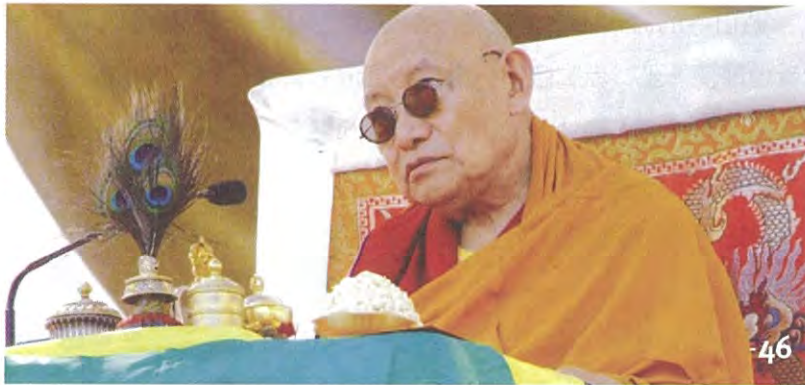




sep - dec 2006

contents



Profiles

The Key Points of Genuine Dharma Practice -46

Kyabjè Trushik Rinpoche explains to us the key points of genuine Dharma practice which form the essence of all Sutras and Tantra teachings.



Features

Traversing the Meandering River of Karma -42

Let Ven. Ajahn Brahm tell you how to make huge good beautiful karma.



Practising Calm-abiding the Vajrayana Way -48

Khensur Kangyurwa Rinpoche gives an insightful account on how we can develop calm-abiding in our practice.

Debunking the Top 10 Myths of the Seventh Month -53

Regulars

Calendar of Events -35

Q&A -36

Buddhist News in Brief

Gifts of Cheque and Prayers for Yogyakarta Earthquake Victims -37

First Mega Buddhist Concert in Singapore with SCO -37

Protecting the Dharma of Utmost Importance, Says Ven. Omalpe Sobhita Thero -38

Passing On of a Great Mahathera, Ven. Tan Chan -39

Malaysia's Home Affairs Ministry Directs Arrest, Deportation of Bogus Monks -39

Recipes *du jour* -41

Yummy vegetarian recipes to tease your tastebuds

Something to Ponder

A first-person account on the little things in life worth reflecting about

Contemplation of Flies -55

Buddhist Fiction

Interesting Dharma tales and fables that will set your mind thinking

The Tea Lady -56

The Little Drops of Dharma -58

Polishing a Rock -59

Seen, Heard & Read -60

Reviews of life-affirming films, music and books beneficial to your well-being

Verses

& Proses -63

A selection of inspiring, uplifting and insightful quotable quotes

Glossary -64

Every Little Kind Act Counts

While editing the teachings on karma given by Ven. Ajahn Brahm, the story about the woman who had been raped struck a deep chord in me. (pg 42) It moved me knowing she is likely able to transform her terrible karma into something wonderful, going beyond her pain to reach out and guide other women who had the same experience to the lightness of freedom. Having gone through what is perhaps the worst of emotional suffering for her, I believe she is now a much stronger person, probably one who is also more selfless and giving.

I too went through something that changed my life profoundly. Although my experience may not be as horrendous as the lady's or those faced by starving Africans outside the refugee camp (that story touched the very depths of my heart too), I know my experience had transformed my life for the better. Today, I try to live a life of kindness, gratitude and love in my every action, ensuring that, to my very best, whatever I do is out of an altruistic motivation and kindness.

According to Khensur Kangyurwa Rinpoche, morality is the foundation of all good qualities. It is also the foundation for the realisation of the paths of Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. (pg 48) In fact, having sincerity or holding the pure and sincere motivation for others to have happiness transforms all problems into the path of enlightenment. (pg 63)

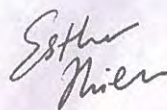
Each and everyone of us matters. Living in such a tightly interconnected environment, whether one is conducting oneself virtuously, with a wholesome motivation does make a difference to the collective karma of the world we live in. Perhaps there would be less natural disasters if each and everyone lives a life of wholesomeness, a life where everyone has the welfare of one another at heart.

