

BODHISATTVA FAMILY

Newsletter

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The Youth Sudhana was a clever student. He once asked: “How to unfold the Bodhi mind? How to open up and perfect the Bodhi mind? How to carry out forever the vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva?”

One of his wise teachers said: “Become a roof and be a warm shelter for others.”



Be a Warm Shelter for Others

One of the Bodhisattva's virtues is to be a shelter, a home which is a very warm place, not a hotel or an inn where people come and go. Home is where we can return, rest, feel peaceful, and find warmth. Practicing the Bodhisattva vows is to find ways to become a shelter, a home for others.

Following the Bodhisattva path is cultivating the caring virtue: caring in every way, thinking of consequences, untying emotional entanglements, and creating good causes and conditions. For a shelter to make guests feel welcome and warm, its host must learn how to care thoughtfully, thoroughly, and always be gentle with guests coming or going.

Even negative or difficult guests would leave gently and peacefully.

A host must have a big heart and skillful means, which is also a dharma practice.

Be a Warm Shelter for Others



Practicing the same dharma brings harmony to people more easily since everyone is on the same path. Family members in harmony have the same platform to converse with each other. Any dharma can help us harmonize with each other if we look at the same upward, transcending direction instead of just going forward. It's quite a task how to nurture and care for our guests. We need to transform ourselves before we can transform others.

"The Lady of the White Hill" is a story that portrays rather well the Bodhisattva spirit. To go from one town to another, folks would have to go through a very deserted area with no villages nearby. From there to a town over 100km away, there was only a hill with many white trees and a garden house on the hilltop. The lady of the house planted many flowers and fruit trees in the back yard.

Those who wanted to go to the next town would have to walk past a desert and go by her house. She would let them know how much further they would have to walk, then give them food, drink, and provisions. When they asked how long she'd lived there, she'd never answer. However, some said that their father, their grandfather, or even their great grandfather had met her a long time ago. Nobody knew her age. She remained a mystery. But she was very nice, always welcomed everyone warmly, and never charged anyone for food and bed.

However, she seldom smiled. It wasn't that she didn't know how to smile or didn't want to smile; she just wanted to stay at ease and peaceful. She truly manifested a bodhisattva spirit. We should behave likewise, always treat guests coming and going in our life with warmth and care, and without attachment or emotional entanglement.

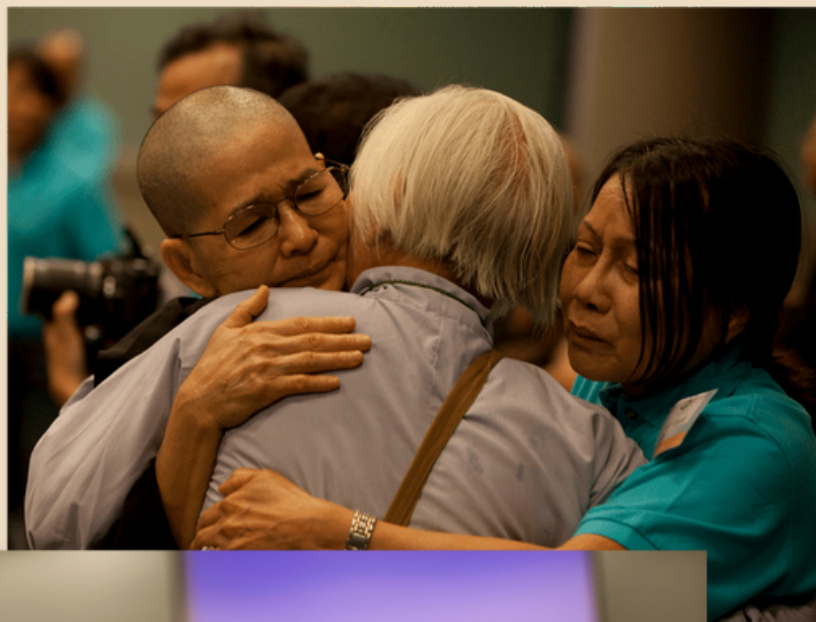
— Be a Warm Shelter for Others —

All of us are guests of some and hosts to others. We should take care not to be a burden for the host when we're a guest and not to be rude or angry when we're a host. We will fall when we begin to tie knots, but we'll feel peaceful when we untie them. The Bodhisattva spirit is wonderful!

