

The Spiritual Practice of Environmental Protection

Time passes swiftly. We are almost reaching the halfway mark for 2016. This year has been an exceedingly hot year for all of us with the equinox, coupled with the heatwave caused by the El Nino phenomenon. Even the nights are stiflingly warm.

The recent spate of climate changes really made me sit up. It made me fully aware that all our actions count and play a part contributing to the environment we all live in. No action is too small to protect our home, the Earth.

I once came across a video depicting the drastic aftermath of a world we will have 100 years later, due to the ignorant and harmful actions caused by our present generations. The terrible consequences will unfortunately be borne by our descendants.

I also saw another environmentalist video which I think is very edifying. It is titled *What If The World Went Vegetarian?* In this approximately 4-minute video, it clarifies how if the world can reduce meat consumption, it would free up arable land, returning them to the state of pristine forestlands; bring down carbon dioxide; and reduce the use of potable water for animal rearing. It is said that decreasing meat consumption may be one of the best strategies for managing climate change.

Taking care of the environment begins with us individually. To play our part to take care of the environment, the Monastery started the Gratitude Corner to reduce, reuse and recycle. We have been actively educating the public to burn less joss paper; constructed and are using an eco-burner; and also implemented the initiative of not burning joss paper boxes from 2017 onwards during the busy months of Qing Ming (18 Mar – 16 Apr 2017) and Ullambana (26 Aug – 10 Sep 2017).

We are all strongly interconnected. Everyone is affected if we do not take care of the environment we live in, whether physically (in our actions) or mentally (by not purifying our minds of greed, hatred and delusion).

The Buddhist practice greatly emphasised the cultivation of gratitude and the enlightenment of the mind, so as to repay the kindness of all beings, who have been our mothers in countless lives.

This Vesak, let us exercise love and compassion together to protect our environment for a better future. We can start by eating less meat, even go meatless on certain days, or use fewer plastic bags, and less electricity and water.

May everyone be blessed with good health, peace and gratitude this Vesak Day! ☺

*Think not lightly of good, saying, "It will not come to me."
Drop by drop is the water pot filled.
Likewise, the wise man, gathering it little by little,
fills himself with good.*

– *Dhammapada, verse 122*



Sik Kwang Sheng (Ven)
Abbot, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

The Buddhist practice greatly emphasised the cultivation of gratitude and enlightenment of the mind, so as to repay the kindness of all beings, who have been our mothers in countless lives (pg. 38).

Cultivating the Four Sublime States (pg. 48) is a start. Through the practice of love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, one brings much happiness into this world. Only an environment of love and compassion can heal this world of its suffering (pgs. 44 & 70).

Genuine love is different from attachment (pg 42). Genuine love only thinks of what one can do for others, even for complete strangers (pg. 61).

Yet for love and the other sublime states to grow, one needs to develop mindfulness (pg. 71). Mindfulness is one of the five strengths that Lord Buddha advised us to develop in order to master meditation well (pg. 54) for it is our mind that steers our thoughts, speech and actions (pg. 57).

We need to learn to differentiate between wholesome and unwholesome thoughts. When wholesome thoughts arise, we let them stay and grow. When the unwholesome ones come, we weed them out immediately, which Ng Pei Fuen likens to the art of growing a lawn (pg. 58).

Zen Master Daehaeng also cautioned that we should pay attention to the thoughts we give rise to; and not let negative thoughts steer our thinking, speech and actions. This is because what we send out, comes back to us in different appearances (pg. 64).

Happy reading and have a blissful and spiritually fruitful Vesak Day. ☺

*Healing the world
with love and compassion*

Esther Thien

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien



APWBC: The “Little Kong Meng San” in Town

text : Oh Puay Fong & Esther Thien



Singapore - Awareness Place Well-Being Centre (APWBC) started with a noble vision to be “an activity centre to reach out and create awareness in happy living” at nominal or no cost. That does not mean we compromise on quality. Throughout all these years, we stood by our objective to provide good, reliable and affordable courses so that more can benefit.

It was tough in the beginning but slowly, our hard work paid off. We became known as “little Kong Meng San” in town. From its humble beginning offering free lunch time meditation for busy city professionals to recharge from their hectic schedules, we now have a full range of courses spanning yoga, vegetarianism, communication, emotional well-being, art therapy, etc. Please visit <http://www.awarenessplace.com/programme> for the full list of our activities.

People also came asking for free Dharma books, including tourists. They were so happy and gratified to receive these books, which are rare in their countries. Having benefited, they wished to carry these back for others. Their kindness and respect for the Dharma touched us deeply.

The years passed happily, thanks to our dedicated instructors and loyal students whose loving-kindness, understanding and generosity helped to sustain us. We are touched to witness filial piety in action when people paid for or took leave to accompany their elderly parents to our **Gentle Yoga** course, or go through great difficulties to transport their wheelchair-bound parents to our **Basic Dharma for Seniors** class. We are encouraged and inspired to see the elders get better every week and yearning for the Dharma. When we launched Project 11 to collect ring tabs from drink cans, which were then recycled to make prosthetic legs for the poor and handicapped, one participant from the Tai Chi class on Friday initiated a collection drive in her office and soon, her colleagues were depositing ring tabs into the cup she had placed on the pantry’s fridge. To her, this was the least she could do to help the poor who needed the expensive prosthetic legs they could not afford. **This is pure goodness and being able to bring out the goodness in others is remarkably invaluable.**

APWBC is indeed very fortunate to be able to provide an enabling environment where such seeds of goodness, love and compassion can bud.

However, our monthly deficits have been escalating. APWBC has been heavily subsidised by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS) all these years but this arrangement will soon end. We therefore appeal for your help to



enable our good work to continue.

You can support us by:

- 1) Donating to “Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery” (please indicate “for APWBC”);
- 2) Joining our workshops or courses; and/or
- 3) Helping to disseminate information about our activities to your contacts.

We deeply appreciate any help we can get and thank you for your support! ☺



SBF Paid Tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew with Prayer Service on His Death Anniversary

Singapore – In memory of our late Founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew’s first death anniversary, the Singapore Buddhist Federation (SBF) organised a prayer service on 23 March 2016.

The service was held from 7.30pm, on Wednesday, in Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery’s Hall of No Form on Level 4 of Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall.

About 700 people attended the 2-hour service, which included an offering of flowers, observing a minute of silence, paying respects to the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, followed by the screening of a tribute video and reciting the prayer, *The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sound (Pu Men Pin)*. ☺

Firefly Mission to Build a Block of Six Classrooms in Laos in 2016

Singapore – Firefly Mission is embarking on another project in Laos this year to build a block of six classrooms for HinHeub Tai Secondary School.

HinHeub Tai Secondary School has a school population of more than 800 students and provides education to children from grade six to nine. Its current three blocks of classrooms are insufficient for its growing intake of students.

Collaborating with Ngee Ann Polytechnic, National University of Singapore and Singapore University of Technology and Design, which have donated US\$14,000 for this project, Firefly Mission has to raise another US\$30,000 in order to meet the construction costs of building the block of classrooms, inclusive of electrical works, toilets and furniture.

Each of the six classrooms will measure six metres wide by eight metres long and three metres high. The block will also house a corridor two metres wide and 48 metres long.

To donate, participate or find out more about Firefly Mission’s upcoming projects, please visit www.fireflymission.org or <https://www.facebook.com/fireflymission> ☺



How can we love others without being attached to them?

Q: How can we reconcile the Buddha's teachings on non-attachment with those on love? How can we love others, like our friends, without being attached to them? – C.G

A: Non-attachment is a balanced state of mind in which we cease overestimating others' qualities. By having a more accurate view of others, our unrealistic expectations fall away, as does our clinging. This leaves us open to loving others for who they are instead of what they do for us. **Our hearts can open to care for everyone impartially, wishing everyone to be happy simply because he or she is a living being.** The feeling of warmth that was previously reserved for a select few, now can be expanded to a great number of people.

With some people we share many common interests. It's easy to talk to them; we understand each other well and help each other grow. We may spend more time with these people than with others. They can be our friends without our clinging to them with attachment. The focus of such a friendship is mutual growth, not fulfilment of our selfish desires.

Since it is difficult to free ourselves from attachment, initially our friendships will be a combination of attachment and genuine love. But, being aware of the disadvantages of attachment, we'll try to eliminate it so it doesn't cause problems in our relationships. Slowly, the quality of our friendships will improve.

Instead of a "take take" mentality where we view everything and everyone in terms of what we can get from them, we develop a "give give" mentality, thinking of what we can do for others. When we have this attitude, we're happy whomever we're with. Others are happy, they like us, and inside our hearts, we're satisfied, for we know that our lives are meaningful. ☺



– Ven Thubten Chodron
www.thubtenchodron.org
www.sravasti.org

A large poster for the Vesak Festival 2016. The background is light pink with cherry blossom patterns. A large, stylized silhouette of a person's head and shoulders is the central focus, holding a pink lotus flower. The text is in both English and Chinese. At the top left, there is a logo for '25th Vesak' and the words 'COMPASSION • GRATITUDE • PEACE'. Below that, it says 'Join us this Vesak and grow in compassion and gratitude'. The main title in Chinese is '知恩報恩' (Zhi En Bao En). To the right, vertical text reads '来与我们共庆卫塞节，让慈悲与感恩之心增长。' (Come with us to celebrate Vesak, let compassion and gratitude grow). The date is '2016 8/5 星期日 Sun 10AM-9PM'. The location is '光明山普觉禅寺 Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery 88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117'. There is a section for '活动 HIGHLIGHTS' with a list of events and times. At the bottom, there is contact information and the Singapore Buddhist Federation logo.

COMPASSION • GRATITUDE • PEACE
Join us this Vesak and grow in compassion and gratitude

25th 卫塞节
2016

知恩報恩

来与我们共庆卫塞节，
让慈悲与感恩之心增长。

2016
8/5 星期日 Sun
10AM-9PM

光明山普觉禅寺 Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
88 Bright Hill Road Singapore 574117

活动 HIGHLIGHTS

10AM-12PM 讽诵药师经与上供
Reciting the Sutra of Medicine Buddha & Paying Homage to the Buddha

