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## **To Resolve and To Develop**

*9<sup>th</sup> General Conference of the  
Buddha's Light International Association  
Tokyo, Japan, April 28, 2002*

**Ven. Master Hsing Yun**

Dear Guests and Members,

My warmest welcome to everyone and in particular to those who have travelled from the far corners of the globe. The BLIA has now stepped into its eleventh year. We are exceedingly honored to have your presence here in Japan to attend the Ninth General Conference of BLIA.

1965 was declared by the United Nations as the "Year of Development," and clearly world development is a responsibility that should be equally shared by all in this world. We are now in the 21st Century, a period when technology and communication is advancing at a rapid pace and everyone is concerned with the tasks of developing the world economy. However, the main task for Buddhists in this new millennium will involve the discovery and development of our inherent Buddha nature.

The BLIA is a Buddhist organization. Therefore we must nurture "internal" as well as "external" development. "Internal" development is the active disclosure of our inner nature and mind whereas "external" development refers to the beneficial advancement of our world.

Take for example the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the USA, which has for a long time been actively involved in the exploration of outer space. Its achievements include lunar landings and the discovery of life-supporting moisture on Mars and the basic compounds of life in the atmosphere of Jupiter. The Russian Mir Space Station splashed down into the South Pacific Ocean after serving more than ten years of space research. We have energy experts exploring the deep seas for oil and other resources. Similarly there are

many corporations involved in development of the infrastructure of cities as well as sea and mountain reclamation. Other notable engineering achievements include for example the new airports in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bangkok.

Today, many educational systems are actively encouraging the development of “gifted” students. We also have literary scholars who are writing exquisite verses and poetry and philosophers who publish their thoughts on the future including those who actively advocate compassion. All of these are a part of our efforts to help develop and improve our cultural and spiritual existence.

Members of the BLIA should constantly act in accordance with other members of society to develop themselves. We should have a socially conscious mind, and always be on the look-out for opportunities to enlighten ourselves as well as others. The “Four Verses of the BLIA” summarize the hopes and aims of all BLIA members:

*May palms be joined in every world in kindness, compassion, joy and giving,*

*May all beings find security in friendship, peace and loving care,*

*May calm and mindful practice seed of patience and equanimity deep,*

*May we give rise to spacious hearts and humble thoughts of gratitude.*

Through the understanding of these verses, we hope that our members can constantly develop their compassion, generosity, blessings, human relationships, humility, and gratitude. We must rediscover our self-nature with the ultimate goal of benefiting and liberating both ourselves and others.

In the eleven years since the founding of the BLIA, we have steadfastly advocated the mutual development of our body and mind as well as acting according to facts and logic. We should aim not only for financial prosperity in the family, but also for harmonious relationships with others. Our objectives in life should not be restricted to power and fortune, but we should also work towards the general benefits of society.

## *To Resolve and To Develop*

In this Ninth BLIA General Conference in Japan, we would like to celebrate the new millennium as well as the eleventh birthday of the BLIA by promoting the theme “To Resolve and To Develop.” It is hoped that in the future, each of us can make the following four resolutions:

(1) Resolve to be kind and compassionate, and treat equally both the beloved and the repugnant.

(2) Resolve to strengthen our minds by being steadfast and wise in our faith.

(3) Resolve to develop a fellowship of equality and coexistence.

(4) Resolve to achieve a Bodhi mind and perfect enlightenment.

These four resolves should also be complemented by the following developments:

(1) To develop truth, goodness and perfection in human nature.

(2) To develop the wealth of blessings, wisdom, and virtue in this world.

(3) To develop harmony, joy, love, and respect in the human race.

(4) To develop oneness between self and the Buddha.

### **1. To Resolve**

Among the many paths in Buddhism, our “resolve” is the singularly most important path. To resolve is the beginning of the cultivation of our minds. Buddhism views our minds as open fields waiting for seeds to be sowed. It emphasizes the importance of a proper cultivation that is required to nurture our path to enlightenment. Therefore, we should resolve to practice the “Four Immeasurable Minds,” “Four Great Vows,” “Four Embracing Virtues,” and “Four Disciplinary Processes” so that we and others can be liberated.

