

**STUDIES ON  
HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM Ⅳ**

**HUMAN LIFE  
人間佛教研究論文選**

Fo Guang Shan Institute of Humanistic Buddhism, Taiwan  
and  
Nan Tien Institute, Australia

# THE VALUE OF THE BUDDHISM PRACTICED BY FO GUANG SHAN

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## **Source**

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Buddhism has a long history with a vast body of texts and many schools of thought. Throughout its history, Buddhism has blended with cultures and ethnic groups of different regions, creating a Buddhist landscape where different schools of thought have blossomed. Especially in a modern society, there is a mixture of good and bad in this process. The ascetic style of Da Bei Monastery in Haicheng, the noisy style of Shaolin Monastery on Mount Song, the majestic style of Lingshan Temple in Wuxi, and of course Taiwan's Chung Tai Temple style and Tzu Chi style are just a few of the many "blooms" that are accumulating in the "social image" and "social perception" of Buddhism. Like with the fragmentation of data in the information age, it can be difficult for the recipients of information to make accurate decisions. Fortunately, Venerable Master Hsing Yun and the organization he founded, Fo Guang Shan, have been carrying out the ideals of Humanistic Buddhism for decades, and have engaged in a large number of fruitful Buddhist activities in accordance with truth and aptitudes. It can be said that the Buddhist practice of Fo Guang Shan, whether in the form of extensive cultural and educational programs or innovations in management and overseas expansion, is like a beacon of light, expounding Buddhism in terms of faith, culture, and life, and providing a contemporary model for people to understand the nature of Buddhism and even the essence of religion in general.

## **1. Buddhist Faith as Practiced by Fo Guang Shan**

Whatever one's understanding of religion, Buddhism is widely recognized as a world religion. As a religion, it is naturally different from philosophy. Although there is a philosophical aspect to religion that is characterized by rational thought, faith is undoubtedly essential. The faith of Buddhism is expressed as a belief in the triple gem. Not only are the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha all required, but there must also be a solemn and intimate relationship with the Buddha, the teaching of the Dharma must be precise and complete, and the members of the Saṅgha must possess both ability and integrity.

The magnificent and majestic Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum, the

compilation and publication of Buddhist texts, especially the Fo Guang Buddhist Canon, and the high level of monastic education all provide a model for a contemporary Buddhist faith with the complete Triple Gem. Increasing the quality of the monastic community is undoubtedly an important prerequisite for enhancing the ability of Buddhism to be received by and to guide sentient beings. It is only when this prerequisite is met that the practice of Buddhism in which the public at large can participate. The cultivation of a large number of highly qualified monastics in the Saṅgha has laid a solid foundation for strengthening the faith of devotees and for the extensive spread of Buddhism around the world.

## **2. Buddhist Culture as Practiced by Fo Guang Shan**

As a classical religion with more than 2,500 years of history, Buddhism has a rich culture. Using Karl Jaspers' theory of the Axial Age to explain, Buddhist culture has a full expression of the dual attributes of human civilization—reason and morality. Buddhism was founded on the idea of the human potential for self-awakening through reason. Śākyamuni used his own reasoning to transcend his personality and become the Buddha. There are no mysterious powers of atonement at work here. The concepts of karmic retribution and the cycle of rebirth strengthen the rationale behind “the desire for a beneficial dharma” and contribute to the moral appeal in Buddhism. Buddhism pursues two other attributes of civilization—equality and peace. These attributes are manifested in Buddhism's unique criticism of the caste system in Indian society through the idea of the “equality of all living beings” and in opposing conflict and violence by “having a merciful heart.” Throughout the development and dissemination of Buddhism, there has been almost no violence. On the contrary, the legend of the white horse carrying sūtras has become the symbol of the peaceful spread of Buddhism.

Buddhism's attribute of “establishing society through morality and culture” under the guidance of Śākyamuni and eminent monks who have followed him, through rigorous theoretical explanation and demonstration of Buddhist concepts, has helped believers to master their inner world. The

doctrine of the Four Noble Truths, the Three Dharma Seals of impermanence, non-self, and nirvāṇa, as well as other theories such as dependent origination all profoundly elucidate the doctrines and teachings of Buddhism. The Tripitaka, temple architecture, and other works of art exude the unfading charm of Buddhist culture.

Since Venerable Master Hsing Yun founded Fo Guang Shan, countless cultural undertakings of all types have showcased Buddhist culture to the world in a comprehensive way. Such undertakings include: *The Biography of Sakyamuni Buddha* and *National Master Yulin*, the *Fo Guang Dictionary of Buddhism*, the *Fo Guang Canon*, various compilations and publications on Buddhist studies, a host of media enterprises including television and newspapers, schools, museums, and Fo Guang Shan temples around the world, among others. The propagation of Buddhism by Fo Guang Shan has always demonstrated the strength of Buddhist culture. Buddhism is a religion of peace. Fo Guang Shan's contribution to Taiwan-China relations is especially prominent.

### **3. Buddhist Life as Practiced by Fo Guang Shan**

The essence of Buddhism is in its application to daily life. Buddhism is a religion of practice that has served individuals and communities since it was established. Its theory and practice are centered around liberation from suffering. As Buddhism became more widespread and the number of devotees has increased, its impact on social life has likewise increased and deepened. Not only did it influence India, but it has also had a profound impact on the Indian Peninsula and regions and peoples far beyond.

When a large number of people have a resolute faith in Buddhism, it will become their way of thinking which will help them understand life and the world, and then it will become their way of life which will help them perfect their own lives and transform the world. Buddhism is intimately related to the lives and emotions of believers. The Five Precepts, Ten Virtues, Four Means of Embracing, Six Pāramitās, and other guidelines for life all have

strong moral aspects. The large number of objects of worship in the history of Buddhism have also mostly had dual spiritual and moral aspects. “Do nothing that is unwholesome. Do all that is wholesome. Purify the mind. This is the teaching of all buddhas.” This classic definition succinctly shows how Buddhism relates to human life.

Buddhism is a lifestyle. Therefore, respect for the Buddhist faith should be shown through respect for the lifestyle chosen by Buddhists, as well as respecting the Buddhists themselves. This is the inherent requirement for a religion to be viewed as a lifestyle. The Buddhist social practices of Fo Guang Shan and its contributions and achievements are well known. “Do good deeds. Speak good words. Think good thoughts.” This is the practice not only among the people within Fo Guang Shan, but also in interactions between Fo Guang Shan members and others. For example, when Fo Guang Shan organizes activities around the world, it pays special attention to actively integrate its activities into the lives of the local people and ensure that the Dharma is manifested in speech and behavior. This was demonstrated during the second World Buddhist Forum held in Taiwan, where Venerable Master Hsing Yun welcomed all the guests in the lobby of Taoyuan International Airport. The personal welcome, the warm reception of visitors to Fo Guang University and other forums, and the unique Fo Guang Shan “lotus mudra” give a sense of unity between faith and lifestyle.

If the life aspect of Buddhism is related to individuals and the cultural aspect is related to groups, then the faith aspect of Buddhism is an abstract relating to the ultimate. The organic integration of these three aspects of Buddhism as practised by Fo Guang Shan not only provides a living example for understanding contemporary Buddhism, but also provides a clear case for us to understand religion and its essence.

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