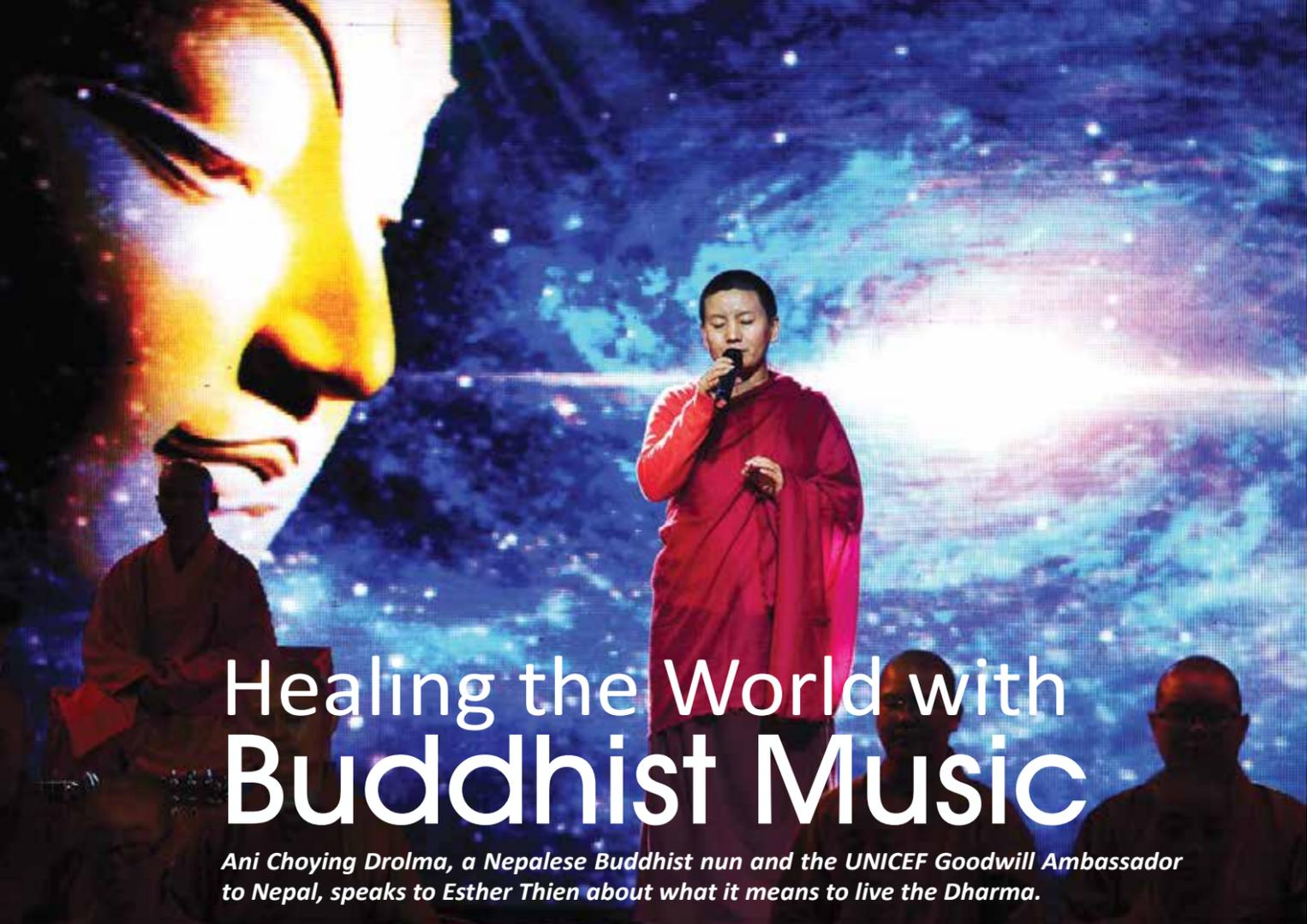
10AM-7PM •浴佛 Bathing of Prince Siddhartha
•义卖会 Vesak Fair

12PM-1.30PM 母亲节与学生祝福仪式
Mother's Day & Students' Blessing

7PM-9PM 知恩报恩的人生观座谈会 Vesak Forum (Mandarin)
演讲者 仁虚法师 · 永佳法师 · 洪孟珠博士 · 纪传盛居士

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新加坡佛教总会
SINGAPORE BUDDHIST FEDERATION



Healing the World with Buddhist Music

Ani Choying Drolma, a Nepalese Buddhist nun and the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador to Nepal, speaks to Esther Thien about what it means to live the Dharma.

Awaken: Ani, how was life like in your early years at the Gompa?

Ani Choying: It was a lot of fun. I was 13 years old at that time. Coming from an environment where there was endless housework to do such as cleaning, taking care of my siblings, laundry and dishes to wash etc., suddenly I experienced a lot of love and care where I did not need to do any housework. I was treated like a child so I enjoyed life in the *gompa* totally as if I were in paradise.

Awaken: So, Ani, you did not have to learn the Buddhist rituals from an early age?

Ani Choying: At the very beginning, no; my teachers did not force me to learn anything. They allowed me to fully experience my childhood, unlike during my early years when my parents did not really allow me to be a child. They always gave me a lot of responsibilities and work to do. I never realised at that time that I was just a child. It was at the nunnery where I took refuge under my teacher that he really blessed me with an environment where I could freely and happily play, be mischievous and explore.

Awaken: What have you learnt from your teacher, Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, and how has Rinpoche changed or shaped your life?

Ani Choying: He changed my life completely. He transformed my perceptions, my behaviour and way of life totally. Before I met my teacher, I was a very angry and unhappy child. After meeting him, I slowly became a much happier child all through his total compassion and care. He allowed me to be who I was at that time, just a child. He made sure I was always safe and comfortable; with nothing to be fearful about, and that nobody discriminated against me or treated me violently. He placed me in an environment where there was so much love, kindness and compassion. The way he spoke to me, the way he treated me and taught me, was always with so much kindness. It was the most healing element for my very wounded childhood.

Awaken: How did you learn the music which you are performing today from the monastery's chant master?

Ani Choying: My teacher taught me how to sing these melodies which are actually required in order to perform the rituals. As I have always enjoyed singing and dancing even as a young girl, when I learned them, it was so much fun to me, and so whenever I sing them, I sing with all my heart. My teacher was always happy with the way I sang them. We didn't learn these melodies as songs to perform but as a form of ritual and meditative practice. Perhaps, due to this meditative technique, I am different from the other singers.

Awaken: Could you please elaborate more on this meditative technique that you were taught?

Ani Choying: It consists of breathing, visualisations and the creation of mental states without negativity. It is about being able to really bring oneself into a natural state of mind and be at that state with full devotion and compassion.

Awaken: Were you given other elaborate training?

Ani Choying: No, my teacher had never subjected me to any kind of harsh training. He just taught me naturally as the time passed by, simply by playing with me or entertaining me with the other nuns. I did not face any school-based sort of regimen with a fixed timetable. The training I received was very fluid. I was never placed in a strict environment. I guess it was because my teacher understood the abusive experiences I had been through as a child so he really handled me with a lot of care.

Awaken: What spurred you to want to spread the Dharma via music?

Ani Choying: Simply because I really enjoy music! Plus, it is a meditative practice which is so needed in this modern age. People are suffering from so much stress and pressure. What they really require the most nowadays is not the best creature comfort they can acquire. It is emotional and mental stability that they are strongly seeking; that serenity, clarity and calmness of the mind which money and external material comfort are unable to provide. In certain ways, yes, material comfort can give you some ease, but not at the deepest level. So meditation is the only solution in this modern time which can help one to establish emotional and mental resilience and stability.

And meditation with music is the most beautiful way to achieve that.

Awaken: Is there any particular musical album that leaves the deepest impression or affects you the most?

Ani Choying: Well, no. Every time I conceive an album, it is like a child to me. So I am never partial to any one of them, or the songs I sang or recorded. I just create them with the aspirations that others will enjoy and benefit from them equally as I sing them with full devotion and purity of my heart.

Awaken: What impact on the world do you hope your Dharma music will achieve?

Ani Choying: Well, I hope that everyone is able to really connect to the Dharma, not merely the superficial understanding of Dharma, but the essence of Dharma itself – that people can realise the stability of the heart and mind is possible with introspection, rather than searching outside themselves for an answer. That is my aspiration. And music is a beautiful tool to accomplish that. According to Buddhist traditions, melody is used as a support to help people bring the mind to calm and clarity.

Awaken: How do you reconcile Dharma music with Theravada tradition of discouraging it?

Ani Choying: Well, I do not think they meant all kinds of music. Even when we chant “*Namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa*” there is a melody to it, and melody is music. Whatever comes out of your speech in a very kind and devotional way through the purity of your heart is music. People are never separated from music; even the heartbeat itself is music. All we need is a way to recognise and be aware of it.

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My music is different from worldly music. The worldly type of music distracts you and carries you further away from the Dharma, and I think this is the type discouraged by the Theravada tradition. But the type of music which brings your mind towards the Dharma, which brings you towards calmness and clarity of the mind, is different. According to my understanding, practising the Dharma means to do whatever you can skilfully according to the times to benefit others, but most importantly, it is to be kind and thoughtful. That is the most essential teaching of the Buddha, according to my understanding of little capacity. That is how I try to live my life and I always clarify why I do the projects I do.

Awaken: You came to Singapore last December for a concert performance and a CD launch. Tell us more about your experiences in Singapore, especially on this CD 《一念蓮花》 which you had collaborated on.

Ani Choying: I only sang one song in this CD. I did it as a favour for my old friend, Keng Leck. I have always loved Singapore. Singapore was the very first country I visited when I travelled out of Nepal. I first came to Singapore in 1988 or 89. The people here are very kind and nice. I am familiar with the various places here and have taken the buses and MRT trains. I also loved that the Singapore airport is always so efficient and fast.

Awaken: How do you feel about being appointed the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador to Nepal?

Ani Choying: Due to my abusive and violent childhood experiences, I know how it feels for a child to grow up in a violent environment, so I wish to do whatever I can in my capacity to allow people to understand that violence should not be carried out towards children. Children should be allowed to grow up in a peaceful, safe and child-friendly environment.

As a woman myself, I also wish to promote women's rights. In terms of the Nepali constitution, women's rights are beautifully written but very lacking in implementation. In reality, the woman's or girl's rights in Nepal are very limited, due to some very ignorant cultural beliefs and practices.

The majority of Nepalese still live in villages and are very conservative. Due to ignorance and poverty, they always place females behind. Women don't get to enjoy equal rights for health or education. For example, they always think that higher education is not important for girls. It is really very sad.

I personally believe that as women, we should also have equal right to enjoy our freedom or choose the way to live our life, such as the freedom to choose the way we want to be educated. Hence as the UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, I wish to shed light on the discrimination that women and young girls are facing; to allow their voices to be heard in a patriarchal society. I am the public voice for them; I talk to media, go to villages to spread the message. That is my motto in life. Whatever I can do in my capacity, I speak on their behalf, because today due to the popularity and success of my music, people listen to me, so I want to be their voice.

Awaken: You have done a lot of amazing work. Tell us more about the humanitarian projects you are involved in.

Ani Choying: Right now, I am mostly engaged in promoting educational opportunities for girls. In general, I want all children to be educated properly, not just secular education but spiritual education, especially in this modern age. Secular education only helps children to be smart and skilful but spiritual education helps children to be kind and thoughtful. Once these two are balanced, our world will be a better place to live in, and our children will have a better and more meaningful way of life in the future. When our children have a more meaningful way of life, they will be happier. We need more happy people than rich people. One may be a millionaire or trillionaire, yet if one is not happy, it doesn't mean anything.



At the same time, I am also running a hospital, with a specialty in treating patients with kidney disease, as I lost my mother to this disease. It is a very expensive disease to treat and most Nepalese do not have the money or knowledge about this disease. Plus there is a lack of proper treatment facilities in Nepal. So today, I run a hospital to help these people.

Awaken: How has your spiritual journey been like so far?

Ani Choying: Satisfactory, I would say. I feel blessed that each and every day, I am not only able to think positively on how to benefit sentient beings but also act on it. Some people could only wish for it without fulfilling it. But with the blessings of my teacher's proper guidance and education of values, today, I can also act and live meaningfully as much as possible. Whatever little I can do, I try to do with the purest state of my heart. With the blessings of my teacher, I have been very successful and happy to be able to do so, and I hope to do more.

To be able to inspire others is also my aspiration, but compared to my Master whose footsteps I try to follow, I am in no way near. I am very far away but nevertheless, am on the path.

Awaken: As an abbess who is in charge of numerous projects at the same time, how do you find time for practice?

Ani Choying: The work itself *is* my practice - Compassion in Action. Dharma is not about reciting compassion but it is about *living* compassion. I try to live it. I do not separate between practice and non-practice sessions. I do not consider only certain particular time as practice, while the rest as non-practice. The life I live is practising the Dharma itself.

Awaken: What advice do you have for female practitioners on the spiritual path?

Ani Choying: I find more potential in the female spiritual path than in anything else, because we women are born instinctively very kind and nurturing, very giving and caring. This instinctive nature that we are blessed with is so powerful that we have the ability to better tolerate and practise patience. We enjoy giving and pouring out so much love that if we don't get the chance to express this, we feel suffocated. Women, especially mothers, are the most beautiful beings; so we should never think less of ourselves, or have any hesitation to do more of such nurturing. We should always rejoice in each other's ability to shower that loving and caring nature on everyone, whether our child, family, community, country or the whole world. That is the essence of Dharma: to *live* it and not just *think* about it. ☺

Nyanaponika Thera explains briefly in an easy-to-understand manner the Four Sublime States.

LOVE (*Metta*)

Love, without desire to possess, knowing well that in the ultimate sense there is no possession and no possessor: this is the highest *love*.

Love, without speaking and thinking of "I," knowing well that this so-called "I" is a mere delusion.

