

5-8月 | may - aug

awaken 普觉

to Compassion and Wisdom on the journey of life



Bringing Wisdom to the Brahma-viharas

This Vesak, let us with skilful desires,
practise meditation to find the wisdom
in the stillness within

茶与禅的因缘

禅宗传灯的含义

学佛者应具有三种心

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Our Responsibility to Protect Our Planet for Our Children and their **FUTURE GENERATIONS**



I recall reading a message from the Environmental Children's Organisation made up of a group of 12 and 13-year-olds from Canada trying to make a difference, fighting for their future. In the message, a 12-year-old girl pertinently pointed out that we humans, all 7.7 billion of us, are part of a family, all sharing the same air, water and soil. Everyone is someone's child regardless of one's status.

Recently, another young girl, a 13-year-old Swedish named Greta, has skipped school every Friday since August 2018 to champion a cause she strongly believes in: climate justice. She hopes her government and other world leaders will do something about the existential threat of climate change while there is still time to act and change things. Many others, including scientists, have since joined her cause.

Saving our environment has never been more critical. The state of

our planet is vital for our survival. How can we have good health if our ecosystem is in poor shape? An environment filled with pollutants and toxins can only have a harmful impact on all life forms.

Not long ago, researchers in the United Kingdom found pieces of plastic trash in the bellies of sea turtles. They found plastics, smaller microplastics, and various synthetic items in the bellies of each and every single animal after checking more than 100 turtles in three different oceans and seas. This study provides more evidence that each of us need to help decrease the amount of plastic waste released into our seas and maintain clean, healthy and productive oceans for future generations.

Not only are animals and plants going extinct every day, the overall temperature of the earth's atmosphere is also increasing. This has brought about frequent, intense occurrences of dangerous weather patterns and devastating heat waves, droughts and floods.

For the sake of our future generations, we must do more to combat global warming and

climate change, and safeguard the precious biodiversity in our world. We are all interdependent; a negative effect in one area can cause problems in others. Everything depends on something else for its existence for all lives are intimately interconnected. As such all of our thoughts and actions have an impact on the environment. Negative intentions and actions based on greed can only bring about damaging consequences which we all have to shoulder collectively.

So let's do our part to take care of our environment. Save energy and water; say no to plastic bags and straws. Reduce our carbon footprint and use biodegradable chemical-free household and personal care products that won't pollute our oceans and underground water. Cut down on unnecessary consumption, and actively reduce, reuse and recycle. Each of us is never too small to make a difference.

Planet earth is the only home we have. ☺

Sik Kwang Sheng (Ven)

Abbot, Kong Meng San Phor
Kark See Monastery

Finding the *wisdom* in the *stillness within*

AS we approach Vesak Day, a day when we rejoice and commemorate the Buddha's Birth, Enlightenment and Parinirvana, we honour meditation, a practice at the core of Buddhist teachings, that brings about greater wisdom and light into our lives.

To practise meditation well, we first need skilful desires, as explained by Ajahn Jayasaro (pg 40) to take care of and protect our mind. As we calm our mind with concentration exercises, we then venture into insight meditation (pg 48). As we walk, we mindfully observe and feel at one with the universe (pg 55). It is during stillness, that we can investigate and examine the mind, and receive information that we may not be able to receive when the mind is full of chatter (pg 58).

Through meditation, we become aware that we are not our thoughts or our feelings. We know how to peacefully co-exist with unpleasant feelings or transform them, without letting the mind become fearful, anxious or depressed (pg 59 & 70). With the insight from meditation, we apply more wisdom in our

lives (pgs. 56 & 60). We learn to have more love and compassion for ourselves and the world (pg 69). We also have an inkling that our dreams and physical reality aren't so different, for they are all products of our mind (pg 66).

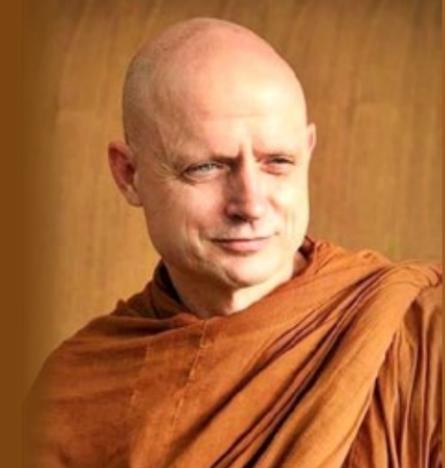
Elsewhere in this issue, Ven Guo Kai further explains the significance of the Shui Lu Grand Prayer (pg 51) conducted on a yearly basis in the monastery and Venerable Thanissaro Bhikkhu expounds more on the Brahma-viharas.

Happy reading, and may everyone have a spiritually fruitful Vesak Day. ☺

Esther Thien

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien





Skilful Desires

Ajahn Jayasaro reflects why skilful desires is important in the practice of meditation.

Demonstrating by example

As I remember, the majority of the teachings that Ajahn Chah gave were not particularly or startlingly profound. They didn't consist of things that you'd never heard of before, where you would say, "Wow, esoteric Buddhist teachings in the forest! If I hadn't come here I would never have had the opportunity for this kind of initiation, or this kind of unheard revelation of the Dhamma." Instead, it was more that every single word he said struck home. It was as if we were hearing those teachings for the first time, but at the same time it wasn't new information which needed a whole extensive vocabulary. Often he was able to express himself in very simple terms, which we could either understand for ourselves or with the help of a friend who would translate for us. But these words struck home, and they struck home because of the relationship, the feeling that we had, the devotion, the faith in him that we felt. So he was able to create a situation in which learning took place.

Through his own example and his personal presence and power, we felt this great sense of *chanda* in practice. I don't know how many people are familiar with this word, but it's a vital word to understand.

Western presentations of Buddhist teachings have often led to the understanding that suffering arises because of desire, and therefore you shouldn't desire anything. Whereas in fact the Buddha spoke of two kinds of desire: desire that arises from ignorance and delusion which is called *taṇhā* – craving – and desire that arises from wisdom and intelligence, which is called *kusala-chanda*, or *dhamma-chanda*, or more simply *chanda*. *Chanda* doesn't mean this exclusively, but in this particular case I'm using *chanda* to mean wise and intelligent desire and motivation, and the Buddha stressed that this is absolutely fundamental to any progress on the Eightfold Path.

In the four *Iddhipādas*, the Four Paths to Power, *chanda* is the first. In the presence of *chanda*, *virīya*, effort, arises. Effort is in many ways the characteristic *dhamma* of this whole school of Buddhism. In fact, the Buddha referred to his teachings not as Theravāda but as *viriyavāda*. It is a teaching of effort, a teaching that there is such a thing as effort, that effort can be put forth, effort should be put forth, and that effort is what is needed for progress on the Path.

When we lived with Ajahn Chah at Wat Pah Pong, he was able to create around him, within the hearts of his students, this sense of

chanda. One way that we can talk about *chanda* is by distinguishing it from the unwholesome kind of desire which is *taṇhā*. One of the most observable differences is that *taṇhā* is focused on the result of an action, while *chanda* is focused on the action itself. So *taṇhā* wants to get, wants to be, wants to become, wants to get rid of, wants to be separated from something. *Chanda* wants 'to do'. In those days after evening chanting Ajahn Chah would often say, 'Now is the time to go back to your kuṭis and put forth effort.' He didn't say, 'Go back and meditate'. So our practice was conceived in terms of effort and it was the putting forth of effort which was important, and the willingness and interest to do that came through *chanda*.

Common problem with meditators

I've very rarely taught meditation in the West, but in Thailand the common problem with lay meditators is that they look on meditation practice as work which you perform in order to get a reward that is called 'peace'; so you meditate in order to become peaceful. **When people meditate and they don't become peaceful, or they don't achieve the kind of peace which they imagined**

they should be achieving, they become frustrated and discouraged, and even despair of meditation altogether or assume that they don't have the spiritual faculties necessary to be able to benefit from meditation. In many ways we can say that following the Path is the fruit, and this is something that I find myself talking about a lot. To make a comparison, let's say a small child is learning to walk. If you were to say, 'Well, where did the child walk to today? How far did he or she get?', that's not the point. The child wasn't standing up, walking a few steps, falling down and getting up in order to get somewhere. The child didn't fail because he or she didn't get to a particular place. Similarly, if you're learning to ride a bicycle, it's not important where exactly you ride to. The question is, can you balance on a bicycle? Can you control a bicycle? Can you ride a bicycle? The goal is not riding to a particular destination.

I suggest that we look at meditation practice in the same way. We say, 'Why are we putting forth this effort?' Well, in order to be someone who knows how to put forth effort all the time in an appropriate way; someone who is able to put forth effort consistently, whatever the surrounding conditions are, whatever the obstacles might be. This ability to put forth unremitting effort is the goal itself. That's not to say that there's no interest in *samādhi*. But *samādhi* will come of itself. It's a natural consequence of this precise, devoted, consistent, wise effort.

Changing our perspective

In working life, some people will consider work as a drudge and a miserable imposition that you have to grit your teeth and get through so that you win the reward of a monthly or weekly wage. This can lead to a lot of unhappiness at work, and can easily be a cause of sloppiness and even corruption and dishonesty if work is looked upon as merely a means to an end. And if you can find an easier means to the same end, then why not? But if the focus is turned towards the work itself, and not towards waiting for some pleasure or happiness which will arise in the future as a result of the work – finding joy, interest in the work for its own sake – that is not to say that you won't get your wage; you get your reward afterwards anyway. It just doesn't have to be constantly on your mind. This can be an attitude towards meditation too. So it's not, 'Oh, I've been meditating for so long and I still haven't got this and haven't reached and realised that ...' The question is, are you someone who can put forth effort consistently? Can you find joy and interest in putting forth effort?

For children, whether they like something or not is a kind of moral imperative.

You say, "You do this."

"No!"

"Why not?"

"I don't like it!"

"Why are you doing this?"

"Because I like it."

This is the rationale of the child: "I will do it, I want to do it because I like it",

and: "I won't do it" or "I shouldn't have to do it because I don't like it."

Although we can garnish and camouflage it a bit as we get older, it's often the rationale of the adult as well. We have things that we like and we find reasons to explain why we like them, while not really being honest enough to recognise that usually the sense of like or dislike comes first and the reasons come afterwards. The very simple observation is that some things we really like are to our detriment in the long term; they can be harmful to us and others. Similarly, some things that we dislike can in the long term be for our benefit and happiness. Therefore we can't assume that our sense of like and dislike is an adequate or reliable indication of whether or not we should spend time doing something, or associating with people or things.

So what we're learning from meditation is the ability to stop and look, and not be carried away by or give overdue importance to these fleeting feelings of liking and disliking; we're learning to put forth effort. And in Ajahn Chah's words, "When you feel diligent and enthusiastic you meditate, and when you feel lazy you meditate." You're recognising those feelings, but you're not allowing them to condition your effort.

As I mentioned, the ability to put forth effort depends a great deal on *chanda*. When you start any meditation period, it's important to recognise that *chanda* is not always there. Even with monks and nuns, people who are giving their lives to this practice, the sense of *chanda* fluctuates. If you lack that sense

of interest and *chanda*, and uplift and enthusiasm for practice, the meditation can very quickly grind to a halt or run into quicksand; you have serious problems. That's why I think it's worth just checking the amount of interest at the beginning of a meditation, and if it's lacking, being willing to spend some time cultivating it, bringing it up. The more you apply yourself to doing this, the more fluent you will be and the more easily you can do it, until it becomes almost automatic.

How to have *chanda* that will condition your effort

One of the simplest ways of doing this is to use our thinking mind to reflect on two subjects. The first is the suffering and drawbacks inherent in the lack of mindfulness, inner peace and wisdom. We can draw upon particular areas or events in our lives which have quite clearly caused great distress to ourselves and others, and can see very plainly their results, such as a lack of inner awareness, lack of mindfulness, lack of inner discipline and inner *Vinaya*. We can also draw upon the experiences of the people we know and how they have particularly affected us. The second way of using the thinking mind is to reflect upon all the blessings of mindfulness, inner peace, wisdom and compassion. Perhaps we can bring up cases of great monks, nuns and teachers to whom we look up, and how much we revere their peace, calm, kindness, compassion and wisdom. We can remind ourselves that they are not the owners of these qualities, that they weren't born with these qualities; that these qualities manifested in them through effort, and that great teachers are vessels for beautiful,

noble qualities. And just as they are vessels, so we too can be vessels: men and women, from both Western and Eastern countries. Birth as a human being means that we have within us the capacity to manifest every noble quality, and that we should try to do so.

There are many different ways of reflecting on the disadvantages and suffering inherent in a lack of mental training and development. Similarly, we can reflect on the advantages and blessings of mental training and development. As you do this more and more, and become more fluent, the process can become very rapid. But the point is that we are recognising that the groundwork, the preparing of the mind in order to give it sufficient integrity and maturity to make use of meditation techniques, is dependent on this quality of *chanda*. If we overlook that or just go straight into the meditation practices when our minds lack the readiness to do so, the result can be frustrating and can lead to a lack of progress on the Path.