Every drop and every bit of kindness counts. Even if it is merely a kind wish or a selfless thought you have, you are contributing to the positive vibes of the world we are living in. Like the Buddha said,

“There is no better virtue than a heart of grand compassion;
there is no higher religion than the development of moral wisdom.
Drop by drop is the water pot filled.
A little at a time, wise people make themselves good.”

We are all in Samsara together. So did you check on your mind today? Are you using it to cherish others, making immeasurably beautiful karma?

May all open up their hearts and be able to give unconditionally. May all sentient beings be well and happy.



Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien

Erratum

A line was accidentally omitted in the feature, *What is Buddha-nature?* on page 42 of our previous issue.

That is to say, “Buddha-nature” provides a more optimistic view of the capacity for enlightenment – all sentient beings have the potential to realise Buddhahood.

YogaKidz @ TLCCCK

Date : 9th Sep 06 – 14th Oct 06 (Every Saturday)
 Time : 9.15am – 10.15am (aged 3-6)
 10.30am – 11.30am (aged 7-12)
 Venue : TLC Student Care Centre (Choa Chu Kang)
 Blk 684A Choa Chu Kang Crescent #01-308

YogaKidz @ TLCAMK

Date : 2nd Sep 06 – 28th Oct 06 (Every Saturday)
 Time : 1.00pm – 2.00pm (aged 3-6)
 2.15pm – 3.15pm (aged 7-12)
 Venue : TLC Student Care Centre (Ang Mo Kio)
 Blk 621 Ang Mo Kio Ave 9 #01-68

General Yoga Class

Date : 26th Sep 06 – 19th Dec 06 (12 Lessons)
 Time : 7.30pm – 9.00pm (Every Tuesday)
 Venue : TLC Student Care Centre (Ang Mo Kio)
 Blk 621 Ang Mo Kio Ave 9 #01-68

Woman's Yoga Class

Date : 13th Sep 06 – 6th Dec 06 (12 Lessons)
 Time : 7.30pm – 9.00pm (Every Wednesday)
 Venue : TLC Student Care Centre (Ang Mo Kio)
 Blk 621 Ang Mo Kio Ave 9 #01-68
 Details : Please call Benjamin Pua at 68495317/96344085
 or e-mail puak@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

Medicine Buddha Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Saturday, 7.45pm – 9.45pm
 Venue : Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas, 2nd Level

Pureland Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Sunday, 9.00am – 11.30am
 Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Diamond Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every Sunday, 2.00pm – 3.45pm
 Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

The Great Compassion Puja (Chinese)

Date/Time : Every 27th of the lunar month, 10.00am – 12.00pm
 Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Spiritual Countdown 2007

Date/Time : 31st Dec 06, 8.00pm till late night
 Venue : To be confirmed
 Details : For more information, pls call 6849 5346

Monthly Group Mani Recitation

Date : 7th & 22nd Sep, 5th Nov, 5th Dec 06
 (Every 15th of the lunar month)
 Time : 7.30pm – 9.30pm
 Venue : 4th floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall
 Details : Please call 6849 5300, visit www.kmspks.org
 or e-mail semd@kmspks.org to enquire.

The 100 Million Mani Recitation Retreat

Date : 24th - 31st Dec 06
 Venue : 4th floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall
 Fee : \$100 (stayout, including overseas participant)
 Details : Please call 6849 5300, visit www.kmspks.org
 or e-mail semd@kmspks.org to enquire.