Love, without selecting and excluding, knowing well that to do so means to create love's own contrasts: dislike, aversion and hatred.

Love, embracing all beings: small and great, far and near, be it on earth, in the water or in the air.

Love, embracing impartially all sentient beings, and not only those who are useful, pleasing or amusing to us.

Love, embracing all beings, be they noble-minded or low-minded, good or evil. The noble and the good are embraced because *love* is flowing to them spontaneously. The low-minded and evil-minded are included because they are those who are most in need of *love*. In many of them the seed of goodness may have died merely because warmth was lacking for its growth, because it perished from cold in a loveless world.

Love, embracing all beings, knowing well that we all are fellow wayfarers through this round of existence — that we all are overcome by the same law of suffering.

Love, but not the sensuous fire that burns, scorches and tortures, that inflicts more wounds than it cures — flaring up now, at the next moment being extinguished, leaving behind more coldness and loneliness than was felt before.

Rather, *love* that lies like a soft but firm hand on the ailing beings, ever unchanged in its sympathy, without wavering, unconcerned with any response it meets. *Love* that is comforting coolness to those who burn with the fire of suffering and passion; that is life-giving warmth to those abandoned in the cold desert of loneliness, to those who are shivering in the frost of a loveless world; to those whose hearts have become as if empty and dry by the repeated calls for help, by deepest despair.

The Four Sublime States

Contemplations on Love
Compassion
Sympathetic Joy
& Equanimity

Love, that is a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Love, that is strength and gives strength: this is the highest love.

Love, which by the Enlightened One was named "the liberation of the heart," "the most sublime beauty": this is the highest *love*.

And what is the highest manifestation of *love*?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realised to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.



COMPASSION (*Karuna*)

The world suffers. But most men have their eyes and ears closed. They do not see the unbroken stream of tears flowing through life; they do not hear the cry of distress continually pervading the world. Their own little grief or joy bars their sight, deafens their ears. Bound by selfishness, their hearts turn stiff and narrow. Being stiff and narrow, how should they be able to strive for any higher goal, to realise that only release from selfish craving will effect their own freedom from suffering?

It is *compassion* that removes the heavy bar, opens the door to freedom, makes the narrow heart as wide as the world. *Compassion* takes away from the heart the inert weight, the paralysing heaviness; it gives wings to those who cling to the lowlands of self.

Through compassion the fact of suffering remains vividly present to our mind, even at times when we personally are free from it. It gives us the rich experience of suffering, thus strengthening us to meet it prepared, when it does befall us.

Compassion reconciles us to our own destiny by showing us the life of others, often much harder than ours.

Behold the endless caravan of beings, men and beasts, burdened with sorrow and pain! The burden of every one of them, we also have carried in bygone times during the unfathomable sequence of repeated births. Behold this, and open your heart to *compassion*!

And this misery may well be our own destiny again! He who is without *compassion* now, will one day cry for it. If sympathy with others is lacking, it will have to be acquired through one's own long and painful experience. This is the great law of life. Knowing this, keep guard over yourself!

Beings, sunk in ignorance, lost in delusion, hasten from one state of suffering to another, not knowing the real cause, not knowing the escape from it. This insight into the general law of suffering is the real foundation of our *compassion*, not any isolated fact of suffering.

Hence our *compassion* will also include those who at the moment may be happy, but act with an evil and deluded mind. In their present deeds we shall foresee their future state of distress, and *compassion* will arise.

The *compassion* of the wise man does not render him a victim of suffering. His thoughts, words and deeds are full of pity. But his heart does not waver; unchanged it remains, serene and calm. How else should he be able to help?

May such *compassion* arise in our hearts! *Compassion* that is sublime in nobility of heart and intellect, which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Compassion that is strength and gives strength: this is highest compassion.

And what is the highest manifestation of *compassion*?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden and realised to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

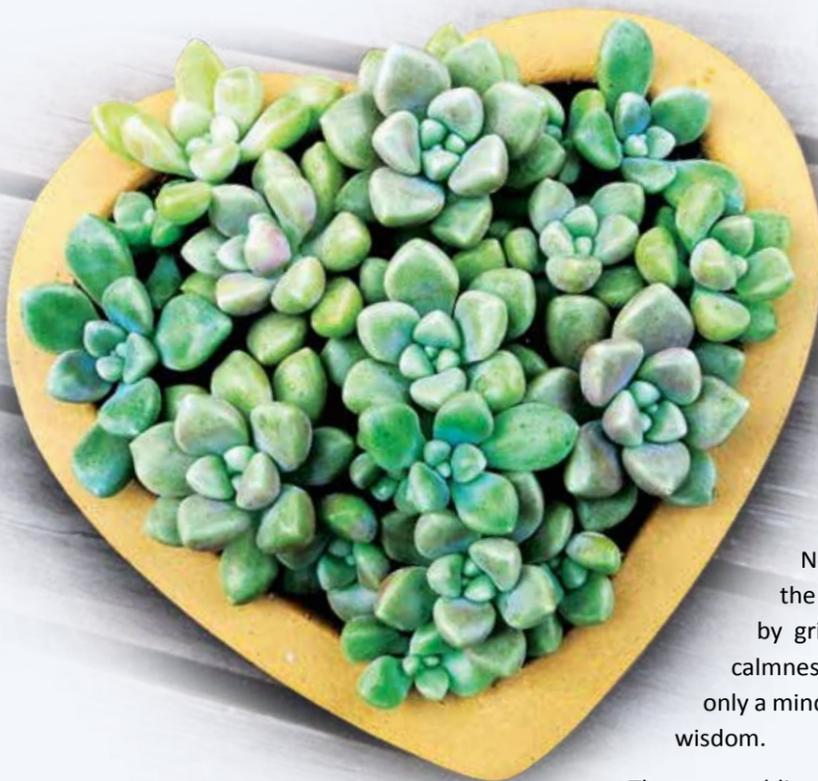
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SYMPATHETIC JOY (*Mudita*)

Not only to compassion, but also to *joy with others* open your heart!

Small, indeed, is the share of happiness and joy allotted to beings! Whenever a little happiness comes to them, then you may rejoice that at least one ray of joy has pierced through the darkness of their lives, and dispelled the grey and gloomy mist that enwraps their hearts.

Your life will gain in joy by sharing the happiness of others as if it were yours. Did you never observe how in moments of happiness men's features change and become bright with joy? Did you never notice how joy rouses men to noble aspirations and deeds, exceeding their normal capacity? Did not such experience fill your own heart with joyful bliss? It is in your power to increase such experience of *sympathetic joy*, by producing happiness in others, by bringing them joy and solace.



Let us teach real joy to men! Many have unlearned it. Life, though full of woe, holds also sources of happiness and joy, unknown to most. Let us teach people to seek and to find real joy within themselves and to rejoice with the joy of others! Let us teach them to unfold their joy to ever sublimer heights!

Noble and sublime joy is not foreign to the Teaching of the Enlightened One. Wrongly the Buddha's Teaching is sometimes considered to be a doctrine diffusing melancholy. Far from it: the *Dhamma* leads step by step to an ever purer and loftier happiness.

Noble and sublime joy is a helper on the path to the extinction of suffering. Not he who is depressed by grief, but one possessed of joy finds that serene calmness leading to a contemplative state of mind. And only a mind serene and collected is able to gain the liberating wisdom.

The more sublime and noble the joy of others is, the more justified will be our own *sympathetic joy*. A cause for our *joy with others* is their

noble life securing the happiness here and in lives hereafter. A still nobler cause for our *joy with others* is their faith in the Dhamma, their understanding of the Dhamma, their following the Dhamma. Let us give them the *help* of the Dhamma! Let us strive to become more and more able ourselves to render such help!

Sympathetic joy means a sublime nobility of heart and intellect which knows, understands and is ready to help.

Sympathetic joy that *is* strength and *gives* strength: this is the highest *joy*.

And what is the highest manifestation of *sympathetic joy*?

To show to the world the path leading to the end of suffering, the path pointed out, trodden, and realised to perfection by Him, the Exalted One, the Buddha.

EQUANIMITY (*Upekkha*)

Equanimity is a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight.

Looking at the world around us, and looking into our own heart, we see clearly how difficult it is to attain and maintain balance of mind.

Looking into life we notice how it continually moves between contrasts: rise and fall, success and failure, loss and gain, honour and blame. We feel how our heart responds to all this with happiness and sorrow, delight and despair, disappointment and satisfaction, hope and fear. These waves of emotion carry us up and fling us down; and no sooner do we find rest, than we are in the power of a new wave again. How can we expect to get a footing on the crest of the waves? How can we erect the building of our lives in the midst of this ever-restless ocean of existence, if not on the Island of Equanimity.

A world where that little share of happiness allotted to beings is mostly secured after many disappointments, failures and defeats;

a world where only the courage to start anew, again and again, promises success;

a world where scanty joy grows amidst sickness, separation and death;

a world where beings who were a short while ago connected with us by *sympathetic joy*, are at the next moment in want of our *compassion* — such a world needs *equanimity*.

But the kind of equanimity required has to be based on vigilant presence of mind, not on indifferent dullness. It has to be the result of hard, deliberate training, not the casual outcome of a passing mood. But equanimity would not deserve its name if it had to be produced by exertion again and again. In such a case it would surely be weakened and finally defeated by the vicissitudes of life. True equanimity, however, should be able to meet all these severe tests and to regenerate its strength from sources within. It will possess this power of resistance and self-renewal only if it is rooted in insight.

What, now, is the nature of that insight? It is the clear understanding of how all these vicissitudes of life originate, and of our own true nature. We have to understand that the various experiences we undergo result from our *kamma* — our actions in thought, word and deed — performed in this life and in earlier lives. *Kamma* is the womb from which we spring (*kamma-yoni*), and whether we like it or not, we are the inalienable "owners" of our deeds (*kamma-ssaka*). But as soon as we have performed any action, our control over it is lost: it forever remains with us and inevitably returns to us as our due heritage (*kamma-dayada*). Nothing that happens to us comes from an "outer" hostile world foreign to ourselves; everything is the outcome of our own mind and deeds. Because this knowledge frees us from fear, it is the first basis of equanimity. When, in everything that befalls us we only meet ourselves, why should we fear?

If, however, fear or uncertainty should arise, we know the refuge where it can be allayed: our good deeds (*kamma-patisarana*). By taking this refuge, confidence and courage will grow within us — confidence in the protecting power of our good deeds done in the past; courage to perform more good deeds right now, despite the discouraging hardships of our present life. For we know that noble and selfless deeds provide the best defence against the hard blows of destiny, that it is never too late but always the right time for good actions. If that refuge, in doing good and avoiding evil, becomes firmly established within us, one day we shall feel assured: "More and more ceases the misery and evil rooted in the past. And this present life — I try to make it spotless and pure. What else can the future bring than increase of the good?" And from that certainty our minds will become serene, and we shall gain the strength of patience and equanimity to bear with all our present adversities. Then our deeds will be our friends (*kamma-bandhu*).

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Likewise, all the various events of our lives, being the result of our deeds, will also be our friends, even if they bring us sorrow and pain. Our deeds return to us in a guise that often makes them unrecognisable. Sometimes our actions return to us in the way that others treat us, sometimes as a thorough upheaval in our lives; often the results are against our expectations or contrary to our wills. Such experiences point out to us consequences of our deeds we did not foresee; they render visible half-conscious motives of our former actions which we tried to hide even from ourselves, covering them up with various pretexts. If we learn to see things from this angle, and to read the message conveyed by our own experience, then suffering, too, will be our friend. It will be a stern friend, but a truthful and well-meaning one who teaches us the most difficult subject, knowledge about ourselves, and warns us against abysses towards which we are moving blindly. By looking at suffering as our teacher and friend, we shall better succeed in enduring it with equanimity. Consequently, the teaching of kamma will give us a powerful impulse for freeing ourselves from kamma, from those deeds which again and again throw us into the suffering of repeated births. Disgust will arise at our own craving, at our own delusion, at our own propensity to create situations which try our strength, our resistance and our equanimity.