Ajahn Chah was someone who gave us this *chanda* for free. But at the same time, unlike some teachers, he took no pleasure in his disciples' devotion. He never indulged in it. Indeed, if he saw that any monk was becoming overly devoted to him individually – becoming attached to him, in other words – often he would just send him off somewhere hundreds of miles away for a year or so to get over it. And so we had this feeling that he always had our best interests at heart, but it wouldn't always be very comfortable for us. He wasn't someone who just wanted to keep his closest disciples around him and bask in that sense

of being loved and respected; not at all. But one important characteristic of the way he taught was that he would bring things back again and again to the Four Noble Truths, not as philosophy but as personal experience. Although we can accept the idea – the value of going against the grain, going against the stream – in practice very few people are able to do that on a consistent basis without becoming overly ascetic and serious, and somewhat twisted. Or else they put forth a lot of effort for a short period, and then just let it all go and feel guilty. Then they go to the opposite extreme again and are super-strict for a while, but are unable to sustain it.

The inability just to go steadily against the stream of *taṇhā*, particularly at the beginning of practice, is a formidable obstacle, but one which has to be surpassed or surmounted. So Ajahn Chah set up his monastery and life there in such a way that there was this constant rubbing against your likes and dislikes, and just a sufficient amount of discomfort to compel you to look and see where the suffering was coming from. He would famously tell us that as a monk you can cut out a lot of distractions, but you can't cut out all distractions. This means that you simplify everything, and you're able to watch the mind a lot more easily.

Watching for indulgences

But three areas which monks can still indulge in are sleep, food and conversation: you have to keep a watch on these. He said, "Don't eat a lot, don't sleep a lot, don't talk a lot", because eating, speaking and sleeping are the dangers for indulgence in monastic life. He

wouldn't let you have the chance to sleep, eat or talk as much as you wanted, simply so that you could see the craving for that kind of indulgence and release. This is not a sadistic practice, but one in which you have to be able to say, 'Yes, I'm suffering. Why? Because of craving; because I want something, or I want something I'm not getting, or I'm getting something I'm not wanting.' This is the value of coming to monasteries and being with monastics, and having groups of friends who give energy to each other and act as *kalyāṇa mitta*, as wise friends. We had this sense of going against the grain, just a little bit; not so much that it felt heroic or unsustainable, but just going outside our comfort zones a wee bit. And it's in such situations that some real progress can take place.

Practise to cultivate spiritual virtue

If you look on meditation as confined to a particular posture, it can be very frustrating. So what is our practice today? Well, our practice in any day, whether we're alone, with family or at work – whatever we're doing, wherever we are – is to take care of the mind and protect it as best we can. This is why I recommend seeing practice in terms of what the Buddha called the Four Right Efforts. Firstly, we practise to prevent the arising of unwholesome *dhammas*¹ that have not yet arisen. Our second area of work is to make the effort to deal with unwholesome *dhammas* that have arisen by skilfully and constructively reducing and eliminating them. The third area of work is seeking ways of instilling and manifesting wholesome

dhammas that have not yet arisen in our hearts. Lastly, with those wholesome *dhammas* that have arisen, we don't take them for granted, but seek to develop them as much as is possible. The Buddha said that prior to his enlightenment, the two virtues that he depended on more than any others were unremitting, constant effort, along with a lack of contentment with the wholesome qualities that he'd already developed.

Meditators need to be contented with material supports and discontented with the spiritual virtues and accomplishments they have already attained. In daily life this is something that can be applied anywhere. For instance, you have to go to a meeting or you have a particular task to perform, and you ask yourself what are the kinds of unwholesome *dhammas* that tend to arise: "When I meet that person I always get so irritated, he's so selfish or so conceited." This is your meditation. Your practice that day is, "How can I spend an hour with that person without getting irritated with him, feeling averse to him or contemptuous of him?" But in the case where you do lose your temper or get upset with somebody, you ask, "What strategies do I have, what practical means have I developed or should be developing to deal with that? And in a particular situation that I'm going to find myself in today – with my family, friends, colleagues at work – what are the wholesome *dhammas*, the particular kinds of virtues that I can be working on: right speech, patience, kindness,



compassion? Where should I be applying those qualities? How should I be applying them? And those qualities that I have developed, how can I take care of them, nurture them and lead them even further onwards?"

These aspects of Dhamma mentioned above give a very wide and comprehensive grounding and structure for practice. Formal meditation techniques are essential in that they are a concentrated form, one in which you temporarily put aside all distractions, and they give a power and an uplift to the mind which will enable the application of the Four Right Efforts in daily life to be successful. But at the same time, the more you put effort into these four areas in daily life, the more you'll enjoy and benefit from meditation. Thus you are finding ways of fine-tuning your motivation so that it's in the practice itself – the excellence of the practice itself – where you begin to trust that the results of that right, wise effort will manifest as a natural consequence. ☺

¹ *dhamma*(s): phenomenon/a; mental objects



Bringing Wisdom to the Brahmaviharas

Text: *Thanissaro Bhikkhu*

The *brahmavihāras*, or “sublime attitudes,” are the Buddha’s primary heart teachings—the ones that connect most directly with our desire for true happiness. The term *brahmavihāra* literally means “dwelling place of *brahmās*.” *Brahmās* are gods who live in the higher heavens, dwelling in an attitude of unlimited goodwill, unlimited compassion, unlimited empathetic joy, and unlimited equanimity. These unlimited attitudes can be developed from the more limited versions of these emotions that we experience in the human heart.

Of these four emotions, goodwill (*mettā*) is the most fundamental. It’s the wish for true happiness, a wish you can direct to yourself or to others. Goodwill was the underlying motivation that led the Buddha to search for awakening and to teach the path to awakening to others after he had found it.

The next two emotions in the list are essentially applications of goodwill. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is what goodwill feels when it encounters suffering: It wants the suffering to stop. Empathetic joy (*muditā*) is what goodwill feels when it encounters happiness: It wants the happiness to continue. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is a different emotion, in that it acts as an aid to and a check on the other three. When you encounter suffering that you can’t stop no matter how hard you try, you need equanimity to avoid creating additional suffering and to channel your energies to areas where you can be of help. In

this way, equanimity isn’t cold-hearted or indifferent. It simply makes your goodwill more focused and effective.

Making these attitudes limitless requires work. It’s easy to feel goodwill, compassion and empathetic joy for people you like and love, but there are bound to be people you dislike—often for very good reasons. Similarly, there are many people for whom it’s easy to feel equanimity: people you don’t know or don’t really care about. But it’s hard to feel equanimity when people you love are suffering. Yet if you want to develop the *brahmavihāras*, you have to include all of these people within the scope of your awareness so that you can apply the proper attitude no matter where or when. This is where your heart needs the help of your head.

All too often, meditators believe that if they can simply add a little more heart juice, a little more emotional oomph, to their *brahmavihāra* practice, their attitudes can become limitless. But if something inside you keeps churning up reasons for liking this person or hating that one, your practice starts feeling hypocritical. You wonder who you’re trying to fool. Or, after a month devoted to the practice, you still find yourself thinking black thoughts about people who cut you off in traffic—to say nothing of people who’ve done the world serious harm.

This is where the head comes in. If we think of the heart as the side of the mind that wants happiness, the

head is the side that understands how cause and effect actually work. If your head and heart can learn to cooperate—that is, if your head can give priority to finding the causes for true happiness, and your heart can learn to embrace those causes—then the training of the mind can go far.

This is *why* the Buddha taught the *brahmavihāras* in a context of head teachings: the principle of causality as it plays out in (1) karma and (2) the process of fabrication that shapes emotions within the body and mind. The more we can get our heads around these teachings, the easier it will be to put our whole heart into developing attitudes that truly are sublime. An understanding of karma helps to explain *what* we’re doing as we develop the *brahmavihāras* and *why* we might want to do so in the first place. An understanding of fabrication helps to explain *how* we can take our human heart and convert it into a place where *brahmas* could dwell.

The teaching on karma starts with the principle that people experience happiness and sorrow based on a combination of their past and present intentions. If we act with unskillful intentions either for ourselves or for others, we’re going to suffer. If we act with skillful intentions, we’ll experience happiness. So if we want to be happy, we have to train our intentions to always be skillful. This is the first reason for developing the *brahmavihāras*: so that we can make our intentions more trustworthy.

Some people say that unlimited goodwill comes naturally to us, that our Buddha-nature is intrinsically compassionate. But the Buddha never said anything about Buddha-nature. What he *did* say is that the mind is even more variegated than

the animal world. We’re capable of anything. So what are we going to do with this capability?

We could do—and have done—almost anything, but the one thing the Buddha does assume across the board is that deep down inside we want to take this capability and devote it to happiness. So the first lesson of karma is that if you really want to be happy, you can’t trust that deep down you know the right thing to do, because that would simply foster complacency. Unskillful intentions would take over and you wouldn’t even know it. Instead, you have to be heedful to recognise unskillful intentions for what they are, and to act only on skillful ones. The way to ensure that you’ll stay heedful is to take your desire for happiness and spread it around.

The second lesson of karma is that just as you’re the primary architect of your own happiness and suffering, other people are the primary architects of theirs. If you really want them to be happy, you don’t just treat them nicely. You also want them to learn how to create the causes for happiness. If you can, you want to show them how to do that. This is why the gift of dharma—lessons in how to give rise to true happiness—is the greatest gift.

In the Buddha’s most famous example of how to express an attitude of unlimited goodwill, he doesn’t just express the following wish for universal happiness:

“Happy, at rest,
may all beings be happy at heart.
Whatever beings there may be,
weak or strong, without exception,
long, large,
middling, short,
subtle, blatant,
seen & unseen,
near & far,
born & seeking birth:

May all beings be happy at heart.” He immediately adds a wish that all beings avoid the causes that would lead them to unhappiness: “Let no one deceive another or despise anyone anywhere, or through anger or resistance wish for another to suffer.” — Sn 1:8

So if you’re using visualisation as part of your goodwill practice, don’t visualise people simply as smiling, surrounded willy-nilly by wealth and sensual pleasures. Visualise them acting, speaking and thinking skilfully. If they’re currently acting on unskillful intentions, visualise them changing their ways. Then act to realise those visualisations if you can.

A similar principle applies to compassion and empathetic joy. Learn to feel compassion not only for people who are already suffering, but also for those who are engaging in unskillful actions that will lead to future suffering. This means, if possible, trying to stop them from doing those things. And learn to feel empathetic joy not only for those who are already happy, but also for those whose actions will lead to future happiness. If you have the opportunity, give them encouragement.

But you also have to realise that no matter how unlimited the scope of these positive emotions, their effect is going to run into limits. In other words, regardless of how strong your goodwill or compassion may be, there are bound to be people whose past actions are unskillful and who cannot or will not change their ways in the present. This is why you need equanimity as your reality check. When you encounter areas where you can’t be of help, you learn not to get upset. Think about the universality of the principle of karma: it applies to everyone regardless of whether

you like them or not. That puts you in a position where you can see more clearly what *can* be changed, where you *can* be of help. In other words, equanimity isn’t a blanket acceptance of things as they are. It’s a tool for helping you to develop discernment as to which kinds of suffering you have to accept and which ones you don’t.

For example, someone in your family may be suffering from Alzheimer’s. If you get upset about the fact of the disease, you’re limiting your ability to be genuinely helpful. To be more effective, you have to use equanimity as a means of letting go of what you *want* to change and focusing more on what *can* be changed in the present.

A third lesson from the principle of karma is that developing the *brahmavihāras* can also help mitigate the results of your past bad actions. The Buddha explains this point with an analogy: If you put a lump of salt into a glass of water, you can’t drink the water in the glass. But if you put that lump of salt into a river, you could then drink the water in the river, because the river contains so much more water than salt. When you develop the four *brahmavihāras*, your mind is like the river. The skillful karma of developing these attitudes in the present is so expansive that whatever results of past bad actions may arise, you hardly notice them.

A proper understanding of karma also helps to correct the false idea that if people are suffering they deserve to suffer, so you might as well just leave them alone. When you catch yourself thinking in those terms, you have to keep four principles in mind. First, remember that when you look at people, you can’t see all the karmic seeds from their past actions. They may be experiencing the results of past bad

actions, but you don't know when those seeds will stop sprouting. Also, you have no idea what other seeds, whatever wonderful latent potentials, will sprout in their place.

There's a saying in some Buddhist circles that if you want to see a person's past actions, you look at his present condition; if you want to see his future condition, you look at his present actions. This principle, however, is based on a basic misperception: that we each have a single karmic account, and what we see in the present is the current running balance in each person's account. Actually, no one's karmic history is a single account. It's composed of the many different seeds planted in many places through the many different actions we've done in the past, each seed maturing at its own rate. Some of these seeds have already sprouted and disappeared; some are sprouting now; some will sprout in the future. This means that a person's present condition reflects only a small portion of his or her past actions. As for the other seeds, you can't see them at all.

This reflection helps you when developing compassion, for it reminds you that you never know when the possibility to help somebody can have an effect. The seeds of the other person's past bad actions may be flowering right now, but he or she could die at any time. You may happen to be the person who's there to help when that person is ready to receive help.

The same pattern applies to empathetic joy. Suppose that your neighbour is wealthier than you are. You may resist feeling empathetic joy for him because you think, "He's already well-off, while I'm still struggling. Why should I wish him to be even happier than he is?" If you find yourself thinking in those

terms, remind yourself that you don't know what your karmic seeds are; you don't know what his karmic seeds are. Maybe his good karmic seeds are about to die. Do you want him to die any faster? Does his happiness diminish yours? What kind of attitude is that? It's useful to think in these ways.

