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# THE CONCEPT OF WEALTH IN VENERABLE MASTER HSING YUN'S HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM

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## **Source**

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## Foreword

Venerable Master Hsing Yun has actively promoted the propagation and practice of Humanistic Buddhism. He believes that, “In the twentieth century, due to the awakening of Buddhists, Buddhism returned to its traditional fundamental teachings, and at the same time adapted itself through modernization. Therefore, the ‘Humanistic Buddhism’ of the twenty-first century was born to meet the needs of the time,”<sup>1</sup> and that “what is known as Humanistic Buddhism needs to have humanity, altruism, joy, universality, timeliness, and an emphasis on daily life. It should be based on *bodhicitta* and traveling the bodhisattva path, always moving upward, forward, toward truth, wholesomeness, and toward the ultimate and perfection of the Buddhist way.”<sup>2</sup> His definition is, “Humanistic Buddhism is that which was taught by the Buddha himself, that which is needed by human beings, that which is pure, and that which is virtuous and beautiful. It is whatever which accords with truth and capabilities, promotes wellbeing, benefits the individual, contributes to the society and country.”<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, “The Humanistic Buddhism that I have been promoting for more than six decades is the harmonious integration between the Dharma and daily life.”<sup>4</sup>

Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism proposes that Buddhism ought to emphasize day-to-day life, paying close attention to the reality of our daily livelihood. In life, wealth is an important aspect for everyone as it forms the foundation for one’s material needs, as well as the development of both individuals and societies. Therefore, wealth should be included in the narrative of how to apply the theory of Humanistic Buddhism into our daily lives. However, there is a saying in the Buddhist tradition of “gold being a poisonous snake,” and money is often seen as the symbol of desire in the secular world. These views seem contradictory to a Buddhism that has transcendental leanings. This contradiction needs to be addressed, especially for Humanistic Buddhism, which aims to incorporate Dharma into our daily lives.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun has expounded on his views of wealth

in many articles. For example, in *Humanistic Buddhism*, we find a section titled “The View of Humanistic Buddhism Towards Some Problems” in which the very first article is titled “A Buddhist View of Wealth.” In *Treatises on Humanistic Buddhism* we find many more relevant articles; one is titled “Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life” and includes sections specifically explaining the opinion of Buddhism towards wealth (“The Way of Financial Management”) and towards daily living (“The Way of Using Resources”). Other articles of note include “Humble Opinions on the Stages in Development of Chinese Buddhism,” “Humble Opinions on Religious Legislation,” “Where the Future of Buddhism Lies,” and “Monasteries in the Mountains and Monasteries in the Cities.” Of these, the most representative of Buddhist views regarding wealth is the “The Way of Financial Management” found in “Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life.”

This article highlights the unique character and implications of Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s views on wealth via the five aspects: (1) wealth as the foundation of daily life and careers, (2) seeking wealth in accordance with the Dharma, (3) the allocation of wealth, (4) a broader understanding of wealth, and (5) re-evaluating the value of wealth.

## **1. Wealth as the Foundation of Daily Life and Careers**

The Humanistic Buddhism promoted by Venerable Master Hsing Yun emphasizes the practicalities of daily life with wealth as its basis. In “Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life,” one section regarding the Buddhist perspective on wealth (“The Way of Financial Management”) mentions that “a person must have a proper occupation and, through their diligence and enterprise, acquire adequate clothing and food, and thus enjoy a stable lifestyle. Only then can they engage in various charitable deeds.”<sup>5</sup>

The common perception is that the practitioners of early Buddhism did not attach much importance to wealth, but instead focused on pure practice. They pursued a simple life, espousing a philosophy of frugality, believing that simplicity was the practice and poverty the path. However, the Mahāyāna

scriptures tell us otherwise. *The Amitabha Sūtra* tells of the Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, which has ground paved with gold and magnificent palace halls furnished with the seven treasures. Furthermore, the bodhisattvas were dripping with unparalleled riches, wearing crowns and bodily adornments. Therefore, Dharma practice does not necessarily have to associate virtue with impoverishment. As long as they are upright and just, Buddhism encourages lay devotees to have high positions and great wealth, and to use their careers to amass riches.<sup>6</sup>