The second insight on which equanimity should be based is the Buddha's teaching of no-self (*anatta*). This doctrine shows that in the ultimate sense deeds are not performed by any self, nor do their results affect any self. Further, it shows that if there is no self, we cannot speak of "my own." It is the delusion of a self that creates suffering and hinders or disturbs equanimity. If this or that quality of ours is blamed, one thinks: "I am blamed" and equanimity is shaken. If this or that work does not succeed, one thinks: "My work has failed" and equanimity is shaken. If wealth or loved ones are lost, one thinks: "What is *mine* has gone" and equanimity is shaken.

To establish equanimity as an unshakable state of mind, one has to give up all possessive *thoughts* of "mine," beginning with little things from which it is easy to detach oneself, and gradually working up to possessions and aims to which one's whole heart clings. One also has to give up the counterpart to such thoughts, all egoistic *thoughts* of "self," beginning with a small section of one's personality, with qualities of minor importance, with small weaknesses one clearly sees, and gradually working up to those emotions and aversions which one regards as the centre of one's being. Thus detachment should be practised.

To the degree we forsake thoughts of "mine" or "self" equanimity will enter our hearts. For how can anything we realise to be foreign and void of a self cause us agitation due to lust, hatred or grief? Thus the teaching of no-self will be our guide on the path to deliverance, to perfect *equanimity*.

Equanimity is the crown and culmination of the four sublime states. But this should not be understood to mean that equanimity is the negation of love, compassion and sympathetic joy, or that it leaves them behind as inferior. Far from that, equanimity includes and pervades them fully, just as they fully pervade perfect equanimity. ☺

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Attunement between parents and children, self and others, is the fundamental way in which the brain activity of parents can directly influence the brain activity of their children.

Mindfulness practice promotes attunement with others through the careful observation of the outer manifestations of emotional and sensory experience.

Try out the simple mindfulness game below, and develop a more attuned relationship with your children:

- 1 Pair up with your child, and elect a leader.
- 2 Stand or sit face-to-face with hands held in front of your chests, palms forward and directly across from the palms of your child's hands.
- 3 The leader of the game slowly moves, and the partner mirrors the movement. Both parent and child make sure to keep palms as closely aligned as possible without touching. This allows the both of you to experience moving in tandem.
- 4 Switch roles and repeat the game. ☺

Reflecting Back: Funhouse Mirrors



by : Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of *The Mindful Child*.
www.susankaisergreenland.com

Meditation is the most useful skill you can master. It can bring the mind to the end of suffering, something no other skill can do. But it's also the most subtle and demanding skill there is. It requires all the mental qualities ordinarily involved in mastering a physical skill—mindfulness and alertness, persistence and patience, discipline and ingenuity—but to an extraordinary degree. This is why, when you come to learn meditation, it's good to reflect on any skills, crafts, or disciplines you've already mastered so that you can apply the lessons they've taught you to the training of the mind.

In teaching meditation, I've often found it helpful to illustrate my points with analogies drawn from physical skills. And, given the particular range of skills and disciplines currently popular in America, I've found that one useful source of analogies is strength training. Meditation is more like a good workout than you might have thought.

The Buddha himself noticed the parallels here. **He defined the practice as a path of five strengths: conviction, persistence, mindfulness, concentration and discernment.**

He likened the mind's ability to beat down its most stubborn thoughts to that of a strong man beating down a weaker man. The agility of a well-trained mind, he said, is like that of a strong man who can easily flex his arm when it's extended, or extend it when it's flexed. And he often compared the higher skills of concentration and discernment to the skills of archery, which—given the massive bows of ancient India—was strength training for the noble warriors of his day. These skills included the ability to shoot great distances, to fire arrows in rapid succession, and to pierce great masses—the great mass, here, standing for the mass of ignorance that envelops the untrained mind.

So even if you've been pumping great masses instead of piercing them, you've been learning some important lessons that will stand you in good stead as a meditator. A few of the more important lessons are these:

- **Read up on anatomy.** If you want to strengthen a muscle, you need to know where it is and what it moves if you're going to understand the exercises that target it. Only then can you perform them efficiently. In the same way, you have to understand the anatomy of the mind's suffering if you want to understand how meditation is supposed to work. Read up on what the Buddha had to say on the topic, and don't settle for books that put you at the far end of a game of telephone. Go straight to the source. You'll find, for instance, that the Buddha explained how ignorance shapes the way you breathe, and how that in turn can add to your suffering. This is why most meditation regimens start with the breath, and why the Buddha's own regimen takes the breath all the way to *nibbana*. So read up to understand how and why.

Strength Training for the Mind

text: Thanissaro Bhikkhu

- **Start where you are.** Too many meditators get discouraged at the outset because their minds won't settle down. But just as you can't wait until you're big and strong before you start strength training, you can't wait until your concentration is strong before you start sitting. Only by exercising what little concentration you have will you make it solid and steady. So even though you feel scrawny when everyone around you seems big, or fat when everyone else seems fit, remember that you're not here to compete with them or with the perfect meditators you see in magazines. You're here to work on yourself. So establish that as your focus, and keep it strong.
 - **Establish a regular routine.** You're in this for the long haul. We all like the stories of sudden enlightenment, but even the most lightning-like insights have to be primed by a long, steady discipline of day-to-day practice. That's because the consistency of your discipline allows you to observe subtle changes, and being observant is what enables insight to arise. So don't get taken in by promises of quick and easy shortcuts. Set aside a time to meditate every day and then stick to your schedule whether you feel like meditating or not. The mind grows by overcoming resistance to repetition, just like a muscle. Sometimes the best insights come on the days you least feel like meditating. Even when they don't, you're establishing a strength of discipline, patience and resilience that will see you through the even greater difficulties of ageing, illness, and death. That's why it's called practice.
 - **Aim for balance.** The "muscle groups" of the path are three: virtue, concentration and discernment. If any one of these gets overdeveloped at the expense of the others, it throws you out of alignment, and your extra strength turns into a liability.
 - **Set interim goals.** You can't fix a deadline for your enlightenment, but you can keep aiming for a little more sitting or walking time, a little more consistency in your mindfulness, a little more speed in recovering from distraction, a little more understanding of what you're doing. The type of meditation taught in retreats where they tell you not to have goals is aimed at (1) people who get neurotic around goals in general and (2) the weekend warriors who need to be cautioned so that they don't push themselves past the breaking point. If you're approaching meditation as a lifetime activity, you've got to have goals. You've got to want results. Otherwise the whole thing loses focus, and you start wondering why you're sitting here when you could be sitting out on the beach.
 - **Focus on proper form.** Get your desire for results to work for you and not against you. Once you've set your goals, focus directly not on the results but on the means that will get you there. It's like building muscle mass. You don't blow air or stuff protein into the muscle to make it larger. You focus on performing your reps properly, and the muscle grows on its own. If, as you meditate, you want the mind to develop more concentration, don't focus on the idea of concentration. Focus on allowing this breath to be more comfortable, one breath at a time. Concentration will then grow without you having to think about it.
 - **Pace yourself.** Learn how to read your pain. When you meditate, some pains in the body are simply a sign that it's adapting to the meditation posture; others, that you're pushing yourself too hard. Some pains are telling the truth, some are lying. Learn how to tell the difference. The same principle applies to the mind. When the mind can't seem to settle down, sometimes it needs to be pushed even harder, sometimes you need to pull back. Your ability to read the difference is what exercises your powers of wisdom and discernment.
- Learn, too, how to read your progress. The meditation won't really be a skill, it won't really be your own, until you learn to judge what works for you and what doesn't. You may have heard that meditation is non-judgmental, but that's simply meant to counteract the tendency to prejudge things before they've had a chance to show their results. Once the results are in, you need to learn how to gauge them, to see how they connect with their causes, so that you can adjust the causes in the direction of the outcome you really want.
- **Vary your routine.** Just as a muscle can stop responding to a particular exercise, your mind can hit a plateau if it's strapped to only one meditation technique. So don't let your regular routine get into a rut. Sometimes the only change you need is a different way of breathing, a different way of visualising the breath energy in the body. But then there are days when the mind won't stay with the breath no matter how many different

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ways of breathing you try. This is why the Buddha taught supplementary meditations to deal with specific problems as they arise. For starters, there's goodwill for times when you're feeling down about yourself or the human race—the people you dislike would be much more tolerable if they could find genuine happiness inside, so wish them that happiness. There's contemplation of the parts of the body for when you're overcome with lust—it's hard to maintain a sexual fantasy when you keep thinking about what lies just underneath the skin. And there's contemplation of death for times when you're feeling lazy—you don't know how much time you've got left, so you'd better meditate now if you want to be ready when the time comes to go.

When these supplementary contemplations have done their work, you can get back to the breath, refreshed and revived. So keep expanding your repertoire. That way your skill becomes all-rounded.

- **Take your ups and downs in stride.** The rhythms of the mind are even more complex than those of the body, so a few radical ups and downs are par for the course. Just make sure that they don't knock you off balance. When things are going so well that the mind grows still without any effort on your part, don't get careless or overly confident. When your mood is so bad that even the supplementary meditations don't work, view it as an opportunity to learn how to be patient and observant of bad moods. Either way, you learn a valuable lesson: how to keep your inner observer separate from whatever else is going on. So do your best to maintain proper form regardless, and you'll come out the other side.
- **Watch your eating habits.** As the Buddha once said, we survive both on mental food and physical food. Mental food consists of the external stimuli you focus on, as well as the intentions that motivate the mind. If you feed your mind junk food, it's going to stay weak and sickly no matter how much you meditate. So show some restraint in your eating. If you know that looking at things in certain ways, with certain intentions, gives rise to greed, anger or delusion, look at them in the opposite way. As Ajaan Lee, my teacher's teacher, once said, look for the bad side of the things you're infatuated with, and the good side of the things you hate. That way you become a discriminating eater, and the mind gets the healthy, nourishing food it needs to grow strong.

As for your physical eating habits, this is one of the areas where inner strength training and outer strength training part ways. As a meditator, you have to be concerned less with what physical food you eat than with why you eat. If you're bulking up for no real purpose, it's actually harmful for the mind. You have to realise that in eating—even if it's vegetarian food—you're placing a burden on the world around you, so you want to give some thought to the purposes served by the strength you gain from your food. Don't take more from the world than you're willing to give back. Don't bulk up just for the fun of it, because the beings—human and animal—who provided the food didn't provide it for fun. Make sure the energy gets put to good use.

- **Don't leave your strength in the gym.** If you don't use your strength in other activities, strength training becomes largely an exercise in vanity. The same principle applies to your meditative skills. If you leave them on the cushion and don't apply them in everyday life, meditation turns into a fetish, something you do to escape the problems of life while their causes continue to fester.

The ability to maintain your centre and to breathe comfortably in any situation can be a genuine lifesaver, keeping the mind in a position where you can more easily think of the right thing to do, say, or think when your surroundings get tough. As a result, the people around you are no longer subjected to your greed, anger and delusion. And as you maintain your inner balance in this way, it helps them maintain theirs. So make the whole world your meditation seat, and you'll find that meditation both on the big seat and the little seat will get a lot stronger. At the same time, it'll become a gift both to yourself and to the world around you.

- **Never lose sight of your ultimate goal.** Mental strength has at least one major advantage over physical strength in that it doesn't inevitably decline with age. It can always keep growing to and through the experience of death. The Buddha promises that it leads to the Deathless, and he wasn't a man to make vain, empty promises. So when you establish your priorities, make sure that you give more time and energy to strengthening your meditation than you do to strengthening your body. After all, someday you'll be forced to lay down this body, no matter how fit or strong you've made it, but you'll never be forced to lay down the strengths you've built for the mind. ☺

Mindfulness

is **Key**



text : Janice Goh

I was once asked, "Are you a Buddhist follower or a disciple?" This seemingly simple question made me spend some time in contemplation. Subsequently, it changed the way I appreciate and embrace Buddhism, setting my sights on becoming a practitioner.

Lord Shakyamuni Buddha gave many teachings. I signed up for my first Dharma class titled: "Guanshiyin Bodhisattva's Universal Door" and the first important lesson I took home from that class was "mindfulness."

