

2014

新加坡佛学院男女二众招生简章

英文部 | 中文部

- 1 本院宗旨：培养一批精通中、英双语，有能力从事弘法管理和学术研究的僧伽人才，为汉传佛教的可持续性发展提供人力资源。
- 2 学制及学习内容
 - 2.1 英文部：六年全日制学习——两年预科主攻英语，四年本科全英文攻读佛学学士课程，修满规定学分后，学生将获颁泰国摩诃朱拉隆功大学学士文凭。
 - 2.2 中文部：四年全日制学习中文佛学学士课程，修满规定学分后，学生将获颁泰国摩诃朱拉隆功大学学士文凭。
- 3 师资阵容：本院拥有一支强大和资深的教学队伍。其中教授佛学科目的教师，都是获得硕士 / 博士学位、精通佛法的比丘和居士。
- 4 生活待遇：学院将提供免费食宿、学习及生活的基本用品，并在学习期间每月发给一定的生活费。
- 5 毕业去向：原则上，毕业后回原寺院。有志于从事佛学研究的毕业生，可以报读本院硕士课程或受助到国外深造。
- 6 报考资格
 - 6.1 不限国籍，年龄为18至35岁的佛教僧人/尼众。
 - 6.2 信仰虔诚，出家一年以上。
 - 6.3 具有高中或同等学历。
(如高级水准、中专或初中毕业加三年佛学院)
 - 6.4 身体健康、无残(隐)疾(如梦游、癫痫)和传染病。
 - 6.5 无犯罪记录。
- 7 报考程序
 - 7.1 即日接受报名，截止日期为2014年3月21日，以邮戳为准。
 - 7.2 来信索取或从网上 http://www.bcs.edu.sg/images/uploads/BA_Registration_Form_2014.pdf 下载《报名表》。如实填写，字迹工整。请务必提供有效电话号码和电子邮件地址，以便及时联络。
 - 7.3 把填好的《报名表》跟下列材料一同寄至本院注册部。
 - a. 两封推荐信，可由报考者的师父、常住寺院的住持 / 师长、曾读佛学院的法师 / 老师提供。

- b. 已获得的最高学历证书和成绩单的复印件。
- c. 身份证和 / 或护照的复印件。
- d. 申请者三个月内正面免冠照片3张
照片要求：彩色、白底、粗面、僧服。
尺寸：35×45mm.
- e. 县级以上医院体检表格
(包括血检、肝检、胸透)

8 录取程序和名额

- 8.1 男众中、英文班共招收60名学生
女众英文班招40名学生(女众仅设英文班)
- 8.2 统一考试，择优录取。
- 8.3 考试科目：英文部考中级英语；中文部考佛学、语文和初级英语，并统一面试。
- 8.4 被录取的考生，签证由我院办理。
- 8.5 录取结果将通过电话、电子邮件和本院网站同时通知，敬请留意。
- 8.6 根据本国移民厅政策，外籍学员需交纳担保金，本院为学员承担一半，另一半由学员自付。具体金额请查阅本院网站：
<http://www.bcs.edu.sg/forum/index.php/topic,104.0.html>

9 一旦被录取，必须在2014年8月24日报到。

10 开课日期：1.9.2014

11 欲知详情，请访问本院网站的“招生”栏目，或来函来电咨询。

地址 **Buddhist College of Singapore**
Registrar's Office
88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117

电话 **0065-6849 5355**
请在周一至周五新加坡时间上午9点到下午4点之间拨打

传真 **0065-6456 0180**

电子信箱 **enquiry@bcs.edu.sg**

网页 **www.bcs.edu.sg**

备注

1. 本院只负责支付学生来新入学和毕业离校的单程机票。
 2. 凡中国大陆学僧，请与中国佛教协会教务部联络。
中国佛教协会教务部
电话/传真：010-66162847
邮箱：jiaowubu2008@126.com
地址：北京市西城区阜成门内大街25号
(中国佛教协会教务部)
邮编100034
- 注 请在周一至周五北京时间上午9点到下午4.30点之间拨打





Wishing all Auspiciousness in the New Year

The Snake makes way for the Galloping Horse as the year 2013 draws to an end. As we eagerly look forward to the happy occasion of the Lunar New Year, it is my sincere wish that all readers, contributors and supporters of Awaken Magazine will enjoy great happiness in the Chinese New Year with doubling of abundance and wisdom. I also wish the devotees of Phor Kark See Monastery a Dharma-inspired and auspicious Chinese New Year.

Reflecting on the past year, the Monastery has successfully implemented various projects through the cohesive cooperation and support from our fourfold Sangha and devotees.

The construction projects of the Buddhist College of Singapore and the multi-storey carpark at the Monastery started on schedule. Next year's Sangha student recruitment drive for the College is also in progress. We celebrate these endeavours with joy and gratitude – gratitude to the Triple Gem for their compassionate protection; gratitude to all staff for their tireless efforts and hard work; and gratitude to the Dharma protectors and all supporters for their unstinting assistance.

A new year, a new mission. While we continue to uphold the Buddha's teachings on compassion, wisdom, equality and gratitude, let us spread the spirit of the Mahayana Bodhisattvas who choose to be in the world instead of renouncing it in order to benefit the masses. Let us proactively spread the Dharma to all beings and engage in charity to improve society. Let us also work hard to build up professional research and management skills in Buddhist education and nurture excellent monastics who would take the Dharma far and wide.

*Cherish and make good use of your time.
Strive diligently in your studies and spiritual cultivation.
Honour and offer thanks to the Four Immeasurables.
Benefit others. ☺*

Sik Kwang Sheng (Ven)
Abbot



Understanding the preciousness of our human life is one of the first steps on the path to enlightenment (pg 40). Together with the other three contemplations on impermanence and death, karma and the suffering of samsara, our mind turns towards the Dharma (pg 50).

Presently, our mind is attuned to mundane concerns due to the illusions of perception, thought and view. The mundane mind perceives permanence in the impermanent; satisfactoriness in the unsatisfactory; and self in what is not-self. Real understanding removes these illusions and helps man to cognise the real nature that underlies all appearance (pg 58).

The first move to achieve right understanding is to deeply contemplate and meditate on the four foundations (pg 71). Read Li Yin's thoughts on impermanence after a close brush with death in the 2004 tsunami (pg 57), or Kiat Heng's rumination on how life is like a single day. The wheel of nature just keeps circling (pg 60).

To understand more about cause and effect, read the stories on page 62 to 64. Or purchase the book, *The Perfect Human Rebirth* (pg 68), to understand more deeply about the first of the four foundations.

Elsewhere in this issue, read how the Kawasakis manoeuvred through uncharted waters to offer help and comfort to Buddhist refugees, monks and nuns in the camps along the Thai/Myanmar border (pg 46).

As we welcome the year of the Horse, we hope that our magazine's new look will also usher in auspiciousness and enhance your reading experience of the Buddha-Dharma.

Have a blissful 2014 blessed with compassion and wisdom. ☺

*Why would you invest all that energy on those plans for the future
if you were not somehow blindly convinced that
you are still sure to be here in this world
for a long time to come?*

*The great practitioners of the past
described themselves as
yogis with the thought of impermanence
implanted firmly in their hearts.
They saw clearly the futility of ordinary pursuits.
Their minds were entirely turned towards the Dharma.*

- Well-known Buddhist master

Contemplations to Turn the Mind towards the Dharma

Esther Thien

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien





What is the meaning and purpose of life?

Q: Why do I still feel lost and discontented, even though I have a stable job and considerable wealth? What is the meaning and purpose of our human life? – *Lost*

A: Understanding the preciousness of our human life is one of the first steps on the path to enlightenment. If we don't appreciate our life, we won't use it in a valuable way. We won't see its purpose. We waste our time. But when we really can see the fortune that we have, we feel enthusiastic about our life and particularly want to practise the Dharma and make our life meaningful by cultivating a kind heart.

All of that follows upon first understanding our great fortune. This is an important meditation for us nowadays, because like you, there are so many people who are dissatisfied, and feel lost in their lives, even though they may be financially secure and have stable jobs. People realise that although wealth and physical comforts do bring us some degree of happiness, these do not cease all our problems or bring us any lasting joy. This is because whatever tangible goods we obtain break down at some point, or they go out of fashion, so we have to get something new. For example, what is really high-tech one day is obsolete the next day. So, all these things that we think we are going to get to make us happy are not bringing the contentment we thought they would. Hence we feel lost.

From a Buddhist perspective, our present situation, or our life is what we call samsara or cyclic existence. That means we get born again and again and again. Under the influence of ignorance, and mental afflictions such as confusion, attachment and anger, and all the actions motivated by these afflictions result in karma. Being under the influence of ignorance, mental afflictions and karma doesn't give us a lot of freedom in our lives. For instance, we do not have the freedom to not get sick, to not age and to not die. Simply by being born we are subject to ageing, sickness and death. Given that we separate from our body, our friends and relatives, our wealth and social status at the time of death, what is the meaning and purpose of our life? Are we going to spend our life obsessing about things that we cannot take with us when we die?

The Buddha said the root of our problems is that we are taking birth under the influence of afflictions and karma and that these mental afflictions exist in our own heart and mind. Simply by being born, we have to face all the different problems that life brings, not just problems related to the body but also family and relationship problems.

For instance, we put a lot of energy into a relationship and it doesn't last. Or we work very hard for our company and our work goes unacknowledged. We don't go looking for these difficulties, which happen quite regularly, they are just part of existing in cyclic existence.



An alternative to getting born again and again in cyclic existence under the influence of afflictions and karma is to free ourselves from mental afflictions and to stop creating the kind of karma that produces rebirth in cyclic existence. So attaining liberation or Nirvana is one way to make our life really meaningful and purposeful. To have some idea of the quality of Nirvana, imagine a scenario that no matter what people said to you, did to you, or what situation you are in, you never got angry or jealous. You are completely peaceful and genuinely content and satisfied.

People generally want more and better. We don't really have true satisfaction and contentment in our hearts these days. We are always looking around and saying, "Someone else has more than I do. Someone else has better than I do, I want... I want... I want..." and so we are craving and clinging all the time. These mental states are very painful because even if we get what we want, we are still unsatisfied. We bought something from the mall, and after two days of joy and excitement at our newfound buy, we are back where we started. This sort of perpetual dissatisfaction we face in life has a lot of wear and tear. In contrast, liberation or Nirvana is a state which is free from that. No matter what we have, who we are with, our mind is peaceful, content, satisfied and appreciative.

Rather than the liberation for oneself, or our own peaceful state of Nirvana, another aim from the Buddhist viewpoint, is the full awakening or enlightenment of the Buddha. A Buddha is someone who has eliminated the afflictions, ignorance, karma as well as the subtle imprints, self-centred thoughts and any kind of defilements that exist on the mindstream. The Buddha has completely eradicated them in such a way that they can never return. In addition, a Buddha has developed all good qualities completely and fully. We have the seeds of many good qualities or what we call the Buddha-nature or Buddha potential. But our good qualities are rather small now. As we practise the path to full awakening, our good qualities start to grow. We become able, for example, to have equal care and concern for all living beings without being attached to some and having aversion to others. We become able to wish every single living being well, no matter how they treat us. That is called love. We become able to wish every living being to be free of suffering, no matter how they treat us. That is called compassion. ☺

- Ven Thubten Chodron

text: Esther Thien

○ **Popiah wins again and again!**

Singapore - Royston Tan's short film *Popiah* has won an award (最佳人文关怀影片奖) at the Xi'an International Folk Video Festival. This award came a week after *Popiah* won the Special Jury Award at Hangzhou International Microfilm Festival. In celebration, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery held a popiah luncheon on 25 October last year to celebrate this joyous occasion together with Royston Tan and the cast of the short film.

Popiah is the second film collaboration between Royston Tan's Chuan Pictures and Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery. The inspiration for this film *Popiah* came from the Popiah lunches organised at the Monastery – a tradition passed down by its former Abbot, Venerable Hong Choon. *Popiah's* storyline portrays the relationship between a son and his father with different values and perceptions in life. Besides the above two festivals, the film had also been screened at the Hong Kong and Busan International Film Festivals and will participate in the international film fests in Rotterdam, Beijing and Fuzhou. It was also aired on China's Phoenix New Media, v.ifeng.com to a viewership of close to 400,000. The Fujian TV station was also reported to be considering screening this touching film on its channels.