Not only does money provide the means to learn Buddhism, but it also serves as the foundation for all Buddhist undertakings. The establishment of Buddhist colleges, meditation halls, chanting halls, schools, hospitals, broadcasting stations, publishing companies, and other ventures all require money. Therefore, money is not entirely a “venomous snake.” The Buddhist scriptures refer to transparent finance, wholesome wealth, and spiritual wealth. As long as money is used in wholesome ways to propagate the Dharma and benefit sentient beings, its merits are far greater and more meaningful than Buddhism practiced with the facade of poverty.<sup>7</sup>

It is evident from these quotations that Venerable Master Hsing Yun views adequate wealth as a priority in our daily living and careers. Wealth is a necessity for any individual to survive in society, and it can also be the basis for various charitable deeds. As for Buddhism itself, wealth is equally important as a foundation on which to develop all Buddhist undertakings. He believes that an individual’s life must be materially prosperous before one can engage in transformative teachings. Venerable Master Hsing Yun sees wealth as important for both the development of Buddhism as a whole and in individual lives.

According to Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s version of Humanistic Buddhism, it is important to recognize the positive aspects of wealth. Some material wealth is certainly needed to survive and maintain one’s life, develop one’s career, realize one’s ideals, and reflect one’s worth. Materialistic wealth is a person’s most basic, direct, and practical requirement. A person’s existence

and livelihood requires some material wealth to provide the fundamentals of clothing, food, housing, and transportation.

Wealth is a fundamental consideration in our daily lives when providing care for our parents, spouse, and children. Venerable Master Hsing Yun emphasizes that “not only are clothing, food, housing, and transportation critical parts of ordinary people’s lives, but also the lives of fully enlightened Buddhas.”<sup>8</sup> Everyone aspires to a wealthy lifestyle, and wealth is one of the five blessings in the Chinese tradition.

Contentment with poverty is expressed by Yan Hui, “With a single bamboo dish of rice, a single gourd dish of drink, and living in his mean narrow lane, while others could not have endured the distress, he did not allow his joy to be affected by it”<sup>9</sup> Such poverty may be an aspiration for some seeking the Dharma, but it is unlikely to inspire the general public. Moreover, the natural economy has transformed into a market economy, causing money to become inseparable from modern life. Society has developed a social consciousness that gravitates towards economic development, and the desire for wealth is now undeniable.

If we hope to have people undergo an education in propriety and transformative teachings, at least a modicum of wealth is a prerequisite. It is hypocritical to discuss moral obligations with those who are in abject poverty. Only when people no longer have to concern themselves with their basic needs can they further pursue their spiritual life.

Confucius had the ideology of “increasing, enriching, and teaching” the population. When he visited the Wei dynasty with Yen Yew as his driver, Confucius observed, “‘How numerous are the people!’ Yew said, ‘Since they are thus numerous, what more shall be done for them?’ ‘Enrich them,’ was the reply. ‘And when they have been enriched, what more shall be done?’ [Confucius] said, ‘Teach them.’”<sup>10</sup> This shows Confucius’ belief in first improving a person’s wealth prior to educating them.<sup>11</sup> Mencius introduced the philosophy of “regulating the livelihood of his people.” He wrote,

“Therefore the intelligent ruler will regulate the livelihood of his people so that they have enough to support their parents and their own children. In good years they will eat their full, and in bad years they will never starve. After this you can encourage them toward the good, because they will follow easily.” And furthermore, “If mulberry trees are planted on plots of one acre, people in their fifties can wear silk. If you do not pull the men away for battle during the breeding times of your livestock, people in their seventies can eat meat. If the proper planting, cultivation, and harvesting times are not missed, the family of eight that lives off a twenty-acre farm will not go hungry. Pay careful attention to education, teaching the fairness of filial piety and fraternity, and the gray-haired will not be seen in the streets carrying heavy burdens on their backs.”<sup>12</sup> In traditional Chinese culture, regulating the livelihood of the people takes precedence over an education in propriety and culture. This is aligned with Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s belief that basic necessities should be satisfied before promoting good virtue.