The second principle to keep in mind is that, in the Buddha's teaching, there's no question of a person's "deserving" happiness or "deserving" pain. The Buddha simply says that there are actions leading to pleasure and actions leading to pain. Karma is not a respecter of persons; it's simply an issue of actions and results. Good people may have some bad actions squirrelled away in their past. People who seem horrible may have done some wonderful things. You never know. So there's no question of a person's deserving or not deserving pleasure or pain. There is simply the principle that actions have results and that your present experience of pleasure or pain is the combined result of past and present actions. You may have some very unskillful actions in your past, but if you learn to think skilfully when those actions bear fruit in the present, you don't have to suffer.

A third principle applies to the question of whether the person who's suffering "deserves" your compassion. You sometimes hear that everyone deserves your compassion because they all have Buddha-nature. But this ignores the primary reason for developing compassion as a brahmavihāra in the first place: You need to make your compassion universal so that you can trust your intentions. If you regard your compassion as so precious that only Buddhas deserve it, you won't be able to trust yourself when encountering people whose actions are consistently evil.

At the same time, you have to remember that no human being has a totally pure karmic past, so you can't make a person's purity the basis for your compassion. Some people resist the idea that, say, children born into a warzone, suffering from brutality and starvation, are there for a karmic reason. It seems heartless, they say, to attribute these sufferings to karma from past lives. The only heartlessness here, though, is the insistence that people are worthy of compassion only if they are innocent of any wrongdoing. Remember that you don't have to like or admire someone to feel compassion for that person. All you have to do is wish for that person to be happy. The more you can develop this attitude toward people you know have misbehaved, the more you'll be able to trust your intentions in any situation.

The Buddha illustrates this point with a graphic analogy: Even if bandits attack you and saw off your limbs with a two-handed saw, you have to feel goodwill starting with them and then spreading to include the entire world. If you keep this analogy in mind, it helps to protect you from acting in unskillful ways, no matter how badly provoked. (*Editor: Read page 56 for a better understanding*)

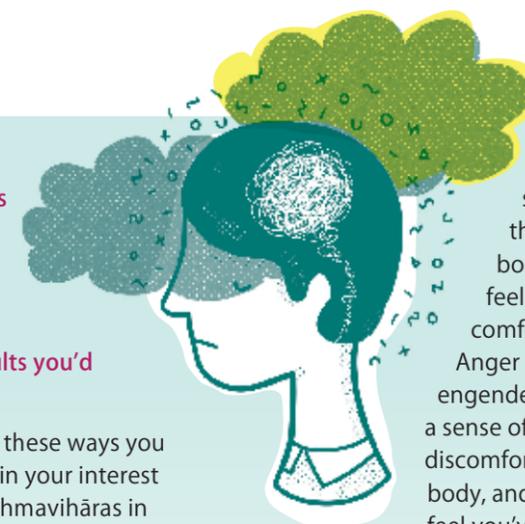
The fourth principle to remember concerns the karma you're creating right now in reaction to other people's pleasure and pain. If you're resentful of somebody else's happiness, someday when you get happy there's going to be somebody resentful of yours. Do you want that? Or if you're hard-hearted towards somebody who's suffering right now, someday you may face the same sort of suffering. Do you want people to be hard-hearted towards you?

Always remember that your reactions are a form of karma, so be mindful to create the kind of karma that gives the results you'd like to see.

When you think in these ways you see that it really is in your interest to develop the brahmavihāras in all situations. So the question is, how do you do that? This is where another aspect of the Buddha's teachings on causality plays a role: his teaching on fabrication, or the way you shape your experience.

Fabrication is of three kinds: bodily, verbal and mental. Bodily fabrication is the way you breathe. Verbal fabrications are thoughts and mental comments on things—your internal speech. In Pāli, these thoughts and comments are called *vitakka*—directed thought, and *vicāra*, evaluation. Mental fabrications are perceptions and feelings: the mental labels you apply to things, and the feelings of pleasure, pain, or neither pleasure nor pain you feel about them.

Any desire or emotion is made up of these three types of fabrication. It starts with thoughts and perceptions, and then it gets into your body through the way you breathe. This is why emotions seem so real, so insistent, so genuinely "you." But as the Buddha points out, you identify with these things because you fabricate them in ignorance: you don't know what you're doing, and you suffer as a result. But if you can fabricate your emotions with knowledge, they can form a path to the end of suffering. And the breath is a good place to start. If, for example, you're feeling anger towards someone, ask yourself, "How am I breathing right now? How can I change the way I



breathe so that my body can feel more comfortable?" Anger often engenders a sense of discomfort in the body, and you feel you've got to

get rid of it. The common ways of getting rid of it are two, and they're both unskillful: either you bottle it up, or you try to get it out of your system by letting it out in your words and deeds.

So the Buddha provides a third, more skilful alternative: Breathe through your discomfort and dissolve it away. Let the breath create physical feelings of ease and fullness, and allow those feelings to saturate your whole body. This physical ease helps put the mind at ease as well. When you're operating from a sense of ease, it's easier to fabricate skilful perceptions as you evaluate your response to the issue with which you're faced.

Here the analogy of the lump of salt is an important perception to keep in mind, as it reminds you to perceive the situation in terms of your need for your own goodwill to protect yourself from bad karma. Part of this protection is to look for the good points of the person you're angry at. To help with this perception, the Buddha provides an even more graphic analogy to remind you of why this approach is not mere sentimentality: If you see someone who's been really nasty to you in his words and deeds but has moments of honesty and goodwill, it's as if you're walking through a desert—hot, trembling, thirsty—and you come across a cow

footprint with a little bit of water in it. Now what do you do? You can't scoop the water up with your hand because that would muddy it. Instead you get down on your hands and knees, and very carefully slurp it up.

Notice your position in this image. It may seem demeaning to have your mouth to the ground like this, but remember: You're trembling with thirst. You need water. If you focus just on the bad points of other people, you're going to feel even more oppressed with the heat and the thirst. You'll get bitter about the human race. But if you can see the good in other people, you'll find it easier to treat them skilfully. Their good points are like water for your heart. You need to focus on them to nourish your own goodness now and in the future.

If, however, the person you're angry about has no good qualities at all, then the Buddha recommends another perception: Think of that person as a sick stranger you've found on the side of the road, far away from any help. You have to feel compassion for him and do whatever you can to get him to the safety of skilful thoughts, words and deeds. What you've done here is to use skilful verbal fabrication—thinking about and evaluating the breath—to turn the breath into a skilful bodily fabrication. This in turn creates a healthy mental fabrication—the feeling of ease—that makes it easier to mentally fabricate perceptions that can deconstruct your unskillful reaction and construct a skilful emotion in its place.

This is how we use our knowledge of karma and fabrication to shape our emotions in the direction we want—which is why head teachings are needed even in matters of the heart. At the same time, because

Understanding the Different Buddhist Meditations

Luang Por Tiradhammo speaks to Esther Thien and clarifies the purpose of the various Buddhist meditations.

Awaken: There are so many meditation methods out there—some religious and others not, how should an absolute beginner interested to learn meditation get started—by counting, focusing on the breaths, or doing walking meditation etc?

Luang Por: It probably depends upon how the person is introduced to meditation. If the person goes to a temple, he or she will probably learnt the technique of that tradition. The main point is

to start practising it in life. So long as the technique is simple—the simplest possible such as breathing meditation—which you can practise immediately and doesn't require a lot of study beforehand.

Awaken: Are there any foundational meditation practices that anyone regardless

of religion, age or culture can do? What is the best way to introduce children to meditation?

Luang Por: Awareness of breathing, simply by observing your breathing, is the most universal and common one. Children learn by example, from role models. It is most important not to force meditation upon them. Meditation must be learnt voluntarily by the

< we've sensitised ourselves to the role that the breath plays in shaping emotion, we can make a genuine change in how we physically feel about these matters. We're not playing make believe. Our change of heart becomes fully embodied, genuinely felt.

This helps undercut the feeling of hypocrisy that can sometimes envelop the practice of the brahmavihāras. Instead of denying our original feelings of anger or distress in any given situation, smothering them with a mass of cotton candy or marshmallow cream, we actually get more closely in touch with them and learn to skilfully reshape them.

All too often we think that getting in touch with our emotions is a means of tapping into who we really are—that we've been divorced from our true nature, and that by getting back in touch with

our emotions we'll reconnect with our true identity. But your emotions are not your true nature; they're just as fabricated as anything else. Because they're fabricated, the real issue is to learn how to fabricate them skilfully, so they don't lead to trouble and can instead lead to a trustworthy happiness.

Remember that emotions cause you to act. They're paths leading to good or bad karma. When you see them as paths, you can transform them into a path you can trust. As you learn how to deconstruct emotions of ill-will, hard-heartedness, resentment and distress, and reconstruct the brahmavihāras in their place, you don't simply attain an unlimited heart. You gain practice in mastering the processes of fabrication. As the Buddha says, that mastery leads first to strong and blissful states of concentration. From there it can fabricate all the

factors of the path leading to the goal of all the Buddha's teachings, whether for head or for heart: the total happiness of nibbāna, unconditionally true.

Which simply goes to show that if you get your head and your heart to respect each other, they can take each other far. Your heart needs the help of your head to generate and act on more skilful emotions. Your head needs your heart to remind you that what's really important in life is putting an end to suffering. When they learn how to work together, they can make your human mind into an unlimited brahma-mind. And more: They can master the causes of happiness to the point where they transcend themselves, touching an uncaused dimension that the head can't encompass, and a happiness so true that the heart has no further need for desire. ☺

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children. If you use coercion, they will soon escape from it and turn to another religion when they grow up.

Awaken: Mindfulness practices are 'in' now. Are there advantages of practising meditation in a focused and disciplined manner that cannot be attained through mindfulness practices? How can I sustain the meditative state after getting up from the meditation cushion?

Luang Por: There are two kinds of Buddhist meditation: concentration meditation (*Shamatha*) and insight meditation (*Vipassana*). In concentration meditation, you develop the discipline of focused attention. This requires a bit of work, and is akin to the training of mental muscles. In insight meditation, the primary mental quality is mindfulness or awareness. When one talks about meditation, many people think it is just about concentration meditation, where one has to sit for hours focusing on the breath. But that is just one aspect of it; it is like comparing apples to oranges.

Mindfulness practices actually belong to the insight meditation category. The exercises in insight meditation are more flexible. In fact, most of the exercises that the Buddha gave are to be aware of the body in its bodily activities such as when you are walking, and reflection upon the four elements which doesn't require you to be in a sitting posture all the time. In concentration meditation, meditators can experience much deeper states of concentration and tranquillity but that is not the end in itself because you need wisdom from insight.

If you focus on just the state of tranquillity and concentration, you cannot sustain the calm as it

is merely a conditioned state of mind, which disappears when you stop focusing. You can sustain it, however, if you recognise that the purpose of sitting meditation is concentration which results in calm. If you recognise this principle, you can then examine your life and look to situations that increase the calm and repeat them over and over again. Repetition will help the mind to settle down. If you are doing many different things, this stirs up the mind. For instance, when you are washing the dishes, focus on it as a concentration exercise rather than seeing the chore as "I want to finish the dishes quickly so that I can do sitting meditation".

The purpose of mindfulness practice is to develop more awareness and clarity of mind. Therefore, analyse what activities in your life would support that. Mindfulness is the very opposite to concentration meditation. Concentration is supported by repetition. But to develop more awareness, sometimes you need to change things and habits and introduce more variety to increase mental alertness. Whenever you find your mind dull, unclear and cloudy, just do something different, such as taking a fresh, unknown route. And if you desire to settle the mind quickly and more deeply, just live in a quiet place without overt distraction.

So please understand the principles: that concentration meditation develops calm; insight meditation develops awareness, alertness and clarity of mind. In a nutshell, examine your life and see what in your lifestyle would support their development. If you have a chance to do the formal practice for a period of time, then you can strengthen those qualities as you have a basis to carry through in

your mundane life.

We need to keep both of them in perspective. One without the other is not going to help us develop our spiritual practice effectively or efficiently.

Awaken: Besides concentration meditation and insight meditation, there is also loving-kindness or *metta* meditation. How should one choose?

Luang Por: Start off with the simplest method—focusing on the breath. This leads to single-pointed attention. Insight meditation is educated attention, you have to know what to put your attention on: body sensations, feelings, states of mind, etc. If you notice distractions or hindrances coming up when you are developing calm, then it will be helpful to apply other meditation techniques to deal with them such as loving-kindness meditation.

When people experience difficulties and challenges, they close down and put up resistance. Loving-kindness or friendliness meditation allows people to relax, open up, to receive and see things from a more flexible perspective. When one faces difficulties, deal with the aversion and resistance that arises. How can we learn what the root really is if we keep resisting? Therefore loving-kindness meditation is taught so we can allow ourselves to come closer to our challenges, to befriend them a bit more and see them in a more flexible way coming from our experiences. If you observe your thoughts through mindfulness, you will also notice belittling or critical thoughts like: "I am not good enough; it is not going to work; I can't do this, etc" then one can also complement it with loving-kindness meditation: "May I be well; may I be free from suffering." This can have an effect

on different levels of consciousness, even deeply embedded traits in our subconscious and unconscious mind. If you have a mindfulness practice, you can investigate and look at the pattern of your thoughts.