* Please refer to pg 33 for more information

A Joyous Celebration of Mid-autumn Festival

Dragon & Lion Dances • Drum & Chinese Orchestra Performances
 Songs & Dances • Acrobatic Performances • Games • Lucky Draws
 Free Lanterns for Children

Date/Time : 6th Oct 06, 7.00pm
 Venue : In front of Dharma Hall
 Details : For more information, pls call 6549 5300

Exploring The Self - Workshop by Tan Yen Yen

Date/Time : 1st & 8th Oct 06, 9.30am - 4.30pm
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre #03-39
 Fee : S\$30 (including GST)
 Details : Limited seats, by registration only. E-mail
 wsdp@kmspks.org or call 6849 5346.
 Your acceptance to the workshop will be
 confirmed via e-mail/sms/phone.

Spiritual Intimacy - Thread of a Good Marriage

(couples relationship workshop)
 Date/Time : 3rd, 10th & 17th Dec 06, 9.30am - 1.30pm
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre
 Details : Please call Benjamin Pua at 68495317 / 96344085
 or e-mail puak@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

How I Practise the Dharma in My Daily Life?

I try to practise the Dharma by being mindful of my actions and being patient with others. I also learn to differentiate between actions and their motives. As I try to be more aware of the motivation behind others' actions, I strive to be more understanding and facilitate others' objectives, bringing them happiness as much as I can. Nowadays, I also understand that the financial aspect is but one part of the overall work package, and that other factors such as colleagues, work environment and opportunities to learn are just as important, if not more, than the monetary incentive. Realising that, I am definitely happier now.

- Teo Puay Kim, Freelance Consultant, 33

I used to ask myself what is the real meaning of life? Is it purely about basic survival and having a sense of security? Or is it really just about pursuing and achieving a good social standing in society? I found my answer on the real meaning of life through the teachings of the Buddha. Realising that all fame, wealth and status disappear the very moment death creeps in, I reflect on death and impermanence. I also try to stay in the 'here and now' at all times. I hope to still be smiling when I have to die one day.

- Billy Loh, currently serving National Service, 23

What Should I Do When I'm Angry with My Parents?

Q: My mother is a devout Buddhist. She has a heart of gold and is a great mother. Since young, she brought us up as Buddhists and taught us to be good and upright. However lately, she is seeing another man. My parents are not divorced, but she spends her time with the man and not me and my father. I'm really upset and angry with her. How should I deal with the situation? Is my mother committing sins? I scolded my mum too, during moments of anger, am I committing sins too?

- A Buddhist youth

A: I think right now, what you can do is wait for the right opportunity to talk to her. Communicate to her sincerely about your fears without engaging in anger or making judgmental remarks. You need to be skilful when handling the situation. Simply be there for your Mum when she needs your company. You don't have to start a debate about the way she chooses her path, but just be there and listen to her thoughts. Do not make judgment. Think of all she has done - bringing you up, giving you food, a place to stay, a good education etc. This kindness itself is really beyond anything that you can do to repay. There is no doubt about it.

If at anytime you feel anger or resentment, do not allow this thought to continue. Instead, reflect upon her kindness and show compassion to your Mum. Everyone makes mistake, so we need to learn to forgive and to move forward in life. Learn to accept your parents as they are. Be there to listen and never give up, just as she is there for you whenever you make mistakes in life. Be her pillar to give her the support which she needs now. You may not be able to do anything to change her mind or her situation now, but I believe your love for her can change her mind in time to come.

One is a Buddhist after having taken refuge in the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha). After taking refuge, one relies on the Triple Gem for protection, knowledge, purification and finally leading one towards liberation from suffering. With strong devotion and faith, one can practise by reciting the names of the Buddhas, from which the blessings will cause one to gradually experience happiness in life.

In Buddhism, we refer to one's unskilful and unwholesome actions as negative karma, not sins. Out of our ignorance, EVERYONE creates bad karma. Most importantly, we need to contemplate and realise that our actions are wrong and then take a new course of action. Through Buddhist practice, we can purify this negative karma.

With the situation that you are in now, I would recommend that you learn the teachings of the Buddha. With faith and understanding in the Buddha's teachings, this will give you courage and strength to face both the good and bad in life. All of us experience suffering. Just because most of us don't talk much about our problems, doesn't mean that we do not experience (big or small) problems in lives. Be strong and be kind to yourself and others.