*Get a copy of this award-winning film from the Monastery's Reception Office.
Donations of any amount for this communal film project are welcome.
For more information, visit www.popiahfilm.sg or www.facebook.com/popiahfilm.*

○ **Minister Khaw graced KMSPKS's first vegetable garden harvest day**

Singapore - Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS) has recently advocated a new activity – vegetable gardening! It set up a community vegetable garden consisting of two sections: a roofed, netted greenhouse which provides a controlled environment for vegetable farming and a galvanised structure constructed for the growing of four types of gourds (bitter gourd, wax/winter gourd, bottle gourd, and angelica gourd). The pesticide-free community vegetable farm is taken care of by staff and volunteers who are keen on the virtues of farming. There are plans to introduce more varieties, besides the current assortment of leaf mustard, kai lan, xiao bai cai, cai xin and Chinese cabbage.



On 18 October 2013, Minister Khaw Boon Wan graced the community vegetable garden's first harvest day. Accompanied by Venerable Chuan Guan, volunteers and AVA personnel, Minister Khaw harvested bitter gourd and leaf mustard from the garden. Mr Cliff Tham, Executive Manager of the Horticulture Technology Department, AVA who oversees KMSPKS Community Vegetable Garden, was also present. If you are interested to volunteer at the vegetable garden, please call 6849 5300 or email reception@kmspks.org to enquire.



Scan to watch video and photos of the monastery's vegetable garden.



○ **A new home for the residents of Bright Hill Evergreen Home**

Singapore – 26 October 2013 marked another momentous milestone in the history of Bright Hill Evergreen Home (BHEH). An official opening ceremony of its new Punggol premises was conducted on that day. Attended by the Guest of Honour, Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Teo Chee Hean; Members of Parliament, Ms Penny Low and Mr Gan Thiam Poh; the Abbot of KMSPKS, Ven Kwang Sheng; and 400 other guests, BHEH is committed to continue its mission of providing quality care and compassionate service to the elderly.



Besides an enhanced, open-concept infrastructure and bigger space to house more residents, the new home also boasts an unparalleled scenic view, being located next to a river with natural surroundings. Its residents can now experience the serenity of living close to nature even as they undergo therapeutic activities of the body and mind.

○ KMSPKS's book, *The Grateful Parrot*, appeared on Channel 8!

Singapore – One of the Monastery's children's books, *The Grateful Parrot*, was used as an educational tool on Episode 10 of "Say It", a Channel 8 programme on 30 October 2013.

The endearing and popular Dr Jia Jia used the Monastery's book to help lead actor, Chua Enlai, to learn a new Chinese Idiom. This speaks volume of the standard of this children's book, and is an acknowledgement of the quality of the book exclusively developed by the Monastery's Awaken Publishing & Design Department. *The Grateful Parrot* is a book that brings alive the qualities of contentment, humility, gratitude, purity, kindness and filial piety that the Buddha espoused.

Scan to read *The Grateful Parrot*.



○ Youth learned about the eight worldly dharmas

Singapore – On 16 October 2013, a thought-provoking sharing session on the eight worldly dharmas was conducted at KMSPKS by British Buddhist, Susan M. Griffith-Jones, who has resettled in Nepal. She flew in to Singapore to conduct this session for youth, highlighting to them how the four pairs of worldly dharma: gain/loss, praise/censure, fame/disgrace and pleasure/pain are driven by the five negative emotions of mind - jealousy, desire, anger, pride and ignorance - as their captain. Through cultivating awareness of one's own mind-state, these five could be transformed into positive aspects of wisdom. The session ended with interesting and creative skits on the eight worldly dharmas put up by the 35 participants.



○ Another oasis of serenity in KMSPKS

Singapore – If the hustle and bustle of urban living is rankling your nerves, pop by and enjoy some blissful calm at the newly renovated koi ponds next to the Hall of Great Strength in the Monastery. Framed by lush greenery, a pair of air-flown Kusamaki trees and adorable little monk stone statues, feel yourself descend to a realm of peace and calm as you enjoy the coolness of the breeze, the picturesque view and the gentle sprinkling of the water fountains in the ponds. A tree-planting and blessing ceremony was held on 25 October 2013 by the Abbot, Ven Kwang Sheng to consecrate the space.

The Buddha once said, "Health is the greatest gift, contentment the greatest wealth, a trusted friend is the best relative, Nirvana is the highest bliss." This festive season, protect your loved ones' health with our refreshing recipes containing the nourishing burdock, wild yam and quinoa. Burdock contains considerably stronger antioxidant than common vegetables and fruits and can improve digestion due to its prebiotic properties. Wild yam is good for the kidney, lungs and spleen, and is said to lower blood sugar and blood pressure. And quinoa has high nutritive value with anti-inflammatory benefits. It is one of the most protein-rich foods we can eat.



Sesame Burdock Pickle 芝麻牛蒡泡菜

Ingredients 用料

- 1 bowl burdock (shredded)
- 1 bowl carrot (shredded)
- 1 bowl cucumber (sliced)
- 1 tbsp black and white sesame
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 tbsp organic shoyu
- 牛蒡 (切丝) 1碗
- 萝卜 (切丝) 1碗
- 黄瓜 (切片) 1碗
- 黑白芝麻2汤匙
- 麻油1汤匙
- 有机酱油1汤匙

Method 做法

- Mix all ingredients well.
- Marinate in the fridge overnight and serve cold.
- 将所有材料混合，放进雪柜隔夜腌制，即可上桌。

Wild Yam Sushi 淮山寿司

Ingredients 用料

- 1 foot raw wild yam
- 20pcs Nori Strip (1" width)
- Raw tahini
- 2 tbsp organic shoyu
- Wasabi (to taste)
- 生淮山1尺
- 紫菜条 (1寸宽)20条
- 白芝麻 ¼碗
- 有机酱油2汤匙
- 芥末酌量



Method 做法

- Cut wild yam into 1.5 inch finger-like sticks.
- Wrap the sticks with nori strips, exposing white ends.
- Sprinkle sesame seeds onto the white ends.
- Serve fresh with shoyu and wasabi.
- 将生淮山切成手指般粗1.5寸条状，用紫菜条卷起来，露出白色尾端，粘上芝麻，配上酱油芥末即可上桌。

Quinoa Sushi 小小米寿司

Ingredients 用料

- 160ml quinoa
- 160ml water
- 1/3 cup raw tahini
- 1/3 cup carrot juice
- 1/3 cup lime or lemon juice
- 1 tsp rock salt
- 2 tbsp brown sugar (heap)
- 1 bowl vegetable shreds
- 4 sheets Nori
- 小小米1杯 (160毫升)
- 水1杯 (160毫升)
- 生芝麻酱1/3杯
- 萝卜汁1/3杯
- 小酸柑汁/柠檬汁1/3杯
- 岩盐1小匙
- 黄糖2大汤匙
- 蔬菜丝1碗
- 紫菜4片

Method 做法

- Cook quinoa with water in rice cooker. Leave it to cool.
- Mix and blend tahini, carrot juice, lime or lemon juice, salt and sugar into salad cream.
- Wrap quinoa and vegetable shreds with nori into sushi roll.
- Dab with salad cream and serve.
- **(Salad cream could be stored in the fridge for 1 week)*
- 将小小米和水混合煮熟，稍冷却备用。把生芝麻酱、萝卜汁、小酸柑汁/柠檬汁、岩盐、黄糖搅成糊状(沙拉酱)，配上小小米、蔬菜丝和紫菜卷成寿司即可上桌。
- **沙拉酱可冷藏一个星期*

Recipes courtesy of Wong Kew Yew of The Veg School.

Call 6336 5067 to sign up for the vegetarian cooking class conducted by the Monastery. 和风雅素食烹饪班：黄其铤老师 (有兴趣者报名参加素食烹饪班，请致电：6336 5067)

photo: Lee Chan

In this version of the Hello Game, we go around the circle (or dinner table), turning to our neighbour, making eye contact, and saying hello. Then we mention one thing we're thinking right now.

To reinforce awareness of how often kids are distracted, and how often our minds have wandered into the past or future, I ask kids to place whatever they're thinking about into one of the three categories- past, present or future.

For example, you might make eye contact with your daughter and say, "Good morning, I'm thinking about your birthday party right now." In response, she might say, "Hi, Mum, I'm thinking about my birthday too, now that you mentioned it."

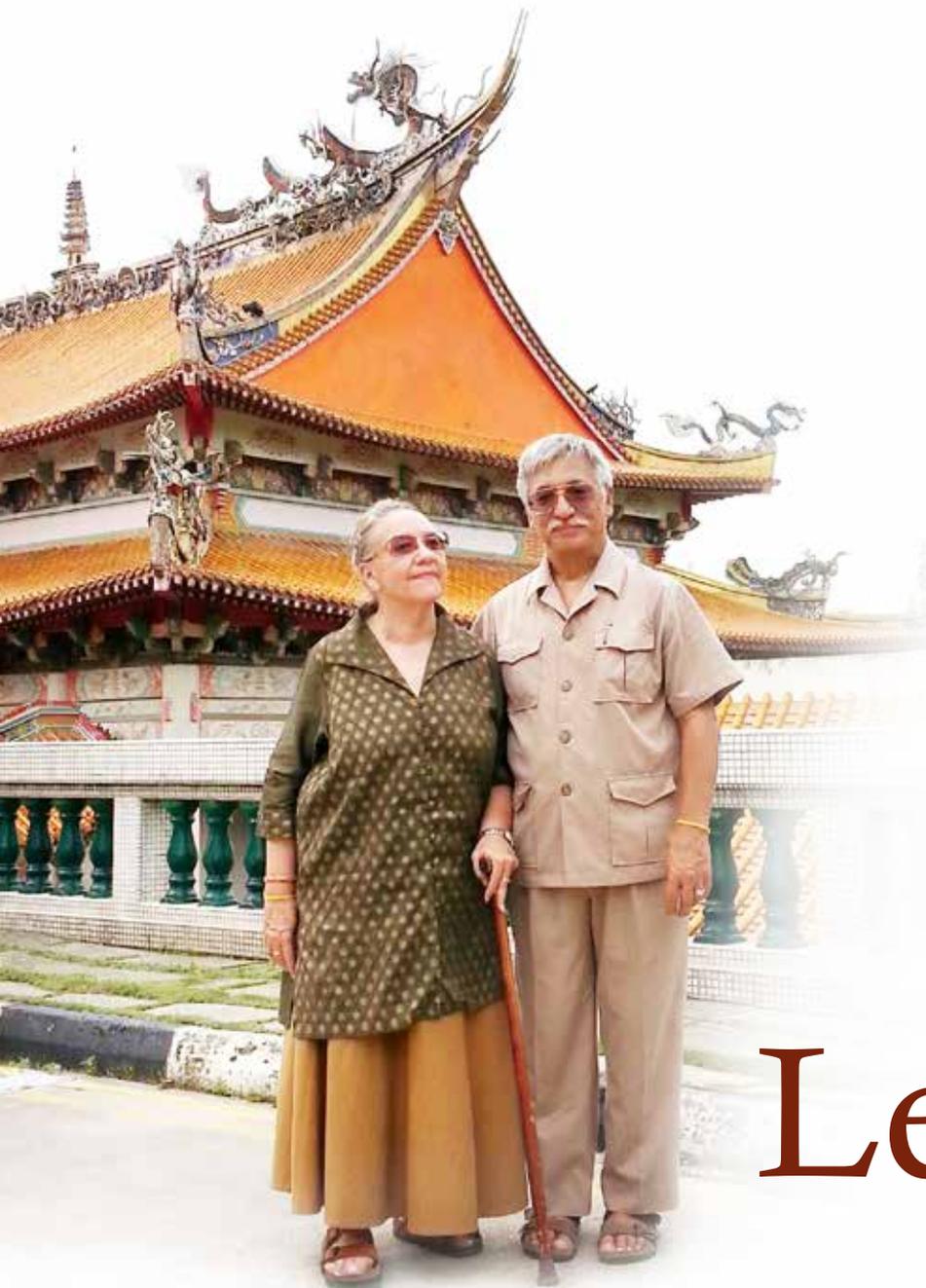
The next step is to identify whether we're thinking about something in the past, present or future. In this case the birthday party is either in the past or the future.