Some might ask, "What about kindness and compassion?" These two elements are important qualities that everyone should possess, not only Buddhists. However, I feel that in the absence of mindfulness, there will be no kindness, compassion, or even happiness. For it is our mind that steers our thoughts, speech and actions.

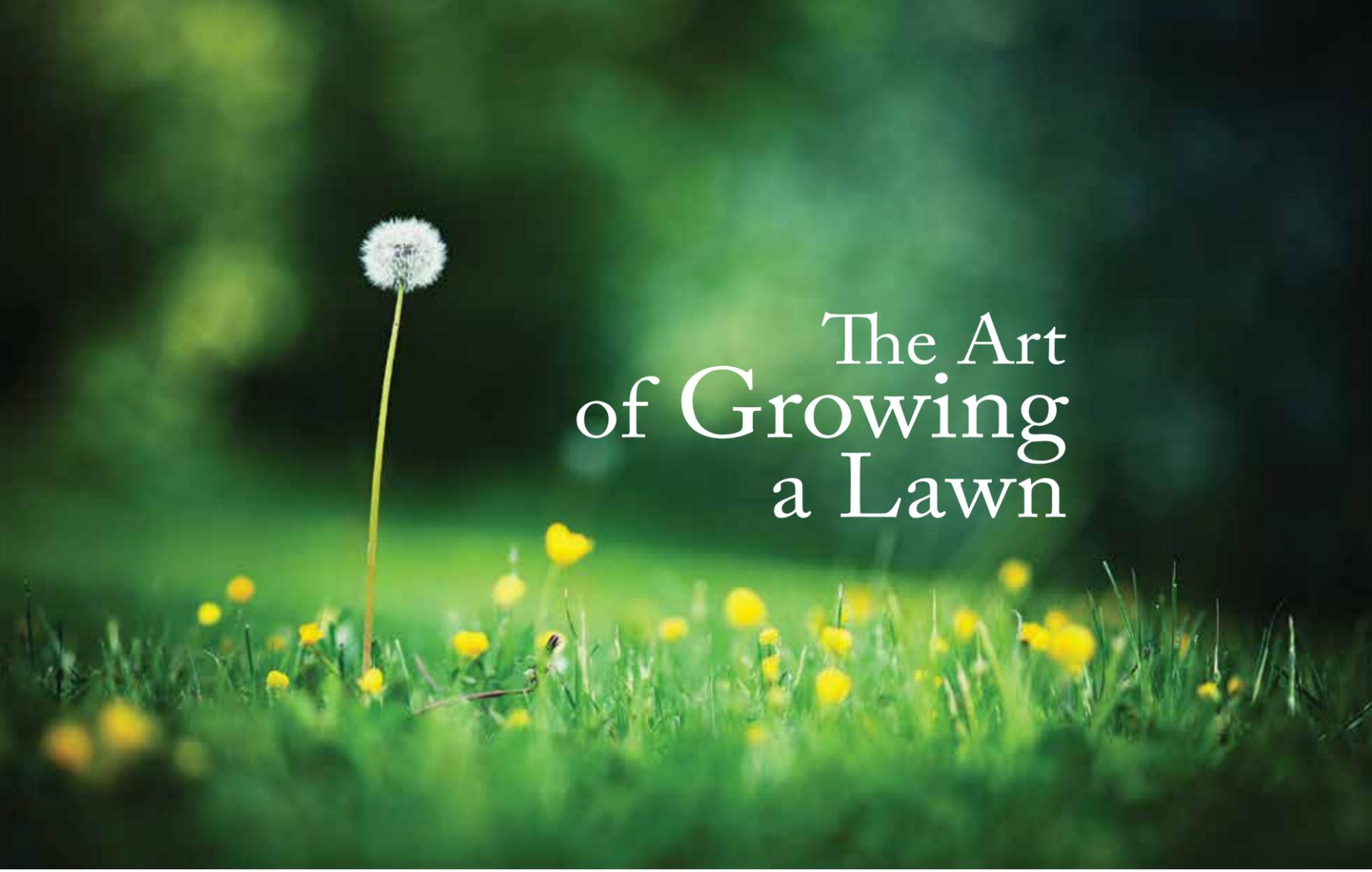
Being mindful gives me choices. It allows me to think and evaluate the different outcomes before I make a decision. Mindfulness helps me to generate self-awareness; develop contentment, inner peace and spiritual values; and practise kindness and compassion to the people around me.

In today's world, we are surrounded by fear, mistrust, anger, jealousy and insecurity. If we are not mindful, we will easily succumb and fall prey to these negativities.

Lama Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), a Buddhist scholar and saint said,
"Everything depends on the mind."

So if we allow negativity to breed in our mind, our thoughts, speech, behaviour and actions will be negative. If we fill our mind with positivity, our thoughts, speech, behaviour and actions will be positive! Happiness is within us. No one can take it away from us. Practising mindfulness, one of Lord Buddha's many teachings, brought me greater happiness, relaxation and peace of mind in life. ☺

- Peter Yap (Tenzin Pagdrol), aged 44 years, Health Consultant.



The Art of Growing a Lawn

I just realised that there is a high art and skill behind cultivating the perfect carpet-grass lawn (at least with this species of grass we have here, called ‘Canada grass’).

First, they need enough water or their tips turn yellow and shrivel up a little. They thrive under shade (which, unfortunately, is not universally available) so they become even more dehydrated under strong sunlight. If the soil is too clayish or hard, or has remnants of cement left from previous construction underneath, they can’t spread easily. They survive, but they don’t thrive. There will be patches of isolated grass clumps which don’t meet. Moreover, when there is enough water, weed seeds start to grow in these tiny, empty gaps.

So when it’s rainy season, I’m relieved there’s no need to water the lawn, but the headache is to remove the weeds fast enough so that they do not literally ‘eat up’ or encircle the grass till they suffocate and die.

Plus, there are the crawling inhabitants in the lawn – the ants, beetles and termites. The water sprinklers, helpful as they are, always fall short. When a little area gets slightly less water than the other parts, the tiny termites and ants say, “Hey! There’s dry land and shelter here under this part!” I don’t really know when they moved in underneath, but when I notice the grass ageing rapidly, – ‘hair’ turning grey in colour and dropping when I lightly comb through it – then I notice the tiny inhabitants running around below, having already bitten off the roots. Frantic watering begins on the affected area to drive the squatters away and to make the bald patch grow back again. In short, the grass always makes us VERY BUSY!

This year, I promised myself to make it a year of breakthroughs: to iron out difficult things, people, myself, and to learn as much as I can in all that I do.

I decided to work on cultivating a perfectly green and smooth grass lawn.

In the process of this undertaking, I began to realise that cultivating a perfect grass patch is like learning to take care of my mind. When the mind is not taken care of, it is like a lawn that is not watered or maintained. The good grass shrivels up and dies, and weeds take over.

Most of us don’t take care of our mind. We wake up and look in the mirror, do our morning business in the toilet, fill our stomachs and plunge into the routine of another busy day. Very few people wake up and take stock of their minds, let alone clear it up, give it a comb and a brush, make it clean and beautiful to meet the coming day.

Some people do a little better and take slightly better care of their mind. Maybe they read self-improvement books, listen to inspirational talks, introspect and contemplate on life and suffering; some meditate. It is like a gardener watering the lawn from time to time, so the good grass survives.

But if they cannot yet differentiate between the good grass (which is what they want to cultivate) and weeds, watering makes both grow. This happens when they do not have the right view or understanding, when they are not able to differentiate between beneficial and unbeneficial thoughts.

From far, their lawn is green and pleasant – people see them as generally good people; from near, you can see that their ‘lawn’ is a combination of good grass and weeds intertwined. This kind of cultivation is dangerous. Nature works in a curiously straightforward way. Weeds persist because they are naturally more resistant to weather and need fewer resources than cultivated species to survive.

The Buddha taught that bad thoughts and actions (those which are unwholesome or unbeneficial) come naturally to us and easily arise, but good ones arise with difficulty.

So good, skilful cultivation of grass takes place when there is watering and weeding at the same time. If we worry about weeds growing with the watering and try to dry out the grass patch, the good grass will die too. It is like hearing people telling me, “Don’t go too deep into the meditation thing, ok? You might go bonkers!” One will never get anywhere following this approach!

With weeding and consistent watering, the good grass gets more space to spread and grow, and it becomes stronger and more beautiful. **It is like learning to watch your mind and differentiate between wholesome and unwholesome thoughts. When the wholesome ones arise, we let them stay and grow. When the unwholesome ones come, we weed them out immediately by doing our best to uproot them so they won’t grow again!** With this practice, the mind becomes purer, greener and more beautiful with good and wholesome thoughts. People feel peaceful to come into contact with such a mind-lawn.

After some weeks of watering (some time of doing this practice), you realise that the growth potential of the existing grass has its limits. It has started to become green and strong, but there are still gaps where the weeds used to be that are bare.

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As long as the soil is not completely covered, it is always vulnerable to weeds coming in. When I notice that the grass is reaching its limit and is still unable to become an oasis of perfect green, some external help is needed. I start to search for patches of that same grass that has overgrown elsewhere. I dig them out and transplant them on the bald patches.

It is like all of us with different wholesome tendencies. Some of us are naturally kind and generous to friends, some are compassionate to little animals, some love to nurture children, but there are so many other wholesome thoughts and acts that we have not learnt to develop. **I used to always do those wholesome things I am best at, and avoid those I am awkward with. Now I realise that there were so many other things I was not learning.** An imbalanced method of mind cultivation cannot ground us fully on the path. When I begin to look around, I start to absorb and learn much from my surroundings. This is like trying to patch up the lawn to make it perfect.

I think this would be the ultimate strategy: watering, weeding and planting grass in the bald areas. With time, consistent effort and vigilance, the perfect lawn may happen; keeping my fingers crossed for the weather, the tiny inhabitants of the soil or some UFO that decides to land on the lawn and scorch it!

But this is all part of the process, isn't it?

Trying to cultivate our mind-lawn till we perfect our wisdom and skill, but when we finally get the perfect lawn, we won't even want to keep it just for ourselves and fence it all up. We would share it with anyone who wants it. We would be satisfied wholeheartedly, just contemplating on all we have developed, abandoned and learnt from this search for perfection. The skills and wisdom of arriving at the perfect lawn stay with us. They are not in the grass.

This saying used to perplex me, "Strive for enlightenment without hope for attainment". It's teaching us not to be like the wide-eyed frog. Its big eyes pop out in front, looking only at what would be available in the far distance. **The true benefit of enlightenment or spiritual striving is not only available suddenly at the ultimate end. Every step of the way, every stride or fall, the learning presents itself – if we are skilful and primed to catch it!**

Set your spiritual goal, learn all the skills and knowledge you need to get there, learn from the wise ones and strive for perfection!

Enlightenment would be the natural blossoming of all you have developed, abandoned and accumulated along the way. The depth and scope of your enlightenment depends on how far and deep you set your mind to develop.

May we all achieve perfect spiritual lawns in this very life.