When we have learned the virtue of the Lady of the White Hill, we'd realize that our children will come and go, as will our spouse and siblings. Then we will always be open, giving, welcoming, and our heart will always feel caring and happy.

. The serene attitude is probably the most difficult to achieve in life, requiring us not to tie knots with anyone. Tying knots implies that we're self-centered, egocentric, not caring about others, and consequently causing all kinds of negative effects and unhappiness.

We can practice daily the Bodhisattva path by changing our paradigm about our roles in life. Most of our guests are related to us. Thus, we should open our heart and elevate our level of vision as well as widening our scope of vision if we want to avoid getting stuck in guest-host entanglements.



"We should open our heart and elevate our level of vision, as well as widening our scope of vision to avoid getting stuck"

Let's try our best to stand on the hilltop. Try not to slip down so our view can continue to elevate.

Master Heng Chang

Reflections of My First XGVT

Hòa An - Thân Thiện Thí

As a child, I often followed my mother to the temple and bowed to the Buddhas, but no one taught me much about Buddhism. At the age of 8, I witnessed the bloodshed during the 1968 Tet Offensive, then the horrible Vietnam War, and the agony of countless people who had lost everything. Since then, I have always wondered: "Who am I, and what should I do to help humanity reduce suffering?"

In spite of countless tragic incidents crossing the ocean to escape and growing up in a foreign land, I always turned to Kwan Yin Bodhisattva and prayed for the Vietnamese people to overcome their calamity. However, the bowing ceremony at the temple was no longer as meaningful to me as before, so I began my journey to find a Buddhist master to learn the Dharma.

Years later, my sister Bach suffered from a very serious illness and wanted to learn Integral Tai Chi (ITC) with Thay in the hope of improving her condition. However, she was in San Jose, so she asked me to learn it and then teach it to her. Thus, I started my religious journey without even knowing it.

Not only did Thay teach the Dharma through Tai Chi, but he also made difficult Buddhist sutras and doctrines easy for us to understand and apply to everyday life. I remember well that I enthusiastically learned ITC with Thay in a small room of the Nhuan's Far East Newspaper headquarters in 2004. Time went by quickly, but that year was infused in my memory.

As a member of the CSS, every year I had always hoped to join the XGVT Sangha but still missed the opportunity to do so for different reasons. Fast forward to 2021—a very high number of people all over the world died because of the Covid pandemic. In addition, our beloved CSS brother Hiễn passed away and at the same time my 91-year-old father became seriously ill. I did not hesitate anymore. I asked my husband to let me shave my head and join the XGVT Sangha.



"I joined the XGVT Sangha to cultivate for those who no longer could do it themselves."

Reflections of My First XGVT

Hòa An - Thân Thiện Thí

I remember vividly the morning Thay shaved my head. I was the first person to sit in the chair. I felt a sense of peace, serenity, and was very touched as this was my opportunity to step into a new chapter of my life. My heart overflowed with the love for my father, for brother Hiển, and the deep appreciation to Thay for helping me to fulfill my vow to become a nun to pray for those who died during the pandemic, for my father, and for brother Hiển. While cutting my hair, Thay explained: "Karma is much like hair. Visualize that as your hair falls, so does your karma." The teaching was simple, but very poignant.

The next day, we started the journey to Pine Summit Camp by bus. Sister Hang, sitting next to me, comforted me with her warmth and her friendly reminders of the important activities during the XGVT program. The first day in camp, the precepts transmission ceremony was very touching. I received a robe, sash, bowl, and a precious message to begin to live the life of the Buddha. The most touching moment was when Thay reminded us: "Everything we do in XGVT from practicing the dharma, bowing to the Buddhas, to breathing the fresh air of the high mountain is for those who can no longer do it."

I shared a room with two lovely dharma sisters. We went to the Buddha Hall every day to study the dharma to expand our wisdom. The team leaders worked very well, keeping everything clean and ready for us. There were days when I saw beautiful snowstorms. Even though it was cold outside, my heart felt warm because our beloved Masters Thay Hang Truong and Thay Hang Duc and all our dharma friends were always around me. It was an indescribable joy to follow the footsteps of the Buddha. There were moments I completely forgot about all my normal life!