You can repeat the game with awareness of emotions and tell her what you're thinking or feeling right now. With a little ingenuity, there are an infinite number of hello prompts you can come up with that will teach important lessons. ☺

Hello Game - What's coming and going in your mind right now?

text: **Susan Kaiser Greenland**, author of *The Mindful Child*.
(www.susankaisergreenland.com)





Born in the US, Ken and Visakha Kawasaki married, lived and worked in Japan, Korea and Thailand, as English teachers, for more than a decade, before travelling to Myanmar and volunteering their time and effort extensively at refugee camps, and setting up the Buddhist Relief Mission. Today, they live in Sri Lanka. The Kawasakis speak to Esther Thien on how the precious Buddha-Dharma helps them to lead a meaningful life and to age with ease and grace into their golden years.

Leading

Awaken: What attracted you to Buddhism?

The Kawasakis: We were both brought up in staunch Christian families and communities in the US. However, we become agnostics when we grew up as the Christian teachings couldn't convince us that there is a creator god who knew or cared about the human world. While we were in Japan, we visited a major exhibition at the Nara National Museum called "Origins of Japanese Buddhist Art." For each genre, the curator had chosen a Japanese National Treasure along with examples from Korea, China, Southeast Asia and India, to showcase its development. We went to the museum with a Danish friend who practised Tibetan Buddhism. She guided us through the magnificent art, pointing out details we would have missed on our own. In a way, she was our first teacher.

During our years of travel, we retraced that course, the easterly spread of Buddhism, from Japan back to India. As we travelled, we read copiously, visited numerous temples and monuments, and took thousands of photos. At first, it was the art which particularly attracted us. The Buddha images were impressive and compelling. The stories on temple walls were intriguing, and we began to recognise

stories we had seen in other places. At Sri Lanka, we visited a Great Stupa at Sanchi. Due to the sweltering heat, we retreated to the Mahabodhi Society Guest House to take cold splash baths. The Sri Lankan monk in charge opened the library for us, and we spent every afternoon there. We were fascinated with the Pali Text Society translation of the Jatakas. Not only did we learn about the stories carved on the Great Stupa, we discovered those which we had seen and photographed in other places. The more we read, the more we came to understand the moral importance and the workings of karma. At that point we realised we were indeed Buddhists. The slides that we took on that trip became the basis of our DVD *Strive on with Diligence*. It started out as a narrated slideshow, but we had so many requests for copies that we eventually recorded it as a video.

Awaken: Tell us more about your voluntary experience at the refugee camps.

The Kawasakis: We made a number of visits to Myanmar over the years and had many good Dharma friends there. In fact, we were seriously planning to relocate there to teach English to monks at a new Buddhist university in Mandalay. In 1987, as soon as monks at the university learned that we were involved with Cambodian refugee monks, they began collecting robes, slippers and umbrellas and requested us to carry them to the camp. They remarked that the Khmer delegates to the Sixth Buddhist Synod in Rangoon in 1956 had been impressively erudite. Unfortunately, many of them had been murdered by the Pol Pot Regime. Back in Bangkok, we arranged with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to donate all of those gifts, along with some Arhat relics from Kyaukse which we had received from our dear friend, U Ko Ko, to the refugees in Site II. About a month later, there was a massive and joyous celebration to enshrine the relics and to donate the offerings to the monks.

a Meaningful Life

However, our plans to move to Mandalay in 1988 didn't materialise. That year, the country erupted in protests. As *Time Magazine* put it, "Burma Boils Over". We were there meditating in the Mahasi Yektha and seeking U Pandita Sayadaw's permission to go to Mandalay when we learned that a good friend had just died. We were there on 8 August 1988 when the riots and uprising took place. A few days later, Tipitaka Mingun Sayadaw lent us his boat for a trip to Sagaing, where we learned of the massacre of monks, students and farmers by the army.

For the next 11 years, we returned every year to the "liberated areas" and the refugee camps along the Thai/Myanmar border, to fund monasteries, students, clinics, women's projects, and public health programmes. During that period, we worked with many ethnic groups, including the Mon, Shan, Karen and Kachin.

Awaken: What spurred you to set up the Buddhist Relief Mission (BRM)?

The Kawasakis: During the Vietnam War era, the vast majority of refugees from Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam were Buddhists. Unfortunately, many of the agencies that dealt with them were Christian – some aggressively evangelistic. No external group was offering support to the monasteries and

<

monks. That was our primary concern whenever we returned to the border camps. Each year, we received donations from friends in Japan, but we didn't feel comfortable having them give money to us as individuals, so we registered BRM in the US in order for us to accept donations from there as well. In 2001, we gained official recognition so that BRM could offer people tax-exemptions for their donations and even for their expenses when they volunteered with us.

Awaken: Do you face difficulties in managing BRM?

The Kawasakis: Because we're very small, we usually agree about Management decisions, so we've not had any serious difficulties whatsoever. Also, as we are working with monks and nuns and wholesome Buddhist projects, problems don't arise. We take nothing out of contributions for overhead costs, but promptly use the funds we are given for the projects stipulated by the donors. Our operation is quite transparent.



Awaken: What have you learned or reaffirmed from your voluntary experiences to your own Buddhist practice?

The Kawasakis: When we were working in the huge refugee programmes funded by the State Department during the Vietnam War era, we kept getting promoted further and further away from the classroom and the refugees themselves. We were exhorted to exercise "professional compassion," which still remains a mystery to us, and people frequently talked about "compassion fatigue." In our opinion, true compassion never gets tired.

We must say that we have benefited from having remarkable teachers, Lao, Khmer, Hmong and Vietnamese, both monastic and lay. Even for people like us, who choose to travel and resettle in countries not our own, it is not easy to understand what it is like to lose your home, your neighbours, and many of your family members and to be thrust into an alien, arrogant culture. Yet, we knew so many people who made that transition with dignity, courage and compassion.

Awaken: Both of you look amazing and radiate much ease and peace. Could you give some advice on how one can age gracefully with the Dharma?

The Kawasakis: We've worked with inmates in the US, and two in particular have been good Dharma friends and teachers to us. We've seen the radical change that Buddhist practice has brought to their lives, under the most trying of circumstances (the noise level, the lack of privacy, and the threats of violence in US prisons). Through years of correspondence, we've seen both men reflect honestly on themselves and refine their understanding of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

Steve was wild as a young man, committed murder, and was handed a life sentence without parole. His mother has written to us about how Buddhism has transformed him, but years and years later, he remains incarcerated. A few years back he did a painting of himself meditating in his cell – every detail was precise, shoes, cot, cabinet, sink and toilet, but, above him, the room opened to the world. His body was confined, but his mind was free.

Calvin (the author of *Razor-Wire Dhamma*) has served his sentence but has not been released. The US penal system is becoming increasingly privatised, corporate-run, and profit-driven, so such injustice is



becoming quite common. He is quite realistic about his situation. Release or no release, he is fine with his life and his practice.

Both these men have touched other inmates' lives and have introduced many to the Dharma and meditation. They are actually living very fruitful lives behind bars. If they can live gracefully under such confinement, we certainly have no excuse for doing less well!

Awaken: Does the thought of death frighten you, as you face old age?

The Kawasakis: We've seen a lot of death, especially in the refugee camps. In that sense, we're quite fortunate. In the US, society tries to neutralise it, cover it up with euphemisms and prettify the body in the funeral parlour. To counter that tendency, the Buddha recommended meditation on foulness.

We regularly practise meditation on death and always enjoy teaching the *Dhammapada* story on *The Weaver's Daughter*. In a textbook we are going to publish, Merit, one of the characters on a pilgrimage in India, a Frenchwoman, learns that her nephew has just died in an accident. From that, we go on to introduce a variety of meditations on death. We feel that it is one of the strongest chapters in the book.

Awaken: Many young people are pretty lost these days, about what life is all about. Having been through life, what advice or words of wisdom would you give to these people?

The Kawasakis: We grew up in wonderful rural communities, attended good public schools, and had a million advantages that our parents never had. We have travelled widely and easily. We never lacked a job when we wanted one. It was a very golden time, and it was also an optimistic time in that it seemed that justice would be done, wars could be stopped, human rights could be protected, education could solve humanity's problems, and things could get better and better.

Today's world, or so it seems to us, is not like that at all. We know lots of young people who have huge debts from their education, a burden weighing them down. Older folks, at least in the US, are less secure than our parents were, with medical costs threatening their senior years.

When we were young, science seemed to promise us the moon, so to speak, but when knowledge is abused, our earth suffers. Pollution, the ruinous exploitation of resources, and the commodification of everything, including people, are truly spoiling our world.

The Buddha taught us what to do when disaster threatens, namely, "Avoid evil, do good, and purify our mind." Young people, old people, and middle-aged people alike might do well to heed the Buddha's words and to strive on with diligence: to treat all others with compassion and kindness; to develop sympathetic joy to neutralise selfishness; and to gain equanimity with the understanding that we cannot always change the things we do not like but that we can change ourselves. ☺

The Four Foundations Thoughts that Turn the Mind Towards the Dharma

by Ven Ji Qun



When we first begin to practise the Buddhist path, it is necessary for our minds to turn towards the Dharma. This is accomplished by relying on the Four Thoughts which are the common foundations for one's practice. All previous masters and siddhas contemplated on these Four Thoughts.

The Four Thoughts to contemplate on are:

- 1) Precious Human Rebirth;
- 2) Impermanence and Death;
- 3) Karma, Cause and Consequence; and
- 4) Suffering of Samsara.

1. Recognising the great significance and preciousness of this human rebirth

We have a precious human rebirth replete with freedoms and endowments. It enables us to learn the Buddha-dharma and holds great meaning, but its value needs to be actualised by taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

The freedoms and endowments refer to the eight freedoms and ten endowments. The eight freedoms are: (1) freedom from rebirth in the hell realm; (2) freedom from rebirth in the hungry ghost realm; (3) freedom from rebirth in the animal realm; (4) freedom from being blind, deaf or dumb; (5) freedom from false worldly views; (6) freedom from being born at a time when the genuine Dharma has vanished; (7) freedom from being born in the northern Uttarakuru continent; and (8) freedom from being born in the god realm of non-discrimination.

The ten endowments are: (1) the endowment of being born human; (2) the endowment of being born where the four types of disciples are present; (3) the endowment of being born where there is Buddha-dharma, with complete sense faculties to hear, accept and retain the Buddha-dharma; (4) the endowment of not having committed or caused others to commit the five actions of immediate retribution; (5) the endowment of not being obscured by false views such as the denial of karma and its results; (6) the endowment of teacher, which refers to encountering the advent of a Buddha in the world; and (7) the endowment of meeting the peerless Buddha-dharma; (8) the endowment of achieving results from one's practice and so forth in accordance with the Dharma; (9) the endowment of having scriptural and realisation Dharma being transmitted in the world; and (10) the endowment of having favourable necessities, that is the complete necessary collections for practice. Among these ten endowments, the first five are inner and the rest are outer.

These endowments can be summarised into the following main points:

1. The foremost is to possess unimpaired intellect, so that one has the abilities to study and understand the Buddha-dharma;
2. The next is to be free from disabilities such as being deaf or blind, so that one is able to read the scriptures or hear one's spiritual guide explain the Dharma;
3. The third is being free from the obstacles of misconceptions, such as completely denying religion due to having come under the influence of certain trends of thought;
4. The fourth is living in a place where there are opportunities to hear the Dharma.

What exactly is the value of such a human rebirth? Its value is priceless, for it endows us with the ability to unearth the limitless treasures of our life: to eliminate all our future sufferings and those of all other beings, and to proceed to the state of liberation on the other shore together with all sentient beings.

None of these accomplishments can be achieved through any kind of wealth. Of course, if we are unable to use our human rebirth correctly, our human rebirth can cause us to create negative karma and fall into the lower realms. Or it can cause us to become its slave, so that we spend our entire life toiling and undergoing strife for its sake. What a stark contrast between gain and loss here!