From the Buddhist perspective, temples adorned with majestic interiors signify a humanistic pure land. They can attract the public and transform people’s impression of Buddhism. Venerable Master Hsing Yun once said, “Many years ago on my visit to a number of European museums, I remember seeing many Catholic Churches. They are all majestic and glittering building[s], a clear demonstration of the Church’s power and wealth in the world. Similarly churches and banks in Taiwan usually occupy the best locations in towns and cities. On reflection, a few decades ago Buddhist temples could only be found at the end of some dirty and obscure laneways.”<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Humanistic Buddhism’s bringing of the Dharma into our daily lives inevitably leads to the development of Buddhist enterprises. As Venerable Master Hsing Yun says, money is the resource for learning the Dharma, and is also the foundation of all Buddhist enterprises. Money is required to build Buddhist colleges, meditation and chanting halls, schools, hospitals, radio stations, publishing companies, and other ventures.

The focus on wealth is important for Buddhism. Buddhism is commonly

understood as a religion that pursues transcendence and distances itself from wealth. The Buddha was a prince who renounced mundane glory and riches to seek the Dharma, and likewise Buddhists thereafter would remove themselves from the villages and cultivate themselves in the forest while maintaining a distance from wealth. We also find stipulations in the Buddhist precepts that monastics cannot possess money or even assets, and thus Buddhism often gives people the impression that it is practiced in poverty.

In modern society, the pursuit of wealth is a common aspiration. Venerable Master Hsing Yun's positive affirmation of the significance of wealth within people's lives, as well as the proactive development of Buddhist enterprises, has both transformed people's impression of Buddhism and deeply embedded the concept of Humanistic Buddhism in their hearts. This aids in bringing the Dharma into secular society, and presents Buddhism as joyful and applicable to daily life. Jiang Canteng writes, "[Venerable Master Hsing Yun] packaged Humanistic Buddhism with the image of happiness and joy, and of breaking with conservatism, thus bringing a sense of pride to Buddhists in Taiwan who no longer have to shy away when faced with criticism of the Western religions. His most important contribution to Buddhism is drastically changing people's opinion of Buddhism in Taiwan."<sup>14</sup> This is an authentic portrayal of Humanistic Buddhism and the achievements of Venerable Master Hsing Yun.

Furthermore, from the perspective of social development, Venerable Master Hsing Yun's positive affirmation of the pursuit of wealth aligns Buddhism with modern society's active pursuit of productivity and development. Social progress and development cannot be achieved without the development of that society's productivity. On this issue, Professor Ji Xianlin once said, "Among the various schools of Buddhism in China, Chan has the longest life span. Scholars in the past have mostly explained this in terms of its doctrines. This has some merits, but in my view, the most important reason has to be sought in the relationship between the needs of religion and that of the development of productivity. Chan's approach is aligned with the principles of religious development, hence its longevity."<sup>15</sup>

Although Professor Ji's analysis here is limited to the tradition of "agricultural Chan" and its being in harmony with agricultural production in a peasant society, we can also see it as a universal issue between Buddhism as a whole and the development of societies. Encouraging people to pursue wealth leads to increased development and productivity, thereby creating greater wealth for society as a whole. In this way, Buddhism does not run counter to the development of society, but rather condones it as socially acceptable. We can conclude that Venerable Master Hsing Yun's emphasis on wealth has positive implications for both society and Buddhism itself.

## 2. Seeking Wealth in Accordance with the Dharma

Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that one should seek wealth in accordance with the Dharma. The word for Dharma in Chinese (法) also means laws and rules. Therefore, wealth in accordance with the Dharma carries the implication to follow a country's laws as well as the Five Precepts of Buddhism.

Firstly, the Venerable Master encourages people to seek wealth in accordance with the Dharma. He says, "According to the *Great Treasures Collection Sūtra (Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra)*, 'Lay devotees can amass wealth legitimately. It does not contravene the Dharma.' By being well off and self[-]sufficient, we will be able to provide for our families, help our relatives and friends in need, and support the propagation of Buddhism. Putting it another way, we must conduct our lives by right action and right livelihood according to the eightfold noble path. The *Samyuktāgama* states that Buddhism acknowledges that proper livelihood can be made from taking part in various lawful professions such as farming, herding, trading or investing."<sup>16</sup> He thus affirms the legitimate pursuit of wealth based on the teachings of the *sūtras*.

