
Sounds of the Dharma Buddhism and Music

I. Music and Buddhism

Music gives us the capacity to express the deepest feelings of the human soul. Whether through holy hymns or sincere chants of praise, it is capable of lifting our minds to an almost sublime state, and, as such, is regarded as having an important role in the promotion of religious teachings. In the world's religions, music has a very important function and a wide range of applications. The teachings of the Buddha mention music on many occasions. In the *Amitabha Sutra*, it is written that heavenly singing and chanting is heard all day and night as *mandara*

flowers softly rain down from the heavens. All kinds of birds produce beautiful and harmonious music throughout the day and night. Upon the blowing of a gentle breeze, the movements of jewel trees bring about a kind of wondrous music, as if thousands of gentle tunes are being played together in harmony. Upon hearing these melodious sounds, those present naturally become mindful of the Buddha, mindful of the Dharma, and mindful of the Sangha. In accordance, all Buddhas and bodhisattvas are very skilled in utilizing music to spread the Dharma and guide sentient beings to enlightenment.

In Buddhism, sutras sung as hymns and other songs praising the virtues of the Buddhas have attracted and helped purify the hearts of countless disciples. One of the Buddha's teachings (*Treatise on the Perfection of Great Wisdom*) says, "In order to build a pure land, the bodhisattvas make use of beautiful music to soften people's hearts. With their hearts softened, people's minds are more receptive, and thus easier to educate and transform through the teachings. For this reason, music has been established as one type of ceremonial offering to be made to the Buddha." In addition to propagating the

Dharma (the teachings of the Buddha), there is a long history of adapting Buddhist songs for use in various ceremonies such as weddings, funerals, etc. In this capacity, Buddhist music plays an integral role in common cultural practices.

Venerable Master Taixu once said, “Music gives the people of a society a means to better communicate their moods and feelings to each other. For instance, if someone plays a certain kind of tune, it is often quite easy for those listening to understand exactly what mood that person is trying to convey. For society to achieve some degree of integration, it is essential to be able to communicate and understand each other’s moods and feelings and as a result establish a sense of unity. This is one of the important functions of music.” The capacity of music to capture people’s attention, touch them deeply, and tug at their heartstrings makes it one of the most beautiful forms of human expression.

Chinese Buddhist music utilizes a rich variety of musical instruments during chants and hymns. Because these instruments are used in the propagation of Buddhist teachings, they are collectively called *Dharma instruments*. Other than the inverted bell,

which originated in India, the instruments used in traditional Chinese Buddhist music are native to China. Instruments such as the gong, large bell (*Ch. qing*), large drum (*Ch. gu*), wooden fish, small cymbals, large cymbals, and Chinese tambourine punctuate both Chinese folk and Buddhist music. In modern practice, Chinese Buddhist music is frequently accompanied by a variety of Chinese orchestral instruments, pianos, or traditional European symphony orchestras. From its humble beginnings, Buddhist music has developed to such an extent that it is currently performed in temples and concert halls throughout the world and can now rival the beauty of western philharmonic orchestras.

II. The Development of Buddhist Music

In India during the time of the Maurya Dynasty (317–180 B.C.E.), powerful King Asoka spared no effort to preserve Buddhism and spread its teachings. This time period witnessed many developments in the field of Buddhist music such as the inclusion of copper gongs, drums, flutes, conch horns, and harps in Buddhist ceremonial music. As Buddhism spread to Tibet, the Tibetan traditions of Buddhism encour-

aged the use of song and dance in certain ceremonies. There is, in fact, a section of the sangha that specializes in the performance of music and dance, referred to as Leva Musicians, meaning “Gods of Fragrance and Music.” The *Mahavairocana Sutra* says, “In all acts of singing there is truth; every dance portrays reality.” In accordance with this, the development of Tibetan Buddhist music has been allowed to blossom freely, which in turn has helped foster its many distinctive characteristics. In Tibetan Buddhism’s larger ceremonies, lamas can be seen utilizing all kinds of unique and exotic ceremonial instruments such as specialized types of drums, windpipes, spiral conchs, and trumpets. The design and artistry of these instruments is widely regarded as being of intricate beauty.

