



RESPECT

THE BASIS OF COMPASSION AND WISDOM by MASTER JEN CHUN

*A compassionate resolve of walking through fire and water,
A wise planning that “offers one’s heart on a platter,”
When generated with clarity and purity, enables
An (ordinary) person to see the great bodhisattvas.*

Throughout history we have seen many examples of people who were willing “to walk through fire and water” to uphold justice, to preserve the integrity of their religion, and to protect their country. These are very difficult tasks. The fire fighters who were involved with the rescue missions following the 9/11 terrorist attacks were examples of those who “walk through fire.” They went right through the fire to fight the fire, even though they knew they might die. They did this because it was their responsibility. When one is willing to go through fire and water, one demonstrates compassion and resolve in action.

A focus of wisdom is openness. “Openness” means that there’s nothing covert; our heart and mind are clearly displayed for others to see; we are willing to “show our cards.” Such openness and enthusiasm require true wisdom. True wisdom illuminates: it puts our physical and mental conduct under the spotlight so that everyone knows what’s on our mind. We will then have the courage and vigor to put our moral beliefs into action.

The wisdom of Dharma is the most excellent. The teaching of the Buddha is most worthy of our respect. We revere the words of the Buddha -- the Teacher of the plain and simple truth. We aspire to truly understand the Dharma.

Compassion means the ability to place everyone else above ourselves. Even the Buddha, the most lofty of all, upheld the notion of equality. Our willingness to endure our own pain and suffering will enable us to provide others with protection and safety.

Buddhism often speaks of having great aspiration and resolve. “Aspiration and resolve” means the firmness of our determination. We apply this firmness to everything we do -- true firmness arises only if we are never deceitful -- and with such purity of all our actions, we do what should be done and refrain from doing what shouldn't be done.

When an ordinary person's own determination gradually becomes pure, he/she begins to see the greatness of the great bodhisattvas. Great bodhisattvas are great because of their extraordinary qualities, the qualities that stem from their great resolve. They do what others hesitate to do; they take up what others fear to undertake. They consider such difficult deeds as their own responsibility, which they must never shirk.



WE SHOULD FIRST RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT EXIST IN THIS WORLD INDEPENDENTLY.

C*ontemplate with wisdom and destroy the ego, which hinders and conceals.*

Act with compassion and support others, who open our hearts and broaden our minds. By the luminosity and virtuous qualities of great resolve and pure karmic action, internal breakthroughs and support from others will continuously come.

Though we all have a heart and a pair of eyes, they are often blind. They are blinded by the delusion of self. Therefore, the single most important aim in practicing Buddhism is to eliminate the fallacy of self. We should first understand that a “true self” does not exist; there is only a “conditioned self” -- this entity that we call “self” is only a temporary conditional existence. If we understand the nature of this conditioned self, we can make good use of the conventional entity “self.” Through the conditioned self, we resolve to create a bright future. With such wisdom, we will be able to break through our delusion of self.

We walk around as if we are wearing a blindfold over our eyes and a veil over our hearts and minds. If we understand this, we should apply wisdom to remove the blindfold and pull off the veil. Then we will be able to truly care for others and extend to them our loving-kindness. There are two elements of loving-kindness. The first element is rational differentiation -- knowing and choosing right from wrong; the second is forbearance of the truth, holding back on personal liberation in order to help others. If we understand the true meaning of loving-kindness, we can truly devote ourselves and truly promote and spread morality through loving-kindness.

What is the meaning of “open and broaden”? We should first recognize that we cannot exist in this world independently. We exist through our connections with innumerable supporting conditions, both human and material. Therefore, we need to devote ourselves to the public welfare and open the valve of our hearts to broaden the capacity of our minds.

How do we open our hearts and broaden our minds? First we make a determination to purify our actions by removing the blindfolds, by not being controlled by the delusion of self. Gradually our deeds become righteous and our resolve solidifies. The luminous and virtuous quality will eventually manifest itself, enabling us to break through the blindfold of self and sustain our practice. Over time, our wisdom will gradually gain in strength, and the capacity of our mind will be further enlarged.

***T**ime spent on worthy causes conducted with integrity will be free from disdain.*



The emptiness doctrine is observed with pure clarity; the principle that is lucidly explicated can transform and inspire (others).

Human beings have two treasures besides the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha): time and space. When we spend time on worthy causes, we cultivate an upright character and we are free from the disdain of others. Without integrity, wealth and lofty social position do not make us useful human beings.

The doctrine of emptiness teaches us not to cling to the two extreme wrong views of eternalism and annihilationism. When we understand the true nature of self and are free from any false view of self, there would be no adverse effect (the delusion) in the activities of “self,” and we will gradually achieve purity in our physical and mental conduct.

