

Tending Life's Garden

Between Ignorance and Enlightenment VI

By Venerable Master Hsing Yun
Translated by Miao Hsi and Cherry Lai;
edited by Edmond Chang and Robin Stevens.

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Since the inauguration in Taiwan of the daily paper, *The Merit Times*, on April 1, 2002, Ven. Master Hsing Yun has been writing an article each day for the column "*Between Ignorance and Enlightenment*." In the beginning, he was only thinking that he would write for a couple of months. However, he kept writing since old and young readers alike benefited so much from reading the column. His articles have generated an interest in reading. Furthermore, they have motivated readers to improve their writing skills; quit unwholesome habits, build harmonious relationships, and help people to achieve more meaningful and successful lives. Many study groups have been using the articles for their discussions.

Ven. Master Hsing Yun has received such enthusiastic feedback on his articles. This provided the inspiration for his latest book "*Tending Life's Garden*", the sixth volume in the *Between Ignorance and Enlightenment* series. It is a collection of one hundred articles revealing Ven. Master Hsing Yun's realizations and wisdom.

Ven. Master Hsing Yun advocates Humanistic Buddhism which integrates our spiritual practice into all aspects of our daily lives. In the chapter of Sportsmanship, Master Hsing Yun uses basketball as an example to offer six valuable lessons about life. Indeed, all the articles teach us how to eliminate

our suffering by solving our life problems. This book is filled with wisdom, optimism, practical guidance and spiritual liberation.

According to editor Edmond Chang, *Tending Life's Garden* can enrich and enlighten all those who are willing to open their hearts and minds to Ven. Master Hsing Yun's wisdom and faith. He tells the readers that editing the book was "truly one of those rare instances where the line between 'work' and personal cultivation was wonderfully blurred." He adds that "there is a powerful and coherent logic that runs throughout this volume that made it particularly illuminating and instructive for everyone. This logic reveals itself almost in an organic manner, not unlike the blossoming of a flower or the sprouting of leaves on a tree."

In the foreword to the first volume of *Between Ignorance and Enlightenment*, Sandra A. Wawrytko (Ph.D from the Departments of Asian Studies and Philosophy at San Diego State University) writes, "Master Hsing Yun launches us on a wide-ranging voyage of personal discovery offering insights on topics as diverse as time management, magnanimity, stress, the power of positive thinking, the value of impermanence, and true love. There is much practical wisdom contained in these pages, set forth in easily digested tidbits that allow the reader to sample the smorgasbord at will."

In *Tending Life's Garden*, Ven. Master Hsing Yun writes skillfully to share his wisdom. He employs the techniques explained below.

1. A list of four, five or six concise points: Venerable Master Hsing Yun clearly expresses his ideas usually with four concise points. They appear in ten of the following articles in this book: *A Brand New Start*, *Ridding Ourselves of Suffering and Sadness*, *Sportsmanship*, *The Importance of Expressions*, *Good, Yet Useless People*, *Governing the Mind*,

Motivating Ourselves, The Metaphors of Life, A New Spring for the Elderly and The End of Life.

2. Abundant examples: Ven. Master Hsing Yun illustrates his points by using examples from his own experiences as well as from ancient and modern times, Chinese and foreign countries, Buddhism and non-Buddhism, and monastics and laity. We can read examples of Venerable Master Huiyuan, Jesus, and Judas in *Overcoming Setbacks*; Nero, Hitler, Mussolini, King Asoka and the Buddha's son Rahula in *Reforming Ourselves*; and Socrates and Christopher Columbus in *Marriage*. In *Setting a Good Example*, he says, "In education it is far better to teach by personal example than with empty words. If we ask others to be good, we must first set an example ourselves with our own actions. Benjamin Franklin once said, 'A good example is the best instruction.'"

3. Presentations of opposite aspects and perspectives to solve dilemmas: Ven. Master Hsing Yun not only describes the advantage of the positive side but also enumerates the disadvantages of the opposite one such as *Overcoming Setbacks*. He concludes that our success in life depends on whether or not we can overcome setbacks and turn them into conditions for progress. When there is no darkness, there is no brightness, and without vices and mistakes we cannot discover the good and the beautiful. When there is no filth, we cannot appreciate cleanliness and without differences there will be no unity.

4. Exceptional insights: Ven. Master Hsing Yun expresses his positive and critical thinking skillfully in *Tending Life's Garden*. He says, in *Self-Deprecation*, "People who know how to be self-deprecating are undoubtedly wise, cultivated and sympathetic. If someone in a senior position can resolve unintentional offenses by his/her subordinates with self-deprecation, it is

a form of compassion." Roger Coreless (Professor of Religion, Emeritus Duke University) also says, "Master Hsing Yun speaks his mind in this anthology on a wide range of subjects...the book could be used for daily reflections or as a prelude to meditation."

In addition to the above-mentioned, between the lines in the book, Master Hsing Yun really presents the six characteristics of Humanistic Buddhism – humanism, emphasis on daily life, altruism, joyfulness, timeliness and universality which are the manifestations of his mind. As long as we make a commitment and take actions to tend our life's Garden, we will enjoy a carefree life. The spring of life is here and now just as Venerable Master Hsing Yun says that "Ignorance and enlightenment lie in just a thought! A thought of ignorance may cause sorrow and pain while an inspiration of enlightenment can bring out the sun of wisdom." (V.I,II Between Ignorance and Enlightenment)

– Yung Dong

Tantric Revisionings: New Understandings of Tibetan Buddhism and Indian Religion

**By Geoffrey Samuel
Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi,
India, 2005, 384 pages**

Geoffrey Samuel, trained at Cambridge University in South and Southeast Asian Studies, under the mentorship of Stanley Tambiah, has assembled in this volume an impressive set of fifteen scholarly papers written over a period of sixteen years on a variety of topics pertaining to the historical and anthropological study of the religions and cultures of India and Tibet.