<

To begin with, a human rebirth is already difficult to obtain. Now, a human rebirth endowed with the freedoms and endowments is even more difficult to obtain. If we do not know how to cherish it and are not skilful in uncovering its potential, then our existence will be squandered in the worst possible way. Suppose a person has been sentenced to imprisonment for a hundred years due to a serious crime. During this period he is allowed half a day of free activity. If he uses this opportunity to perform meritorious acts to atone for his crime, he will be able to enjoy total freedom for the next fifty years. If instead, he simply uses it to have fun, then even though he may experience some degree of happiness right there and then, what follows will still be lengthy imprisonment. And if he is not careful and creates further wrongdoings while enjoying himself, he may be subjected to prolonged and even more intense misery in jail.

The plight of sentient beings in cyclic existence is just like that. We have no idea how many times we have been wandering in cyclic existence life after life, appearing and disappearing on this long pathway of birth and death without end. It is with difficulty that we have obtained this long-awaited chance to be liberated, a status that will enable us to engage in practice. If we do not seize it to transform ourselves with joyous effort and achieve liberation, very quickly we will go on to take rebirth in cyclic existence. At this junction with several options leading to different destinations, we must identify the correct direction to take and make a timely decision as to where we are to go.

Practising the Dharma is a path we need to traverse in order to unearth the boundless treasures of our life. Obtaining a human rebirth is equivalent to getting the precious chance to decide how our life will unfold in the future. As we come to be aware of this fact, can we bear to give it up easily? Will we not take action immediately? If there exists a poor man who hears that he is in possession of a priceless treasure but is in no hurry to find it, but instead passionately pursues all kinds of trivial gains at the cost of his life, we will certainly bemoan his foolishness. Now what is unfortunate is that we ourselves have been such a fool life after life. Busying ourselves for our entire life for the sake of external possessions, which we did not bring along at birth and will not take away at death, we neglect to unearth our own treasures. Or we might have tried for a short while with great enthusiasm, but readily abandoned the endeavour when the search proved to be difficult or long. We behave in such a foolish manner because we do not understand the precious value of our human rebirth.

2. Being mindful of death and impermanence

Likewise, being mindful of death and impermanence is a strong driving force. The Buddha said, “The observation of impermanence is sufficient for one to attain the path.” This quintessential statement should be deeply impressed upon the mind of every Buddhist. Perhaps some people will feel puzzled, “I’m living just fine. Be mindful of death? Won’t that just be looking for trouble for myself?” Yet others may develop the misunderstanding that Buddhism inclines people towards becoming passive and escapist.



The truth is, Buddhism emphasises the mindfulness of death and impermanence so that we can fully understand the harsh reality and be constantly prepared to handle any mishaps. Even if death were to suddenly descend upon us, we will be able to face it with ease, control and confidence. In this sense, the mindfulness of death urges us to be proactive in using this life to practise the Dharma, and thereby accomplish the turning point in the transformation of our life.

In this world, most people are preoccupied with making a living, pursuing fame and gain, and indulging in pleasure. Notwithstanding the constant struggle and the price they have to pay physically and mentally, even if they were to become successful in the end, what would they have added to their life? They would have added nothing but some momentary satisfaction and fleeting worldly purpose. When death comes to us, will such achievements enable us to depart from this life without regrets and face death unflinchingly?

If there is birth, there will definitely be death. Like the shadow cast by an object in sunlight that cannot be shaken off, none of us can escape death. What is frightening about death is that the time of death is uncertain. Some people die in an accident soon after being born. Some pass away only at a ripe old age of a hundred years old. Some die due to illness while some leave suddenly due to an unexpected calamity. Nobody can guarantee that he will definitely be alive tomorrow. Even for us who are alive and well today, our breathing can just stop and we may find ourselves in a future rebirth with our next breath. Death is a phantom whose whereabouts are uncertain; we do not know when we will fall into its clutches.

We cannot predict how much more time is left for us in this life. It may be a few decades, one year or even a day, before we are caught off guard and lose this only chance where we can act as the master of our own destiny. We may suddenly die even before we have the time to sigh. Our precious human rebirth replete with its freedoms and endowments, having expired, will go down the drain. What other loss in this world can be more tragic?

When death comes, having a high status will not be able to save us. Riches will not be able to help us and our relatives will not have the power to prevent us from dying. In this boundless universe consisting of the billion-fold world systems, what can give us strength, allow us to face death fearlessly, and provide us with the power to transcend birth and death?

“ **As far as our continuum of life is concerned, only the Buddha-dharma has everlasting true meaning. Everything else is just a dream, an illusion, a bubble or a reflection.** ”

Actually, it is not necessary to wait until death to recognise our circumstances as such. When elderly people recall the past events of their youth, do they not lament that life is like a dream, worldly matters are like illusions, and no trace whatsoever will be left behind?

For this reason, being mindful of death will enable us to clearly see our perilous situation in cyclic existence, recognise the significance of the Buddha-dharma in our life, and naturally give rise to the thought to seek protection, just as someone who falls into water will immediately look to a strong person extending a helping hand. This is a very important prerequisite. Just imagine, is it possible for such a person, who is on the verge of drowning, to have wandering emotions and thoughts? If someone in those circumstances were to have the luck to meet a rescuer at that point in time, would he not cling on to the rescuer for dear life without letting go even slightly? In a certain sense, if we fail to contemplate death for a single day, it is likely that the day will pass in vain. This is because we will unknowingly revert to our old ways and come under their control. Our habits have enormous force and need to be counteracted by applying the powerful antidote of being mindful of death.

Mindfulness of death and impermanence is like the deafening chimes of a bell issuing alerts to worldly people. Each chime reminds us to cherish every minute and second that we have now, and to use our time to accomplish the most important task of this life. This kind of attitude is similar to that of a person who is about to die treasuring what little remaining time he has, without allowing himself to be indolent even slightly. Therefore, being mindful of death and impermanence should lay the foundation for all our Dharma practices.

<

3. Meditating on the infallibility of karma and its results

Karma is an important force impelling the continuation of life. In a certain sense, karma creates everything, and karma is everything. Since the very existence of life is the existence of karma, the continuation of life is the continuation of karma. Karma refers to the imprints left behind by the actions of our body, speech and mind. Among them, some are strong while others are weak. These imprints or forces are accumulated over our past lives. Some people accumulate only a particular type of force, while some accumulate only another type of force. For example, people who continuously exercise attachment will strengthen the force of attachment in their life, moulding a character where attachment is predominant. Those who continuously exercise hatred will strengthen the force of hatred in their mind, casting the mind into a disposition where hatred is predominant, and so on. Every type of force represents the accumulation of karma, and directly affects our life thereafter.

How do we gauge a person? According to profession or title? According to the role in the family or the role in society? These outer forms are impermanent, changeable and unreliable.



The factor deciding what we are is precisely our karma. This is to say, you are what you do. Our past actions determined the present, and our present actions determine the future. In this process there is no specific soul or self. Therefore, life is very malleable; it will become whatever inner quality we endow it with.

In the flow of life, no thought or conduct will go to waste. Regardless of whether our thoughts and conduct are positive or negative, they will leave their imprints. The only difference between them is the strength of the imprints. When we give rise to compassion, we are reinforcing compassion in our life. When we give rise to attachment, we are reinforcing attachment in our life. Different thoughts and conduct strengthen different kinds of forces and create different directions in life.

Another characteristic of karma is that one will not obtain the result of a karma one has not created; but once one has created it, it will not go to waste. Karma does not arise out of the void. If we have not created a certain karma, no one will be able to falsely accuse us of committing it and attribute blame to us by force; but once we have created it, it will certainly not vanish and we will not be so lucky as to be spared from the principle of karma. So in this sense, the principle of karma is more just and precise than worldly law.



Karma can increase but it can also decrease and disappear. What happens to it depends on the causes and conditions that we set up. If we provide virtuous causes and conditions through continuous confession and practice, then our negative karma will no longer have the opportunity to grow; instead it will gradually be eliminated. Conversely, if we increase our afflictions uninterruptedly, then this supplies the fertile land for our negative karma to thrive and rapidly multiply, even up to billions of times. This is like a seed growing into a gigantic tree reaching to the sky and producing thousands and thousands of seeds.

Karma and its results are true and infallible. The results include not only the manifested effects, but also the inner consequences. Many people are concerned with the outer results, wondering, “If I do this, will I fall into the hell realm? If I do that, will I rise to the god realm?” I feel that, from the viewpoint of the principle of cause and result, the external result is not important. Rather, we should be concerned about the psychological force that is produced by our every thought and conduct in life. This is because the objective result will just be a dream, an illusion, a bubble or a reflection; it will become the past after all. However, if the inner force is not eliminated through confession and repentance, it will affect us forever. Hence, this kind of force has long-term ramifications and is more frightening.

We need to have unwavering confidence in the certainty of karma, that every kind of karma will bring about its results: virtuous karma will bring about the result of happiness, and non-virtuous karma will bring about the result of suffering. Happiness or suffering, no matter how slight, does not occur by chance; it is induced by virtuous karma or non-virtuous karma. It is said in *The Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* that the hell beings who are undergoing boundless suffering experience occasionally a cool breeze between their bouts of suffering; even the happiness that is brought about by that cool breeze has to do with their past virtuous karma, whereas the pain of sickness and hardship manifested by noble hearers arise from the non-virtuous karma they created previously.

Not only will karma bring about future results, it will also manifest in some form of change right in the present. A virtuous karma represents a mental factor of virtue and is a type of harmonious force. When we give rise to compassion and loving-kindness, our mind feels warm and pleasant, we experience happiness right *here and now*, and this happiness can spread to those around us. In contrast, when we give rise to hatred and jealousy, our mind will definitely be in a state of confrontation and conflict, we will experience pain right *here and now*, and we may go on to cause harm to those around us. Therefore, the results of happiness and suffering, produced by virtuous karma and non-virtuous karma respectively, are completely determined by our individual mental characteristics.

It has been said, “Karma that has been created will not disappear even after hundreds and thousands of aeons. Once the causes and conditions come together, one will experience the results.” Karma is true and infallible. At the same time, we should also recognise that the view of karma in Buddhism is one of selflessness, in which karma itself is also free of inherent existence and can be altered through confession and repentance. If karma cannot be altered, then the karma we have created since beginningless time will impel us to undergo suffering for long lengthy aeons, such that the day when we will be free from it will never arrive. The purification of karmic obstacles serves as the preliminary of all practices. And karmic obstacles are counteracted mainly through the power of remorse (feeling intense regret due to one’s belief in karma and its results), the power of refuge (taking refuge and generating bodhicitta), the power of remedy (reading and reciting Mahayana scriptures, cultivating the view of emptiness, and so forth), and the power of resolution (not repeating one’s misdeeds). In conjunction with purification, we should extensively practise virtuous conduct and improve ourselves continuously so that we can improve our situation life after life.

<

4. Reflecting on the suffering of samsara, especially on the suffering in the three lower realms

Why is death frightening? Without doubt, it has to do with our inability to let go of our attachment to this world, but more importantly, it is because we do not know where we will head to after death. Accomplished practitioners are able to face birth and death with light-heartedness, precisely because they know very clearly what the future holds for them, and are able to make a choice according to the power of their own wish, whether to be reborn in Sukhavati Pure Land and “encounter the Buddha when the flower opens up” as the Chinese saying goes, or to return out of compassion to the world according to their vows. However, mundane beings have no control but to drift about according to their karmic winds and be mired in the ocean of suffering.

The Buddha-dharma tells us that sentient beings cycle continuously in the six realms: god (deva), human, demi-god (asura), animal, hungry ghost and hell realms. Among these realms, the agony and intensity of the circumstances in the three lower realms are unbearable to hear about, let alone experience. The reason the Buddha repeatedly described the sufferings of the lower realms was neither to terrify us, nor to increase the sense of heaviness of our miserable human existence, and especially not, as some have imagined, to create an atmosphere of sensationalism in order to attract disciples. We need to know that the Tathagata is one who speaks what is genuine, true, not false, and not inconsistent. He wanted us to recollect the sufferings of the lower realms due to his infinite compassion. To wake up worldly people from their deluded dream, he cautioned us, who are as if dwelling in a house on fire and yet unaware of the danger we are facing, so that we will wake up from our stupor and quickly escape using whatever means.