Secondly, he identifies the types of wealth and means of obtaining such wealth that Buddhism does not condone. He considers the following acts to be unwholesome: "Buddhism disapproves of ill-gotten gains acquired by theft, corruption, renegeing on debts, appropriating another's money, embezzlement,

taking by force, prospering through extortion, illegal business, deceiving investors, and profiteering.”<sup>17</sup> These methods of gaining wealth are also contrary to secular law.

He also says, “Buddhism condemns breaking the law, whether it is selling drugs or trafficking in human life, as well as improper jobs such as butchering or running a bar or gambling establishment; that is, any occupation that violates the Dharma—those that run counter to the precepts against killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, or taking intoxicants and drugs.”<sup>18</sup> And again he states:

*The Collection of Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha [Madhyamāgama Sūtra]* asserts that there are six inappropriate ways to make money: (1) making money by gambling; this includes gambling on sporting matches, tournaments, and in other facilities, (2) engaging in improper lines of work; this refers to those who ignore family duties, for example, by loitering about without proper employment, (3) getting drunk and engaging in excessive behavior; alcohol can cloud the mind, lead to excessive behavior, and is unproductive, (4) becoming friends with the impious for the purpose of earning a profit; by making bad friends, one will not make money but lose everything instead, possibly even one’s life, (5) indulging in indecent pleasure; this includes those who waste themselves on song, dance, and prostitutes, and (6) being lazy in the pursuit of wealth; this refers to those who do not like to work and will use any excuse to avoid it.

These six inappropriate ways consume wealth rather than produce it. Not only do they result in the loss of wealth, health, and reputation in this life, but also

unhappiness in future lives and not being reborn as a human being. Therefore, when we say inappropriate ways, we mean evil and unethical ways.<sup>19</sup>

Venerable Master Hsing Yun thus explains that the Buddhist way of obtaining money must be in accordance with both the laws of the country and the fundamental precepts of Buddhism. In short, the pursuit of wealth must be done in an ethical manner.

Buddhists are members of society and citizens within their country; they are therefore subject to the same laws as others. They are also followers of Buddhism, so they must also abide by Buddhist religious concepts and precepts. Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that Buddhists must abide by both sets of laws and precepts in the pursuit of wealth. He once gave this example, “Chan Master Yongming Yanshou of the Song dynasty fully expended the royal treasury in order to liberate lives. Although the act of liberating lives is permissible, that of misappropriating funds from the treasury contravenes the country’s laws and is not.”<sup>20</sup>

Venerable Master Hsing Yun’s notion of pursuing wealth in accordance with the Dharma provides a positive example for contemporary society. He is of the opinion that wealth must come from ethical sources. From the perspective of an individual, pursuing wealth in accordance with the Dharma is not a restriction, but rather a freedom, only legitimately-obtained wealth will bring genuine happiness. Secular laws can be regarded as a type of externally-enforced discipline, whereas the Dharma’s precepts are a form of self-discipline. Therefore, pursuing wealth in accordance with the Dharma will reduce the conflicts and illegality often associated with wealth, enabling safe and happy lives, and eventually a peaceful society.

### **3. The Allocation of Wealth**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that once a person has acquired wealth, its distribution then becomes an important issue. In this regard

he remarked:

In a *gāthā* from the *Connected Discourses* (*Samyuktāgama Sūtra*) states, “One fifth for food, two fifths for business, one fifth to save, and the remaining fifth for the poor.” So, if you have a monthly income of three thousand US dollars, twelve hundred would go into your business, six hundred into the maintenance of your household, six hundred into your savings account, and the remaining six hundred returned to society to provide relief for the poor.