Awaken: Is it best to stick to only one type of meditation practice exclusively in order to anchor the mind, i.e. aim for mastery of one technique? Or should we develop a repertoire of meditation practices to broaden our mind?

Luang Por: It is helpful to have some basis in a variety but if you constantly flit around, you will end up having a lot of knowledge but no expertise in any of them. If you stay with a practice for a while until you have some familiarity and experience with it, then perhaps you can be open to complementing that practice with something else, but it should come from your experience. As Ajahn Chah once said, when you are calm enough, you can proceed to other practices. So you gauge your own experience.

For those with a very active and anxious mind, they will need a greater level of calm in their mental activity and emotional state, to rest in the calm of feeling safe and secure, before they see the calm in their bodies too.

If your body is tense and you force your mind to shut up, you won't achieve the calm, because it is artificial and doesn't last long. When you relax your body and calm your mind, you may sometimes notice disharmony or discomfort in your emotions.

You will have to observe and assess your own level and experience, in terms of time, place and situation to know if you are calm enough. When the mind is calm, you then

bring your awareness to other sensations in the body. But when that awareness stirs up the mind, you go back to establishing the calm again.

Awaken: Is there any difference between chanting and meditation? It seems to me that both can help to focus the mind but the ways they do so are different. If I only have time to do one practice, is it better to chant or meditate?

Luang Por: Chanting is a form of concentration meditation that calms the mind with its soothing rhythm. When you chant and understand the meaning of what you are chanting, it can also provide for reflection and insight.

Awaken: What advice do you have for beginners who gave up meditation because they had bad experiences during their first few sessions, e.g. bodily aches or numbness, sudden itching, frightening mental images, uncontrollable crying? Are there people who should not meditate?

Luang Por: Don't think meditation is a cure-all for challenging mental states of mind. Meditation is not necessarily going to cure them all or cure all mental illnesses. Sometimes, people put too much faith and energy into meditation and over-do it, rather than to take responsibility for their mental ailments and help themselves. They abdicate responsibility. The purpose of meditation is to work on ourselves; it is an inner work, a process of empowering the positive qualities in ourselves. If you think that someone or something else like medications or meditation will do it for me, it is the incorrect attitude and motivation.

Many of the experiences you mentioned above tend to happen

in intensive retreats. For the average person, it is best and healthful if you just do a little bit every day. You shouldn't do a lot of concentration exercises without a teacher available whom you can consult with.

Awaken: As much as meditators seek inner bliss, they themselves can become a nuisance to other people when they deem others to have disturbed their meditation and aggressively display or confront others to voice their annoyance. What advice do you have for highly-strung, irritable meditators?

Luang Por: This is not right meditation. Such meditators are too attached to the techniques and their own personal meditation or progress. The whole point of meditation is learning to let go, learning to be detached, to undo their attachment. If you are attached to your meditation, it is still attachment. In the *Pali* scriptures, the Buddha gave a simile of the raft. You use the raft to cross the river but once you have crossed over, you leave it behind, you don't carry the raft with you. The only thing that goes with you is your spiritual practice. It is more valuable to learn to put it down and practise patience and flexibility to adapt to certain situations and circumstances.

Awaken: What is a straightforward method that a layperson can do for 10 or 20 minutes a day to keep his or her mind balanced and sharp?

Luang Por: I would say it is observing the breath. It is the most universal one. ☺

Editor: The Monastery regularly conducts meditation retreats and classes. Please turn to page 72 or visit www.kmspks.org for more information.



The *Ins* and *Outs* of the Shuilu Grand Prayer

Venerable Guokai elucidates in a 2018 Chinese talk given at KMSPKS Monastery on how the Shuilu Grand Prayer came about a long time ago.

Translated by Oh Puay Fong

What is the “Shui Lu Grand Prayer”?

This is one of the grandest and most elaborate of Chinese Buddhist prayers. Some translations of its full name include “The Universal Deliverance and Grand Feast Assembly for All Sages and Sentient Beings Gathering from the Water and Land of Dharma Realms” or “The Grand Prayer that Blesses and Benefits All Sentient Beings”. “Shui Lu” in Chinese means “Water and Land”, and refers to the realms where sentient beings are often found suffering, hence it is also called “The Great Compassionate Liberation Rite of Water and Land” or “Water Land Dharma Function” or “Shui Lu Grand Prayer”.

The Shui Lu Grand Prayer liberates sentient beings from suffering through the extensive merit generated by making offerings of Dharma and food, so that all beings can attain happiness and enter the path of Buddhahood. Participating in this prayer generates inconceivable merit for both the living and deceased. As one is making offerings to the Triple Gem of the ten directions and to gatherings of sentient beings within the six realms, the merit benefits not only one, but also one's immediate and extended family.

Even those who cannot physically participate because of their hectic workday schedules but who contribute with the underlying compassionate motivation to benefit all sentient beings will accumulate the merit. Making a sincere aspiration brings immeasurable merit. If one participates without selfish thoughts to benefit oneself, but wishes instead for the well-being and happiness of all sentient beings, the merit expands in direct proportion to the vastness of one's aspiration. Thus making an expansive aspiration, such as for world peace, national stability or the good health of all beings, increases the merit one accrues.

How it all started

Two Buddhist tales are related to this Grand Prayer. The first took place in India, while the second happened in China.

When the Buddha was still alive, his personal attendant, Ananda was meditating in the forest one day when he suddenly saw a hideous

skeletal hungry ghost with a huge bulging stomach. Actually, this hungry ghost was a manifestation of Guan Yin Bodhisattva (Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara).

Ananda asked the hungry ghost, “Who are you? Why are you here?”

To which the Lord of Hungry Ghosts responded, “My name is Mian Ran (“Burning Mouth”). I come here specially to inform you that you will die three days later and descend into the hungry ghost realm, suffering and agonising just like me.”

Ananda was terrified upon hearing this and asked how he could avoid such a misfortunate plight.

The Lord of Hungry Ghosts told Ananda that if he could feed a measure of food each to a hundred thousand hungry ghosts and to a hundred thousand ascetics the next day, and present these offerings to the Three Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha—then he would attain longevity and avert this miserable outcome. After Ananda came out of his meditation, he hurried off to relate his encounter to the Buddha. The Buddha then expounded *The Discourse on the Feeding of Hungry Spirits* and taught Ananda the proper way of bestowing food.

By blessing the food and drinks with prayers before offering them, they became Dharma gifts which could be offered to the Triple Gem, and could also nourish infinite number of hungry ghosts and deities. Limited supply of food would multiply such that it became sufficient to feed all sentient beings equally and lessen their suffering. Those beings with positive karma may even be reborn in heavenly realms from receiving Dharma-infused food. Ananda was rescued from this predicament as a result and averted a negative rebirth as a hungry ghost. This is the first story.



The second story took place during China's Period of Disunity (a.k.a. Wei Jin North-South Dynasties)—a very long time ago—there was an Emperor Wu who founded the Liang Dynasty. One day, the emperor dreamt that a godlike monk advised him to free the spirits of the dead from their suffering, given his immense power and means. The next day, the emperor sought advice from his court ministers for ways to do this. One of them, *Chan* Master Bao Zhi suggested that the emperor source and research extensively different Buddhist sutras for information, to which the emperor agreed. Together, both of them went through volumes of sutras to glean the information.

When they read the tale of Ananda's encounter with the hungry ghost, they had their *Eureka* moment.

This marked the start of the Shui Lu Grand Prayer in China. The previous story traced its origin in India. Emperor Wu of Liang spent three years to formalise the rituals for the Grand Prayer. After he had completed the Grand Prayer manual, he organised a prayer within the palace. However, before the statue of Buddha, candle lamps were placed but not lighted. The emperor, taking the manual in his hands, prayed before the Buddha that if the rituals would indeed help sentient beings in the six realms, then the candle lamps would light up by themselves. If not, they would remain unchanged.

He then made his first prostration before the Buddha. That same moment, the candle lamps lighted up by themselves and the whole hall became brilliantly bright. As he made his second prostration, the ground trembled slightly like a minor earthquake, which was an auspicious sign. After his third prostration, fragrant flowers floated down from the sky, another auspicious sign. Emperor Wu of Liang was thus reassured and organised the inaugural Shui Lu Grand Prayer at the Zhengjiang Jinshan Temple in China's Jiangsu province on the fifteenth day of the second month. This was how the Shui Lu Grand Prayer started in China.

However, after Emperor Wu of Liang, the manual was lost for more than 160 years due to dynastic wars during those turbulent times. During the Tang Dynasty, *Chan* Master Dao Ying from the Xijin Fahai Temple serendipitously dreamt that he was to go to the Da Jue Temple to look for the Shui Lu Grand Prayer manual to revive the tradition. Since the Tang Dynasty until today, more than 1,500 years

have passed and this Grand Prayer was improved upon and perfected through the ages, culminating in our existing protocols. These two stories provide the background to this amazing Grand Prayer.

What Goes On

This prayer has been performed for more than 2,000 years now. It benefits and ultimately liberates all sentient beings in all the worldly and other-worldly realms. It helps beings to avert many rebirths of misfortune, ensure many lifetimes of protection, depart from the negative paths, relieve their suffering and experience happiness. Ultimately, it leads sentient beings towards the Buddha-Dharma. This Grand Prayer requires seven full days for complete fruition. The Sunday preceding the ceremony is spent consecrating the shrines, so it takes a total of eight days and seven nights to organise one Grand Prayer.

The Shui Lu Grand Prayer has seven shrines but all of them constitute one totality. It doesn't mean if I go to one shrine, then I can't go to another shrine because all the different shrines combine to constitute one grand prayer. For example, if you want to recite the Lotus Sutra, or the Medicine Buddha Sutra, or to chant the Buddha's name, you can. We are all part of a holistic Buddhist ceremony. All the shrines are equally important. Without any one of them, the Grand Prayer cannot take place. Therefore, all the shrines are important and indispensable.

During this prayer, we dedicate merit thrice every day towards the Inner Shrine. The purpose is to broadcast to all realms and to dedicate merit to all beings. Therefore, the Shui Lu Grand Prayer

actually makes no separation between the inner and outer shrines. You can go to the one you like. We accomplish this Grand Prayer as a whole, together.

Averting misfortunes, liberating the masses, making offerings to higher beings, and bestowing to lower beings are the essence of this Buddhist ceremony. Thus, it is called the most supreme of all prayers. The Shui Lu Grand Prayer has immeasurable merit from the concentrated blessings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the pure motivation of the Sangha and the strong support from devotees. For monastics, because of the motivation to benefit others, all hindrances to their spiritual cultivation will be speedily removed. Monastics have committed themselves to the Buddhist path. By practising, praying, repenting with utmost sincerity, all hindrances on their spiritual path will be eliminated. For the laity, they will avert misfortune, grow in wisdom, increase their merit and can use the occasion skilfully to introduce their friends to Buddhism.

This Grand Prayer has potent power to help particularly those wandering spirits in the negative realms, and babies who die before birth or die prematurely, as it compassionately delivers them from their endless suffering. So if there is a deceased in the family, or a baby who died

prematurely, you can write a tablet for his or her deliverance.

Important Points

1. **Be unafraid of hardship.** Have a sincere heart, but don't force yourself especially if you have any critical illnesses.
2. **Pay attention to your health and personal hygiene.** Spiritual practice requires stamina. With good physical health, then you can also develop compassion, resolve or wisdom and self-introspection. If you're feeling unwell or sick, see a doctor and take medication. Also, please be mindful of personal hygiene out of consideration for others.
3. **Encourage one another.** We are all followers of the Buddha-Dharma, encouraging one another will push us forward even more. And please be courteous. A monastery abides by the Dharma, with liberation as its focus. You can't snatch anything away from here anyway, so please give in to one another. There's no need to rush to place the joss sticks. If you come for the Grand Prayer, please try not to be late or leave early, unless there is an emergency.
4. **The whole point of participating in this Grand Prayer is to purge or liberate your wrong views, your vexations, your attachments and self-clinging.** If your temper gets worse after every Grand



Prayer, then even participating in 100 Shui Lu Grand Prayers is meaningless. If you don't transform yourself—from being lazy to conscientious, foolish to wise, greedy to generous, bad-tempered to open-hearted—you will only gain the minimum benefit from the seven days of this Grand Prayer. All teachings or prayers that do not awaken our inherent Buddha nature only serve to plant some good seeds. Don't leave empty-handed, make sure you gain insight into the Dharma when attending the Grand Prayer. Transform yourself into a polite person with a gentle heart. Restrain yourself if you have been too aggressive in the past, be refined. Participants should be mindful of their habitual manner of speech or behaviour and restrain themselves. Transform yourself into a very courteous, very refined, very gracious person. We apply the Dharma and wisdom to our mind so that it becomes gentler, wiser and purer. This in turn will give us an attractive appearance. Everyone—man or woman—is equal and no occupation is higher than another. So acknowledge others with a nod or a Buddhist greeting. Speak softly and gently. This is basic etiquette.

5. **Cultivate confidence in the Triple Gem after seven days of Shui Lu Grand Prayer.** The Buddha Dharma is the only Truth in the Universe. In this world, those without the Dharma or those who are not acquainted with the Dharma spend their whole lives adrift in confusion, suffering and agony. Nobody is doing harm to those people, but their own inner turmoil is pushing them to the brink of a mental breakdown.