We should see clearly that the three lower realms are not far away from us at all. In reality, they may just be a single breath away.

When your next breath fails to come, do you have the confidence that you will not be reborn in a lower realm? We should reflect: “Do I have control over my mind right now? If I lack control over it at present, what are the chances that I will emerge victorious at the moment of death? And how am I going to face the trials of my various karmas as well as the adverse conditions?”

Upon that precarious and hazardous road of the intermediate state leading to the next rebirth, one deprived of discernment by means of a well-trained mind is like a blind man dwelling at the edge of a cliff. It will only take slight heedlessness for him to plummet into an abyss and experience suffering in the lower realms for long lengthy aeons.

So how can we avoid the sufferings of the lower realms? How can we save all sentient beings—ourselves and others—from cyclic existence? We can attain these goals only by going for refuge in the Three Jewels, practising properly, and attaining final liberation. Therefore, it is said that frequent recollection of the sufferings of the lower realms, together with the other three thoughts is an important cause for turning our mind towards Dharma practice. ☺

(Extracted and adapted from A Handbook for Training in Refuge published by KMSPKS. Get the free book from the monastery.)

It's been a couple of years since I have taken refuge. Before that I was an avid traveller, backpacking everywhere. It seemed to be satisfying but after a while came the question: What's the purpose of all this? I had no answer until I went through a huge event - the Tsunami on 26 December 2004.

I was diving at Phi Phi Island when it happened. I survived but what I experienced changed my life. I saw corpses lying everywhere. I saw a lot of people injured. I almost lost a friend but luckily she too survived. At that point in time, I felt so helpless that I couldn't do anything about it. Also the question arose: what happened to them? Why were there so many people dead and injured and yet I seemed to have just walked out of it? I couldn't understand. I could have been one of the corpses lying there. I'd never been so close to death.

When I came home, I wanted to help in the rescue efforts. My friend Huibing shared with me that the Buddhist temple she frequents was conducting a light offering session for the victims. I went and lighted a lamp for them. That was probably the first time I had prayed in my life. After that I began to go for teachings.

Impermanence is one of the first teachings that resonates with my heart. Especially after surviving the tsunami. Everything was well and happy the day before but gone the next day.

Nothing in this world will last. Only by recognising impermanence can we appreciate what we have now - our loved ones, the things that we already have, the moments we share with people around us. Only by appreciating and living in the present moment can we then live life fully and die with no regrets. ☺

Boey Li Yin aged 35, Business Development Manager

A person with long dark hair is sitting on a wooden pier, looking out at the ocean. The person is seen from behind, silhouetted against the bright sky and water. The pier is made of wooden planks and extends into the water. The ocean is calm with some whitecaps in the distance. The sky is a pale, hazy blue.

Reflection on Impermanence and Death

The Fact of Impermanence

by Piyadassi Thera

The Buddha speaks of three kinds of illusion or perversions (vipallaasa, Skt. viparyaasa) that grip man's mind, namely: the illusions of perception, thought and view (sa~n~naa vipallaasa; citta vipallaasa; di.t.thi vipallaasa). Now when a man is caught up in these illusions he perceives, thinks and views incorrectly.

He perceives permanence in the impermanent; satisfactoriness in the unsatisfactory (ease and happiness in suffering); self in what is not self (a soul in the soulless); beauty in the repulsive.

He thinks and views in the same erroneous manner. Thus each illusion works in four ways (AN 4.49), and leads man astray, clouds his vision and confuses him. This is due to unwise reflections, to unsystematic attention (ayoniso manasikaara).

Right understanding (or insight meditation — vipassanaa) alone removes these illusions and helps man to cognise the real nature that underlies all appearance. It is only when man comes out of this cloud of illusions and perversions that he shines with true wisdom like the full moon that emerges brilliant from behind a black cloud.

The aggregates of mind and body, being ever subject to cause and effect, pass through the inconceivably rapid moments of arising, presently existing, and ceasing (uppaada, .thiti, bha"nga), just as the unending waves of the sea or as a river in flood sweeps to a climax and subsides. Indeed, human life is compared to a mountain stream that flows and rushes on, changing incessantly (AN 7.70) "nadisoto viya," like a flowing stream.

It should now be clear that the being whom for all practical purposes we call a man, woman or individual, is not something static, but kinetic, being in a state of constant and continuous change. Now when a person views life and all that pertains to life in this light, and understands analytically this so-called being as a mere succession of mental and the bodily aggregates, he sees things as they really are (yathaabhutam).

He does not hold the wrong view of "personality belief," belief in a soul or self (sakkaaya di.t.thi), because he knows through right understanding that all phenomenal existence is causally dependent (pa.ticca-samuppanna), that each is conditioned by something else, and that its existence is relative to that condition. He knows that as a result there is no "I," no persisting psychic entity, no ego principle, no self or anything pertaining to a self in this life process. He is, therefore, free from the notion of a microcosmic soul (jiivaatma) or a macrocosmic soul (paramaatma).

It is said that through insight meditation (vipassanaa) one sees things as they really are (yathaabhutam) and not as they appear to be. Viewing things as they really are implies, as we discussed above, seeing the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and no-self nature of all conditioned and component things. To such a meditative disciple of the Buddha the "world" is not the external or the empirical world, but the human body with its consciousness. It is the world of the five aggregates of clinging (pa~nca upaadaanakkhandaa). It is this that he tries to understand as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and without self or soul. It is to this world of body and mind that the Buddha referred to when he said to Mogharaaja, "Ever mindful, Mogharaaja, see the world as void (su~n~na); having given up the notion of a self [underlying it] — so may one overcome death (Maara); The King of Death sees not one who thus knows the world" (Sutta Nipaata).



The Buddha was explaining in detail to his disciples the impermanent nature of the five aggregates, how they are devoid of self, and how the latent conceits "I am" and "mine" cease to exist. Then there arose a thought in the mind of a certain monk thus: "Material body is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, mental formations are not self, consciousness is not self. Then what self do selfless deeds affect?"

The Buddha, reading the thought of the monk's mind, said, "The question was beside the point" and made the monk understand the impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self nature of the aggregates.

“It is wrong to say that the doer of the deed is the same as the one who experiences its results. It is equally wrong to say that the doer of the deed and the one who experiences its results are two different persons,” for the simple reason that what we call life is a flow of psychic and physical processes or energies, arising and ceasing constantly; it is not possible to say that the doer himself experiences results because he is changing now, every moment of his life; but at the same time you must not forget the fact that the continuity of life that is the continuance of experience, the procession of events is not lost; it continues without a gap. The child is not the same as an adolescent, the adolescent is not the same as the adult, they are neither the same nor totally different persons (na ca so na ca a~n~no, — Milinda Pa~nho). There is only a flow of bodily and mental processes.

There are three types of teachers, the first one teaches that the ego or the self is real now as well as in the future (here and hereafter); the second one teaches that the ego is real only in this life, not in the future; the third one teaches that the concept of an ego is an illusion: it is not real either in this life or in the hereafter.

The first one is the eternalist (sassatavaadi); the second one is the annihilationist (ucchedavaadi); the third one is the Buddha who teaches the middle way of avoiding the extremes of eternalism and annihilationism. (Here the middle way is the doctrine of dependent arising, or causal conditioning — Paticca Samuppaada).

All theistic religions teach that the ego survives after death in some way or other, and is not annihilated. The materialist's concept is that the ego is annihilated at death. The Buddhist view is that there is no ego, or anything substantial, or lasting, but all things conditioned are subject to change, and they change not remaining the same for two consecutive moments, and that there is a continuity but no identity.

So long as man cherishes the idea of the lasting self or ego it will not be possible for him to conceive the idea that all things are impermanent, that there is, in reality, an arising and a ceasing of things (samudaya dhamma, vaya dhamma, — Satipa.t.thaana sutta). The understanding of the anatta doctrine, which is exclusively Buddhist, is indispensable in the understanding of the four noble truths and the other principal tenets of Buddhism.

The people of the world today mark the changing nature of life. Although they see it, they do not keep it in mind and act with dispassionate discernment. Though change again and again speaks to them and makes them unhappy, they pursue their mad career of whirling round the wheel of existence and are twisted and torn between the spokes of agony. They cherish the belief that it is possible to discover a way of happiness in this very change, to find a centre of security in this circle of impermanence. They imagine that although the world is uncertain they can make it certain and give it a solid basis, and so the unrelenting struggle for worldly improvement goes on with persevering effort and futile enthusiasm.

History has proved again and again and will continue to prove that nothing in this world is lasting. All things when clung to fail. Nations and civilisations rise, flourish, and die away as waves upon the ocean, yielding place to new, and thus the scrolls of time record the passing pageant, the baseless vision, and the fading flow that is human history. ☺



As the sun creeps over the horizon, a ray of light strikes the cockerel's half opened eyes. It lets out a long and loud crow, signalling that a brand new day has dawned upon us. Birds chirp and sing their melodies, competing for attention. A butterfly flutters from flower to flower looking for sustenance, its wings so delicate they may disintegrate. The bees buzz and join the solitary butterfly taking nectar from the flowers. A morning glory dances in the light morning breeze shaking off dewdrops left overnight on its petals. A brand new day full of promise has begun on this part of mother earth.

Life Is Like a Day

text: Seow Kiat Heng

The coming of a child to this world is like the dawn of a day, bringing with him much joy, hope and anticipation. Parents gaze lovingly at the baby, smile and stroke the newborn's hair with such loving gentleness that only a parent can give. Grandparents, relatives and friends partake in the joyous coming of the child. It calls for a celebration. Other than celebrate what else do homo sapiens do? They ceaselessly and unwittingly let their senses lead them as if their senses are their masters.

As the sun continues its journey up the boundless sky, it is mid morning. The day gets warmer. The cockerel, the birds, bees, butterfly and the morning glory continue with their activities while the petals of the morning glory begin to curl and change hue in the warmth of the sun.

The child too has blossomed into a fine youth, who is ready to take on the world. His cocky manners are simultaneously detestable and amusing. He thinks the universe revolves around him. Little does he know that disappointments, frustrations, grief, and all manners of suffering await him. He will learn and accept that dissatisfactoriness in life is a universal truth. If this universal truth is not accepted, the suffering is endless.

As designed by nature, the sun continues its journey relentlessly up the sky. At midday, it is at its most merciless, beating down on every living organism on mother earth. Our co-inhabitants on mother earth like the cockerel, the birds, the bees, the butterfly and the morning glory seek refuge in the shade.

At mid day, the child has entered middle age. He has suffered many disappointments, frustrations and setbacks. If he gains some wisdom he will accept that dissatisfactoriness in life is a universal truth. He now knows that the universe does not revolve around him. His perspectives change and he begins to flow with nature instead of challenging it. He wants to slow down like his co-inhabitants but at this stage of his life, when the mid day sun is at its most merciless, he has many commitments to honour and upkeep. He has to journey on but may take a short rest by taking a vacation or a sabbatical to recharge.

At mid afternoon, the heat from the sun begins to relent just as the child becomes wiser and more caring to all around him. He mellows with the cooler temperature as he continues to flow with nature in a more graceful and natural way that is very admirable. This fortitude helps him reach leadership position in his career. People turn to him for guidance.

As the sun moves to the west and begins its descent, it changes its hue from hot red to cool orange. Activities on this side of mother earth slow down and birds, bees and butterflies return to their nests. The morning glory folds its petals and takes its well-deserved rest after a hard day succouring the bees and butterflies with its nectar.

At this stage of his life, the child is stepping into the sunset. What can he look forward to in sunset?

Well, sunset can be very beautiful. If there is a light drizzle, he may catch a glimpse of a rainbow but he is not going to chase the rainbow. For having gained wisdom, he knows it is an illusion, just like life is an illusion. All things in life are conditioned phenomena. Like the flowers, the bees, birds and butterflies we are here today in this form, tomorrow (our next life) we will be in another form.

As the sun sinks into the west, darkness descends upon us. After a hard day, he comes to rest (metaphor for death). If he has done a good job and been virtuous, he will have a good night's rest (metaphor for being reborn in a better form). If he has been virtuous, cautiously avoiding non-virtues and diligently purifying his mind so that there is no trace of defilements, he will have a very pleasant dream (metaphor for a heavenly rebirth or Nirvana). Otherwise, if he has been non-virtuous in the day, he will have nightmares (metaphor for entering hell or being reborn in a lower realm).