The days of cultivating with the XGVT Sangha passed quickly. On the last day of the XGVT program, all of us attended the precepts returning ceremony. When listening to Thay's words of "returning the robe, sash, and bowl to the Buddha to go back to your normal life", I tried to swallow my tears, but seeing sister Cuc crying, I couldn't hold back anymore, and my tears fell like rain. It was the appreciating rain for the peaceful and gentle days living according to the Buddha's teachings. I forgot all about the mundane world as I experienced something sacred and unforgettable. I told myself that I would bring that profound experience into my normal life.



Reflections of My First XGVT

Hòa An - Thân Thiện Thí

Joining XGVT for the first time, I promised myself to open my heart and be ready to accept all new lessons so that I could absorb the profound experience. Sincerely, I would like to remind those who join XGVT for the first time: "Please open your mind to receive amazing experiences." For those who have done it many times, each XGVT is a time to let go, to leave behind all the old experiences, so that we can freely open our heart to receive new ones.

I felt as if I had thoroughly understood Thay's teachings about The Avatamsaka Sutra which always emphasizes "transcending worliness and engaging with the world" as well as constantly evolving. New experiences will help us become a mature person in spirituality and in many aspects of life.

Every one of us needs to give ourselves the opportunity to grow. The deeply profound experiences through XGVT will change ourselves, shake our foundation, and transform our life forever. Let us listen to the aspiration in our mind. XGVT is the journey back to our luminous self-nature, our innate light. I wholeheartedly wish you to have the diligence and success on the Dharma path.



**"Give yourself
the opportunity
to grow"**



Training Review

Sash Receiving

Passed down from the Buddha, the precious sash symbolizes the field of blessings that the Buddha and the monastics represent.

Bowl Receiving

I vow to open up my heart and mind for loving kindness and wisdom to nurture the Dharma body. I vow to keep my mind empty and ready to store all the goodness.

Sitting Cloth Receiving

The four sides of the sitting cloth represent limitless love (compassion), harmony and lovability (loving kindness), optimism and the spirit of always bringing joy to others (altruistic joy), gentleness, peacefulness, nonattachment, easy to let go, to give and to sacrifice (equanimity).

The meaning of the first three

locks of hair when shaving head

The first lock of hair: To honor and express deep gratitude for our parents.

The second lock of hair: To appreciate our spouse or significant others.

The third lock of hair: To transfer merits to family, relatives, and friends.

With each remaining lock of hair: we let go of afflictions for those with difficulties, pain, or loss.

The meaning of Repentance Bowing

1- After prostrating, the movement of standing up represents transcendence becoming open and non-obstructed since we connect with Heaven above and the earth below. Standing upright symbolizes Vigor Paramita, the effort of being constantly open.

2- When prostrating, our body looks like a baby in the womb, representing the return to the pure state before we create karmas.

The movement of prostrating on the ground also represents Patience Paramita.

3- Standing up represents openness, connecting with heaven and earth, with the un-obstructed True Mind. Palms together is to be aware that all opposites, right-wrong, good-bad, true-false, all return to the Non-Dual True Mind.

Ten Precepts for Novice

Monks and Nuns

1. No killing
2. No stealing
3. No sexual misconduct
4. No lying
5. No drinking, no taking drugs
6. No wearing flowers, jewelry, perfume, or makeup
7. No singing, dancing, performing, or watching musical shows or entertainment.
8. No sleeping in high and large beds
9. No eating at improper time
10. No keeping or using cash, gold, or precious gems.

Contact & Information

ALTRUISTIC HOME LEAVING

**FROM NOVEMBER 26TH
TO DECEMBER 5TH
AT PINE SUMMIT CAMP, CA.**

XGVT TRAINING PROGRAM

**FROM JULY 10TH
TO NOVEMBER 13TH**

Registration and further details:
<http://xuatgiavitha.com>



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Anaheim, CA 92804
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COMPASSIONATE
SERVICE SOCIETY

The XGVT committee would like to ask all Sangha brothers, sisters, and friends to share your special life story or experience urging you to join Altruistic Home Leaving.

Please contribute your story via
xgvt@compassheart.com

XGVT Regional Coordinators

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