Strive on without delay! ☺

text : Ng Pei Fuen



A Tribute to My Mother and All Mother Beings

My mother is losing her mind slowly to dementia. Surprisingly, she is morphing into a gentle, jovial, old lady as a result and is a pleasure to be with. I still recall my shock when she thanked me one day after I had helped her with some menial task. From young, I had associated her with a super volatile temper. A rocket launches after counting down from 10 but my mother didn't need that long to go ballistic. As I spend my time attending to her nowadays, given her multiple medical conditions, I started to appreciate that her fiery temper in the past was possibly a defence mechanism induced by her difficult childhood as the first-born daughter of a poor family with 10 other younger siblings who came successively one to three years apart from each other. Inevitably, she helped out with housework and babysitting the younger ones since young. She was walloped whenever she made a mistake, such as letting her toddler-brother fall. To help with her family's financial situation, her first unofficial job when she was seven years old was to assist an elderly egg seller. One day while we were on the bus going home after a medical appointment, she blurted out that she still remembered she was starving while selling those eggs every morning. How she wished to have just one small hard-boiled egg to satisfy her gnawing hunger. Alas! It was impossible. An egg cost five cents then, which she could ill-afford when her daily wage was about fifty cents. It was possibly the ultimate demand for self-denial to expect from a hungry seven-year-old but she was disciplined. She never helped herself to an egg, not unless it was given. I was both stunned and ashamed to hear this. I have been nagging her to cut down on eggs because of her high cholesterol. **After hearing this, I resolved henceforth to firstly, stop preventing her from eating eggs (it is within recommended intake anyway); secondly, to cherish all that I have, plentiful by comparison; and thirdly, to understand others' perspective before I jump to conclude what is good or bad for them.**

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She officially entered the workforce at the grand age of nine, walking nearly one hour every day to the noodle stall where she worked. Typical of those times (in the 1950s, after World War II), her job was not limited to serving the customers, cleaning the tables and doing the dishes but extended to doing the laundry for the boss's family, taking care of his children and whatever she was told to do. As she recounted her backbreaking labour, she revealed that the only people who were kind to her were the bar girls and *pie kia* (meaning "gangsters" in Hokkien) who often tipped her. With the extra money, she would buy a packet of noodles for her father before leaving work and could take a bus home. It was a source of pride for her to be able to give her father a treat and the highlight of the day for both of them in their daily struggles. It was an epiphany for me as I suddenly understood why my mother tended to prefer the "questionable" company whom I was specifically taught in school to avoid. In her then-impressionable young mind, these were good, generous people. In contrast, the studious, thinking types could not empathise with her miserable situation and more often than not, simply looked down on her as a poor street urchin. Ironically, all her children graduated from university though I only realise now why my mother held our highbrow intellectualising in disdain. We are calculative and can rationalise *ad nauseum* with various justifications the economics of supply and demand over something as simple as reaching out and help someone. In our scheme of things, kindness has no place. This brings to mind a similar lesson my late father had taught me. I had heard that my father was paying for the meals of some destitute old men at the nearby hawker centre and felt that I should warn my father not to be cheated. My father responded that the problem with the likes of me who had not experienced great hardship in our lives was that we have no empathy and knew only how to compute cost-benefit analysis like bureaucrats spending the national budget running into the millions. As if anyone would choose to live miserable, hungry and poor in order to cheat us of a few dollars!

Sadly, I learned a few years ago from my aunt (my mother's sister) that she was the brightest of the lot. During her two years of formal schooling, she topped her class in both years while helping out at home and selling eggs every morning, which left her with little time and energy outside school to study. She was nicknamed the walking calculator at the market and known as a tough negotiator, notwithstanding her young age and skinny frame. Regrettably, it is too late now to rectify this situation and my mother's potential has gone unfulfilled in this lifetime.

As memories of her bitter past faded away, my mother has mellowed and emerged as a cheerful, optimistic, appreciative and life-loving fighter. Yes, she is still formidable and the warrior is still in her. Admirably, she has a strong will to live and thrive comes what may. In stark contrast, my highly-educated friends with good jobs who keep talking about suicide because "it's all meaningless" appear like airy, brittle beings programmed to self-destruct. My mother would have responded with a vehement "Siao!" (meaning "crazy" in Hokkien) to their frivolous talk. **To my mother, living is worthwhile in itself. Even as she struggles with daily activities as her mobility issues exacerbate and the doctors prescribe more and more medicines, my mother has never entertained any thought of giving up. As I age and mature myself, I surmise that there is no inherent meaning in our existence; we have to make meaning in our own individual lives. Perhaps the greatest difference is: my hardy mother lives for others all her life. She is not self-obsessed and lives a down-to-earth life.** I am reminded of a truism: Even if the game did not start off well, finish well.

Some of my siblings refuse to forgive my mother for the wrongs they perceived she did in the past. Paradoxically, I was the one who did not get along well with both parents as a child but becoming a Buddhist has offered me closure. I built a good relationship with my father before he passed away suddenly from heart failure. I now endeavour to end well with my mother, as with all key relationships in my life. **What's there to hang on to and not forgive if all our interactions are shifting mind imprints that disappear like footprints in the sand when the tide comes?** I'm beginning to question the concept of "personality" as taught in academic psychology – a configuration of stable,

underlying traits – which is heavily influenced by western notions. It is really just another assumption, one not shared by Buddhism, for example, since the Buddha taught "non-self". There is simply nothing stable or underlying this fleeting flux of consciousness we call ourselves!

Dementia provides real-life observations of such transience but don't count on it to make you forgetful and forgiving. From what I read, much depends on which half of the brain is affected. That makes it a 50-50 chance and it's too risky! A friend's mother who had dementia turned completely belligerent. My friend was practically disowned by her own demented mother, who threw her out of the house and became verbally vitriolic. Her mother subsequently became bedridden and unresponsive, kept alive artificially. Still when her mother finally passed away, my friend was highly distraught and grief-stricken. She knew reconciliation was impossible since her mother became non-communicative but the pain never goes away. Our karmic ties with our birth parents are perhaps stronger than we dare to admit.

On the other hand, listening to my mother's sneak glimpses into her past, it struck me that certain mind imprints stay stuck with us all our lives, which means we really should guard our minds more cautiously.

I was having trouble connecting with what Tibetan Buddhism taught about "mother beings" – that all beings had been, are, and will be our parents so we should cultivate compassion for all of them. Upon reflecting on my own mother's kindness, however, the truth becomes absurdly clear. **Many seniors of the pioneer generation in Singapore would have lived through similar experiences like my mother's. Through their sacrifices, we now enjoy the shade of the trees that they had planted. They have all been like our parents because without their early toils, our lives would have been radically different.**

A real-life encounter illustrates this perfectly. Last year, I met an elderly Cambodian man who was exceptionally friendly to me after he learned that I am Singaporean. I found out through our conversation that he had transited through Singapore on his way to France as a refugee in the 1970s after escaping from the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. He recalled with tears brimming that he had lost everything during his country's civil war and his only belongings then were the tattered rags he wore. After suffering unspeakable hellish conditions at the hands of his own people, he was overwhelmingly touched by the kindness and generosity of the strangers he met in Singapore who gave him food, clothes and money to enable him to start a new life in France. He came empty-handed but left with a suitcase full of things and perhaps, more importantly, with renewed hope and courage to rebuild his life, courtesy of these anonymous strangers. I was humbled and touched by his story. I was also acutely aware that I have done absolutely nothing to deserve this man's goodwill but simply reaped the benefit of my seniors' charity.

So as we celebrate Vesak Day and Mother's Day this May, I want to remember my mother and all mother beings like the SG pioneers who were as kind as parents to us and convey to them my deepest respect and heartfelt appreciation.

We are all interconnected and dependent on one another so let's always remember to give thanks.

THANK YOU! Here's wishing all a happy, healthy mind and life! ☺



text : Oh Puay Fong

Once, a young monastic entered the yard of a house that looked so run-down and abject that he felt guilty about asking that household for alms. He was about to leave when the owner called out to him. The family had very meagre food but still, they wanted to make an offering.

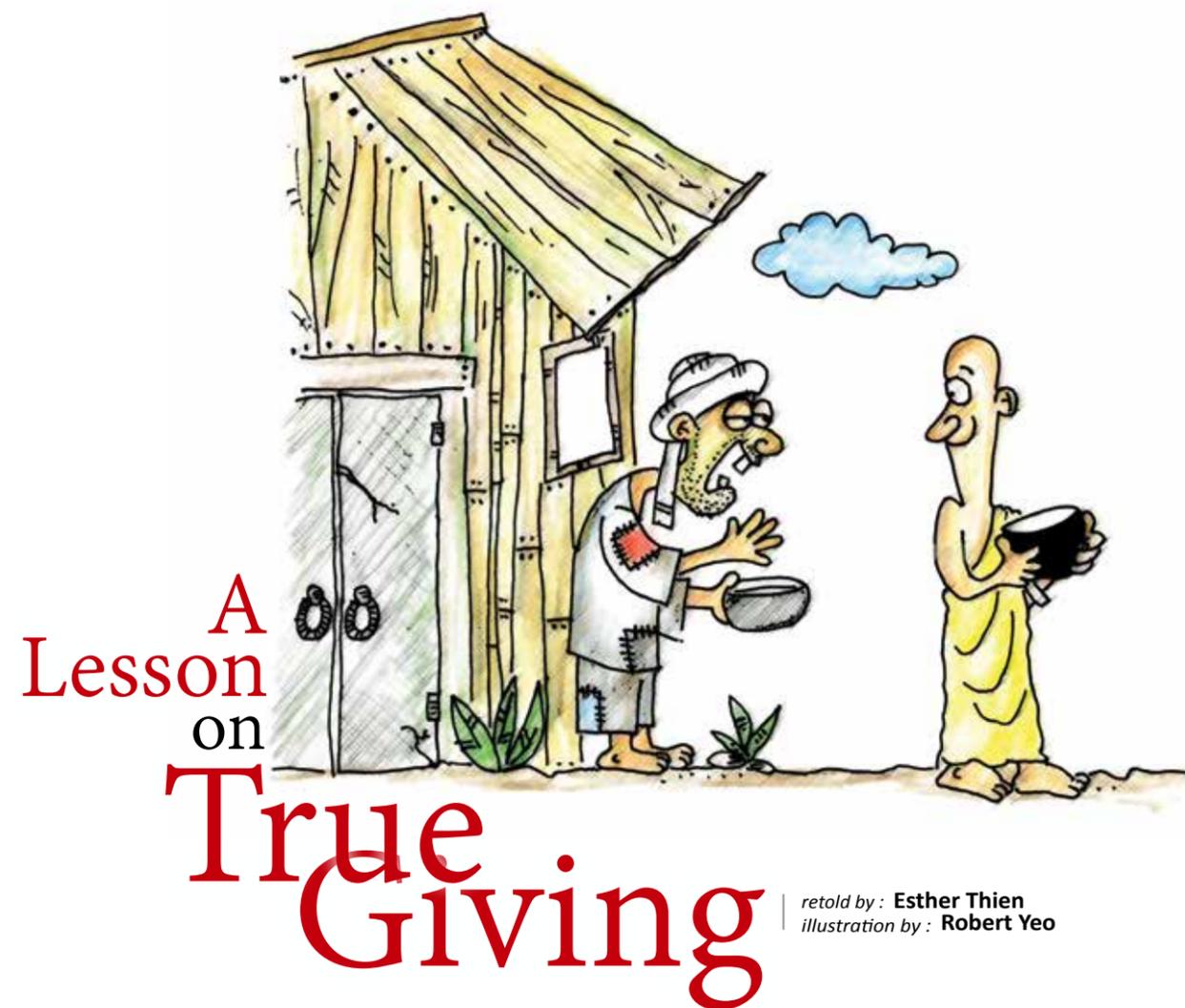
The impoverished family usually went around asking the other villagers for the water they had washed their rice in, which would otherwise be thrown away. The poor family added a bit of rice to this water and boiled it down until it thickened a little. This soup was their food.

Using the best bowl they had, the family offered a bowl of this rice water on a serving table to the monastic, who humbly accepted it.

As the monastic drank it, he was moved to tears by their sincerity and wanted to do something to help them. He had nothing of his own to give, but he could find them some firewood.