What is going to happen tomorrow? The sun will still rise from the east. More babies will be born. There will be happiness and suffering. Bees, butterflies, flowers and so on will continue with their activities.

The Wheel of Nature just keeps circling. ☺

The Story of Queen Moonlight

text: **Esther Thien**

Once, when the Buddha was staying in Kapilavastu, a couple gave birth to a son and daughter. The daughter was named Moonlight. When the children grew up, the father passed away and the daughter became a servant of the king. As Moonlight liked to take her meals in the garden, she would often collect flowers and weave them into garlands.

One day, she caught sight of the Buddha as he was going on an almsround. Immediately, she developed strong devotion for him.

“I’m such an unfortunate person. Such a noble being of refuge is right here before my very eyes. Yet I don’t have an opportunity to make offerings. If only I could, I would surely make offerings.”

The Buddha read her mind and with great compassion, approached her and said, “If you have any offerings, place them in my bowl.”

Thrilled, Moonlight filled the bowl completely with garlands. She then respectfully prostrated at the Buddha’s feet and prayed, “Due

to the virtue I have created from this offering, may I never be a servant again.”

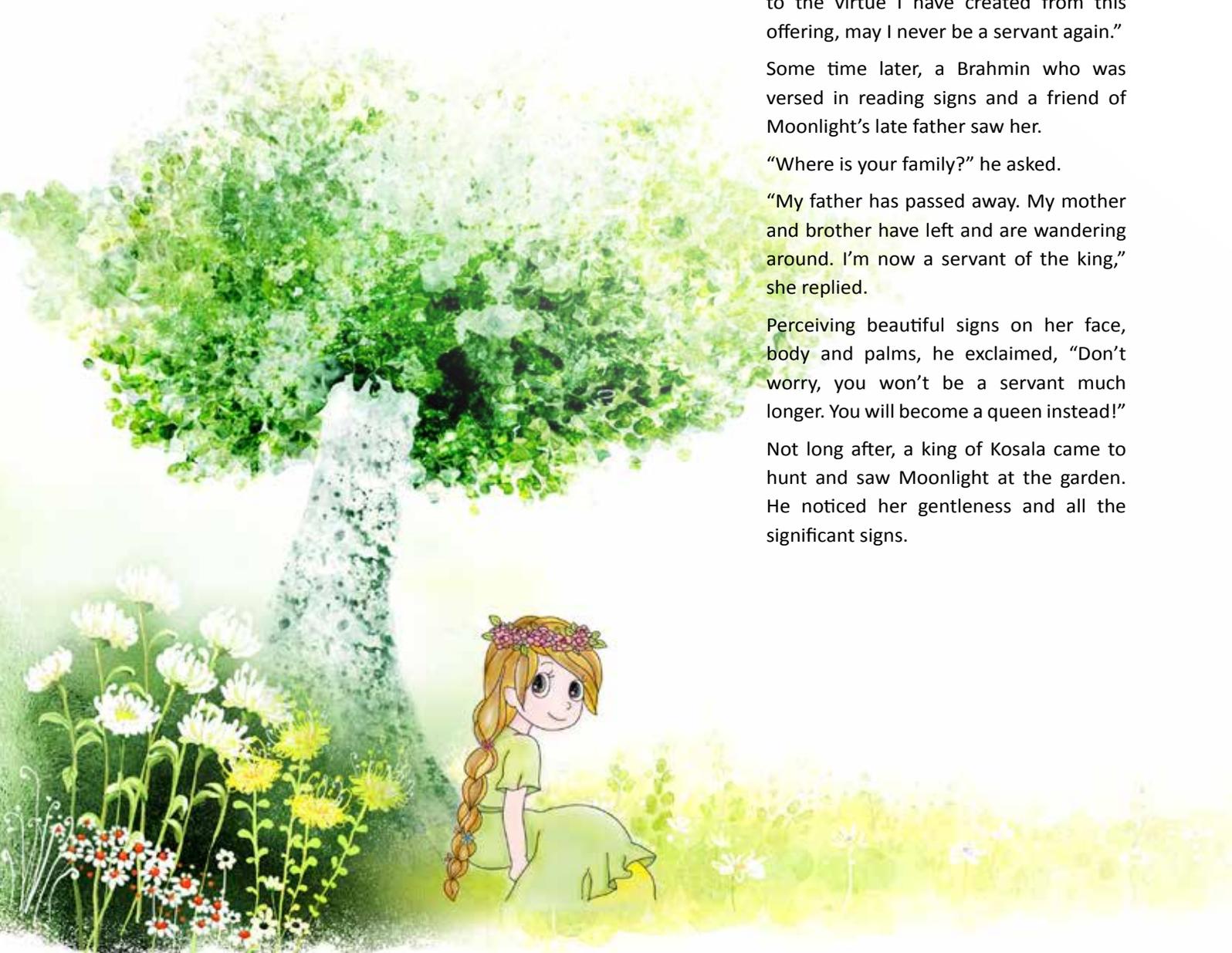
Some time later, a Brahmin who was versed in reading signs and a friend of Moonlight’s late father saw her.

“Where is your family?” he asked.

“My father has passed away. My mother and brother have left and are wandering around. I’m now a servant of the king,” she replied.

Perceiving beautiful signs on her face, body and palms, he exclaimed, “Don’t worry, you won’t be a servant much longer. You will become a queen instead!”

Not long after, a king of Kosala came to hunt and saw Moonlight at the garden. He noticed her gentleness and all the significant signs.



“Who are you?” he asked.

“I’m Moonlight, a servant of the Shakyen king.” She replied.

“You can’t be a servant, you must be his daughter!”

Shortly after, the Shakyen king invited the king from Kosala to a luxurious banquet in his palace. Again the latter queried about Moonlight. Upon hearing that she is a servant of the Shakyen king, the king of Kosala protested, “This is no servant, but your daughter. Please give her hand to me in marriage.”

“You can have any of my many beautiful daughters. Why do you want her?” asked the Shakyen king.

“I want only her,” insisted the king of Kosala. So the two wedded and Moonlight became his queen. The couple lived happily and peacefully for the rest of their lives.

○ This story demonstrates the ripening of karma. In this world, karma and its results can be seen all around us. The variety of animals on earth, all those strange and various species, is due to karma.

When you plant a single apple seed, it produces hundreds of apples. It is the same with positive and negative actions. Even a small action, positive or negative, can ripen into a large result, just like a spark of fire can cause a forest fire. Moreover, we cannot get away from the karma of committing negative actions by having others do them for us.

Karma is infallible and ripens without fail. It ripens within the mind of the individual who has accumulated or committed that karma. Karma follows us from lifetime to lifetime and determines what we experience in the future. The potential results depend on the intention and emotions behind the actions. So meditate on the four foundations at all times and turn your mind towards the Dharma. ☺

The Farmer’s Ordination

text: Esther Thien



○ Once, at the time of the Buddha, a farmer went to Shariputra and requested for ordination as a monastic. Shariputra examined him but discovered no seed and no cause to attain arhatship in that lifetime, so he said, “Sorry, I cannot ordain you as a monastic.”

“People who have created terrible negative karma are allowed to be monastics. Why not me? I have not done anything bad in my entire life,” the farmer cried disappointedly.

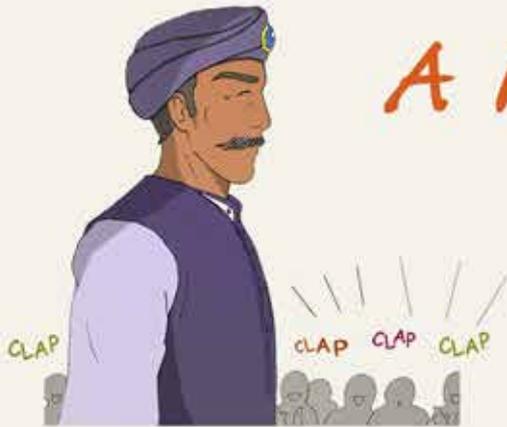
The Buddha came by and asked, “What happened? What has upset you?” The farmer then recounted the incident to the Buddha. With great compassion, the Buddha took the farmer’s hand and said, “Come, I will ordain you. You do have a seed to attain arhatship.” Shariputra became curious and asked, “Lord Buddha, what kind of potential did you see that I couldn’t perceive?”

The Buddha clarified, “Thousands and thousands of aeons ago, this man was born a fly. He was sitting on a pile of cow dung when a sudden gush of water caught the cow dung, along with the fly, and sent them down the river. Downstream, someone had placed a little stupa in the water and that cow dung swirled around and around it. Due to that act of circumambulation, this man now has a seed to attain arhatship in this lifetime.”

○ Cause and effect is so subtle that only omniscient wisdom can perceive every detail. Thus we must be very careful that our actions are truly beneficial. Reciting just one verse of a Sutra or one mantra, protecting the life of even one small insect, or giving a tiny item away – we should not ignore such actions and think that they make no difference if one does them or not. Many inconsequential actions will gather and swell like the ocean, and turn out to have tremendous impact. So reflect on the infallibility of cause and effect often throughout your day. ☺

A King's Life

illustration: Beeli Chua
text: Esther Thien



1. Once, there was a king who was praised by all to be wise and compassionate; a king who took good care of his people.

2. One day, a man came up to the king.



You must be the happiest man in the world. You live in such a magnificent palace, sit on a golden throne and eat such exquisite and delicious food!



Thank you for your compliments. I'd like to invite you to stay here tonight in the palace and sleep in my golden bed.

3. The man was overjoyed that the king had extended such a great privilege to him. He was served a heavenly gourmet meal before being taken to the king's bedroom.



Here's the golden bed. A sharp sword hangs directly above it. This sword may fall at any moment, but this is my order to you: sleep one night in this bed.



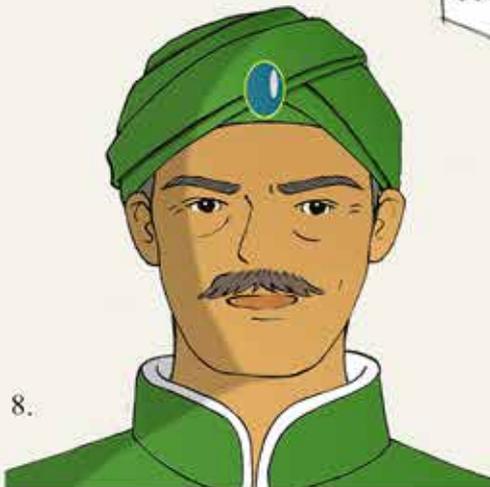
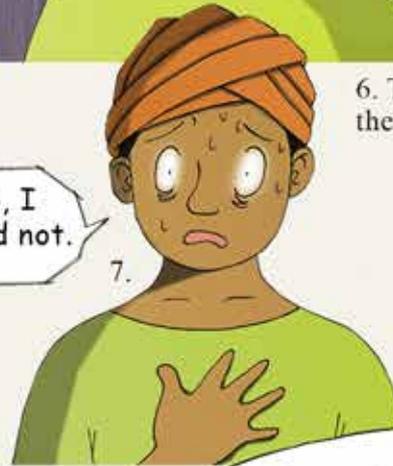
5. The man tried, but couldn't sleep at all. All night, he was nervous that the sword would fall and kill him at any moment.



6. The next morning, the king returned.

No, I could not.

7.



8.

This is how it is for me, too. You thought I was delightfully enjoying good food and luxuries, but I take the full responsibility of the country's welfare on my shoulders. I constantly worry about how to protect the country and its people. I experience no peace whatsoever.

Most people often think, "I will be so happy when I'm rich. My life will be perfect and my problems will go away." Pleasures, material possessions and great wealth may appear to bring joy, but we can't be sure of what lies below the surface. Underneath, they may bring a lot of suffering. Wealth and possessions may be useful. But are they the real roots of happiness?