When Buddhism was first introduced into China (from India), focus was placed primarily on the translation of scriptures, and the teaching of Sanskrit Buddhist hymns was discontinued because of the large differences between these two languages. As Venerable Master Huijiao of the Southern Dynasties period (420–589 C.E.) stated, “Sanskrit words have many syllables, whereas Chinese words are mono-

syllabic. If you pronounce Sanskrit words but write them in Chinese characters, the text will contain too many syllables and the pace of the music will sound rushed. But, if you sing in Chinese and keep the text in Sanskrit, then you will have to rush through a very long section of text while pronouncing only a few syllables. For this reason, we have made translations of the scriptures, but do not continue to use or teach spoken Sanskrit.” In the absence of traditional hymns, monastics later recomposed and adapted classical folk songs along with some music commonly played for royalty and officials in the Imperial Court, which gave rise to the unique flavor and tradition of Chinese Buddhist music. The earliest collection of Chinese Buddhist hymns dates back as far as the Wei Dynasty period (220–265 C.E.). Cao Zhi (the 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 in Sanskrit apparently emanating from the sky. Touched by the song’s beauty, he committed it to memory and later wrote it into a melody entitled “The Yushan Fanbei,” the first Buddhist hymn constructed in a Chinese style. This song served as the

foundation for the development of Chinese Buddhist music.

In response to the uniqueness of Chinese Buddhist music, the *Biography of Great Chinese Masters* says, “All songs teaching the Dharma that were composed by Indian monastics or laypeople are called ‘*bei*’ (*Skt. patha*). Intonations or chants of sutras composed in China are known as recitals.” The collective name for this type of traditional Buddhist music in Mandarin is *fanbei* and it has its origins in the time of the Buddha. Another style of ancient Indian chants and hymns became widely popular during the period of the composition of the *Vedas*. This style of chant was prominently adopted by Buddhism and has its origins in the *sabdavidya*, (the branch of the classical five great studies of India concerning sound and music). Buddhist hymns composed in this style are collectively referred to in Mandarin as *shengbai* (*Sabda Hymns*).

During the time period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589 C.E.), the contributions of several emperors deeply influenced the development of Buddhist music. Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty, for example, was a devout Buddhist

whose great love for Buddhist music motivated him to write several well-known musical compositions such as “Great Joy” (*Ch. Da Huan*), “The Heavenly Way” (*Ch. Tian Dao*), “The Cessation of Evil and Wrongdoing” (*Ch. Mie Guo E*), and “Stopping the Wheel of Suffering” (*Ch. Duan Ku Lun*). Though these were originally composed to teach the Dharma, by virtue of their aesthetic value they came to be regarded as quality musical compositions. Emperor Wu also set the precedent for the establishment of Buddhist children’s choirs with works including “The Children’s Joy of the Dharma Song” (*Ch. Fale Tongzi Ji*) and “Children’s Fanbei” (*Ch. Tongzi Yi Ge Fanbei*). In addition, he established the Wuzhe Dahui¹ (*Skt. Pancaparisad*), held for confession, penance, and remission, the *Ullambhana* Ghost Festival, and the Liang Wu Repentance Liturgy. Emperor Wu also initiated the practice of singing Buddhist hymns during repentance ceremonies. The contributions of Emperor Wu were instrumental in blending Buddhist Music with that of the mainstream classical Chinese traditions.

From the period of the Northern and Southern

¹ A seven-day vegetarian festival for the public.

Dynasties to the beginning of the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 C.E.), the great achievements of monastics in terms of their singing and public speaking abilities stand out prominently in the field of Buddhist music as being peerless in their time. At the same time, Pure Land School monastics composed several songs praising the Buddha that were sufficiently esteemed to be compiled in the *Tripitaka*. It was during this period that Venerable Huiyuan of Lushan pioneered the use of music as a method of promoting the Dharma and propagating the doctrines of Buddhism.