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The Buddha-Dharma is exceptional, like drinking thirst-quenching nectar. There are no teachings more thorough or more liberating than the Buddha-Dharma. We attend the Grand Prayer to awaken our inherent Buddha nature, to understand that all phenomena are illusory.

There are three important points in Buddhist cultivation:

- 1) Practise with utmost sincerity as a means to progress further.
- 2) Discern causes and consequences, which is to understand the law of karma. Therefore we need to guard our intentions and thoughts.
- 3) Cultivate a heart like the Buddha's, which is most beautiful. A beautiful heart makes a beautiful person. When inner wisdom is accomplished,

the Buddhist path is accomplished.

We must have faith in the Buddha-Dharma. The key is to transform our character. Otherwise, one is still bound for rebirth in hell even if one chants the Buddha name until one's mouth hurts. **The only truth in the Universe is Buddha nature, which we all have. Buddhism is designed for the living, Buddhism exists for the living. The Grand Prayer facilitates deliverance from the four states: spirits; our wrong views; our vexations; and life and death.**

Abandoning all wrong thoughts, you transcend life and death. Liberating your negative thoughts, delusions, and vexations is the true deliverance. Any prayer or teaching that does not awaken our Buddha

nature is only empty, meaningless talk. Liberating your inner demons—wrong views, prejudices, negative thoughts so that they become right and constructive is the major significance of the Grand Prayer.

On the last day, we incinerate the paper boats, which our wise forebears used to symbolise the Dharma. Practising according to the Dharma is akin to taking a boat that will take us from this shore (samsara) to the other shore (enlightenment).

So why do we incinerate them? Burning transforms form into formless. Our ancestors are very clever and know that it is impossible for you to immediately grasp what is intangible or formless. So they used a tangible paper boat that is burned at the successful conclusion of the Grand Prayer. The

tangible is rendered intangible, and demonstrates the Buddha's teaching on emptiness. We are troubled, clinging and risking mental breakdown because we mistakenly assume that everything in this world is real. We don't realise that one day, we will transform into a heap of bones too. Even before we transform into a heap of bones, we are changing every minute, every second.

Medical studies reveal that all the cells in our bodies completely renew once every seven years. You are a different body every seven years. So there is no inherent self. Even the cells are constantly changing. Our thoughts and motivations are constantly shifting too. But you insist "I exist", which is rather contrived. As you still do not have the wisdom to discern this, the burning of the paper boat is a visual teaching on emptiness. Transform all misery into wisdom, this is the true meaning of the Shui Lu Grand Prayer. The rituals are mere symbols, skilful means employed by our wise ancestors to awaken us. All the rituals and protocols are gradual, modular steps towards a grand outcome, which is to awaken our Buddha nature.

I hope all of us gathered here will awaken our inherent wisdom to liberate all beings suffering in the six realms. May the Dharma seeds planted today soon sprout sturdily and all attain the supreme Buddhist path. Let me wish everyone and your family good health and happiness. Amitufo! This is the end of today's talk. ☺

About the artist

Michelle is a lady who seeks quiet and contentment by painting.

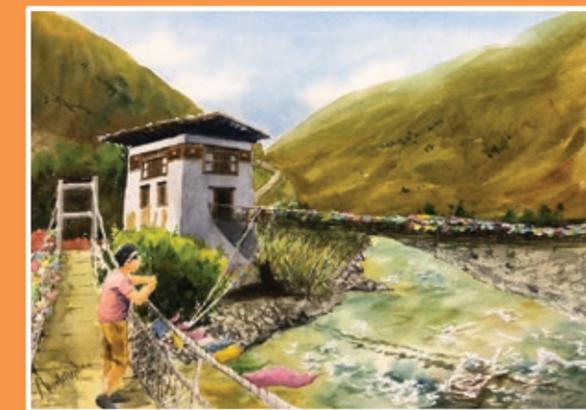
ART FOR REFLECTION

WALKING MEDITATION

Watercolours on Paper
by Michelle Au

As we walk mindfully step-by-step, we watch each inhalation and exhalation. We notice the gentle breeze caressing our face, and the birds chirping in the wind. We look up to see a sky full of falling flowers that are smiling.

I feel one with the Universe, the Universe is one with me. Mindfully breathing, we become purer and brighter; we become stronger already.



PRAYER FLAGS

Watercolours on Paper
by Michelle Au

The five-coloured prayer flags fluttering in the wind have become a lovely scene in Bhutan's landscape. They are inscribed with sutras and mantras. Five colours—blue, white, red, green and yellow—symbolise the elements: the skies, winds, fires, rivers and lands respectively. The Bhutanese believes that every time the prayer flags flutter with the wind, the sutras and mantras inscribed on them are recited once, spreading goodwill and compassion into all pervading space and so bring benefit to all beings. ☺

KAKACUPAMA SUTTA
The Smile of the Saw MN 21

Illustration :
Law Wen Hui



Yes, that is true Ginger.

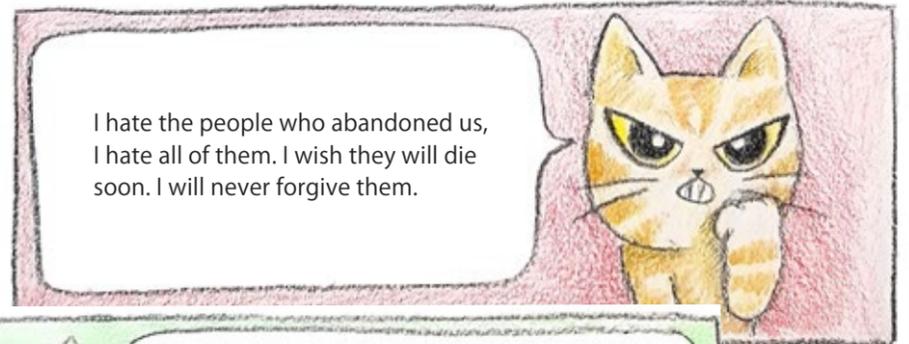
Hello Siha, it is said that you were abandoned when you were young, is that true?

Don't you hate the people who abandoned you? Are you not angry?

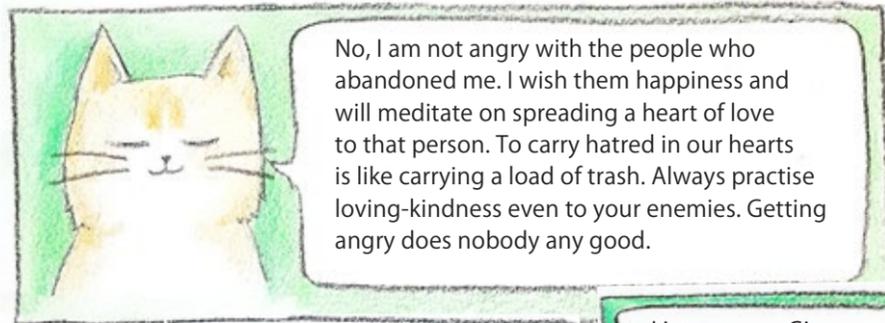


My whole family was abandoned and left out in the streets. We had to survive by looking for leftover food scraps.

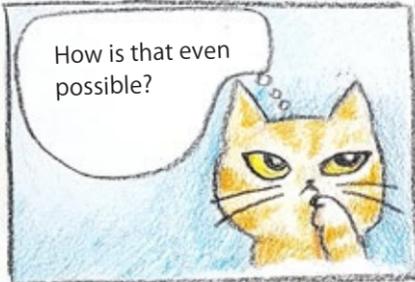
My mum almost died taking care of me and my four brothers.



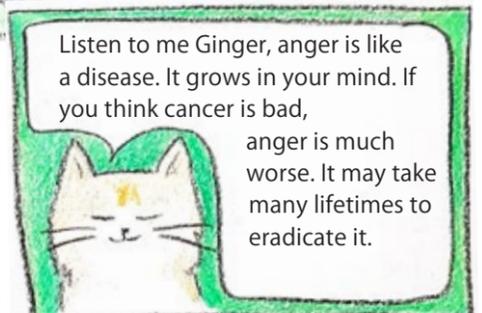
I hate the people who abandoned us, I hate all of them. I wish they will die soon. I will never forgive them.



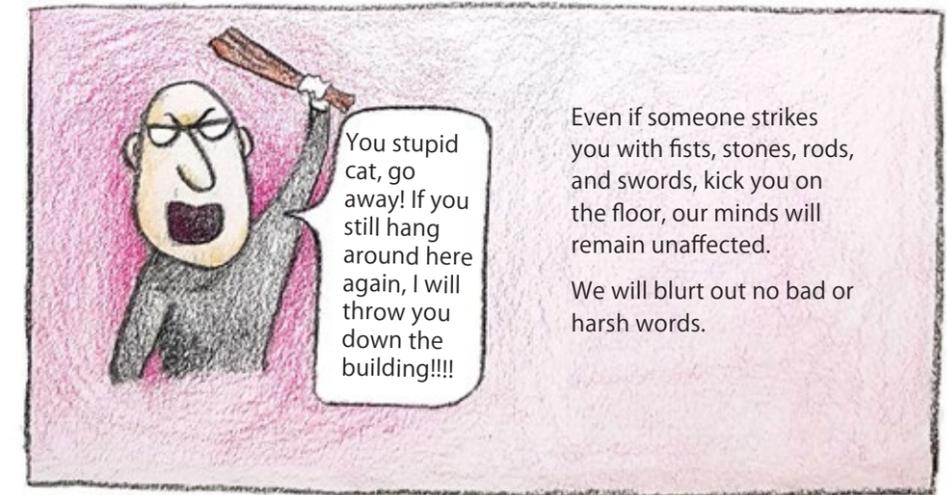
No, I am not angry with the people who abandoned me. I wish them happiness and will meditate on spreading a heart of love to that person. To carry hatred in our hearts is like carrying a load of trash. Always practise loving-kindness even to your enemies. Getting angry does nobody any good.



How is that even possible?

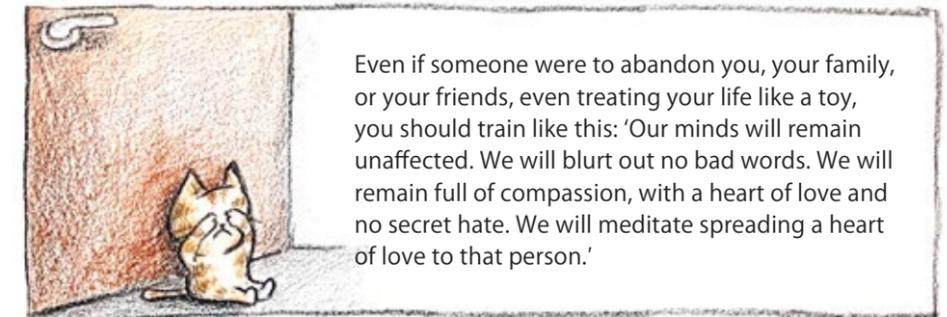


Listen to me Ginger, anger is like a disease. It grows in your mind. If you think cancer is bad, anger is much worse. It may take many lifetimes to eradicate it.

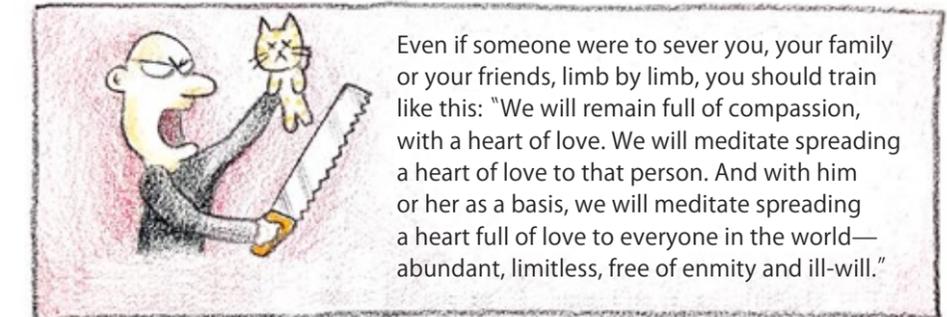


You stupid cat, go away! If you still hang around here again, I will throw you down the building!!!!

Even if someone strikes you with fists, stones, rods, and swords, kick you on the floor, our minds will remain unaffected.
We will blurt out no bad or harsh words.



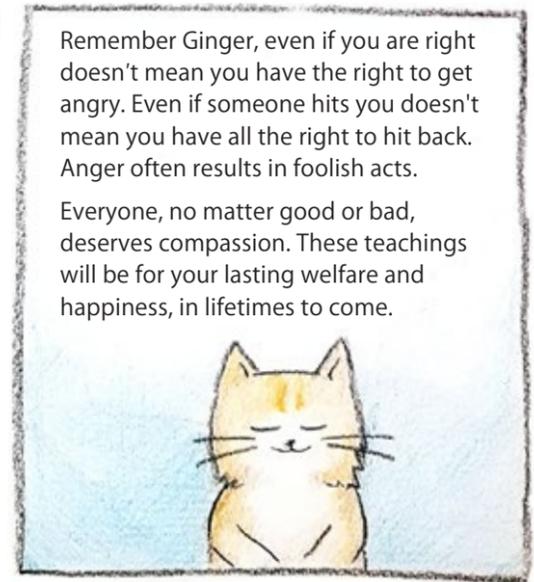
Even if someone were to abandon you, your family, or your friends, even treating your life like a toy, you should train like this: 'Our minds will remain unaffected. We will blurt out no bad words. We will remain full of compassion, with a heart of love and no secret hate. We will meditate spreading a heart of love to that person.'