Master Sheng-An once said, “Resolve is the first important step in Buddhism and the ability to maintain this resolve will eventually lead to enlightenment.” We as members of the BLIA should undertake the following four resolutions.



(1) Resolve to be kind and compassionate, and treat equally both the beloved and repugnant.

“ Kindness leads to joy while compassion leads to the end of suffering.” The greatest flaws in our world lie in our discrimination between love and hate, and between intimacy and resentment. However the differences between love and hate, as well as intimacy and resentment often arise on our sentiments. An open sore will be regarded differently depending on where it is found. If a sore is found on your own body you would carefully cleanse, treat and nurse it. Similarly, if our treatment of our foe can be based on love rather than hate, and on the recognition of oneness among all beings, it will not be difficult to achieve universal harmony. If we truly believe in “ unconditional kindness and universal compassion,” it will be easy to accept that all beings are precious and related to one another.

Buddhism encourages us to replace enmity with kindness and stop conflict with tolerance. Christianity tells us to “ love thy enemy,” whereas Confucianism teaches “ universal love and benevolence.” The Buddha set an example that it is possible to create conditions for spiritual advancement by showing kindness and compassion to his rival, Devadatta.

Unquestionably, kindness and compassion are fundamental to all the teachings of Buddhism which are comprised of the Tripitaka and the Twelve Canons. As is stated in the *Vimalakirti-nirdeśa Sutra*, “ Dharma becomes heresy when it is practiced without kindness and compassion.”

According to the *Sutra of the Eight Realizations of Great Beings*, “ Life and death are like flickering flames, and suffering is endless. Take the Mahayana Vow to befriend all things. Vow to take on the illimitable suffering of sentient beings, and lead them all to ultimate bliss.” Since the beginning of time, Bodhisattvas have resolved to toil and work for the benefit of all living beings because they recognize the causal link between living beings and enlightenment. Therefore, it stands to reason that kindness and compassion are a direct route to enlightenment.

It is pointless to merely talk about kindness and compassion without actually

putting them into practice. In fact, the Buddhist scriptures contain many examples of how kindness and compassion were practiced. The more notable examples are the vows that were made by various bodhisattvas and patriarchs, including those of Ksitigarbha bodhisattva, who resolved to liberate all beings from hell before attaining Buddhahood. These saints all resolved to use kindness and compassion to bring salvation to the world.

Kindness and compassion are the purest and highest forms of love. If we can be more considerate and prepared to exchange places with others, kindness and compassion will become a part of one's nature. In this way we will be able to eradicate greed and craving, hatred and bitterness, pride and arrogance, and fear and consternation. It was once said, "Personal kindness and compassion bring forth companionship, and communal kindness and compassion result in social unity." In other words, the practice of kindness and compassion by one person will enhance his relationship with others. Better still, if kindness and compassion are practiced in society, then we will be rewarded with an environment of harmony and joy.

In his time, the Buddha had brought peace and happiness to all beings through his kindness and compassion. We hope that members of the BLIA can follow his example by taking the first step of treating others as oneself. The Lotus Sutra teaches us to regard all beings as part of our own family irrespective of whether they are intimate or obnoxious to us. We must show others our love, and ultimately, through our compassion, take all humanity along the path of light and blessings.

(2) Resolve to strengthen our minds by being steadfast and wise in our faith.

To "strengthen" means to improve and to progress. *The Path to Buddhahood* states, "through the improvement of our livelihood, we can enjoy both material and spiritual joy." In other words, we should not reject and deny the pursuit of personal necessities, affection and wealth through proper means. However, these are only superficial goals and should be supplemented simultaneously by being steadfast and wise in our faith. We must constantly strive to elevate ourselves through the practice of meditation and observation, thus com-

plying with one of the guidelines of the BLIA: “ We live in the peace and joy of the Dharma. We disentangle ourselves from suffering and ignorance.”