In recent times, a large volume of Tang Dynasty Buddhist compositions was uncovered in the Dunhuang Caves of China. Primarily concerned with interpretations of the sutras, these compositions are known as “Verses for the Common People” (*Ch. Su Jiang*), and were the first Chinese Buddhist compositions to adopt a more folk-like style and flavor. This music represents a reform in the style of singing and chanting, and in addition employs a new system of musical notation. Before the end of the Tang Dynasty, the style of Buddhist music in China had become entirely Chinese and achieved unprecedented popularity.

Later, during the Yuan Dynasty (1277 – 1367 C.E.), Buddhist musicians adapted melodies of the then popular “Compositions of the Northern and Southern Dynasties” (*Ch. Nan Bei Qu*). In the Ming Dynasty (1386 – 1644 C.E.), monastics adapted more than three hundred popular and classical melodies and compiled them on fifty scrolls known collectively as *Songs Proclaiming the Titles of All the Honorable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas* (*Ch. Zhu Fo Shizun Rulai Pusa Zunzhe Mingcheng Gequ*). Some of the most famous secular music of the time was adapted to create Buddhist pieces. For example, the Song Dynasty piece “A Butterfly Falls in Love with a Flower” (*Ch. Die Lian Hua*) was rewritten as the Buddhist piece “A Spiritual Song” (*Ch. Ju Lingxiang Zhi Qu*). Although folk tunes such as these were widely used to propagate the teachings, Buddhist music had already become quite popular among the common people. However, Buddhist music still seemed to lack creativity and continued to remain hampered by elements of conservatism.

Upon the formation of the Republic of China in 1912, Buddhist music slowly began to lose its popularity among the general public and fewer monastics

continued the work of writing new compositions. However, in 1930 at the Xiamen City Minnan Buddhist Institute, Venerable Master Taixu in cooperation with Venerable Master Hongyi composed a renowned, beautiful piece called *The Song of the Three Treasures* (Ch. *San Bao Ge*). At the same time, they called upon all Buddhist disciples to preserve and carry on the legacy of Buddhist music. Venerable Master Taixu was motivated in part by his understanding that Buddhist music is a very convenient means for propagating spiritual education. In addition, he believed that if music could be used to help spread the Dharma, then it would contribute greatly to the diversity and richness of religious education of the public. His associate, Venerable Hongyi, was an accomplished and esteemed musician before entering the order and ten of his songs concerning naturalism and its implications in Buddhist teachings were eventually compiled into an album entitled *The Qingliang Selection* (Ch. *Qingliang Geji*). During this time, however, most people had limited exposure to Buddhist music and therefore it did not enjoy widespread popularity.

Recently, there has been an upsurge in the popu-

larity of Buddhist music as a result of the broad use of hymns and *fanbei* as a means to promote the Dharma. Given such little encouragement in previous years this is a most welcome sign. During the 1950s, many monastics worked diligently to compose the words for new songs with the help of musicians Yang Yongpu, Li Zhonghe, and Wu Juche. A collection of the songs they composed has been recorded by Fo Guang Shan and released in an album entitled *Fo Guang Hymn Collection (Ch. Fojiao Shengge Ji)*. Their efforts serve as a great inspiration to those who wish to carry on work in this field.

In 1957, the Ilan Buddhist Recital Society's youth group choir produced several more Buddhist albums under my supervision. Altogether we produced six albums, which included a total of over twenty compositions. As this was the first time such a project had been undertaken in Buddhist circles, a new epoch in the history of Buddhist music was born. However, in those days a lot of prominent people in Buddhist circles did not agree with this kind of undertaking. Despite criticism, I continued to feel such projects were important for the propagation of Buddhism, and I decided to remain undeterred in my