Engrossed in momentary pleasures, sentient beings fail to reach the ultimate goal - enlightenment - and instead cycle in samsara. But as long as we are in samsara, dissatisfaction is unavoidable due to its nature of change and impermanence. However much we try to protect our comfort or wealth, when the time of death comes, we leave empty-handed. So contemplate the four foundations and practise non-attachment and the precious Dharma instead. It will help you earn the infinite wealth of enlightened qualities, standing you in good stead when death comes knocking.

The Merits of Producing Buddhist Teachings and Buddha Images

- 1 One's light karmic misgivings will dissolve, while heavy ones lighten.
- 2 One will be protected by devas, and be unharmed by natural and man-made disasters.
- 3 One will always be free from the suffering of hatred and vengeance.
- 4 One will be unharmed by yaksas, evil spirits and wild beasts.
- 5 One's mind will be at peace, free from harm and nightmares.
- 6 One's complexion will be radiant.
- 7 One will be full of auspicious energy.
- 8 One who practises the Dharma wholeheartedly will have adequate living necessities.
- 9 One's family will be harmonious and be blessed with fortune and wisdom.
- 10 One who practises what one preaches will be respected and loved by all.
- 11 One who is dull-minded will gain wisdom.
- 12 One who is ill will gain health.
- 13 One who is poor will gain wealth.
- 14 One will be free of being reborn in the negative realms.
- 15 One will be able to help others grow in wisdom and gain great merits in doing so.
- 16 One will always be able to learn the Dharma, till one's wisdom and spiritual penetrations are fully grown and one becomes a Buddha.

Dear Reader, "The Gift of the Dharma Exceeds All Other Gifts."

Do you wish to offer this greatest gift to others, so that more can be touched by the beauty of the Dharma, and be inspired to lead happy and meaningful lives? If so, you can share in the production costs of AWAKEN Magazine for free distribution. Simply photocopy this page, fill in the sponsorship form and mail it back to us together with your cheque or money order. All cheques and money orders should be made payable to "Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery" and sent to:

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

AWAKEN Magazine
88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117

For overseas readers, please send bankdrafts in Singapore currency. Please include S\$10 for bank charges. Please note that the monastery is NOT able to accept cheques in foreign currency.

You can also donate online via eNets or Giro at <http://kmspks.org/about/donate>

If you have any enquiries, please call 6849 5300 or e-mail: awaken@kmspks.org

Name: Chinese Name:

Gender: Age: Highest educational level:

Address:

Occupation:

Tel: (H) (O) (Hp)

Email:

Amount: (Cash*/ Cheque No:)

Do you require an official receipt? (Yes* / No) *Please delete where appropriate

Would you like to receive emails on upcoming talks, retreats or other events of the monastery? (Yes* / No) *Please delete where appropriate

Where did you obtain this magazine?

I acknowledge and consent KMSPKS to contact me with regard to any sponsorship matters, via the information provided above. To update any changes to your personal particulars, please email publication@kmspks.org or call us at 6849 5342

Issue 28

ENHANCE

your campus life with

Buddhism

Experience how you can make sense of this world by first making sense of your life. Study hard and have fun with a group of close-knitted spiritual friends along the way.

Find out more about Buddhism (the fun way) through these clubs at your local campus.



"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion... if there is any religion that would cope with scientific needs, it would be Buddhism." - Albert Einstein

For more information on Buddhist activities for profits, please visit [bmf7.org/ynrk](http://bmf7.org/bmf7.org/ynrk)



Nanyang Polytechnic Buddhist Society
geocities.com/nyybuddhistsociety
NYPBS_Membership@yaho.com.sg

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Buddhist Society
npbuddhistsociety.blogspot.com

NTU Buddhist Society
clubs.ntu.edu.sg/buddhist
buddhist@ntu.edu.sg

NUS Buddhist Society
nubs.org.sg
president@nusbs.org.sg

SIM Buddhist Bhavana Club
sim.buddhistsbhavana@yahoo.com

Singapore Polytechnic Buddhist Society
spbs-oc.blogspot.com
spbs_sst@gmail.com

招募 志愿 佛学老师

Recruitment for Volunteer Dharma Teachers

Grow & blossom together in our big Buddhist family!
引导儿童和少年在佛教大家庭里一起成长、提升

If you are a Buddhist who practise the Teachings of the Buddha, and you possess the following:

- Heart and passion to educate; to act as a friend and mentor to children/teens
- Able to commit for at least one year

如果你是遵循佛法教义的佛教徒，又符合以下条件：

- 有一颗热忱和慈悲的心，能对孩子和少年扮演益友良师的角色
- 能承诺服务至少一年

Brought to you by **kmspks** SAT SURE SCHOOLS learn practise realise share

Enquiry 查询 6849 5300, 6849 5328/
sundayschool@kmspks.org

WHAT'S NEW
 Auspicious ornaments of goodwill and friendly wishes
 text: Esther Thien



Usher in the Year of the Horse on a good note by getting these auspicious ornaments of goodwill and friendly wishes.

Send loving, friendly wishes to friends and loved ones by penning them down on a golden blessing lantern. Wish them academic or career success, good health, prosperity or spiritual fulfilment in life. Hang the mini lantern at your home's shrine or at the monastery.

Or inspire your children and loved ones with these ultra-*kawaii* and lovable miniatures and namecard holders of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Choose from Buddha Amitabha, Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, Bodhisattva Manjusri, Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha or Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta. Great as gifts to place on the car's dashboard, work or study desk, shelves or TV console.

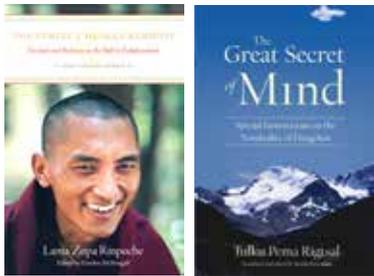


To find out more, please call Awareness Place stores at 6337 7582 or 6452 1732

The Perfect Human Rebirth: Freedom and Richness on the Path to Enlightenment

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

For a complete compendium that deals with how rare and precious it is to receive not just a human rebirth but a perfect human rebirth, with eight freedoms and ten endowments to practise the Dharma, check out this new book. Drawn from teachings given over four decades, the book elucidates in a reader-friendly manner the preciousness and great benefits that a perfect human rebirth can bring and why we should not waste a moment of it. Get it from Awareness Place stores for S\$26.80.



The Great Secret of Mind

by Tulku Pema Rigtsal

The *Great Secret of Mind* is a book that covers in-depth the profound teachings of the Buddha, from the View of teachings, Meditation as the Path to Conduct and Attainment of realisation. A recommended read for all those who meditate, this book condenses the Buddha’s teachings in a clear and readable manner, sprinkled with numerous anecdotes for better understanding. Priced at S\$34.20 from Awareness Place stores.

Only with a Perfect Human Rebirth Can We See the Great Secret of Mind text: Esther Thien

Contemplating Impermanence, Death and the meaning of Human Life with The Island text: Susan M. Griffith-Jones



The Island

Directed by: Michael Bay
Starring: Scarlett Johansson
Ewan McGregor

It’s the year 2019 and the ‘lucky ones’, who have survived a worldwide environmental contamination are now living in a lock-tight, heavily controlled, military-style technological environment. They live in a ‘chip swipe’ system, whereby everything they do, such as their sleep, contents of their urine, diet, exercise and work habits are thoroughly examined.

The only chance to leave this sterile environment is through a lottery game whereby the winner can go to the last air-breathing place on earth, ‘The Island’ that is advertised as a paradise.

But we slowly learn that these people are not what they seem to be. Lincoln Six Echo, an inmate of this place finds a small living moth and questions how it could have survived the contamination. He thus discovers the secret of the place and is driven to act when a woman he likes wins the lottery and is headed for ‘The Island’.

All humans experience various levels of Samsara in their thoughts daily: the hell realm in anger, hungry ghost realm in desire, human realm in the suffering of change, demi-god realm in jealousy and god realm in pride. And indeed, in the movie, we see these multi-faceted layers of human experience.

Humans are divided into two types in this film: the ones who give and the ones who gain. The latter are so greedy that they have developed the ability to completely deceive others through mind programming for their own benefit and take advantage of human weaknesses by justifying that “Everyone wants to live forever”.

This is a powerful depiction of the extent a human will go to in order to cheat the inevitable onset of old age and disease, natural processes of the ever-changing nature of life. A message of impermanence prevails as death lurks in all corners of this movie.

According to the Dharma, human life is precious when it is used to achieve enlightenment, not as a tool to make more money, gain more assets and cheat others.

The law of cause and effect as action reverberating upon the one who initiated it, always holds true. The big question is what those who have paid large sums of money for something would do when they realise that they have completely compromised all sense of morality to get it.



The Blessings of Buddha Summer in the Lotus Ground

If you prefer to watch DVD videos, take a look at these two documentaries which are recent releases. *The Blessings of Buddha* contains eight tracks and documents the development of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and how the Buddha's relics were transported to Sri Lanka from India and placed in different monasteries. Be mesmerised by the intriguing stories narrated of pilgrims and arhats. Also listen to the explanation by Ven Dr B Chandima Thero to better understand the fundamentals of the Buddha's teachings on how gratitude and compassion form the bedrock of the Buddha-dharma.

Summer in the Lotus Ground, a film by Chris Stewart is a documentary on the Dzogchen Monastery and the Lotus Ground Retreat Centre in the Tibetan plateau. Amid stunning backdrop of nature and melodious Tibetan mantra singing, viewers get a glimpse of the practices that Vajrayana Buddhist practitioners engage in, and understand what an empowerment constitutes and what hand mudras do. Retails at \$22.00 each at Awareness Place stores.

Enlightenment The Moment Music Touches Mind

by Dagmo Sonam Palkyi



Go with the flow of the lyrical energies emanated from the unique lively rendition of mantras in these two CDs produced by Primal Beat Creations. Listen to the harmonious interplay of simple Dharma messages and mantra singing to the sounds of nature and pleasing musical tunes. Feel your heart expand and sing to the mantra tunes. My personal favourite is the track "Manjusri" in the CD by Dagmo Sonam Palkyi. Pay S\$19.90 for each CD at Awareness Place stores.

Dharma Apps

One good thing about having a smartphone or tablet is that it can be used to connect you to the wisdom of the Dharma 24/7

text: Esther Thien



Just Be Good Buddhist

by Just Be Good
Free

This app is a one-stop centre for those who are keen to deepen their understanding of the fundamentals in Buddhism. Choose e-learning modules, read ebooks or listen to talks by eminent Venerables such as Ven Ajahn Brahm and Ven Aggacitta. Only available on Google Play.



A Life that Tells How to Live

by Orange Tip Editions
US\$3.99

A Theravada Buddhist monk, Ven PA Payutto is a scholar of the Pali Canon who has taught in numerous universities, and is a recipient of UNESCO's Prize for Peace Education in 1994. In this ebook app, he explains to the urban professional the intricate teachings of the Buddha on how one can lead a purposeful life in an easy-to-understand manner. Only available on the iPhone and iPad.

HEARD

text: Esther Thien

Impermanent are all component things,
they arise and cease, that is their nature:
They come into being and pass away,
release from them is bliss supreme.

- Maha-Parinibbana Sutta

The eight consciousness, alaya consciousness,
is known as storehouse consciousness.
It stores the consequences of our actions...
seeds of all our karma.
Karmic force resides there.
The eighth consciousness does not
become larger or smaller as
individuals create karma and
experience consequences.
Although it consists of
many different karmic seeds,
the eighth consciousness is one,
ever-changing karmic force.

Karmic force is analogous to water
rushing down a mountain.
If the water is blocked by a stone,
it will alter its course and continue to flow
until it reaches the ocean.

- Ven Master Sheng Yen

There is no true happiness in worldly existence
because the happiness in the higher realms
is subject to change and
is thus impermanent.

Any place in samsara,
whether in the higher realms
or even in the most pleasurable place
is impermanent and thus not reliable.
As Lord Buddha had taught,
all compounded things are impermanent.
And whatever that is impermanent
is subject to suffering.

- Well-known Buddhist teacher

To know the four foundations intellectually is not enough.
We have to contemplate and meditate on them until
we personally experience them from the depth of our hearts
the preciousness of this human life;
and that our life's end can come at any time.
This is how you practise the four foundations.