The word “discourse” in Chinese (*li*) also means the ultimate principle or guideline. What kind of principle is considered the ultimate guideline? The principle refers to the ultimate truth -- the truth that can withstand the scrutiny of the most rigorous logic. Once we penetrate this ultimate truth, we are “victorious” because from then on our actions will always reflect the principle, namely, the truth. If we can then clearly explicate this principle, we can transform and inspire others.

Everyone should share the responsibility to spread the Dharma. Whether you are a lay person or a monastic, you need to spend time studying the Dharma, so that you will be able to give discourses. Do not think it is another person’s responsibility. Do not simply enjoy the benefit of the Dharma. Do not be lazy and waste your time. Don’t waste your life as a human being

***F**or those who never diverge from the mindfulness of respect, herein mundane and supramundane qualities arise.*

For those who frequently make ample use of mindfulness of respect, wherever they go, their path is clear and wide.

We should have respect at all times.

Having respect is more than paying lip service. We demonstrate respect in all our actions. Once we can hold respect in our minds at all times, it naturally flows out through all our activities. All moral actions, whether mundane or supramundane, will then be born from respect.

What difference does it make to have a sense of respect? Without a sense of respect, we are without sincerity. An insincere person follows the flow of samsara, from life to life, like a leaf drifting on flowing water. If we apply respect, we can reach a relaxed state of mind because the mind will be free from the control of our egos. Any pressure that we normally feel in life will not affect us, and our mind will be calm and strong.

Whether you are a monastic or lay person, if you are a pure follower of the Buddha, you will be able to win respect wherever you go and you will be faced with a path that is clear and wide. If you can have this open mind, you do not have any selfishness in your mind and everything you do, you do for others; wherever you go, others will want to make a connection with you. Once you are able to make connections with everyone, you will be able to make connections with all the Buddhas. That is where the great effectiveness lies.

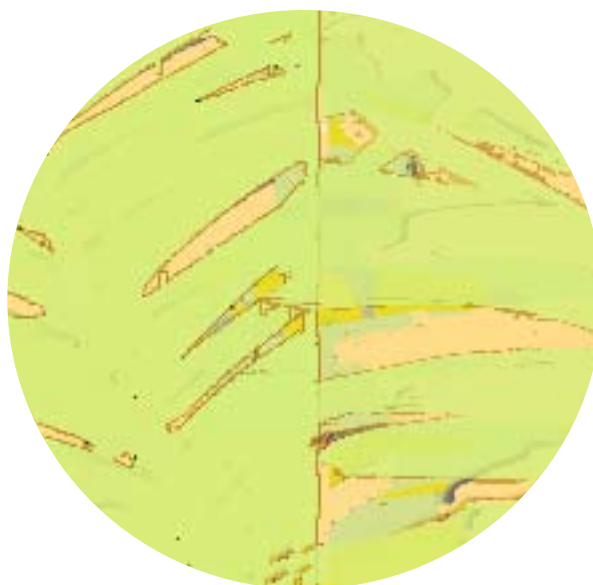
On the other hand, whether you are a lay person or a monastic, if you can maintain pure Dharma practice, you will also win the respect of others. The path in front of you will be clear and wide. Because of your openness and selflessness, everything you do, you do it to benefit others. People will then want to connect with you wherever you go. Building a connection with everyone, you are building a connection with all the Buddhas. This is the great use of respect.

We should look to the Buddha to learn how to show respect. The Buddha Shakyamuni not only paid respect and showed reverence to all the Buddhas of the past, he also showed respect to all sentient beings in the past, present, and future. This is the true essence of Buddhism. This is the difference between it and other worldly religions.

You should apply the same kind of reverence and respect to everybody surrounding you. With this kind of universal reverence, you will not lose your temper. Not only should you show respect to good people, you should also show respect to bad people because whatever these people did that makes them bad is only temporary. You should apply this attitude of equality to everyone and then you will have no anger or aversion. Your mind will then be calm, pure, and steady.

What kind of person was the Buddha?

He was one who always placed others before himself. He never had one thought of craving for himself. Because he possessed this kind of mentality, he was able to dedicate everything he had to everybody else. If you are able to follow the example set by the Buddha, you will have no craving and greed. With non-greed, your behavior will show integrity and wherever you go, you will exude purity and integrity in your actions



For the past 20 years, **MASTER JEN-CHUN** has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching with the goal of creating a pure form of Buddhism in the United States by emphasizing the study and practice of Dharma, instead of ritual practices and ceremonies. He is founder and spiritual leader of Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.