In the *Great Treasures Collection Sūtra* (*Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*), the Buddha tells us how to manage our wealth by using the example of King Prasenajit, who because of his great wealth had no need for financial planning. This being the case, the Buddha devised a plan for managing his wealth: one third for religious offerings, one third to assist the poor, and one third for the nation’s resources. The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (*Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*) says that in addition to providing for daily needs, a person’s wealth should be disposed of in four parts: one fourth for supporting one’s parents and family, one fourth for servants, one fourth for friends and relatives, and one fourth for the country and monastics.<sup>21</sup>

These recommendations for the allocation of wealth can be summarized in the following categories: (1) as safeguard for the family’s daily living expenses, (2) business and investment, (3) savings, and (4) giving back to society via religious, welfare, and charitable enterprises.

Buddhism encourages people to actively pursue wealth, but such a pursuit

is not the ultimate objective of Buddhism. Wealth is the foundation of daily living and also provides the resources for promoting the Dharma. The way in which one allocates wealth is a concrete manifestation of one's worldview, value system, and perspective on life. After satisfying the needs of everyday living, the allocation of wealth becomes even more important. Being attached to pleasure can give rise to more greed, which is unlikely to bring about more happiness. By giving back to society, especially to those engaged in noble undertakings and those involved in helping the impoverished, one not only gains a better appreciation of the impermanence of wealth, thus reducing one's attachment to it, but one also nurtures one's compassion. Therefore, it makes an important improvement to the quality of a person's spirit and life.

At the societal level, this way of allocating wealth has even greater significance. In present societies, there are large disparities in wealth between individuals and between regions. This wealth disparity has already created many problems. Master Taixu once said:

Economics is divided into three aspects: production, consumption, and allocation. It is easy to discuss the first two, but the difficulty lies in allocation. The unrest in society at present arises from the lack of a good method of allocation.

For a simple method offered by the Dharma, the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Mind* taught that people should divide their assets into three parts: one part for investment, another for personal and family living expenses, and one to provide relief to the poor and promote religion, i.e., engage in cultural, charitable, and public welfare enterprises. This enables humanity to distribute their wealth fairly and allows everyone to enjoy happiness equally.

If this can be done, the struggle between social

classes will not happen. Capitalism at present uses nine-tenths of its wealth as capital, and this leads to the formation of a special class in society, contributing further to class struggle. In fact, in life we only require food, clothing, shelter, and transportation; why would we need so much capital?<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, many problems in society are caused by the misallocation of wealth allocation, and as such the Buddhist method can serve as a useful model.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun's philosophy of wealth distribution was created in a modern society where economic life was highly developed. Therefore, Humanistic Buddhism's philosophy of wealth is of major theoretical and practical significance for the problems of modernization—such as justice, ethics, or happiness—pertaining to daily life in the context of modernity.

#### **4. A Broad Definition of Wealth**

While affirming material wealth, Venerable Master Hsing Yun also affirms spiritual wealth. In terms of the purpose of wealth, he believes that wealth is not only limited to the material realm, “There are many kinds of wealth: wealth in the narrow and broad senses; tangible and intangible wealth; wealth in this life and in lives to come; personal and public wealth; material and spiritual wealth; as well as transitory and eternal wealth.”<sup>23</sup> Anything that is meaningful and valuable to us is wealth.

Wealth in the narrow sense of money is important, but even more important is wealth in the broad sense, which includes health, wisdom, personal relations, ability, trustworthiness, eloquence, prestige, achievement, history, character, and morality. These intangible forms of wealth are superior to more tangible forms. Buddhism places more emphasis on

public wealth than on personal wealth. Examples of public wealth include roads, parks, rivers, public works, and even the protection of nature and all creatures in the universe. Buddhism also advocates enjoyment in lieu of possession, wisdom instead of money, satisfaction as opposed to desire, thought in place of material goods, and the development of a sense of universalism.<sup>24</sup>

This shows that Venerable Master Hsing Yun appreciates the role of material wealth in human life, but also supports a broader and more profound definition of wealth.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun's transcendent view of wealth serves as an important guide for the social life of people today. In the book *Forecast 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Daisaku Ikeda commented on contemporary society, "Modern civilization seems to draw out without limits, and perhaps even enlarges, all kinds of desires, especially those for sensual pleasures, power and possession. The indulgence of desire will cause wars between people, leading to the destruction of life and nature. This seems to cut across all modern phenomena."<sup>25</sup>

The construction of a society centered on economic development has indeed made great progress, but it has also resulted in many drawbacks. The acquisition of wealth satisfies some human desires, but simultaneously creates many problems. In today's civilization, which is highly developed in a material sense, many have lost themselves in their indulgence and cannot extricate themselves, becoming willing slaves to their material desires. When everyone pursues their personal interests, competition between individuals is inevitable, just as the unlimited consumption of natural resources has contributed to many environmental problems.