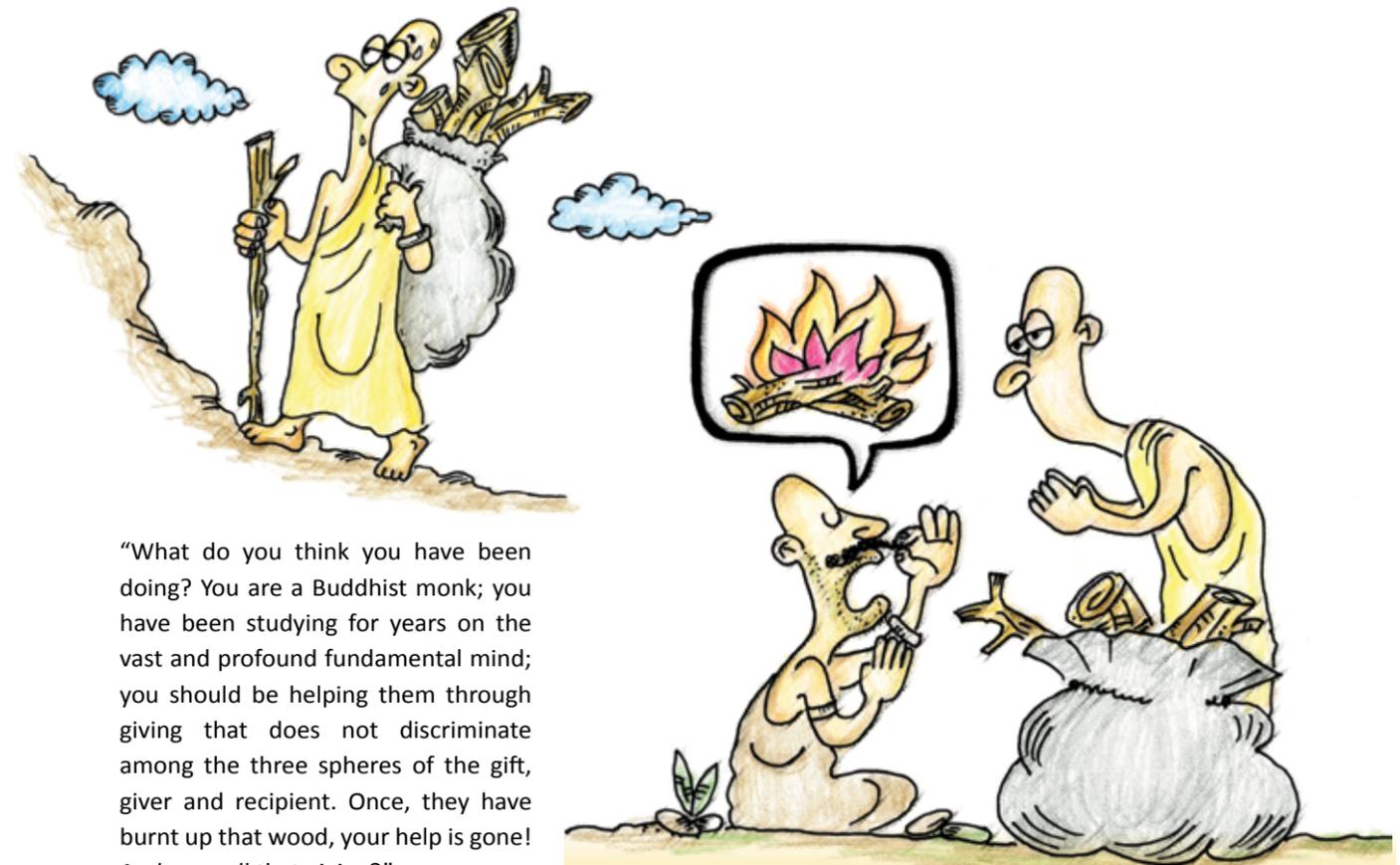
Later that afternoon, the venerable headed into the mountains with an empty bag. He collected all the firewood he could carry and was returning to his benefactor's house when he met his Master.

His Master asked him what he was doing, and the young monastic recounted the whole story to him. As soon as he had finished telling the story, his Master swung his staff around and started hitting the legs of the young monastic mercilessly.



A Lesson on True Giving

retold by: Esther Thien
illustration by: Robert Yeo



“What do you think you have been doing? You are a Buddhist monk; you have been studying for years on the vast and profound fundamental mind; you should be helping them through giving that does not discriminate among the three spheres of the gift, giver and recipient. Once, they have burnt up that wood, your help is gone! And you call that giving?”

The young venerable rolled on the ground in pain, still carrying the bag load of firewood with tears streaming down his face. Finally, he sat up and was wiping away his tears and blood when he suddenly understood what constituted formless giving.

Blood was still trickling down his leg, but now he understood the principle of entrusting a thought to his fundamental mind. That moment, he forgot all his pain and shock. Instead, he felt so light and free that he thought he could fly. He took all of his gratitude and best wishes for the family and silently entrusted them to his fundamental mind.

Soon after, the benefactor who gave him that humble bowl of rice water began to flourish until eventually that family became one of the most prosperous families in the village. ☺

The benefit of producing a positive thought for someone and entrusting it to the fundamental mind cannot be compared to the temporary help which material goods provide.

When you selflessly entrust a wish to help someone to your foundational mind without the discriminating thought of “I am doing this” or “I did that”, the help continues without ceasing. It never ends and instead helps the other person on a very fundamental level.

Furthermore, the virtue and merit of that act eventually returns to you.

Pay careful attention to the thoughts you give rise to. Don't let negative thoughts such as “I don't know anything”, “I don't have anything” or “I am sick” steer your thinking, speech or actions. Don't let them become excuses for thinking about yourself only. If you do so, the results will not be good. This is because what you send out—all of your thoughts, words and actions—returns to you. Whatever you store into your foundational mind comes back to you in different appearances.

If your mind is focused on narrow and shallow aspects, the poverty of your focus opens up before you. But if you use your mind in an all-embracing, deep and inclusive manner, you will experience peace and warmth.

Truly, the difference between a heavenly or hellish experience lies in a single thought.

- Zen Master Daehaeng



Vegan French Toast 纯素法国吐司

You probably know that French toast does not originate from France, but do you know that the original French toast recipe, which dates back to between 4th to 5th century, did not use eggs? In our recipe, no egg, cow's milk or butter is used to create a healthier yet tasty breakfast.

Ingredients :

- Day-old baguette 8 slices
- Soy milk 140g
- Sugar 2 teaspoons
- Flour 2 tablespoons
- Nutritional yeast* 1 tablespoon
- Ground cinnamon ½ teaspoon
- Salt 1 pinch
- Oil for frying

Method :

- 1 Mix soy milk, sugar, flour, nutritional yeast, ground cinnamon and salt together to form an even batter.
- 2 Dip both sides of the bread in the batter.
- 3 Heat some oil in a pan, fry both sides of the bread for a few minutes, until they turn golden brown.
- 4 Serve with fresh fruits or jam, and if you fancy, a drizzle of maple syrup or a sprinkle of icing sugar.

或许你知道法国吐司并非源自法国，但你可知道这一千多年前就存在的早餐，食材中原本并无蛋？在此分享一个无蛋、无牛奶，无牛油，即健康又美味的食谱。

材料：

- 隔夜法国面包 8片
- 豆奶140克
- 糖2小匙
- 面粉2大匙
- 营养酵母* 1大匙
- 肉桂粉 半小匙
- 盐 1小撮
- 油 适量

做法：

- 1 将豆奶、糖、面粉、营养酵母、肉桂粉与盐倒入搅拌盘中，搅拌均匀。
- 2 将面包的正反面沾上做法1的面糊。
- 3 锅中加入适量的油，油热后将面包放入锅中，煎数分钟至两面金黄色。
- 4 上盘时可搭配新鲜水果或果酱，也可依个人喜好，也可淋上枫糖浆或撒上糖粉。



* Unlike most yeast, nutritional yeast is an inactive yeast. It has a cheesy nutty flavour, which gives vegan food a rich flavour. As its name suggest, it has high nutritional value, being rich in vitamin B12, proteins, fibre and various other vitamins and minerals.

有别于一般酵母，营养酵母并不含活性酵母。它味道独特，有浓浓的乳酪与果仁味，能够增添纯素食物的风味。就如它的名称，它营养价值高，含有丰富的维生素B12、蛋白质、纤维以及许多维生素与矿物质。

Author 食谱 / Photographer 照片: **Joyce T**
For more vegan food ideas, check out
www.facebook.com/rejoyceveg/



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If you are passionate about joining us in realising our vision and take pride in producing great work, we welcome you to join our big family.

You may send your resume to:
hrdept@kmspks.org OR drop by our HR Office @ 88 Bright Hill Road, Singapore 574117 between 9am to 4.30pm (Mon-Fri), except public holidays.

Alternatively, you may log onto:
www.kmspks.org and click onto "kmspks", followed by "Livelihood" to view our job vacancies.

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 "KMSPKS Monastery" and sent to:

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Issue 35 / May 2016

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WHAT'S NEW

Text: Esther Thien

This Vesak Day, recollect the great qualities of the Triple Gem by listening intently to the various sutras, mantras and names of the Buddhas. One way to achieve this is through the use of an audio player that is pre-recorded with these tracks.

A favourite with seniors for its handy, portable size and easy operation, you can choose from three variants.

The cheapest model, a milky white palm-sized rectangular device embossed with 3D lotuses and priced at \$6, is preset with 22 tracks. It comes with a lanyard for you to hang the player around the neck. Just plug in earphones and you are ready to go.

The second model, retailing at \$45, is designed in the shape of a *mu-yu* (wood block) with an intricate rope knot and detailings. Besides showcasing a more exquisite look and 38 tracks, this model comes with a micro-SD and USB ports, so it allows you to transfer and play your other favourite Buddhist tracks on it.

Recollect the Qualities of the Triple Gem Through Hearing

The last model, which is the largest of the lot, comes in the shape of a red lotus. Its special feature is the solar panels. Simply install the device on its stand, place it out on your porch or garden on a sunny day to charge it. Priced at \$52, this is a rain-resistant device that is preset with 32 tracks. Playing such an outdoor audio player can also purify the energies of your home's surroundings.



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

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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 情绪低落沮丧	Sad
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 生活压力繁重	Stressed
<input type="checkbox"/> 情感上碰到状况	Stuck in a relationship rut
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 需要一位聆听心事的人	Simply in need of a listening ear

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Want Your story to be heard too?

Are you touched by the stories and interviews featured in this magazine?

Perhaps you too have a story to tell, a story of how the Buddha and His Teachings so inspired you to walk the Buddhist path, or maybe a simple account of the little treasures and blessings in life? Or perhaps you are a budding poet who would like to share a prose and a verse or two about how the Dharma changed your life forever?

Whatever your story or poem may be, we welcome you to write in to us. Share your inspiring tale of faith and awakening with the rest of the world. Send your entries to awaken@kmspks.org or:

AWAKEN, The Executive Editor
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Please include your full name, address and contact details. We reserve the right to edit the stories and letters for space and grammar considerations.

Listen Meditatively to the Sutras and Mantras of the Enlightened Ones



Born (Musical Spirituality of Jade Born)
\$19.90



The Twenty-One Homage to Tara
\$19.90



The Auspicious Valley
By Ma Chang-sheng
\$22



This Vesak, listen meditatively to the sutras and mantras of the Enlightened Ones in homage to the Triple Gem. The first CD, *Born*, showcases lilt, crystal clear singing of familiar mantras and prayers amid a background of heavenly music. My favourites are tracks 8 and 9.

The second CD, *The Twenty-One Homage to Tara*, features mantras and prayers that a Tibetan Buddhist would recite in his daily practice. Recited by the nuns of Tsogyal Sherub Daryeling Nunnery, feel the robust spiritual energies as you listen to the prayers.

The last CD of the collection, *The Auspicious Valley*, marries interesting instrumental tunes with various mantras and prayers. Let Ma Chang-sheng's clear drifting voice transport you to an oasis of peace with his mantra rendition.



The Sands of Time
\$28.90



Travelling with an Ocarina & Ukulele
\$28.90

Melancholy and Grace
\$19.90

Relax and unwind from a day's work with this collection of easy-listening albums. *The Sands of Time* is a 2-CD album that features a total of 32 melodious instrumental tracks.

Travelling with an Ocarina & Ukulele contains 10 delightful and gentle tracks produced with these two midget instruments. All the tracks in this CD are eminently listenable, and will perk you up.

The third album, *Melancholy and Grace*, is produced by a Korean producer well-known for producing the instrumental music for K-drama. Consisting of 15 tracks, feel your spirit soar as you listen to them.

Insert the CDs into your player, sip a cup of chamomile tea and relax in your comfy lounge chair.