efforts. Then a few years later in 1979, 1990, 1992, and 1995 my persistence was rewarded by receiving permission to organize some large performances in Taipei's renowned Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Hall and National Concert Hall. These performances, featuring dances coordinated with Sanskrit songs and other music teaching the Dharma, marked the first time Buddhist hymns had ever been performed in any large public concert facility in Taiwan. In addition, a performance entitled "Paying Homage to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions—A Dance and Song Ceremony in Sanskrit" was held as part of a traditional arts festival at the invitation of the Taipei City government. This was to mark the first time traditional Buddhist *fanbei* and modern hymns had been performed alongside popular and more established mainstream styles of Western music, traditional Chinese music, and dance. This pioneering effort certainly served to affirm the newly established status of Buddhist music in society and was rewarded with significant acknowledgement in all sections of the Buddhist world.

III. The Contributions of Buddhist Music

In addition to songs used to expound the truth of the sutras, Buddhist *fanbei* also includes an esteemed and beautiful collection of gentle melodies that give praise to all the Buddhas and great bodhisattvas. These were originally composed as expressions of the deep faith of Buddhist disciples, and by virtue of their beauty, they have left a rich legacy of superb melodies and literature. These include all kinds of gathas praising various Buddhas, such as the “Bhaisajyaguru Gatha,” the “Avalokitesvara Gatha,” as well as statements of Buddhist vows, which have contributed significantly to the broadening, enrichment, and variety of Chinese literature. Holy hymns are used in ceremonies for making offerings or inviting the presence of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Excellent pieces such as the solemn *Incense Offering Prayer* (Ch. *Lu Xiang Zan*), the *Incense Prayer for Upholding the Precepts* (Ch. *Baoding Zan*), and the *Prayer for Offerings Made to Celestial Beings* (Ch. *Jie Ding Zhenxiang Zan*) embody and beautifully express the virtues of respect and religious piety.

Buddhist *fanbei* has contributed a unique style to

the world of music. Characterized by a relaxed and easy pace, soft tones, and a dignified, solemn manner, Buddhist *fanbei* gives elegant expression to the five virtuous qualities of sincerity, elegance, clarity, depth, and equanimity. According to the *Ten-Recitations Vinaya*, regularly listening to Buddhist *fanbei* 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. Regarding the regular practice of chanting or singing *fanbei*, the *Record of the Buddhist Schools in India and Southern Asia* mentions six kinds of merits that can be obtained: 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 clearer and healthier respiratory system, a mind more free from fear and anxiety, and longevity and improved health.

In the practice of Buddhism, *fanbei* has important functions in daily living, in repentance ceremonies, and in ceremonies accompanying sutra lectures. During daily activities, practitioners regularly chant

fanbei such as the *Meal Offering Dharani* (Ch. *Gongyang Zhou*) and the *Meal Completion Mantra* (Ch. *Jie Zhai Ji*) to make offerings and transfer merits to all the Buddhas and all the sentient beings of the six realms. During repentance ceremonies, focus is placed on singing several prayers as a means to guide and teach participants. Before lectures are given on the sutras, incense prayers are sung to invite all Buddhas and bodhisattvas to attend the service, helping to generate a dignified, solemn, reverent, and respectful manner among participants. After the ceremony's conclusion, the "Gatha for the Transfer of Merits" (Ch. *Huixiang Ji*) is chanted, where the merits for attending the service are dedicated for the benefit of all sentient beings. Through this, attendees express the wish that all sentient beings be relieved of all suffering and come to find lasting happiness.

Buddhist *fanbei* is not designed to try to elevate or excite the emotions of participants or practitioners, but in fact aims to achieve the opposite effect. Its main function is to conserve emotional energy, calm thoughts, reduce desire, and allow practitioners to see their true nature with a clear mind. The *Flower Ornament Sutra* and the *Lotus Sutra* contain phrases

such as “conduct ceremonies and teach the Dharma with music” and “with a joyful spirit, sing the truths of the Dharma.” From this it can be seen that *fanbei* has an important role in teaching the Dharma to the public.