However, desire is human nature, and various forces—even progressive ones—can be generated from it. People's desires should not be completely

suppressed, but should be beautified by the efforts of people themselves, guided by skillful means.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun's Humanistic Buddhist perspective on wealth is inspiring. He believes that it is reasonable to pursue material wealth legally, but there are also other types of wealth that we should cherish, for instance: health, wisdom, personal relations, ability, trustworthiness, eloquence, prestige, achievement, history, character, and morality. More importantly, one must appreciate the true essence of Buddhism in one's life: not remaining attached to the self, viewing mundane wealth through the Buddhist perspective of causes and conditions, having compassion, and working toward the ideal of living together in coexistence. Only then can one find the true meaning of life and minimize conflict in the world.

Additionally, Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that public facilities and natural ecology are also forms of wealth. He urges people to change their desire for possession into one of enjoyment without ownership. This philosophy of wealth is indeed very beneficial to the protection of the natural environment.

## **5. Redefining the Value of Wealth**

Venerable Master Hsing Yun believes that the view of wealth in Humanistic Buddhism is “neither good nor evil,” and hence we should not have value judgements in regard to monetary wealth. He said:

Buddhism...does not deny [wealth]. Money can be a poisonous serpent, but it can also be used to practice and spread the Dharma. According to Buddhist scriptures, there have been wealthy Buddhist benefactors such as the Elder Sudatta, who donated Jetavana to the Buddha and his monks and followers (see *Fenbie Gongde Lun* [分別功德論]), and Viśākhā, who gave the “four offerings” (see the *Four*

*Part Vinaya [Dharmaguptaka Vinaya]*) who won the praise of the Buddha. For this reason, Buddhism does not place undue emphasis on asceticism, because demanding a plain and simple life for oneself is moral, but to demand it of others is too harsh.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, one can have one's mind set on enlightenment and not necessarily have to study the Way in poverty. For the individual, Mahāyāna Buddhism advocates simple food and clothing, but wealth is necessary for temples and groups. The construction and decoration of temples—the red eaves, golden-tiled roofs, carved and painted beams, splendid and solemn pavilions, terraces, towers, and corridor after corridor—all require money, hence the term “Buddhist Pure Land.” Actually, Buddhism is a pure and spiritual existence, a joyful and prosperous world.<sup>27</sup>

Money can provide the resources for studying the Way, and it is the basis for the propagation of Buddhism. Buddhist institutes, meditation halls, schools, hospitals, television stations, and magazines all require money. For this reason, money cannot be regarded entirely as a poisonous serpent. “Clean wealth,” “good wealth,” and “sacred wealth” are referred to in the Buddhist *sūtras* as money used for good, for spreading the Dharma, and for benefiting sentient beings. The merit accrued through utilizing money in this way is greater by far than studying the Way in poverty. It is also wiser and more significant.<sup>28</sup>

Venerable Master Hsing Yun concludes that, “Humanistic Buddhism should redefine its value of wealth. As long as it is clean wealth and in

accordance with the right occupation and livelihood, then the more the better. As long as it is beneficial to the people, society, and the economy, and as long as the occupation—such as farming, manufacturing, business, or banking—adds to the happiness and prosperity of life, Buddhists should participate. Having money is not shameful, but poverty can lead to evil.”<sup>29</sup>

“Redefining value” is a wise method that Venerable Master Hsing Yun employs in applying the philosophy of Humanistic Buddhism to the issues concerning tradition and traditional Buddhism. It is neither a simple affirmation or denial, but rather about abiding in the present moment while returning to traditions, so that we may gain new insights on some of our traditional values. From there, we can realize the perfect connection between tradition and modernity in accordance with truth and capabilities.