The albums are available at all Awareness Place stores.

HEARD

text: Esther Thien

SEEN

The Healing Power of Loving-kindness & Compassion

text: Susan Griffith-Jones



A Dog of Flanders

Directed by: Kevin Brodie
Starring: Jack Warden, Jon Voight, Jeremy James Kissner

This beautiful heartwarming story begins with the death of a young lady, who left behind a small boy. She had returned to her poor father's home in the middle of the woods, somewhere in Belgium. The boy, Nello, grows up with his grandfather, an unassuming but wise man with a deep yet simple philosophy on life that rubs off deeply on Nello.

One day, Nello finds a beaten and starving dog in the forest. They take it in even though they barely have enough food for themselves. While attempting to save the dog's life, Nello learns from his grandfather, 'Never underestimate the power of love to heal' and the dog makes a remarkable recovery as Nello pours his compassion onto it.

Their kindness is repaid when the dog not only becomes Nello's steadfast companion, but as the boy's grandfather steadily gets weaker as time passes, it helps Nello to keep their little milk delivery business going by pulling the cart through the villages where they sell it to passers-by and to the market in the small local town.

From a very young age, Nello has also shown a naturally gifted artistic talent. He learns that his mother had also been very artistically inclined too and he is inspired by her to become a great artist. One day as he is gazing up at the statue of the famous artist, 'Rubens' in the centre of town, the boy meets an elder artist who lives there. He goes to the man's studio and is told that he has the makings of a genius, but needs to 'see' properly so that he can interpret what is around him onto the canvas.

This man pops up now and again in the movie to give Nello his next vital lesson. These are all wise teachings on how to perceive reality as it really is. He eventually introduces Nello to painting so that Nello can enter a contest in which the winner can get a lot of prize money and a scholarship to a fine art school. The boy is determined beyond anything else to achieve this.

But, life stands in the way and Nello must struggle through thick and thin to attain his goals, face temptation and continually prove his honesty.

The movie is full of lessons on the law of karmic deeds and how, above all, compassion for each other saves the community.



Watch it online here

READ

Watering the seeds of compassion and kindness within us all.

text: Esther Thien

Kindfulness
By Ajahn Brahm
\$13.00

Nurturing compassion
By The 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje
\$12.50

Kindfulness is the new approach to meditation. Kindfulness relaxes you, bringing unparalleled ease and healing to the mind and body, and to the whole world. In this highly readable book, Ajahn Brahm tells us how developing kindness can help us to reduce and overcome our problems.

In the second book, *Nurturing Compassion*, the 17th Karmapa raises a clarion call, urging each of us to find the meaning of our own life as we take up the responsibility to protect the environment and the world we all live in. To do so, we only need to nurture the seeds of love and compassion that are innately in all of us. Both books are available at Awareness Place stores.

Wake Up and Laugh: The Dharma Teachings of Zen Master Daehuang
\$28

Know Where You're Going
By Ayya Khema
\$27.60

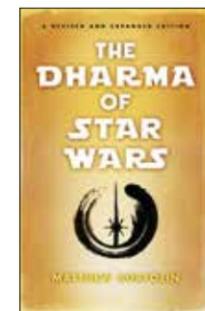
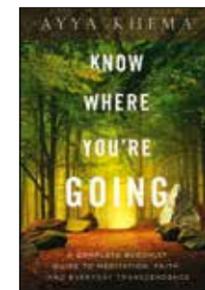
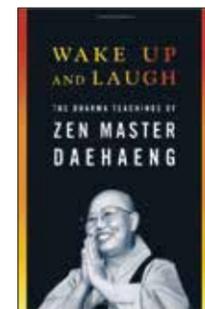
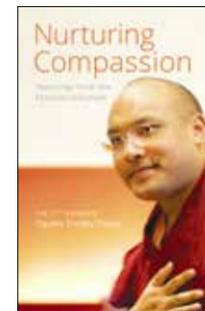
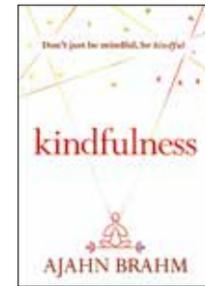
The Dharma of Star Wars
\$28

Wake up and Laugh is a beautiful book filled with much compassion, practical wisdom and humour by one of Korea's most respected and foremost Zen masters. Written in simple prose, Master Daehuang reveals how everything in daily life, even the unpleasant and difficult aspects, can become fuel for spiritual growth. An enlightening read!

The second title, *Know Where You're Going*, extends what Master Daehuang has taught for everyday transcendence. By offering a complete meditation course, it guides us to live a wholehearted spiritual life, amid our day-to-day concerns and responsibilities, to cultivate mindfulness, love and altruism.

If you are a fan of the Star Wars movies, you will appreciate the third book immensely which unites the wisdom and compassion of the Jedi with the Dharma. Here, the modern space saga and the ancient words of the Buddha illuminate each other in playful and unexpectedly rewarding ways.

All three books are available at Awareness Place stores.



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Smiling Mind

Smiling mind

Free

Put a smile to your mind with the *Smiling Mind* meditation app. This app makes meditation easy. Use it anytime, anywhere on a daily basis.

Developed by a team of psychologists with expertise in youth and adolescent therapy, mindfulness meditation and web-based wellness programmes, this free app provides six meditation programmes for those aged seven years to 11 years, 12 years to 15 years, 16 years to 22 years, adults, bite-size and extended.

If you are looking for an app to introduce your kids to simple mindfulness meditation, this is a good app to try. Available on Google Play.

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

Dharma Apps

2016

05
may08
aug

Calendar of Events

DHARMA

CEREMONY | PRAYERS

Vesak Auspicious Lanterns

Kindle a light to illuminate the world of darkness
Be a lamp upon yourself and spread the brightness to all humankind
14 – 28 May
Venue : KMSPKS
Offering : \$50 (family & individual)
\$300 (company)
Registration : Front Office
Enquiry : 6849 5333



Vesak Light Transference Ceremony

A ceremony where devotees pass on light of wisdom to every direction of the world to dispel the darkness of ignorance.

14 May | Sat | 7.30pm
Venue : In front of Hall of Great Strength
Enquiry : 6849 5300

3 Steps 1 Bow Ceremony

A ceremony where devotees meditatively circumambulate the perimeter of the monastery, bowing once every three steps while chanting mantras or names of the Buddha in praise of Him.

20 May | Fri | 5.30pm onwards (for ticket holders)
10pm onwards (for non-ticket holders)
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5300

Vesak Celebration

The most important day for the Buddhist community as it commemorates the birth, Enlightenment and final Nirvana of the Buddha on the full moon of the fourth lunar month.

20 May 5.30pm – 21 May 5pm | Fri – Sat
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5300

Threshold Refuge & Five Precepts Ceremony

Through taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, one enters the Buddhist path, whilst undertaking the precepts (basic guidelines of moral conduct) helps one to develop mindfulness.

Jul | Sun | 12.30pm – 2.30pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

Ullambana Prayer Festival

Participate in this prayer to express gratitude to deceased loved ones as well as to liberate the sufferings of sentient beings in the three lower realms.

17 Aug | Wed
Venue : KMSPKS
Tablet booking : \$250, \$100 & \$50
Registration : From 19 Jun onwards till fully registered
Enquiry : 6849 5333

Sunday Group Cultivation (Open to all ages)

Join us every Sunday for a short chanting, short guided meditation & a not so short discussion led by Venerable Chuan Guan. No prior registration is required.

Every Sun | 2pm – 3:30pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom 5



Sunday Group Cultivation Monthly Lunch Gathering

Lunch gathering before Sunday Group Cultivation.

First Sunday of every month | 1pm – 2pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom 5
Enquiry : 6849 5345 | youth@kmspsk.org

TALKS | WORKSHOPS | COURSES

Vesak Public Talk by Ajahn Sumedo

8 May | Sun
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

English Buddhism Course Year 1 (Module 2)

Taught by Venerable
Introducing the Buddhist Observances and the Triple Gem.

1 Jun – 27 Jul | Wed | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

English Buddhism Course Year 2 (Module 2)

Taught by Venerable
Learn about the development of Buddhism after the final Nirvana of Buddha.

30 May – 1 Aug | Mon | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

Sutra Study | Taught by Venerable

The commentary of the Mahayana door of wisdom on the hundred phenomena

Module 2 : 31 Mar – 26 May | Thu | 7.30pm – 9pm
Module 3 : 7 Jul – 1 Sep | Thu | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 3 | Classroom 307
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

KMSPKS Guided Tour

Join us on a guided tour around KMSPKS and get to know more about Buddhism, its history and arts.

26 Jun, 31 Jul, 28 Aug | Sun | 10am – 12pm
Meeting Place : VHCMMH | Level 1
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | guidedtour@kmspsk.org

Threshold Refuge & Five Precepts Preparatory Course

Understand the meaning of taking refuge and precepts.

Jul | Sun | 9.30am – 11am
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

Buddhist Etiquette Workshop

Learn to be mindful of our daily conduct as we progress on the spiritual path by cultivating virtuous action, speech and thought that benefit ourselves and others.

Jul | 12.30pm – 2pm
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

Ullambana Public Talk | (To be confirmed)

Aug | Sat | 3pm – 4.30pm
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

English Dharma Talk | By Yick Keng Hang

The History After the Pari-Nirvana of the Buddha

16 Jun | Thu | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : APWBC
Nominal donation : \$5
Enquiry : 6336 5067 | sem@kmspsk.org

MEDITATION | RETREAT

Self-Meditation @ Lunch

Rejuvenate your mind and body! Take an hour break during lunch to join our meditation practice.

4 May – 31 Aug | Wed | 12.30pm – 1.30pm
Venue : APWBC (Registration is required & subject to availability)
Enquiry : 6336 5067 | sem@kmspsk.org

Meditation Group Practice

4 May – 31 Aug | Wed | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form
Fee : Free (No instructor)
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

The Four Immeasurables (2-day retreat)

By Dr Alan Wallace
20 – 21 Aug | Sat – Sun | 9.30am – 5pm
Venue : Hall of Medicine Buddha
Enquiry : 6849 5300 | sem@kmspsk.org

Basic Meditation Class | By Dr Lee Foong Ming

5 – 26 Aug | Sat | 7.30pm – 9pm
Venue : APWBC
Fee : \$40
Enquiry : 6336 5067 | sem@kmspsk.org

YOUTH

DHARMA

Camp Awareness 2016

A 3-day, 2-night Buddhist Camp for youth aged 13 to 17, it seeks to share the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings through interactive activities and sharing sessions.

7 – 9 Jun | Tue – Thu
Venue : Pasir Ris Holiday Camp
Fee : \$30 (1st 20 participants) thereafter
\$45 (1 person), \$40 (2 persons)
\$35 per person (3 persons)
Enquiry : 6849 5345 | youth@kmspsk.org

LIFESTYLE

Y Talk

A self-improvement and self-help initiative targeted at young adults and professionals. There are various themed topics and invited speakers will share their stories and experiences.

Every 2nd & 4th Thu of the month | 7.30pm – 9.30pm
Venue : APWBC
Enquiry : 6849 5345 | ytalk@kmspsk.org

Sports & Games

Captain's Ball, Frisbee, Badminton etc for those aged 13 to 25 years.

Every Sun | 3pm – 4.30pm
Venue : Big field behind KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5345 | youth@kmspsk.org

COMMUNITY

Food Ration

Play your part for the community! Join us to deliver food to the low-income families at Thomson Ville Estate.

Every 2nd Sun of the month (except Feb)
Sun | 8.30am – 12pm
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5359 | youth@kmspsk.org

Clean Our Parks

Clean our parks and make them pleasant and safe for us and our animal friends.

Once a month | Sun | 9am – 12pm
Venue : KMSPKS
Enquiry : 6849 5345 | youth@kmspsk.org

Y-Tuition

A free tuition programme for needy Secondary 3 to 5 students.

Every Sun (From 10 Jan onwards) | 9am – 2pm
Venue : VHCMMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Enquiry : 6849 5359 | youth@kmspsk.org