When you have the time, recite the name of Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa. Known as "the Lord who looks upon the world with compassion", this Bodhisattva is the one who will listen to the sufferings of the world and to free all sentient beings from suffering.

Just sit comfortably and recite "Na Mo Guan Shi Yin Pu Sa" as many times as you can (108 times or more will be good), before praying to Guan Yin and sincerely requesting her help to protect your family.

If you can, you may also visit Phor Kark See Monastery and participate in the chanting session on the mantra of Guan Yin, the six-syllable mantra – Om Mani Padme Hung, which will bring peace and remove obstacles in life. I pray that your family issues will be resolved soon and may everyone show love and compassion to each other. Remember, do not give up hope, and someday the light will shine again.

– Ven. Chuan Xian

Are you bugged by any problems in life? Perhaps you have difficulties overcoming certain life's challenges and obstacles? Or are you just purely curious about the Dharma? We welcome you to write in to us. E-mail your problems, issues and queries to awaken@kmspks.org or send your letters to:

AWAKEN, The Managing Editor
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
88 Bright Hill Road
Singapore 574117

Gifts of Cheque and Prayers for Yogyakarta Earthquake Victims

By Esther Thien



Singapore - There is hope for humanity yet. When a massive earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale hit Indonesian province of Yogyakarta and Central Java in May this year, Singaporeans, of all races and religions, united once again, to help their fellow brothers and sisters. Religious organisations like Singapore Buddhist Lodge, Loyang Tua Pek Kong Temple, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery,

Jamiyah Singapore, Hindu Endowments Board, Inter Religious Organisation (IRO), Indonesia Singapore Friendship Association (ISFA) and other organisations came together, raised funds and presented a cheque of S\$261,550 to the Indonesian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Andradjati.

In a show of compassionate solidarity that goes beyond political, religious or ethnic differences, a special prayer was also held to honour those who lost their lives while offering blessings for a speedy recovery to those who are injured. Conducted by nine religious leaders from the Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Taoist, Christian, Islam, Sikh, Baha'i and the Jain faiths, close to 1,000 people attended this unique prayer.

One of the more recent major calamities to strike mankind, this earthquake left 6,000 dead, 40,000 injured and displaced close to 700,000 people. The earthquake also caused heavy damage to homes, buildings, roads and places of work.

First Mega Buddhist Concert in Singapore with SCO

Singapore – Local Buddhist arts will be taking another leap forward with the *Voices of Harmony, Sound of a Thousand Years* musical and dance fiesta. To be held on 15 December 2006 at the Singapore Indoor stadium, close to 400 performers will express the Buddha's outstanding qualities of compassion, wisdom, peace and gratitude via dance and musical enchantments of the most exquisite forms.

Organised by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS) and presented by Singapore Chinese Orchestra (SCO), this is the first time a Buddhist concert of this scale is conducted here. Ven. Sik Kwang Sheng, the abbot of KMSPKS and the executive advisor of this event, will also be performing at the occasion. A versatile instrumentalist adept at playing the organ and the big drum, the visionary Venerable hopes Buddhist music can strike a chord in each and everyone's heart. Minister Mentor, Mr Lee Kuan Yew is the invited guest of honour to grace this fund-raising concert.

Ven. Kwang Sheng also hopes the concert will promote harmony amongst different races and religions. "In recent years, Phor Kark See has been using 'Harmony' as its theme in many projects. We see the importance of harmonious living, especially in a multi-racial country like



Singapore. Through this concert, we hope to increase the awareness that we can all work towards a common goal of living in a harmonious society,” he explains.