Although we have this precious human body with its 18 qualities,
if we do not develop bodhicitta,
love and compassion in our hearts,
this human life is of no use.
There are many material things in this world
but none of them can accompany us at the moment of death.
The only thing we can take with us from life to life
until enlightenment is our development of love,
compassion and bodhicitta.

-Ven Garchen Rinpoche

Attachment: Attachments are what keep us turning on the wheel of rebirth. In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering: From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear. (Dhammapada) Becoming enlightened is nothing other than severing all our attachments. What is meant by "attachment"? It is the investing of mental or emotional energy in an "object". We can become attached to people, things, experiential states, and our own thoughts and preconceptions. In Buddhist teachings attachments are usually divided into two general categories: attachments to self and attachments to dharmas. For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment.

Awareness: Attentive consciousness of the reality of things (especially of the present moment).

Afflictions: Another name for negative or disturbing emotions, also known as *kleshas*. Greed/ Craving, Hatred/ Aversion, Ignorance/Delusion, Envy/Jealousy and Pride. Same as 'defilements'.

Amitabha: Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life.

Arhat: One who has destroyed dualistic ego-grasping/ clinging and achieved liberation of cyclic existence. There are three types of Arhats: Shravaka, Pratyekabuddha and Buddha.

Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva: Guanyin; the Bodhisattva who personifies the perfect great Compassion of all Buddhas, who hears and heeds the cries of the world.

Bhikkhu: A fully ordained male Buddhist monastic, who lived by the vinaya's framework of monastic discipline. Their lifestyle is shaped so as to support their spiritual practice, to live a simple and meditative life, and attain Nirvana. Called *bhiksu* in Sanskrit.

Bodhicitta: The enlightenment-mind. The mind dedicated to attaining Buddhahood in order to help all sentient beings.

Buddha-Dharma: The Dharma of the Buddhas. That is the teachings of the Buddha.

Bodhisattva: One who aspires to be a guide to save all beings from suffering with the Buddha-Dharma, while attaining liberation.

Buddha: An aspect of the Triple Gem - The Awakened or Enlightened One. A Buddha is one who has attained liberation from all suffering, attaining True Happiness, Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Compassion, among all other virtues for the sake of helping all sentient beings. "The Buddha" refers to the historical Shakyamuni or Gautama Buddha, who is the founder of Buddhism in our world.

Compassion: The quality of helping to remove suffering in others; the ending of cruelty. *Karuna* in Pali.

Cyclical existence: The cycle of death and rebirth, taking uncontrolled rebirth under the influence of defilement and karmic imprints. The process arises out of ignorance and is marked by suffering.

Ignorance: The quality of lacking Wisdom, not knowing or seeing the reality of all things.

Defilements: Our negative qualities – chiefly Greed/ Craving, Hatred/ Aversion and Ignorance/Delusion. Same as 'afflictions'.

Dharma: Refers to three types. 1. All phenomena. 2. Principles of Nature. 3. An aspect of the Triple Gem - the teachings of the Buddha or the general teachings of Buddhism. In this context, the Dharma refers to the teachings of the Buddha. *Dhamma* in Pali.

Enlightenment: same as Buddhahood, full enlightenment/ awakening. Highest level of development, having forever eliminated all defilements and karmic imprints, and having developed all good qualities and wisdom to their fullest extent.

Generosity: The practice of cultivating unattached and unconditional giving.

Impermanence: All compounded things are constantly changing, as a result or effect of changing causes and conditions. All living and non-living elements are thus subject to decay and renewal.

Jatakas: A voluminous body of Buddhist texts found in *Khuddaka Nikaya*, native to India concerning the previous lives of Shakyamuni Buddha, in both human and animal form. In whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates.

Karma: Refers to action, which is the cause ripening into the results. That is we experience the result of what we had done, and that what we do will result in what we will experience when conditions gather.

Loving-kindness: The quality of wishing and giving happiness and well-being to others. *Metta* in Pali.

Lower realms: The realms of animals, hungry ghost and hell beings

Mahayana: The Greater Vehicle. The dominant Buddhist tradition of East Asia that emphasises on the Bodhisattva ideal.

Mantra: Prescribed syllables (in Sanskrit) to protect the mind from defilements. They express the essence of specific energies. Recitation of mantra is always done with specific visualisations.

Meditation: A practice to habituate ourselves to calm and positive states of mind, conducive for one to see ultimate reality.

Meditative Concentration: Calm abiding, Concentration. 1. Meditation method to achieve tranquillity. 2. The resultant tranquil meditative state; the ability to remain single-pointedly on an object with a pliant and blissful mind. Mental quiescence, stilled and settled state of awareness.

Mindfulness: An aspect of the 'Noble Eightfold Path' - the quality that enables us to remember, and keep our awareness and attention on what is beneficial to one and all in terms of thoughts, speech and actions. *Sati* in Pali.

Morality: One of three sections of the Noble Eightfold Path and is a code of conduct that embraces a commitment to harmony and self-restraint with the principle motivation being non-violence, or freedom from causing harm. It is an internal, aware and intentional ethical behaviour, according to one's commitment to the path of liberation and wholehearted commitment to what is wholesome. Various described as virtue, right conduct, moral discipline or ethics and precept. Called *Sila* in Pali.

Mudra: A symbolic or ritual gesture, and an energetic seal of authenticity employed in Buddhist spiritual practices.

Nirvana: Nirvana is a Sanskrit term that is interpreted in various ways: 1) cessation, or extinction, referring to the elimination of the afflictions at the time of enlightenment, 2) freedom from desire; and 3) no longer either coming into being or ceasing to be. *Nibbana* in Pali.

Noble Eightfold Path: A systematic and complete formula to rid dissatisfaction and attain true happiness and peace by cultivating Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation (Pls read "Be A Lamp Upon Yourself" or "Buddhism for Beginners" published by KMSPKS for detailed info).

Pali: The language of the Theravada Buddhist Canon. Pali was originally a natural, spoken dialect closely related to Sanskrit, which on the other hand was not used for every day discourse.

Pureland: A world without defilements manifested by a Buddha out of Compassion, for sentient beings to seek birth in, to perfect the practice of the Dharma. The best known being Sukhavati Pureland created by Amitabha Buddha.

Refuge: In the Buddhist context to take refuge means to accept the Buddha and the Buddhist teachings as the path one wants to take.

Samsara: This world of rebirth and suffering.

Stupa: A religious structure containing Buddhist scriptures, and /or the remains of the Buddha or his disciples, whether relics or bones.

Sutra(s): The recorded teachings of the Buddha. Spelt as *Sutta* in Pali.

Theravada: A foundational school of Buddhism. Literally 'Way of the Elders'. Today, it refers to the Buddhist tradition found in South-east Asia.

Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Vajrayana: Tantric school of Buddhism.

Venerable: An honorific addressing of a member of the Sangha.

Virtues: Blessings which transcend Birth and Death and lead to Buddhahood. Depending on the intention of the practitioner - whether he is seeking mundane rewards (merit) or transcendence (virtue) - the same action will then result in merit or virtue.

Vipassana: A form of meditation that develops insight into the nature of the mind and body.

Wisdom: The understanding or discernment based on the direct realisation of the Four Noble Truths, Impermanence, Interdependent Origination, Non-self and Emptiness. The Buddha taught that all things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that knowing this — not in a rational, but empirical manner — is wisdom.



Calendar of Events Jan-Apr 2014

| EVENT/COURSE | DATE | TIME | VENUE | INSTRUCTOR/SPEAKER | FEE | ENQUIRY/REGISTRATION |
|---|---|-------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| YOUTH | | | | | | |
| Y Care | | | | | | |
| Food Ration | 12/1, 9/3, 6/4 (Sun) | 8.30am - 12.00pm | KMSPKS | N.A | N.A | 6849 5345/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Volunteer and celebrate Chinese New Year with Bright Hill Evergreen Home Residents | 9/2 (Sun) | 9.00am - 12.00pm | Bright Hill Evergreen Home | | | |
| Volunteer and bring Bright Hill Evergreen Home Residents out for a morning of fun | 13/4 (Sun) | 8.30am - 12.00pm | | | | |
| Y Talk | | | | | | |
| A series of self-improvement, self-help talks and topics related to Buddhism | 9/1, 23/1, 13/2, 27/2 13/3, 27/3, 10/4, 24/4 (Thu) | 7.30pm - 9.30pm | APWB | Buddhist Professionals & Venerables | Free | 6849 5345/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Y Cultivation | | | | | | |
| Weekly Sunday meditation, recitation and reflection of sutra for youth aged 17-35 | 5/1, 12/1, 19/1, 26/1 16/2, 23/2, 2/3, 9/3, 23/3 13/4, 20/4, 27/4 (Sun) | 10.00am - 11.30am | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 5 | Ven Chuan Guan | Free | 6849 5345/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Y Dharma | | | | | | |
| Short Buddhism Course for youth aged 17-35 years old taught by Venerable Chuan Guan | 5/1, 19/1, 2/3, 16/3, 20/4 (Sun) | 2.00pm - 3.30pm | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 5 | Ven Chuan Guan | \$10 | 6849 5345/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Y Sharing | | | | | | |
| A sharing by Buddhist youths of their skills and life experiences | 26/1, 23/2, 30/3, 27/4 (Sun) | 2.00pm - 3.30pm | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 5 | Buddhist Youth | Nil | 6849 5345/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Y Guide | | | | | | |
| Temple Trail (English and Chinese) | 11/1 (Sat), 9/3 (Sun) | 10.00am | KMSPKS | Volunteer Guides | Free | 6849 5300/ youth@kmspks.org |
| Y Tuition | | | | | | |
| Pri 4-6 | Jan 2014 (Every Sat) | 10.30am | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 8 | Volunteer Tutors | Free | 6849 5359 / youth@kmspks.org |
| Sec 4 | Jan 2014 (Every Sun) | | | | | |
| CEREMONY PRAYERS | | | | | | |
| 3 Refuges & 5 Precepts Prep Class | March | 9.30am - 11.00am | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 8 | Venerable | Free | 6849 5300 / sem@kmspks.org |
| 3 Refuges & 5 Precepts Ceremony | March | 12.30pm | Hall Of No Form | Ven Kwang Sheng | Free (by registration) | |
| GROUP PRACTICE | | | | | | |
| Meditation Group Practice | 8/1-12/11 (Wed) | 7.30pm - 9.00pm | Hall Of No Form | | | 6849 5300 / sem@kmspks.org |
| DHARMA | | | | | | |
| English Buddhism Course Year 1 | 13/2-6/11 (Thu) | 7.30pm - 9.00pm | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 9 | Ven Chun Hui | \$90/yr | 6849 5300 / sem@kmspks.org |
| English Buddhism Course Year 2 | 17/2-3/11 (Mon) | | | Ven Chun Nian | \$90/yr | |
| English Buddhist Sutra Class | 13/3-6/11 (Thu) | | KMSPKS VHCMH, L1 Classroom 5 | Ven Chuan Guan | \$90/yr | |
| LIFESTYLE | | | | | | |
| Hatha Yoga / Hatha Gentle Yoga / Hatha Yoga for Beginners/ Lunch-time Hatha Yoga | 23/12-10/3 (Mon, except 27/1, 3/2) | 7.45pm - 9.15pm | APWBC | Certified Yoga Teachers | \$160 for 10 sessions | 6336 5067 / sem@kmspks.org |
| | 11/2-15/4 (Tue) | 10.30am - 12.00pm | | | \$120 for 10 sessions | |
| | 11/2-15/4 (Tue) | 12.45pm - 1.35pm | | | \$140 for 10 sessions | |
| | 11/2-15/4 (Tue) | 3.00pm - 4.30pm | | | \$160 for 10 sessions | |
| | 19/2-23/4 (Wed) | 7.30pm - 9.00pm | | | \$160 for 10 sessions | |
| | 17/1-4/4 (Fri, except 31/1, 7/2) | 10.30am - 12.00pm | | | \$160 for 10 sessions | |
| | 14/2-25/4 (Fri, except 18/4) | 12.45pm - 1.35pm | | | \$120 for 10 sessions | |
| | 28/12-15/3 (Sat, except 1/2, 8/2) | 9.15am - 10.45am | | | \$160 for 10 sessions | |