*The Sutra of Hui-Neng* says, “ steadfastness and wisdom are one and the same.” “ Steadfastness” is our mind’ s ability to remain composed and undisturbed by external circumstances. “ Wisdom” is the ability to think and act according to the Dharma. A follower once responded to his master’ s question by suggesting that to solve a problem one must be steadfast and composed, and once a scheme is devised it must be acted upon with wisdom.

To be without either steadfastness or wisdom is a major departure from the Dharma. The *Nirvana Sutra* states, “ Too much steadfastness leads to ignorance and too much wisdom leads to erroneous views.” Master Hui-Neng preached that steadfastness and wisdom arise from the practice of pure thoughts, and that the ability to remain composed and calm in all situations will lead to the experience of our self nature.

There is no demarcation separating steadfastness and wisdom. The talk of one is directly related to the other, just like the ocean and the waves, light and a lamp, two wings of a bird, and two arms of a man. There is nothing that is not achievable if we make good use of our steadfastness and wisdom.

As members of the BLIA we must therefore resolve to improve our faith by being steadfast and wise. Buddhism has outlined a number of ways in which we can progressively improve our faith. We can progressively improve ourselves through the ranks of the “ Five Mahayana Vehicles” of human, deva, Sravaka, Pratyeka-buddha and Bodhisattva. Similarly the enlightenment of a Theravada Arhat and a Mahayana Bodhisattva is achieved progressively through four stages and fifty-one stages respectively. Therefore, do not expect our own enlightenment to come all of a sudden; it will most probably be achieved in gradual elevations.

Today’ s Buddhist communities are composed mainly of devotees and their families whose relationships are founded on mutual respect and affection. It would be unreasonable to expect our devotees to exclude and reject the normal pursuit of jobs, reputation, and general enjoyment of their lives just because they are

Buddhists. As laymen, we cannot follow the examples of the monastics by retiring from the mundane world. We can however, strengthen our own resolve by learning more about detachment and by enhancing our Bodhi mind through steadfastness and wisdom. Through a combination of kindness and compassion, we will be able to experience perfect satisfaction and an understanding of the Truth.

**(3) Resolve to develop a fellowship of equality and coexistence.**

Most troubles in the world arise out of discrimination, whether this is between male and female, rich and poor, knowledgeable and ignorant, and domestic and foreign. As long as there is discrimination, there will be contradiction and dispute. How can true harmony exist in this world if we are constantly faced with disputes and arguments? World peace and happiness can be achieved only through the eradication of prejudice and the advancement of equality and fellowship.

The Dharma proclaims to the devotees the importance of equality in a community. It restrains us from killing by stating that, "the flesh of humans and animals differ only in names. All living things possess the same true nature, and are only different in shapes and sizes." In truth, all living beings are no different from the Buddha, possessing wisdom and virtuous appearance. It is only our discriminatory ways that created the sufferings in this world.

Our human race may have evolved into different colors, shapes, and sizes. However, irrespective of the colour of their skins, essentially they all have similar goals in life. These goals generally include personal safety, harmony, happiness, and a comfortable and easy life. Therefore, we should never base our own needs and happiness on the loss and suffering of others. Likewise, we should not show off our achievements by emphasizing the failures of others.

Confucius once said, "Do not do to others what you do not want to be done to you." Buddhism always advocates the sharing of Dharma joy with everyone in the world. We must look upon all living beings as our companions, as part of our body and mind, and as an integral part of our lives.

It is true that living things may come into existence in many different ways and are of varying forms and appearances. Some may have conscious thoughts while others may appear to possess little to no intelligence. However, each of these

living beings does have a consciousness that is no different from our own. Our eventual enlightenment can be linked through the likes of mountains and streams, and trees and flowers, which can be regarded as integral parts of our self-nature. The ultimate truth is that all living beings possess a self-nature of neither more nor less importance.