The illustrious list of performers includes home-grown singer Joi Chua, internationally acclaimed soprano Nancy Yuen, Gyuto Monks from Tibet famous for their unique deep harmonic overtone chanting and the China Disabled People’s Performing Art Troupe. They will perform to the accompaniment by SCO under the baton of Maestro Tsung Yeh. Local schools’ choirs from National University of Singapore, Anderson Junior College, Meridian Junior College, Tampines Junior College and Maha Bodhi School will also be lending their vocal prowess. But the highlight of the night is the renowned performance of the Thousand-hand Bodhisattva by the China Disabled People’s Performing Art Troupe.

Expect a fantastic ride at the concert. **Through the charm of this extraordinary musical**

encounter, the wondrous sounds of the Buddha's teachings echo forth to light up the hearts of all beings, dispelling the darkness of ignorance, and awakening all to experience the love and compassion of the Buddha.

Tickets are selling at all SISTIC outlets. Family specials and concessions are available. Call 6348 5555 or visit www.sistic.com.sg to book your tickets.

*Although the Lord speaks with but one voice,
those present perceive that same voice differently,
and each understands in his own language,
according to his own needs.*

This is a special quality of the Buddha.

~ Vimalakirti Niradesa Sutra

Protecting the Dharma of Utmost Importance, Says Ven Omalpe Sobhita Thero

Sri Lanka – In an opening address by Ven. Omalpe Sobhita Thero at 2550 Buddha Jayanti Conference in Colombo, he emphasised the importance of protecting the Dharma by the Sangha and laity. To highlight that the protection of the Dharma is of utmost importance to the Buddha, he gave this example:



One day, Mara came to the Buddha and told him that he should pass away since his dispensation is in order. Buddha replied: “No.” Mara asked why. Buddha explained: “Parappavadam Sahadammena Niggahitun.” “Of course, my disciples are very qualified and virtuous. But until my disciples are able to rebut all counter-beliefs with the most skilful means, leaving no room for doubt, I will not go.”

He then went on to say the threats that Buddhism is facing today are far more powerful, more alarming and more dangerous. “Unless we act now to find ways of tackling the Adhamma (non-Dharma) forces, Buddhism would become a relic in the museum of world’s religions,” he added.

According to Ven. Sobhita, the first and most obvious threat is one shared by all mainstream religions – that of decline in spirituality and morals standards, generated by modern consumerism and mass media throughout the world.

However, the second and even more alarming threat is religious fundamentalism and intolerance. Ven. Sobhita cited examples of how poor village Buddhists in Thailand, Cambodia or Laos, were being forced into conversion with the temptation of money or other material benefits. This is especially the case after the tsunami where disaster

aid is often mixed with religious conversion.

“We are not against any genuine change of faith, but against the exploitation of the poor and vulnerable, of forced conversion with the temptation of money or other material means. The motives behind such conversion are often to destroy the peace and harmony, and eradicate the indigenous cultural values of a society,” he clarified.

To conclude his address, Ven. Sobhita who is the founder of Sri Bodhiraja Foundation in Sri Lanka and Buddhist Raja Society in Singapore quoted a passage from the Makhadeva Sutta of Majjhima Nikaya:

“Ananda, at any certain time, when my teachings are disrupted, those people will be the last generation of the Dharma. Because of this, I say to you: Follow and protect my teachings. Do not become the last of my people.”

Passing On of a Great Mahathera, Venerable Tan Chan

Singapore – Ven. Tan Chan, the ex-abbot of Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery and one of the great Mahatheras of this century, passed away peacefully on 27 June 2006. The ceremony for setting in his casket was presided by Ven. Shi Long Gen.



A significant affair in the Buddhist community, representatives from the Singapore Buddhist Federation and various Buddhist organisations, nunneries and monasteries came to pay their last respects.

His wake was attended by people from all walks of life, including officials like the Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, the Minister for Manpower & Second Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen, and numerous other MPs and grassroots leaders.

