

Introduction by the President

The Fourth International Conference on Humanistic Buddhism (December 17-20, 2002) far exceeded our expectations. It was a delightful privilege and a source of infinite pleasure that the Venerable Grand Master Hsing Yun, the Founder-Leader of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order and President of the Board of Trustees of Hsi Lai University, graced both the inaugural and closing ceremonies and shared his most insightful views on Humanistic Buddhism and Education. He is also the founder of two other universities, two high schools, several Buddhist colleges, one television station, one newspaper, many Buddhist temples and monasteries as well as hundreds of Buddha's Light International Association chapters and subchapters for Buddhist laypeople all over the world.

We were equally pleased with the participation of senior dignitaries of Fo Guang Shan, including Venerable Tzu Hui, the IAB Honoree for the year 2002. Others included Venerable Tzu Jung, General Secretary of BLIA Headquarters, Venerable Hui Chuan, Abbot of Hsi Lai Temple, and many other venerables from the Fo Guang Shan Community. The BLIA members in the Los Angeles area, led by Mr. Jim Chen, President of the Los Angeles Chapter, also attended the opening ceremony. A special invitee to this Conference was Professor Wang Bangwei, President of the Academy of Oriental Studies and Director of the Research Center for Eastern Literature of Peking University in Beijing, China. He delivered a special public lecture on the situation of Buddhism and Buddhist Studies in Mainland China. Apart from participants from USA, there were keynote speakers from France, Germany, India and Bulgaria, and participants from Taiwan, Korea, England and Singapore.

The educational philosophy of Hsi Lai University is Humanistic Buddhism, which emphasizes human well being here and now. The life of human individuals here and now should be woven into the context of the world and the universe through positive interaction with other sentient beings in order to benefit themselves and others. Individual happiness thus will be extended to all directly and indirectly relevant beings in the limitless space and time in order to make one's life meaningful. We pay attention to every moment of here and now as well as every moment in the limitless future as it spreads and encompasses all spatial and temporal areas of sentient beings and beyond. The only way that human beings can walk on without hindrances and failure, that they can really walk out of the bottleneck of human civilization and destiny, that they can touch the heart of our ancestral sages and feel that the world has become more vast and more prosperous, and feel our life is more meaningful, is the Bodhisattva Way. There is not any other way for human beings in here and now or in the future that is broader and better than the Bodhisattva Way.

The fourth volume of Hsi Lai Journal of Humanistic Buddhism reflects the wide-ranging intellectual contribution of this Conference to our understanding of the role of Humanistic Buddhism in Education. As the Venerable Grand Master repeatedly emphasized Buddhism is education and education to be a service to humanity has to embody the highest of Buddhist wisdom and values. With his deep and far-reaching experience as a Buddhist educator of the highest distinction, he urged that the spiritual and ethical content of education was timeless, unchanging, and worthy of special attention. The deliberations of the Conference, so inspired by his sagacity, proved to be exceedingly thought-provoking and stimulating. We are deeply grateful to the

Venerable Grand Master for his gracious presence and excellent intellectual motivation. His most inspiring closing address in the form of a traditional merit-offering discourse was a fitting finale to in-depth deliberations of scholars on the role which Buddhism had and should play in the promotion of the education of the whole person.

Most of the participants to the Conference were renowned scholars in Buddhism and some were graduate students majoring in Buddhism or religious studies. It was extraordinarily encouraging that many of them had participated since 1999 and returned every year. Others were here for the second or third time. There were also many new faces. Every one of the participants was valued by us as the most esteemed Dharma friends who sing the songs of purity and enlightenment in the chaos of the modern turbulent world. They stand out like the pure and beautiful lotus in the stream. I wish every one of them will return again and again and take this event as an indispensable part of your yearly calendar. It really makes sense because we gather together here not only for self-enrichment but also to benefit more people who need Buddhist guidance in their lives.

Finally, let me say thank you very much to Dr. Ananda W.P. Guruge, the Director of IAB, and his associates including Mr. Hee Jong You, for their untiring effort in organizing the conferences, and editing and publishing the journals over the past four years. My deep gratitude also goes to my colleagues at Hsi Lai University who have worked so hard to provide all necessary facilities and resources, as well as meals and rooms and many other materials, to make the success of the conference possible.

As usual, the International Academy of Buddhism chose an honoree of the year. This year the honor went to Venerable Tzu Hui because of her more than forty years of commitment to Buddhist educational, cultural and academic efforts and the resulting superb achievements in Taiwan as well as in many countries in Asia, America, Australia, Africa and Europe. She has followed Grand Master Hsing Yun's ideal of Humanistic Buddhism and devoted all her time, energy and wisdom to various kinds of activities that benefit human beings individually and as a whole, by means of writing, translating, interpreting, editing books, giving lectures on Buddhism, building Buddhist colleges, high schools, elementary schools, kindergartens and universities, organizing scholarly activities and conferences, organizing concerts, and supporting cultural and educational exchange programs between different beliefs, cultures and ethnic groups. Her many talents include teaching, writing, organizing, interpreting, and language. In addition to traditional classics, she explores the most effective ways of making the Buddhist canons accessible to the modern people in digital form, and the first product is the Fo Guang Electronic Agama Sutras, released three months ago. What she has done embodies the spirit of Buddhist teaching, that is, always moving forward with an open mind to know the heart beats and rhythm of the age and listen to the yearning of sentient beings when they are in urgent need of help. She is a female and a nun who always walks and leads a new trend ahead of her time. This is also the soul of Humanistic Buddhism: Buddhism can always be lively, progressive and inspiring only if it is rooted in the steps of continuing exploration, and unflinching and creative experiment.

– Naichen Chen, President, HLU