Fanbei music has notably influenced and contributed to the cultural legacies of various Chinese empires and dynasties. Before the Tang Dynasty, government artists assumed the work of compiling, editing, and distributing popular musical pieces and artistic growth during that period was limited. However, between the Sui and Tang Dynasties, commerce between China’s western and eastern regions was unimpeded, resulting in the introduction of music from the outer western and northern regions to China’s more heavily populated eastern regions. In addition, wars and continued fighting resulted in the dispersion and loss of many Chinese classics. These factors resulted in a period of renewed creativity and the reinvention of several different musical styles.

By the end of the Northern Song Dynasty (960—1128 C.E.), local artists began to take on the role of directing the development of popular music. Commoners formed their own organizations and even

established official performance halls. As a result, during the Tang Dynasty, Song Dynasty (960–1128 C.E.), and Yuan Dynasty (1277–1367 C.E.), Buddhist temples were able to gradually develop and popularize a new style of teaching the Dharma that featured public talks expounding and publicizing the Dharma sung to *fanbei* melodies. This popular style of lecturing was known as the singing lecture technique. This style was successful in attracting the attention of the public and was considered to be a very moving style of vocal music. Documents containing historical details concerning these developments were discovered among hidden pieces of art found in the Dunhuang Caves. These documents show the emergence of a style of symbols employed by the monastics of hundreds of years ago to describe and teach the chanting of Buddhist doctrines. They also contain depictions of solemn looking ceremonial dances, orchestra constructions, elegant offering ceremony dance postures, and instrumental recitals of Indian music. 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.

In light of the way traditional Chinese music and Buddhist music have blended together over a long period of time, Buddhist temples of the past could be considered custodial centers for the preservation and development of traditional ballads. It was recorded that during the Song Dynasty a famous scholar by the name of Cheng Mingdao attended a ceremony at a Buddhist temple called Guan Yunmen. When he saw the grand formations of classical instruments and heard the crisp sounds of drums and bells he was so excited about what he had discovered that he yelled out, “So! The ritual music of all three dynasties can be found here!” In pre-contemporary China, recognized scholars were required to be accomplished in a variety of compulsory fields of study, one of which was classical Chinese music. As such, Cheng Mingdao’s statement concerning the style of music present is perceived to have the weight of authority.

The contributions of Buddhist music to the world can be exemplified in a legend involving a famous Buddhist musician. During Sakyamuni Buddha’s time on earth (500 B.C.E.) there was a *bhiksu* named Pathaka whose voice was so beautiful that when he chanted Buddhist *fanbei* even animals that overheard

him were touched. One day, King Prasenajit was leading a large army to invade Anga (a small state in ancient India) and on the way they stopped at the Jetavana Monastery while Pathaka was in the middle of a chanting service. As soon as the horses heard the sound of Pathaka's chanting, they became so absorbed in the sound that they came to a full stop and refused to advance any further. When the sound reached King Prasenajit, he was so moved by the beauty of the music that he could not bring himself to shed blood in battle and immediately decided to abandon his campaign and return home.

IV. Modernization of Buddhist Music

After I came to Taiwan from China in 1949, based upon my sincere vow to spread and publicize the teachings, I decided that it would be best to adopt a more modern approach to using hymns to propagate the Dharma. As such, I placed a lot of emphasis on the promotion of Buddhist music, and advocated a strategy of simplifying the words of tunes to make them easier to understand, as well as using more modern and popular musical styles. It was my hope

that Buddhist songs could be composed, songs that most people would find deeply touching, but that were also easy enough for the average person to sing along with. As a result, I personally composed the lyrics to several Buddhist songs and led the Ilan Buddhist youth group choir in a premier performance of the Sound of Buddhism concert group on the Minben radio station in 1954. In addition, I made it a point to institutionalize the singing of modern Buddhist hymns during all types of Buddhist activities.