How humans feel about each other often depends on how closely we are related to each other. Take a look around us and we can find that we are often associated with people of the same country, same political party, same office, same school, same hometown, same surname, and same family. We will invariably find that the relationships between husband and wife, father and son, and brother and sister are often accompanied by great emotional attachments. In order to establish a common fellowship in this world, we must recognize that each person is somehow related to and dependent on each other. For example we will starve unless farmers do the planting and harvesting. Similarly, we will get cold if no one works in mills and clothing factories. Without the contributions and hard work of everyone in the community, our lives will be less comfortable and full of hardship. Nowadays, it is inconceivable to think that it is possible to exist without considering the contributions made by each and every person in society. If we can establish a fellowship of equality, while working under the principle of oneness and coexistence, it is hard to imagine a world without true peace.

#### (4) Resolve to achieve a Bodhi mind and perfect enlightenment.

A Bodhi mind (*bodhicitta*) signifies the determination for self sacrifice so that all beings may be liberated. This is an aspiration of a Bodhisattva who has resolved to achieve full and complete enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings.

In the Mahayana tradition, those following the Bodhisattva path will practice in accordance with the precepts, the avoidance evil, as well as the diligent application of Dharma and the assistance to all beings. Clearly, these practitioners are more than just trying to avoid committing bad karma. In fact they are acting proactively to learn as much as they can about the Buddha's teachings so that they

will be well-prepared to enlighten others.

In the *Sutra of the Virtuous Bodhisattva Precepts*, it is said that “ the two ways to violate the Bodhisattva precepts are (i) the loss of the Bodhi mind and (ii) the accumulation of deluded thoughts.” It must be understood that a Bodhisattva has vowed to enlighten all beings, and if he loses his resolve to practice accordingly, he is no longer a Bodhisattva.

There are many examples set by past sages and patriarchs to show how to practice with a Bodhi mind. For example, according to the *Jataka Sutra* which records the lives of the Buddha before his enlightenment, he sacrificed his body by feeding himself to a tiger and an eagle. This was his way of accomplishing his great vow concerning the paramita of “ giving.” Similarly, in one of his other lives, the Buddha willingly allowed King Kaliraja to cut his body without feeling resentment or hatred, thus accomplish his great vow on the paramita of “ forbearance.”

There are many examples of the Buddha’s disciples and monastics who sacrificed themselves for the benefit of others and for the propagation of the Dharma. *Maudgalyayana* sacrificed his life for Buddhism, *Purna* put his life at risk by vowing to preach Buddhism to barbarous people and, in order to print the Buddhist Tripitaka and Twelve Canons, *Bhiksuni Fa-zhen* severed one of her arms to raise funds. It is hard to imagine that these great vows can be accomplished without the strength and resolve of a Bodhi mind. It is also through the sacrifices made by these saints and sages that we are able to benefit from the teachings of the Buddha today.

It should be strongly emphasized that the resolve to develop a Bodhi mind should be regarded as a long-term aspiration. Once such a vow has been made, we should apply ourselves diligently in every aspect of our lives, no matter how insignificant. A person with a Bodhi mind should not abandon even a single living being or disregard the smallest virtuous deed. A Bodhi mind requires us to follow the Dharma path and consider the truth as our companion.

The objectives of the BLIA are to introduce the Dharma to all beings, in particular the Dharma that brings forth happiness and joy. The aim is to encourage

continued improvement of our characters so that we may be emancipated from our troubles and sufferings, and also to better our quality of life by releasing us from our egos and material desires. As a result, we will be able to appreciate the joy of fellowship with other beings.

We all go through different rebirth cycles, and it is impossible to control our past and future lives. However, we must all at least try to master our present lives. Life is meaningless for an unhappy person even if he or she possesses good looks, vast knowledge, wealth, and power. That is why Buddhism advocates joy in meditation and happiness in learning about the Dharma. We are not truly reaping the benefits of Buddhism if we are not conscious of the delight experienced during this learning process. For without "Dharma joy," we will be adversely affected by the abuse and criticism of others, or distracted by discomfort and hardship when we are praying, chanting, or assisting others.

Therefore we can always find joy when giving and practicing the Dharma. On the other hand, if we do not feel at ease or happy in our practice, we may not have the right resolve for a Bodhi mind. We cannot achieve perfection in our practice if we do not feel completely at ease. I hope that BLIA members can follow the example shown by Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva to be completely at ease whenever practicing the Bodhi way. Perfect enlightenment is achievable if we can liberate ourselves through learning and practicing while helping others to be aware of the Dharma.