An elaborate and extensive Buddhist prayer service was conducted around the clock for eight days before a funeral procession was held on 6 July. That morning, the skies poured. It was as if the heavens above were sending him off. Attended by numerous exalted Sangha leaders from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan, India, China and Singapore, Ven. Liao Chung, President of World Buddhist Sangha Council and Ven. Chek Huang, Advisor of Malaysian Buddhist Association led different segment of prayer rites before the cremation begun.

Born on 15 February 1919, Ven. Tan Chan was ordained as a monk at the age of 17. He was the thirteenth abbot of Lian Shan

Shuang Lin Monastery from 1975 to 2003. A strong supporter of Dharma propagation and Sangha education, Ven. Tan Chan was also the key advocator for rebuilding the monastery to improve its environment.

His pure and pristine conduct makes him a role model for all. His wide circle of disciples includes those from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, America, Vietnam, India, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Malaysia's Home Affairs Ministry Directs Arrest, Deportation Of Bogus Monks

Malaysia – The Home Affairs Ministry had directed the police and immigration authorities to detain and deport phoney monks from abroad who tarnish the image of Buddhism by seeking donations illegally, reported a news article on June 18 in *Bernama*.

These monks, who were attired in robes worn by Buddhist monks and sought donations from the people at public places such as night markets and eateries, violated the law by seeking donations without a permit and misusing their entry visa for the purpose of their visit, said Home Affairs Deputy Minister Datuk Tan Chai Ho.

“The police must detain this group of people and the immigration authorities must deport them to their countries,” he continued.

Tan said that according to Buddhist teachings, the alms bowls carried by Buddhist monks were meant to be containers for food and not money, which the fake monks carried in them.

He declared that a dialogue would be held among the police, immigration authorities and the Buddhist association to keep away the bogus monks.

He advised the Buddhist association to distribute leaflets on the activities of these bogus monks to the public so that people would not be deceived by them.

Tan revealed that there were three cases in Johor Bahru recently, where the people caught phoney monks seeking donations, and handed them to the police.

He also said that some of these bogus monks offer to tell people's fortune and predict winning lottery numbers, and advertise these services in the local newspapers.

The newspapers should decline them space in their publications because the activities run contrary to Buddhist teachings and tarnish the image of Buddhist monks, he added.

With the spirit of compassion and wisdom, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery set up **TLC Student Care Centre (TLCSCC)** for community outreach to children and parents of any race and religion.

At TLCSCC, we believe that complementing the present education system with a balanced approach of nurturing a child's Self-Esteem, Mental Attitude and Ethical Conduct can better help the child to face challenges in life.

YOUR CHILD IS A GENIUS

We believe that every child is a Genius. When a child is born, each child has his unique immense potential and innate talents waiting to be uncovered. As educators, we create the environment that continuously motivates and stimulates each child for a zest of learning in life. With such approaches, coupled with Tender Loving Care, your child will develop his/her potential to the fullest and will definitely excel! Allow TLCSCC to be part of that grooming process for the geniuses of tomorrow!

OPERATION HOURS:

Monday – Friday : 7:00am - 7:00pm
 Saturday : 7:00am - 1:30pm
 Public Holiday* : 7:00am - 1.30pm
 *Eves of New Year, Chinese New Year & Christmas

AGE ELIGIBILITY : Children between the ages of 7 and 14 years old

FEE : From \$240 - \$310 / month

Please contact our friendly personnel at our centres regarding fee subsidy, structure or assistance.



Blk 621 Ang Mo Kio Ave 9 #01-68 Singapore 560621 • Tel: 6454 6686 • Fax: 6454 6696
 Blk 684A Choa Chu Kang Crescent #01-308 Singapore 681684 • Tel: 6310 6410 • Fax: 6219 0068
 e-mail:tlcsc@kmspks.org

Want your story to be heard too?

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

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

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

AWAKEN, The Managing Editor
 Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
 Dharma Propagation Division
 88 Bright Hill Road
 Singapore 574117

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

Singaporeans love their food. If you are hesitating to take vegetarian food because you think it will be bland and tasteless, think again. This vegetarian version of an Asian well-loved dish shows you how it can be just as good as the real thing.



