* also says, "The making of vows gives one the weapon to defeat the evil army of defilement." From this we can see that the entrance onto the path of buddhahood is none other than the making of vows, because while an effect or result is derived from our practices, without the power of vows, no matter how hard we practice, we still cannot reach our goal. Therefore it is essential for Buddhists to develop the bodhi mind and make vows in order to attain bodhi wisdom.

Bodhi mind refers to the great vow of enlightening both oneself and others; in other words, a bodhi mind is one that aspires to "seek buddhahood from above, teach and liberate sentient beings below." The main reason that Buddhism declined in the past was because Buddhists did not strive hard enough to cultivate their compassion and wisdom, make vows and put the above into practice. Take the Four Universal Vows as an example, most people only dare chant them out loud but have very little courage to put them into practice. Therefore, if we wish for Buddhism to prosper today, then we must follow the

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

examples of sages and eminent masters from the past, and resolve to develop the bodhi mind. For example, Sakyamuni Buddha vowed to never leave his seat from under the Bodhi tree until he attained enlightenment; Amitabha Buddha made forty-eight vows to create the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss; Medicine Buddha made twelve vows to adorn his Eastern Pure Land; the Bodhisattvas Manjusri, Samanthabhadra, Avalokitesvara, and Ksitigarbha have also based their practice on compassion and vows.

Other examples include Master Xuanzang who traveled westwards in pursuit of the Dharma, and Master Jianzhen who traveled eastwards to Japan to propagate the Dharma; their spirit and resolve to change the world and benefit humanity is something worth learning from. In fact, every practitioner of Mahayana Buddhism is obliged to follow and practice the Four Universal Vows. Therefore, every Buddha's Light member who vows to practice the bodhisattva path needs to cultivate bodhi wisdom and the power of vows in order to change the world and benefit humanity. Once it deviates from the path of bodhi mind, Humanistic Buddhism will only be further away from the Buddha's Way, and is only as good as worldly knowledge.

How exactly do we develop the bodhi mind and find strength from vow making? The *Śūraṅgama Sutra* says, "A deviant cause will only result in a tortuous effect." When we resolve to do something and make vows, our intention must comply with what is said in *Commentary on the Awakening of Mahayana Faith*, they must be grand, upright, perfect and truthful. "If even a flaming wheel rotates on the top of my head, I still will not relinquish the bodhi mind because of the burning pain." By making such a vow, we shall not diverge from the right path.

The following are some examples of vows that Buddha's Light members can make:

1. I vow to be a Buddhist of right belief who shares the Dharma with the world.
2. I vow to spread the right beliefs of Buddhism throughout the world.
3. I vow to go to remote areas and outlying territories to propagate the Dharma.
4. I vow to reach and offer my love and care to areas of distress.
5. I vow to dedicate all my property to a Buddhist organization for sustainable management; I vow to dedicate my legacy to a Buddhist organization for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

6. I vow to build a Buddhist family with right understanding and right views, and value religious heritage within the family.
7. I vow to be loyal to one teacher and one path, and will protect the right Dharma.
8. I vow to write, speak, practice, and spread the Dharma.

Other than the above, Buddhists also need to vow to cater to the needs of life and help society by providing relief to those who are suffering. Examples of specific actions include the following:

1. **Set up a “Dharma Line”** and allow those in need, who have no one to talk to a chance to unload their thoughts on the telephone, and even receive guidance and comfort provided from the perspective of Buddhism.
2. **Set up a “Relief Center”** to guide those lost at life’s crossroads back onto the right tracks.
3. **Set up a “Dharma Counseling Center”** to provide answers to those who may have doubts or problems with their life, career, family and personal relationships.
4. **Set up a “Senior’s Club”** to offer the elderly a place to get together, drink tea, play chess, read, and chant. Through these interactions with others, they will also find peace of mind from the Dharma.
5. **Set up a “Senior’s Home”** to take care of one’s own aged parents first and then extend the same care to aged people in general. By this, those elderly who live alone can be free from the suffering of loneliness and helplessness.
6. **Set up a “Shelter Home”** to provide temporary places to stay for the sick and needy, so they can rest, recuperate and get back on their feet again.
7. **Set up a “Job Center for Women”** to offer career advise to women from rural areas seeking a job in metropolitan districts, and help them find temporary accommodations while they are in-between jobs, so as to protect them from unscrupulous persons and risks of being deceived.
8. **Set up a “Visiting Team”** to visit hospitals or homes of the ill under an organized plan to chant for them, give them blessings, and give them books on Buddhism so as to comfort their hearts.

Change the World and Benefit Humanity

9. Take part in programs such as Fo Guang Shan Mobile Clinic that delivers medical supplies to remote areas, so that the healthy can provide financial support to the poor who are ill and need medical attention.

10. Organize an “Emergency Support Group” to offer immediate relief to those whose homes have been destroyed by serious natural disasters. This is also what we mean by “relieving those in urgent need is more important than helping those in long-term poverty.”

11. Allocate a tenth of your income for donations.

12. Spend a few hours each week on volunteer works for religious or charity purposes.

Being resolved and making vows are not a practice exclusive to Buddhists; every member of society has the obligation to do so. Once one has resolved to do it, the accomplishment of a task then becomes possible; once a vow is made, a clear goal will then be in sight. In particular, a chaotic society is the cause of many people’s worries and senses of insecurity. Therefore it is vital that every member of society resolves and vows to play their roles well; for example, “As a police officer, I vow to fulfill my duty in eliminating crime, and fight against the evils of society to bring safety and stability to people;” “As a housewife, I vow to be good to my in-laws, educate my children, and be thoughtful of my husband and to ensure the morals of my family;” “As a student, I vow to excel in both my studies and conducts by studying hard, being good and caring for my parents, respecting my teachers, and getting along with my friends.” If everyone in the nation vows to bring happiness, be generous and share their joy with others, then our society is bound to be full of harmony.

All in all, vow making is like excavating an endless source of energy within our minds, it is a treasure that can never be exhausted. By constantly making resolutions and vows, we will be able to leave behind history for ourselves, contributions to the family, compassion to society, and bright hopes to the world.

May all Buddha’s Light members, men or women, young or old, have with them compassion, wisdom, vows and practice to change the world, and benefit humanity with their bodhi wisdom and vows. The extensive spread of Buddhism in society and its outreach into people’s hearts can surely be expected soon.

Universal Gate Buddhist Journal, Issue 36

Conclusion

The establishment of BLIA has not only brought devotees' religious beliefs onto a higher level, it is also a revolutionary act in the history of Buddhism. With fifteen year's of dedication to the propagation of Humanistic Buddhism, BLIA members have made tremendous progress in making the life-relatedness, modernization, localization and internationalization of Buddhism happen. I hope in the future, each of our members can stay in line with the Buddhist spirit of compassion and wisdom, maintain their self-awareness and integrity, and fill themselves with the energy gained from their resolve to support and participate in the propagation of Buddhism. Furthermore, with bodhi wisdom and vows as the support, may we dedicate our hearts and strength to the propagation of Buddhism, purification of the world, and also the happiness and well-being of humanity.