At that time a lot of people opposed this very strongly, even saying such methods could destroy Buddhism. However, history confirms that this strategy has been a success. The drawing power of music has indeed encouraged many people to enter into the Buddhist community, where a significant number have slowly been transformed spiritually as a result of being in constant contact with the teachings. In addition, it has encouraged many talented youths to become active in Buddhism, and many have later gone on to make lifelong commitments and enormous contributions to Buddhism, such as Venerable Tzu Hui and Venerable Tzu Jung. Even though there have been many setbacks and obstructions, I have main-

tained my conviction to bring a degree of modernization to Buddhist music.

The idea to modernize Buddhist music is based on a need to respond to changes in society in order to provide the most appropriate and suitable methods to help purify the hearts and minds of the public. Indeed, the lifestyle common to most people today is very busy and quite stressful, and with many people seeming to have no place to take any kind of spiritual refuge it can often become quite easy for them to lose themselves. However, the pure and clear sounding melodies of Buddhist music provide a way to communicate the higher spiritual states of mind that are advocated by the Dharma, and can serve to enrich and reenergize the hearts of the people.

Buddhist melodies are characterized as being strong, but not fierce; soft, but not weak; pure, but not dry; still, but not sluggish, and able to help purify the hearts of listeners. By using music to perform the task of spreading the Dharma and liberating sentient beings, we can reach the most remote places and overcome the limitations of time and distance, as well as differences in cultural backgrounds and nationalities. Music can help us achieve the task of widely propa-

gating the Dharma and spreading the wisdom and compassionate vows of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas across every corner of the globe.

Modernized Buddhist music is focused on bringing harmony into people's everyday lives, purifying people's minds, and performing the function of educating and transforming listeners in order to bring their emotions in line with the teachings of the Dharma. With modern media and information equipment constantly improving, we need to make full use of technology to find more efficient means to give Buddhist music public coverage, such as through the use of electronic broadcasting media including television and radio stations. We need to use music to break through the barriers of differences in cultural backgrounds, social customs, and languages. By using all sorts of equipment such as classical instruments, laserdiscs, electronic organs, the piano, and many other kinds of musical instruments we can create and distribute music that can suit the tastes and meet the needs of people from around the world.

The following are five guiding principles to further the modernization and popularization of Buddhist music:

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- a. Buddhist music should not be something unique to temples and monastic life, but should move towards spreading out to the general public.
 - b. In addition to Buddhist verses and chanted prayers, we need to continue creating more and more new musical pieces.
 - c. Those propagating Buddhism should from now on do more to advocate the use of music, and should use music to attract the public to study Buddhism.
 - d. Buddhists can start to form bands, choirs, orchestras, classical music troupes, etc. to use music to spread and teach the Dharma.
 - e. I hope that from this day on, we can see new musical talent make a mark in Buddhist history in the same mold as the likes of Asvaghosa Bodhisattva and Venerable Master Hongyi.

In addition to the techniques and styles of ceremonial music honoring the Buddhas that are now regarded as defining Buddhist music, we can begin to mix the solemn spirit of Buddhist melodies with some of the qualities of contemporary music to take the

modernization of Buddhist music to a whole new level.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun

Founder of the Fo Guang Shan (Buddha's Light Mountain) Buddhist Order and the Buddha's Light International Association, Venerable Master Hsing Yun has dedicated his life to teaching Humanistic Buddhism, which seeks to realize spiritual cultivation in everyday living.

Master Hsing Yun is the 48th Patriarch of the Linji Chan School. Born in Jiangsu Province, China in 1927, he was tonsured under Venerable Master Zhikai at the age of twelve and became a novice monk at Qixia Vinaya College. He was fully ordained in 1941 following years of strict monastic training. When he left Jiaoshan Buddhist College at the age of twenty, he had studied for almost ten years in a monastery.

Due to the civil war in China, Master Hsing Yun moved to Taiwan in 1949 where he undertook the revitalization of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. He began fulfilling his vow to promote the Dharma by starting chanting groups, student and youth groups, and other civic-minded organizations with Leiyin Temple in Ilan as his base. Since the founding of Fo

Guang Shan monastery in Kaohsiung in 1967, more than two hundred temples have been established worldwide. Hsi Lai Temple, the symbolic torch of the Dharma spreading to the West, was built in 1988 near Los Angeles.