In Venerable Master’s Hsing Yun’s Humanistic Buddhist philosophy of economics, we see his advocacy for redefining the value of wealth. This is indeed an outstanding application of his fundamental method for applying Humanistic Buddhism to the management of wealth-related issues. The Venerable Master’s various ideas presented in this article regarding wealth are actually the results of his re-evaluating the value of wealth.

## **6. Conclusion**

As history plays out, all cultures have to make appropriate adjustments and changes. In the development of Buddhism, its doctrines, organizations, and methods of dissemination have continually adjusted to changing times, societies, and geography.

Venerable Master Hsing Yun said, “In my thoughts, I constantly consider how to use modern methods to teach Buddhism and turn them into skillful means for propagating the Dharma without violating the fundamental teachings of traditional Buddhism...If Buddhism were overly secular or secularized, it would no longer be valuable; but if it were overly transcendent, it could not be easily accepted by people. Hence, these two truths have to be harmonized.”<sup>30</sup>

Humanistic Buddhism's perspective on wealth is an important theoretical development of Venerable Master Hsing Yun in his mission to propagate the Dharma in accordance with truth and capabilities. Professor Cheng Gongrang pointed out that Venerable Master Hsing Yun's interpretation of Humanistic Buddhism lies "between 'that which was taught by the Buddha himself' and 'that which is needed by human beings' as well as between 'that which is pure' and 'that which is virtuous and beautiful.'"<sup>31</sup> This is also the method used by Venerable Master Hsing Yun when interpreting Humanistic Buddhism's perspective on wealth.

Fundamental to Venerable Master Hsing Yun's philosophy is the implementation of Buddhism's core ethos in real life. The most notable feature of his perspective on wealth is the level of importance he places on it and how actively he promotes it. He affirms that it is reasonable for people to pursue wealth in moderation. He believes that wealth is the foundation of daily life and careers, and identifies the types of wealth acceptable to Buddhism and a reasonable method of allocating wealth. He even broadens and deepens the Buddhist concept of wealth, helping people realize the importance of spiritual wealth as well as monetary wealth. He believes that Humanistic Buddhism must continue to redefine the value of wealth.

In summary, the Humanistic Buddhist perspective on wealth, as presented by Venerable Master Hsing Yun, is one of the core theories that highlight the integration of Buddhism and contemporary life. It is of great significance to the development of Buddhism, and is a useful model for the development of society today. It also provides valuable inspiration for people to pursue a truly happy and beautiful life.

## Notes

1 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Humble Opinions on the Stages in Development of Chinese Buddhism," in *Treatises on Humanistic Buddhism* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 77.

2 Ibid.

3 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Chinese Culture and the Five Vehicles," in *Treatises on Humanistic Buddhism* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 493.

- 4 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life," in *Treatises on Humanistic Buddhism* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 324.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid, 362.
- 7 Ibid, 367.
- 8 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," in *Treatises on Humanistic Buddhism* (Taipei: Gandha Samudra Culture Company, 2008), 367.
- 9 James Legge, *Chinese Classics: with a Translation, Critical and Exegetical Notes, Prolegomena, and Copious Indexes* (Legge, 1861), 52.
- 10 Ibid, 130-1. -Ed.
- 11 Yang Bojun, *An Interpretive Commentary to the Analects* (Beijing: Chung Hwa Book Co., 2005), 137.
- 12 Charles Muller, *Mencius (Selections)*, accessed July 19, 2021, <http://www.acmuller.net/con-dao/mencius.html>.
- 13 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* 23 (September 2004): 27.
- 14 Jiang Canteng, *A New Perspective on Taiwan's Contemporary History of Buddhism* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2006), 385.
- 15 Ji Xianlin, *Ji Xian Lin on Buddhism* (Wuhan: Wuhan Publishing House, 2011), 251.
- 16 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, "Self-awareness and Practicing the Buddha's Way," *Universal Gate Buddhist Journal* 23 (September 2004): 26.
- 17 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism: A Blueprint for Life*, trans. John Balcom (Hacienda Heights: Buddha's Light Publishing, 2003), 40.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Venerable Master Hsing Yun, *Humanistic Buddhism* (Kaohsiung: Fo Guang Cultural Enterprise, 1995), 212.
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