## **2. To Develop**

Since its founding in Taiwan on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 1991, and the subsequent inauguration of the World Headquarters in the USA on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May in the following year, the BLIA has constantly developed its objectives and goals.

The BLIA's development plan is progressive. It starts off from a personal level that encourages goodness through which BLIA members can develop and improve by themselves. This is to be followed by the creation of BLIA families, society and finally a Buddha's Light Pureland.

In order to achieve our final goal of a Buddha's Light Pureland, it is neces-

sary to promote the training of lay Dharma teachers and lecturers. It is also necessary to broaden the international perspective of our members so that we are more aware of the importance of efficient development of the world's resources as well as our own spiritual abilities. I hope that each one of us can act according to the following four directions:

(1) To develop truth, goodness and perfection in human nature.

Since its founding, the BLIA has repeatedly emphasized the importance of culture, education, charity, regular chanting services, and particularly the instruction of proper practices for devotees. In different parts of the world, the BLIA has organized various study groups, short-term monastic retreats, seminars, children's camps, youth training classes, orchestras, as well as BLIA Young Adults Divisions and Adulthood ceremonies.

The purpose of these cultural, educational and community welfare activities is to provide our members with the necessary training for a truthful, good and perfect character. In this world today, we often find that families lack intimate feelings. Likewise in today's society, one rarely finds the desire to perform kind deeds for others, which results in a failure in communication. What is there to look forward to in this world when it is full of greed, jealousy, violence, and foulness? We humans have failed to discover the goodness that is inherent to our true nature, and are reluctant to share with others all that is honorable and good.

It is most important that we establish and develop an environment of truth, kindness, and perfection in this world. It is stated in a sutra that, "Universal goodness is like parental love. Kindness and perfection will bring forth physical well-being, mental peace, improved diligence, and better human relationships. They will also eradicate evil, affliction, and human faults. That is why we should practice universal goodness."

No matter where we are, we should all try to set truth, goodness, and perfection as our ultimate goals. This is achievable if, from this day forward, we act according to the Buddha's teachings:

a) To be truthful and factual in our speech without being ambiguous or flattering. (as is stated in the *Diamond Sutra*)



b) To act with goodness, virtue, benevolence and kindness for the benefit of mankind.( as is stated in the *Agama Sutra*)

c) To think with wisdom, righteousness, compassion, and great vows with blessings.

To speak, act and think correctly are the “The Three Benevolent Acts” recognized by the BLIA as the path to acquire truth, goodness, and perfection in our character. However, the result will be significantly magnified if the governments and all those concerned with the enhancement of human nature are prepared to adopt the same policy. One way to achieve this is to publicly reward and encourage those who are prepared to practice truth, goodness and perfection. In this world, we should be able to hear good words being said, to feel the sincerity in people’s actions and to perceive the good intentions in everyone’s thoughts.

We hope that all BLIA members can take the lead by learning how to promote the development of a harmonious world so that we can lead a true, good, and perfect life.

## **(2) To develop the wealth of blessings, wisdom, and virtue in this world.**

In this world, everyone would like to develop his or her own career and fortune. But most of all we hope that everyone can consider the importance of developing their future assets in blessings, wisdom, and virtuous wealth.

There are different kinds of wealth. In the narrow sense, wealth refers to money, buildings, land and stock. When considered in a broad sense, it refers to health, intelligence, relationships, credibility, and morality.

Wealth can also be defined as “priced wealth” such as prestige, reputation, and social and historical achievement; or “priceless wealth” such as integrity, conscience, loyalty, and character. Wealth can be tangible, intangible, present, future, personal, communal, physical, spiritual, temporary, or permanent.

If we can build our wealth upon a foundation of blessings and wisdom, we will be able to enjoy a most satisfactory life, for blessings and wisdom are the ultimate wealth that a person can possess. A perfect example can be personified in