Master Hsing Yun has been guiding Buddhism on a course of modernization by integrating Buddhist values into education, cultural activities, charity, and religious practices. To achieve these ends, he travels all over the world, giving lectures and actively engaging in religious dialogue. The Fo Guang Shan organization also oversees sixteen Buddhist colleges and four universities, one of which is the University of the West in Rosemead, California.

Over the past fifty years, Master Hsing Yun has written many books teaching Humanistic Buddhism and defining its practice. Whether providing insight into Buddhist sutras, human nature, or inter-religious exchange, he stresses the need for respect, compassion, and tolerance among all beings in order to alleviate suffering in this world. His works have been translated into English, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Sinhalese, Spanish, Swedish, Thai, and Vietnamese.

Buddha's Light Publishing F.G.S. Int'l Translation Center

For as long as Venerable Master Hsing Yun has been a Buddhist monk, he has had a firm belief that books and other means of transmitting the Buddha's teachings can unite us spiritually, help us practice Buddhism at a higher altitude, and continuously challenge our views on how we define and live our lives.

In 1996, the Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center was established with this goal in mind. This marked the beginning of a series of publications translated into various languages from the Master's original writings in Chinese. Presently, several translation centers have been set up worldwide. Centers that coordinate translation or publication projects are located in Los Angeles, USA; Montreal, Canada; Sydney, Australia; Berlin, Germany; France; Sweden; Argentina; Brazil; South Africa; Japan; Korea; and Thailand.

In 2001, Buddha's Light Publishing was established to publish Buddhist books translated by Fo Guang Shan International Translation Center as well as other important Buddhist works. Buddha's Light Publishing is committed to building bridges between East and West, Buddhist communities, and cultures. All proceeds from our book sales support Buddhist propagation efforts.

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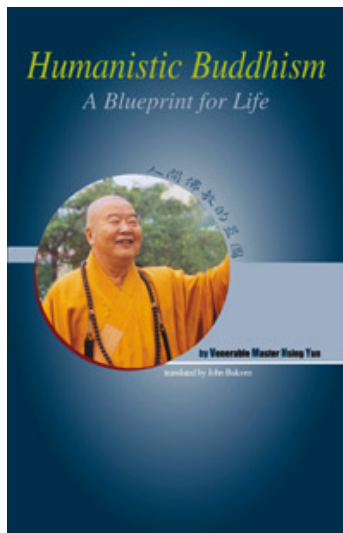
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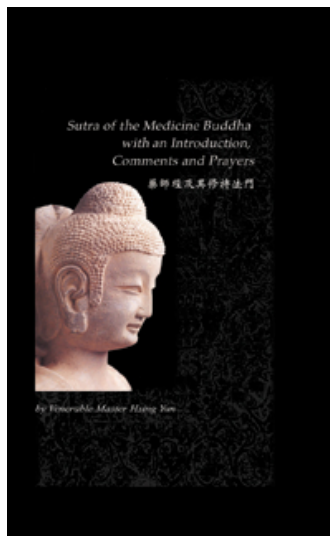
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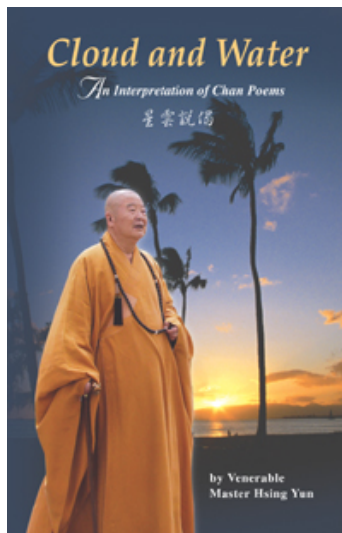
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