Even if someone were to sever you, your family or your friends, limb by limb, you should train like this: "We will remain full of compassion, with a heart of love. We will meditate spreading a heart of love to that person. And with him or her as a basis, we will meditate spreading a heart full of love to everyone in the world—abundant, limitless, free of enmity and ill-will."



Yes, I understand now Siha. It is because of my ignorance and ego that I always get angry. I sometimes think that getting angry shows that I'm right.



Remember Ginger, even if you are right doesn't mean you have the right to get angry. Even if someone hits you doesn't mean you have all the right to hit back. Anger often results in foolish acts.
Everyone, no matter good or bad, deserves compassion. These teachings will be for your lasting welfare and happiness, in lifetimes to come.

Everyday Zen *When You're Silent, It Speaks*

Illustration & text: Johny Tay



*How do you communicate with the void?
If you speak it is silent; if you're silent it speaks.*

Imagine a large block of concrete. It serves little purpose except to occupy space but if you carve spaces into the block, emptying out material to create rooms, doors and windows, the block turns into a house.

Imagine life as a piece of musical composition. If the composition has no pauses, it would cease to have meaning—all you would hear is one continuous drone. It would make no sense. Add the pauses between the notes, and the composition becomes a valid piece of music.

Just as spaces within a block make it a house, and pauses within a composition make it musical, the 'gaps' between our everyday events give our

lives true meaning. It is also the gaps between our thoughts that allow us to see our true nature.

How can we find these 'gaps'? By stilling both body and mind; such discipline is best built from a meditative practice. Once focus from both body and mind is attained, "silence" emerges.

Yet this silence is not the same thing as the voidness of anything. It is empty; yet it is substantial. Thus, as expounded in the Heart Sutra, "form is not other than emptiness".

What is 'it'? It is the thousand winds that blow; it is the sunlight's glint on snow; it is the gentle tropical drizzle; it is whimsical afternoon cloud. It is formless, nameless, odourless, colourless... You feel it just beyond the quietness of a still mind and betwixt your breaths through your nostrils.

It is the true essence of the Universe, the supramundane void of true reality.

Only by contemplating the silence, can you realise that life was never about fame, attainments, possessions, or even 'you'. It is the gaps between each experience, between each breath, that herald the true essence of life. And when this is realised, you learn the strength to let go of your attachments.

There should be no seeking. Seeking creates duality—a perception of 'have' and 'have not'. True reality cannot be realised this way.

By contemplating the silence, Prince Siddhartha attained Nirvana and became Shakyamuni Buddha. Thereafter, the Buddha spent much of his remaining days exhorting the importance of meditation.

As long as you have the strength to take the next breath and contemplate the silence, you have the strength to surmount the trappings of *samsara*. With that strength lies your potential to reach true awakening. ☺

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Dharma practice consists of developing the ability to be present to our experience in order to learn from it. What do we seek to learn from our experience?

The Four Noble Truths; how the presence of defilements causes suffering in the mind, and how the abandonment of defilements leads to the cessation of suffering.

Look, investigate. Where is the suffering right now? Examine your mind slowly. Suffering can range from severe anguish to the subtlest discontent.

Ask yourself: where is the craving? Look for the connection.

Learn to let go of the craving to get and consume.

Learn to let go of the craving to be, to be seen as, to be known as, to become.

Learn to let go of the craving to get rid of, to escape from, whenever and wherever you are, whatever you are doing, whoever you are with. This is the practice.

Any mental discomfort that arises is a useful indication of where work needs to be done. We become conscious of our pride and conceit, our fears and attachments at such moments. We don't dismiss or repress such feelings.

We say, "Yes, that's it! Right there." We know that unless we address these things and deal with them skilfully, our minds will never know true peace.

Strength of mind doesn't mean the ability to ignore unpleasant feelings.

It means that when it is appropriate or unavoidable, we know how to peacefully co-exist with them, without letting the mind become anxious or depressed, without falling prey to panic or fear. It is possible to do this because of the simple fact that discomfort and the awareness of discomfort are two different things. ☺

True Dharma Practice

Text : Ajahn Jayasaro



example. It appears to us to be a real cracker. There is something about it or in it that makes it a cracker and not anything else. It is one solid cracker, which exists "out there," independent of causes and conditions, independent of parts, and independent of our minds and the concepts and labels we apply to it.

Q What does it mean to have the wisdom to realise reality? – I.F.

A: To be free from our difficulties in the cycle of constantly recurring problems, the Buddha said we must eradicate their root cause: the ignorance that grasps at a truly-existent, independently-existent self. This is done by gaining wisdom, realising emptiness, which is the third principal realisation of the path.

The emptiness perceived by this wisdom is the lack of all fantasised ways of existing that we've projected onto people and phenomena. What is it that people and phenomena are empty of? They lack being independently, truly or inherently-existent. Unfortunately, from beginningless time, we've been so accustomed to the seeming appearance of independently-existent phenomena and have been so used to grasping at this appearance as correct, that we fail to detect that it is false. We aren't aware that people and phenomena do not exist in the way they appear to.

How do things appear to exist to us? Let's take a cracker, as an

example. But, if the cracker really exists in this way, then when we analyse and search for this real cracker, we should definitely be able to find it.

If we break the cracker in half, is the real cracker in one half or in the other half? Or is it in both? If we say the cracker is in both, then we must have two crackers since we have two separate pieces. If we say the cracker is in one half rather than in the other, why is one piece the cracker while the other piece, which is made of the same material, isn't?

Even if we do accept the bigger piece as being the cracker, then what about it or in it is the cracker? We should be able to find the cracker and the "crackerness" quality somewhere in it. But if we continue to break it into pieces in an attempt to find the real cracker, we'll end up with a mess, not a cracker! We'll have a pile of crumbs, and what about that is a cracker?

The real, independent cracker that appeared to exist is unfindable when we analyse and attempt to locate it.

If there were some inherent cracker there, we should have been able to find it either among its parts or separate from its parts. But, it isn't its parts, and it isn't anywhere else either. If the cracker were separate from its parts, then the toasted combination of flour and water could be on this plate and the cracker could be across the room. That's hardly the case, for apart from the toasted dough, what else could be called "cracker"?

Nor is the cracker the collection of its parts, for a collection is just a group of parts. If none of the parts by itself is a cracker, how can many parts together be an independent cracker with some cracker-ness quality? Just as a collection of non-butterflies—for example grasshoppers—doesn't make a butterfly, a group of non-crackers—that is, a group of crumbs—can't suddenly make a real cracker that exists as a cracker on its own.

This leads us to conclude there was no inherent cracker to start with. In other words, the real, solid and findable cracker that appeared to us and that we grasped as existing independently, doesn't exist. That's not to say there's no cracker there at all, only that the independent cracker doesn't exist in the way it appeared to. It doesn't exist in the way we thought it did.

However, the cracker still exists. If it didn't, we couldn't eat it! Although it doesn't exist in an independent fashion, it does exist dependently. It depends on its causes and conditions: the flour, water, baker and so on. It depends on its parts: the various sections that compose it, as well as its colour and shape,

its smell, taste, and so on. And, it also depends on our conventionally conceiving of it and labelling it "cracker." As a society, we've agreed to consider this accumulation of parts that serves a particular function as a unique phenomenon, and give it the name "cracker" to distinguish it from other things.

How does the cracker exist? A group of atoms are put together in a certain pattern. Our minds look at that, conceive it to be one thing, and give it the name "cracker." It becomes a cracker because all of us have conceived of it in a similar way and have agreed, by the force of social convention, to give it the name "cracker."

If there is no essential, independent cracker, is there an independent me? Is there a real "I," a findable person?

Am I my body? If I am, then which part of my body is me? My arm? My stomach? My brain? All of my organs are composed of atoms. They aren't me. Nor is my entire body me, for if it were, then after I die, my corpse would be me. I am something more than the atoms that compose the body, for physical matter alone, without consciousness, can't perceive objects, and I am cognisant.

Then we examine, am I my mind? If so, then am I my eye consciousness which perceives colour and shape? My ear consciousness which perceives sound? My mental consciousness, the one that thinks? Am I a particular personality characteristic? If I were my anger, then I should always be angry. If I were my intelligence, then I should always be intelligent.

Nor am I a collection of all these various mental qualities and states of mind, because a collection of things each of which aren't a real, independent me can't become me.

The collection of my body and mind isn't an independent self, for it's a collection of parts. It's dependent on those parts. How could a real independent me be found in the collection of my body and mind—neither of which is me?

Nor do I exist as something separate from the body and mind. If I did, then I should be able to identify and find my self where there was neither my body nor my mind. That would mean that I could be in one place, while my body and mind were in another! That's clearly impossible. The self, or I, is linked and related to the body and mind.

Are we some independent entity that goes from one lifetime to the next? At the time of death, our minds absorb into more and more subtle states. The subtlest level of mind goes from one life to the next. However, this extremely subtle mind is constantly changing each moment. It never remains the same in two consecutive instants, just as on a physical level, the arrangement of electrons in an atom changes in each instant. We can't point to one moment of our mind which has been and always will be us. We aren't yesterday's mind, we aren't today's mind or tomorrow's mind. We aren't the mind that leaves this body at death, nor are we the mind that is reborn. What we call "I" is dependent upon all of these, but it isn't any one of them.

Remembering the example of a river can help us to understand

this. The Mississippi River isn't its banks. It's not the water or the rocks or the streams that feed into it. A real, independent river appears to exist when we aren't analysing, but as soon as we question, "What is this independent river that appears to exist?" we can't find anything to point to. Yet, there is a dependently-existing river.

Similarly, our mindstream isn't any particular moment of mind, nor is it the collection of moments. Such a truly-existent mindstream doesn't exist. Our mind is empty of true or inherent existence. Still, there is the continuum of moments of mind that form the mindstream, and this takes rebirth.

The "I" or the self doesn't exist independently of the body and mind. Nor can it be found within the body or mind. Nor is it the body and mind together. In other words, the solid, truly-existing "I" we felt when we were angry can't be found anywhere. Why not? Because it doesn't exist. The "I" is empty of being independently-existent. This is what is meant by selflessness or emptiness. It's important to understand that realising emptiness doesn't destroy the "I." An independent, solid, real "I" never existed. What we are destroying is the ignorance which holds on to the idea that such a solid "I" exists. ☺

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



KOKEE DELIGHTS: Delightfully Healthy



dessert. Attracted by the rare herb used to make the dessert, I ordered the **Purple Yam (Shan Yao) with Lotus seed soup** (S\$4), which is beneficial for treating dry cough, asthma and diabetes.

The Straits Times had previously featured their delicious *Ang Ku*



Kueh, an oval-shaped sticky Chinese pastry filled with sweet peanut or bean filling in the centre. Its skin is made with sweet potato flour, presumably easier to digest than those commonly made from glutinous rice flour. Unfortunately, I did not get to try the *kuehs* during my visit, so I will surely return soon for their *Ang Ku Kueh* and the rest of its healthy menu! 🍵

Kokee Delight is a relatively small stall serving a wide variety of healthy food options, all reasonably-priced, such as Thunder Tea with Organic Brown Rice, *Bak Kut Teh* with organic brown rice or noodle and Organic Bibimbap.

I was down with flu recently and was looking for hydrating and healthy food to help me recover. So what better ways to nurse a flu than with nutritious food like porridge?

I had the **Mixed Grain Porridge (S\$4)** at the newly-opened *Kokee Delights* at Bukit Timah Plaza. The porridge is made with grains, diced tofu, corn, beans and carrots containing all the vitamins I need. As the stall's name suggests, I was delightfully better after eating the porridge and felt that I had space for



Overall Ratings:

Food: 7/10
Ambience: 5/10
Service: 6/10

Address:

Bukit Timah Plaza,
No.1 Jln Anak Bukit
#B1-50, Central Singapore,
Singapore, 588996

Opening Hours:

Mon to Sun,
10am to 7pm
Closed on 2nd and 4th
Wednesday every month.

<https://www.foodpanda.sg/restaurant/w0zo/kokee-delights>

Text & Photos: **Chloe Huang**



D'Life Signature: Delicious extensive *zichar* menu



Zichar is a familiar food terminology in Singapore and it refers to stalls that serve a wide variety of Chinese home-cooked meals. The wide selection typically includes rice, noodles, vegetables, meat and seafood dishes. Is there a recommended *zichar* place for vegetarians?

Yes, of course!

Real Food, located at Novena Square 2 has closed! The good news is, **D'Life Signature** has taken over the place with its extensive (read: really extensive!) *zichar* menu. There are a total of 151 vegetarian dishes to choose from, 23 types of drinks and usually 4 types of vegan cakes.

Being a vegetarian restaurant, the menu is categorised into Chef's recommendations, rice, noodle, congee, western food, spaghetti, pizza, salad, mushroom, tofu, vegetables, textured protein, soup and home-made soup.

Overall Ratings

Food: 8.5/10
Ambience: 8/10
Service: 8/10

Address

D'life Signature
10 Sinaran Drive Square 2
#B1-105/106/129
Singapore 307506
Contact number: 6909 9525

Opening Hours

10am to 10pm daily

My recommendations are:

1. Yam Ring with Monkey Head Mushroom with Dried Chilli (\$16)

Generous portion of monkey head mushroom. The vegetables, tomato and capsicum, give this dish an added flavour.

2. Cereal Abalone Mushroom (\$12)

Well-coated with crispy cereals. The texture of the abalone mushroom is perfect for this dish.

3. Sambal Sweet Potato Leaves (\$9)

Even without the use of shrimp paste, the vegetarian sambal sauce is just as flavourful.

4. Strawberry Holiday (\$5.90)

Vegan cake that is elegant and delicious.



Text & Photos: **Jos Tan**

Details are available at <https://www.facebook.com/Dlife-Signature-蔬品軒-221572468568605/>



Herbal Black-eyed Pea Soup

If you are an advocate of herbal therapy to fortify your body against free radicals, environmental pollutants and other stressors, you will enjoy this concoction.

INGREDIENTS (SERVES FOUR)

2 cups	Organic mixed brown rice (brown, red and black rice)
80g	Organic black-eyed pea
200g	Radish
150g	Carrot
20g	Astragalus (<i>Huang Qi</i>)
20g	Root of codonopsis (<i>Dang Shen</i>)
12pcs	Black dates
2tbsps	Goji berries (wolfberries)
2 litres	Filtered water

SEASONING

½ tsp	Rock salt
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PREPARATION

1. Rinse and soak black-eyed pea in filtered water overnight. Drain water and rinse clean.
2. Wash and peel the skin of carrot and radish before cutting them into medium-size cubes.
3. Rinse Chinese herbs, *Huang Qi* and *Dang Shen*, goji berries and black dates with filtered water.

METHOD

1. Bring filtered water to boil in a pot.
2. Add black-eyed pea and Chinese herbs to cook for 30 minutes.
3. Next, add carrot and radish to cook for 15 minutes.
7. Then, add black dates, goji berries and seasoning to cook for 5 minutes before turning off the fire.
8. This nourishing herbal soup can be served on its own or with organic brown rice.

Recipe & photo provided courtesy of Vinitha Ang, NutriHub Culinary Art.

More nutritious plant-based whole food recipes can be found from "*Get Healthy and Save \$\$\$ thru' Vegan NutriMeal*" available at the Awareness Hub, Bras Basah Complex, #03-15.

You can also call **Awareness Hub** at 6336 5067, or turn to page 72 for more details on our vegetarian cooking classes.



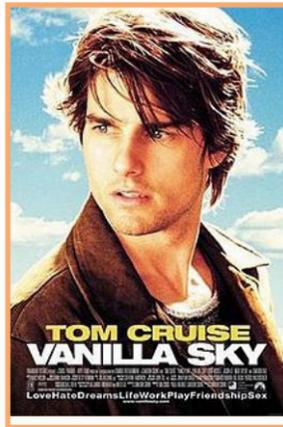
The Hopping Game

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

Mindfulness practice promotes attunement to others through the careful observation of the outer manifestations of emotional and sensory experience. There are several mindfulness-based mirroring games that encourage heightened awareness of other people in a fun and playful way.

The Hopping Game is one such game. It integrates mirroring with breath awareness and concentration.

- Children make a choo-choo train by standing in a circle with each child facing the back of the next child in the circle.
- Place a cushion on the floor between each person in the train.
- Everyone stands in mountain pose and pays attention to the sensation of breathing.
- When the leader hits the drum, everyone hops over the cushion. Say at each beat of the drum, "Stand, breathe, focus, hop".
- As the children become more experienced, the leader can make the game progressively more difficult by omitting verbal instructions. The fewer the prompts, the faster the train moves.
- The prompts go from, "Stand, breathe, focus, hop" to "Breathe, focus, hop" to "Focus, hop" to "Hop" and ultimately, students are cued by one or more consecutive drumbeats.
- Before long, everyone is focusing and hopping without verbal prompts.
- This game deftly promotes awareness of other people. If a child doesn't pay attention to other kids in the train, she will likely crash into the person in front of her, or the person behind will crash into her. ☺



Vanilla Sky

Directed by: Cameron Crowe
Starring: Tom Cruise, Penelope Cruz, Kurt Russell, Cameron Diaz

This unusual, but brilliantly symbolic, movie has us questioning a lot of things right from the start and indeed keeps us on our toes throughout, so that it ends up playing a role as a meditation on the meaning of reality. The events seem real, and yet they also don't seem real, so you are always asking yourself what is really going on, in the sense of "Is he simply dreaming?" and as a result of that, more pertinently, "Am I dreaming this reality?" As the movie progresses, scenarios become increasingly strange. We find ourselves continuously demanding information to the unending question of "What happened?" The movie dishes out the answers one by one.

Vanilla Sky really puts everything we thought we ever knew about life into perspective and challenges our current understanding of our consciousness. The meaning of the title, *Vanilla Sky*, complements this, and is introduced in the movie as a painting by Monet where the pastel colours of the sky are all merged into one another so that they cannot be separated.

Fairly near the beginning, David, only son of a rich publisher, shows the original of

this painting to a woman, whom he is falling in love with at first sight. His best friend has brought her to his party. She's different from the shallow women he's used to date and ironically her name, 'Sofia' means 'wisdom'. Everything changes for him that evening, when she inspires him to shift his attitude from that of a playboy to someone with more sense of responsibility and heartfelt passion for life. But despite his newly-found love for Sofia, things go dreadfully wrong when his current girlfriend stalks him and becomes out of control with jealousy.

Another continuing drama is his relation with the board of directors at his late father's firm. They were left with practically half the company after his father's death. They are, however, beholden to David, whose share is 51%, but there's a continuous undercurrent of him potentially being ousted by them at any time. One is continuously asking the question if they are to blame for whatever it is that happened, which the movie unravels to us bit by bit.

The backdrop of the whole movie is from a large prison cell, where David is being held for murder. Piece by piece, we can put together the process of what led up to that. But to make this more eerie and indeed raise more questions, he's also wearing a mask, as a tactic to hide himself in more ways than just simply concealing his face. We eventually come to know that he doesn't want to divulge what really happened, because he doesn't believe it anymore. It is this that kickstarts the truth of the matter being revealed.

Throughout the movie, different states of consciousness are exposed as different emanating states of our consciousness, and indeed we come to learn that David is experiencing these varying states of consciousness. But what we eventually discern is from which state of being he is experiencing them. This is where the twist of the whole movie is revealed. ☺

*Thus shall you think of this fleeting world:
A star at dawn,
A bubble in a stream,
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud,
A flickering lamp,
A phantom, and a dream.
- The Diamond Sutra*



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Dharma Propagation Division
Awaken Publishing & Design
88 Bright Hill Road
Singapore 574117

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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:

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Issue 44 / May 2019

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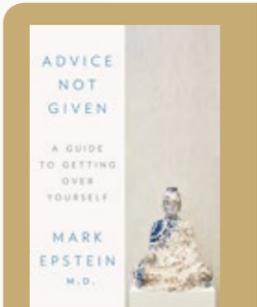
READ

Marvel over the brightness of the human spirit Text: Esther Thien



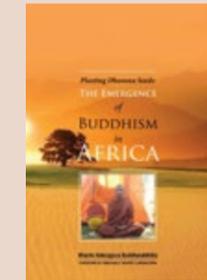
Love for Imperfect Things: How to Accept Yourself in a World Striving for Perfection
By Haemin Sunim
S\$23.70

Haemin Sunim is one of my favourite authors, and this #1 international bestseller is no different in the style of Sunim to bring more love, compassion and wisdom to our world. He shows us how we can find beauty in the most imperfect of things, including our very own selves, and the ways to loving ourselves first. Being ourselves is enough. Our existence is already enough. The simplicity and beauty of the teachings go straight to your heart.



Advice Not Given: A Guide to Getting Over Yourself
By Mark Epstein, M.D.
S\$26.70

In *Advice Not Given: A Guide to Getting Over Yourself*, psychiatrist Dr Mark Epstein reveals how Buddhism and Western psychotherapy, two traditions that developed in entirely different times and places, identify the ego as the limiting factor in our well-being. In this book elucidating a brilliant interchange between the fundamentals of Buddhism and the insights of psychotherapy, he offers in exceptionally lucid language a collection of stories and personal revelations with the capacity to inspire you into rearranging your perspective for the better, giving you a sense of peace and acceptance of yourself.



Planting Dhamma Seeds: The Emergence of Buddhism in Africa
By Bhante Kaboggoza
Buddharakkhita
S\$22.90

Planting Dhamma Seeds: The Emergence of Buddhism in Africa is a deeply inspiring tale of an African monk who went against all odds to nurture a Buddhist community in Uganda. It tells the unique story of Bhante Buddharakkhita's own personal spiritual journey which brought him from Uganda to India, Tibet, Thailand, Myanmar and the United States in his quest to study Buddhism and train as a Buddhist monk. And how he came full circle by bringing the Dharma back home to his motherland and sowing the seeds of Dharma in Africa by overcoming innumerable obstacles with sheer determination, dedication and compassionate resolve to establish the Uganda Buddhist Centre. This is a book you won't want to put down as it celebrates and brings forth the brightness of the human spirit. ☺

All books are available at Awareness Place stores.



NEW RELEASES!



Read Our New Books Today!

Get a copy from:

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
<https://issuu.com/awakenpublishing>
<https://www.kmspks.org/dharma-resources/publication>



Seeking Fulfilling Careers?

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS) is an established Buddhist organisation with a vision to be the exemplary spiritual and service sanctuary for the spread and practice of Buddhism; one that is guided by compassion and wisdom to enrich the lives of the community at large.

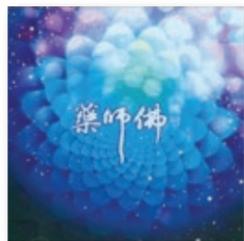
If you are passionate about joining us in realising our vision and take pride in producing great work, we welcome you to join our big family.

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/career to view our job vacancies.

Please glue here and do not staple





The Chant of Medicine Buddha
By Venerable Sik Kwang Sheng
S\$10.00



Tibetan Heart Sutra
By Imee Ooi
S\$12.00

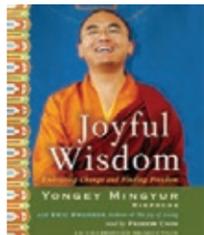
Recorded by Ocean Butterflies Music and produced by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in homage to the Medicine Buddha, this one-hour long album consists of two tracks that sing praise to the name of Medicine Buddha. The first is sung by Venerable Sik Kwang Sheng, abbot of the monastery, supported by a medley of singers and melodic instruments. The second is a pure instrumental version of the song. Feel peace arising in your heart as you listen to the tracks.

In Imee's signature style, *Tibetan Heart Sutra* is a beautiful album containing two tracks. The first is the chant of the Tibetan Heart Sutra that is gently and tenderly brought to life by Imee's ethereal vocals. The second, *Vessel of The Great Wisdom*, is a track created from various tonal vibrations and beats to awaken the consciousness. ☺

Both titles are available at Awareness Place stores.

Connecting you to the wisdom of the Dharma 24/7 Text: Esther Thien

Dharma Apps



Joyful Wisdom: Embracing Change and Finding Freedom
Penguin Random House Audio
\$19.99

If you have always wanted to read this book but did not have the time, consider learning it by engaging the ear consciousness through this audiobook. *Joyful Wisdom* is written by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche, one of the most renowned Buddhist scholars and teachers, whose teachings have inspired people of all faiths and walks of life around the world.

In this audiobook, narrated by Feodor Chin, Mingyur Rinpoche addresses the timely and timeless problem of anxiety. Instead of escaping from or succumbing to it, he teaches a third option of looking directly at anxiety and the other disturbing emotions and problems we face in life as stepping stones to healing and freedom.

Through befriending them and working with them, we can achieve an enduring authentic experience in which our inherent wisdom, confidence, clarity and joy shine through.

This audiobook comes in three parts. The first identifies the true source of our unease; the second describes meditation methods that enable us to transform our life experiences into deeper insights; and the third talks about application of these methods to common emotional, physical and personal problems.

A valuable and insightful book for anyone who wishes to be wiser in dealing with the challenges of life! ☺



Available on Google Play and Apple Store.

Scan this to download app



Meditate with timely reminders of contemplative quotes



If you are looking to get a handy carrier or a small lunch-time bag, you can consider the latest line of bags brought in by Awareness Place.

Crafted in satin and suede-like materials with quality workmanship, these bags which you can sling across your body come in various sizes, colours and styles, and are suitable for keeping prayer beads and texts, or nifty as a lovely lunch-time pouch to keep your cell phone, cards, some cash and coins, or simply just to store personal items, accessories and make-up.

They are also thoughtfully embroidered with decorative motifs, auspicious verses and contemplative quotes to give timely reminders to breathe, relax and be at ease when stress becomes overwhelming at work and in life.

Priced between S\$15.00 and S\$36.00. ☺



Calendar of Events 2019

05 May 08 Aug



DHARMA

• CEREMONY | PRAYERS

Vesak Light Transference, Aspiration-making Ceremony

A ceremony that signifies the passing of the light of wisdom in every direction of the world to dispel the darkness of ignorance.

11 May | Sat | 6pm onwards
Venue: In front Hall of Great Strength
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.

18 May, 3pm – 19 May, 4pm | Sat – Sun
Venue: KMSPKS
Enquiry: 6849 5300
Visit www.kmspks.org/vesak for details

3-Step, 1-Bow Ceremony

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

18 May | Sat | 5pm onwards (for ticket holders)
10pm onwards (for non-ticket holders)
Venue: KMSPKS
Enquiry: 6849 5300



Threefold Refuge & Five Precepts Ceremony (Conducted in Mandarin)

14 Jul | Sun | 11.45am – 2.30pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form
Free Admission
Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org
2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

Sutra Recitation Group Practice

(Conducted in Mandarin)

Diamond Sutra Prayer | Every Sun | 2pm | Hall of Great Compassion

Pureland Group Practice | Every Sun | 9.30am | Hall of Great Compassion

Medicine Buddha Sutra Prayer | Every Sat | 7.30pm | Hall of Great Compassion

The Great Compassion Prayer | Every 27th of lunar month | 10am | Hall of Great Compassion

The Great Compassion Prayer@Guanyin Dan | 19th of second, sixth & ninth lunar months | 10am | Hall of Great Compassion
Free Admission

Ullambana Prayer

(Conducted in Mandarin)

15 Aug | Thu | 8.30am – 9pm
Mass offering: \$50 (outdoor) \$100 (aircon)
\$280 (individual table)
Registration: 17 June onwards till fully registered
Enquiry: 6849 5333

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Prayer

(Conducted in Mandarin)

1 – 9 Aug | 8pm – 9.30pm
Venue: Hall of Great Compassion
Free Admission

• TALKS | WORKSHOPS | COURSES

English Buddhism Course Year 1 | By Venerable

27 Feb - 30 Oct | Wed | 7.30pm - 9pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org

English Buddhism Course Year 2 | By Venerable

25 Feb - 21 Oct | Mon | 7.30pm - 9pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org

English Buddhism Course Year 3 | By Venerable

27 Feb - 16 Oct | Wed | 7.30pm - 9pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Fee: \$110 for full year (3 modules)

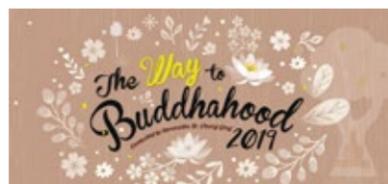
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org

English D-Talk Series

Dharma talks by Ven. Chuan Xuan
7, 14 & 21 Jul | Sun | 12.30pm – 2.30pm

Dharma talks by Ven. Dr Chuan Sheng

8, 15 & 22 Sep | Sun | 12.30pm – 2.30pm
Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom
Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org



The Way to Buddhahood | By Venerable

This course contains methods that leads one to the supreme Buddha realm.

Module 1 (13 lessons)

10 Jan - 11 Jul | alternate Thu | 7.30pm - 9pm

Module 2 (11 lessons)

25 Jul - 26 Dec | alternate Thu | 7.30pm - 9pm

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom

Fee: \$90 (for Modules 1 & 2)

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | 6849 5345 | ded@kmspks.org

The Eco-crisis:

What has Gratitude Got to Do with It?

Understand the causes and impact of the eco-crisis we are facing now, and how we can save earth and ourselves.

7 Jul | Sun | 9am – 11am

Venue: VHCMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form

Free Admission

Registration:

1. Online: <http://bit.ly/Eco-crisis>

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

Threefold Refuge & Five Precepts

Preparatory Class

Teachings on the Observance of Threefold

Refuge & Five Precepts

14 Jul | Sun | 9am – 10.30am

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom

Free Admission

Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

Buddhist Etiquette & Introduction to Cultivation

Teachings on Basic Practice,

Observance of Buddhist Etiquette

13 Jul | Sat | 9am – 11.30am

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Classroom

Free Admission

Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org



MEDITATION



Relaxation & Mindfulness Meditation (Bilingual) | by Venerable Kwang Sheng

Basic Meditation which involves Body Scanning and Relaxation

6 May – 17 Jun | Mon | 7.45pm – 9.15pm

Venue: VHCMH | Level 4 | Hall of No Form

Fee: \$30

Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

5-Day Vipassana Retreat

A stay-out retreat with Sayadaw U Nyanaramsi

1-5 Jun | Sat – Wed | 8am – 8pm

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Ju Yuan Fang | (Meeting Point A)

Fee: \$150

Registration:

1. Online: <http://bit.do/5dvvr191>

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org



5-day Vipassana Meditation Retreat

A stay-out retreat with Venerable Sayadaw U Pyinyarnanda

1 – 5 Jul | Mon – Fri | 8am – 8pm

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Ju Yuan Fang | (Meeting Point A)

Fee: \$150

Registration:

1. Online: <http://goo.gl/jul5dmr>

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

Weekly Meditation Group Practice

Every Mon & Fri

Venue: Hall of Great Compassion / Hall of Great Strength

Free Admission

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | ded@kmspks.org

For the latest schedule, please refer to <http://bit.do/2019WMGP>.



LIFESTYLE

• TOUR

KMSPKS Guided Tour

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

30 Jun, 28 Jul & 25 Aug | Sun | 10am – 12pm

Venue: VHCMH | Level 1 | Ju Yuan Fang

Free Admission

Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

3. Awareness Hub 11.30am – 6pm

Enquiry: 6849 5300 | guidedtour@kmspks.org



• ART

Rhythm Rejuvenation

* Stress Reduction and Relaxation
* Enhance Body Immunity through Rhythm
* Develop Self-love and Awareness
* Guided Imagery for Empowered Living
* Wholesome Support & Connection
16 Jun | Sun | 3pm – 5pm
Fee: \$30

Zentangle Beginner's Course

9 Jun | Sun | 2pm – 6pm
Fee: \$75
Material Fee: \$15 (payable to instructor)

Zentangle Intermediate Class (Black Tile)

Learn how to draw on black tiles using white and gold gelly roll pens and white charcoal pen for shading and highlights.

14 Jul | Sun | 2pm – 5pm

Fee: \$70

Material Fee: \$15 (payable to instructor)

Zentangle Intermediate Class (Zendala)

21 Jul | Sun | 2pm – 5pm

Fee: \$70

Material Fee: \$15 (payable to instructor)

Mother's Day Floral Workshop

9 May | Thu | 7pm – 9pm

Fee: \$26

Material Fee: \$33 (payable to instructor)



Western Floral Arrangement and Hand Bouquet (II)

Learn classic flower bouquet-making and table arrangements as well as unique geometric designs.

4 – 25 Jul | Thu | 7pm – 9pm

Fee: \$80 (four sessions)

Material Fee: \$30 (per session, payable to instructor)



Seniors & Art

10, 17, 24 and 31 Jul | Wed | 1.30pm to 3pm
Free Admission

100 Bliss Blanket Workshop

Let us rekindle a tradition that delivers and expresses love through the 100 bliss blanket to people we love and care about.

2 and 23 May | Thu |

Grp 1: 4pm to 6pm | Grp 2: 7pm to 9pm

Fee: \$40 (two sessions)

Material fee: \$48 (payable to instructor)

Venue: Awareness Hub

• CHILDREN

Children's Art – Colours of Life

This programme is specifically designed for children between 4 and 12 years old.

25 May – 27 Jul, 3 Aug – 5 Oct | Sat | 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Fee: \$60 (for 10 sessions, excluding art materials)

Inner Kids Workshop (aged 5–9 years)

Jun 2, 9, 16 | Sun | 10am – 1pm

Fee: \$100 (for 3 sessions)

Inner Kids Summer Camp (aged 7–11 years)

Jun 5, 12, 19 | Wed | 9am – 4pm

Camp Fee: \$180 for 3 days

Lunch/snacks: \$20 for 3 days

Venue: Awareness Hub

Registration:

1. Online: www.kmspks.org

2. Reception Office@KMSPKS 9am – 4pm

3. Awareness Hub 11.30am – 6pm

Enquiry: 63365067 awarenesshub@kmspks.org

• CULINARY



Indonesian Vegan Cuisine

5 May | Sun | 3pm – 6.30pm
Fee: \$88

Singapore Hawker Fare II (Vegan Style)

2 Jun | Sun | 3pm – 6.30pm
Fee: \$88

Japanese Nutri Vegan Cuisine

18 Aug | Sun | 3pm – 6.30pm
Fee: \$88

Venue: Awareness Hub

• WELLNESS

Raise your ESI for Workplace Success

Discover how to turn negativity into positive vibes with tools and resources from this workshop.

30 Jun & 7 Jul | Sun | 9.30am to 5pm

Fee: \$168 (for 2 sessions)

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (Second Run)

Learn how to cope with stress in daily life through the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme.

12 Jul – 30 Aug | every Fri | 7.30pm – 9.45pm

Except 9 Aug (Fri and PH) 10am – 12.15pm

12 Aug (Mon) 9.30am – 4.30pm (full day)

Fee: \$300 (9 sessions including 1 full-day session)



Balancing Body Meridian through Acupressure

26 May, 28 Jul, 25 Aug | Sun | 3pm – 5pm

Fee: \$30 (per session)

Health Seminar: Food Allergies, their Causes & Remedies

19 Aug | Mon | 2.30pm – 4pm

Fee: \$30

Yin Yoga for Beginners

A yoga practice to stimulate the organs and meridians

7 May – 9 Jul | Tue | 6.15pm – 7.30pm

16 Jul – 17 Sep | Tue | 6.15pm – 7.30pm

Fee: \$170 (10 sessions) Walk-in \$23 per lesson

Yin Yoga

7 May – 9 Jul | Tue | 7.35pm – 8.50pm

18 May – 20 Jul | Sat | 12pm – 1.15pm

16 Jul – 17 Sep | Tue | 7.35pm – 8.50pm

27 Jul – 28 Sep | Sat | 12pm – 1.15pm

2019 卫塞节
Vesak Day

知恩报恩

Season of Gratitude

浸入深具启发性的卫塞体验，请参与我们为一个月期的卫塞庆典，以感恩世尊慈悲教导众生离苦之道。

For an inspiring and immersive Vesak experience, join us in our month-long Vesak fiesta as we express gratitude to the Buddha for his compassion towards all beings by teaching us the way to be free from suffering.

助人无碍
Acts of Benevolence

散发希望 Hair For Hope

1/5 | 星期三 Wed | 9.30am~1.30pm
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 4楼 | 无相殿
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Level 4 | Hall of No Form

捐血活动 Blood Donation Drive

25/5 | 星期六 Sat | 9.00am~3.00pm
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 1楼
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall | Level 1

讲座
Talks

Technology of the Happy Blissful Heart, Here and Now by Ajahn Sumedho

4/5 | Sat | 2.00pm~3.30pm
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Level 4 | Hall of No Form

佛心慧语 | 传雄法师 主讲

11/5 | 星期六 | 3.00pm~5.00pm
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 4楼 | 无相殿

传灯·许愿
Light Transference & Aspirations

传灯与许愿仪式 Light Transference & Aspiration-making Ceremony

11/5 | 星期六 Sat | 傍晚6时以后 6.00pm onwards
大雄宝殿前 | In front of Hall of Great Strength

浴佛
Bathing of Prince Siddhartha

浴佛 Bathing of Prince Siddhartha

- 18/5 (星期六 Sat) 6.00pm~19/5 (星期日 Sun) 7.00pm
大悲殿 Hall of Great Compassion
- 18/5 (星期六 Sat) 6.45pm~19/5 (星期日 Sun) 5.30pm
大雄宝殿 Hall of Great Strength

三步一拜
3-Step, 1-Bow Ceremony

三步一拜 3-Step, 1-Bow Ceremony

预计完成时间为2小时 *Estimated completion time is 2 hours*

18/5 (星期六 Sat) 5.00pm~19/5 (星期日 Sun) 7.00am
大雄宝殿前 In front of Hall of Great Strength

注 NOTE

请依据参加券上的时间前来参与。无参加卷者，请于5月18日晚上10时至隔天上午7时在宏船老和尚纪念馆4楼排队参加公开组。
Please adhere to the timing stated on your ticket to participate. Non-ticket holders may join the Open Queue at Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall, Level 4 from 10pm on 18 May till next day 7am.

参加卷分发详情 Distribution of tickets

12/5 | 星期日 Sun | 12.00pm~2.00pm
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 4楼 | 无相殿
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Level 4 | Hall of No Form

注 NOTE

参加卷先到先得。每人只限领取2张参加卷。本寺不允许彻夜排队。
Kindly note that tickets are given out on a first-come-first-served basis. Limited to 2 tickets per person. No overnight queuing is allowed.

义卖
Charity Fair

慈善义卖会 Charity Food Fair

18/5 (星期六 Sat) 3.00pm~
19/5 (星期日 Sun) 4.00pm
光明殿前、菩提树下与高堂
In front of Hall of Universal Brightness,
Bodhi Tree and Dining Hall

导览
Guided Tour

思源轩开放日 Museum Guided Tour

18/5 (星期六 Sat) 3.00pm~
19/5 (星期日 Sun) 12.00am
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 3楼 | 思源轩
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Level 3 | The Venerable Hong Choon Museum

共修
Group Practice

礼拜千佛 Prayers

19/5 | 星期日 Sun | 8.30am~4.00pm
大悲殿 Hall of Great Compassion

玩乐
Fun & Games

家庭亲子小天地 Family Entertainment & Activities Corner

19/5 | 星期日 Sun | 10.00am~4.00pm
宏船老和尚纪念馆 | 4楼 | 无相殿
Venerable Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Level 4 | Hall of No Form