用料

300克叻沙叶 - 一半叶子切碎, 一半和茎用来煮汤
 10叶班兰叶 - 洗净备用
 5汤匙素江鱼仔辣椒酱 - 备用
 5汤匙素虾米香辣椒酱 - 备用
 半罐花奶水 - 备用
 1罐草菇 - 备用
 300克素鱼片 - 洗净、用热水泡好、备用
 400克豆芽 - 洗净、用热水泡软
 20个豆卜 - 切条
 1公斤粗米粉 - 用热水泡软

酱料

2饭碗的基本辣椒酱 - 备用
 1公斤椰酱 - 备用
 盐和糖 - 酌量加入

做法

1. 锅一个加入清水1公升, 加入叻沙叶、茎和班兰叶煮20分钟, 备用。
2. 热锅, 加入基本辣椒酱、素江鱼仔辣椒酱、素虾米香辣椒酱、翻炒至香味发散。
3. 注入清水2公升和加入上述一锅的汤汁, 及豆卜和草菇, 开火煮至滚, 再加入花奶水、椰酱、盐和糖。
4. 大碗一个, 把豆芽放入碗底加入粗米粉上铺素鱼片, 淋入汤汁、豆卜, 加入叻沙叶即成。

份量: 10人

基本辣椒酱的调配方法

450克香茅 - 洗净、切成小粒、磨碎
 400克姜 - 洗净、切成小粒、磨碎
 350克黄姜 - 洗净、切成小粒、磨碎
 450克峇角力 - 洗净、沥干、磨碎
 半粒素峇辣煎 - 切成小粒、磨碎
 1公斤辣椒酱 - 备用
 各100克盐和糖 - 酌量加入

做法

1. 热镬, 倒入1公升食油烧热。加入材料1至5炒香。
2. 加入辣椒酱、慢火翻炒30至45分钟, 至红油上浮、香味四溢, 加入盐糖调味即成。

* 新炒辣椒酱可储存于冰箱, 常让辣椒油覆盖辣椒酱, 能保存更久。

这基本辣椒酱, 在加入不同配料时, 可以用来炒菜, 煮煮米暹, 马来卤面, 隆冬, 叻沙以及各式咖喱等等。

Vegetarian Laksa 素叻沙

Ingredients

300gm laksa leaves - half shredded, half cooked with stem for stock
 10 pcs pandan leaves
 5 tbsp vegetarian ikan bilis chilli sauce
 5 tbsp vegetarian prawn chilli sauce
 1/2 can carnation milk
 1 can mushroom
 300gm cooked vegetarian fish slices
 400gm bean sprouts
 20 pcs sliced tao pok
 1 kg cooked thick bee hoon

Sauce/Paste/Others

2 rice bowls basic chilli paste
 1 kg coconut cream
 Appropriate amount of salt and sugar

Method

1. Add 1 litre of water into a wok. Add laksa leaves, laksa stem, pandan leaves, cook for 20mins. Put aside after cooking.
2. Heat the wok. Add the basic chilli paste, vegetarian ikan bilis sauce, and vegetarian prawn chilli sauce; and stir-fry.
3. Add 2 litres of water. Then add the stock prepared in item 1. Add tao pok and mushroom. Cook to boil and add milk, coconut cream, salt and sugar.
4. Place bean sprouts at the bottom of a big bowl. Add thick bee hoon, vegetarian fish slices. Add the laksa soup prepared in item 3. Sprinkle the laksa leaves on top and it is ready to be served.

Served: 10 persons

Preparation of Basic Chilli Paste

450gm lemon grass - wash, diced and blended.
 400gm langkuas - wash, diced and blended.
 350gm tumeric - wash, diced and blended.
 450gm buah geras - wash, dry and blended.
 1/2 pc vegetable belacan - diced and blended
 1 kg chilli paste - to be added last
 Salt and sugar 100gm each - add to taste

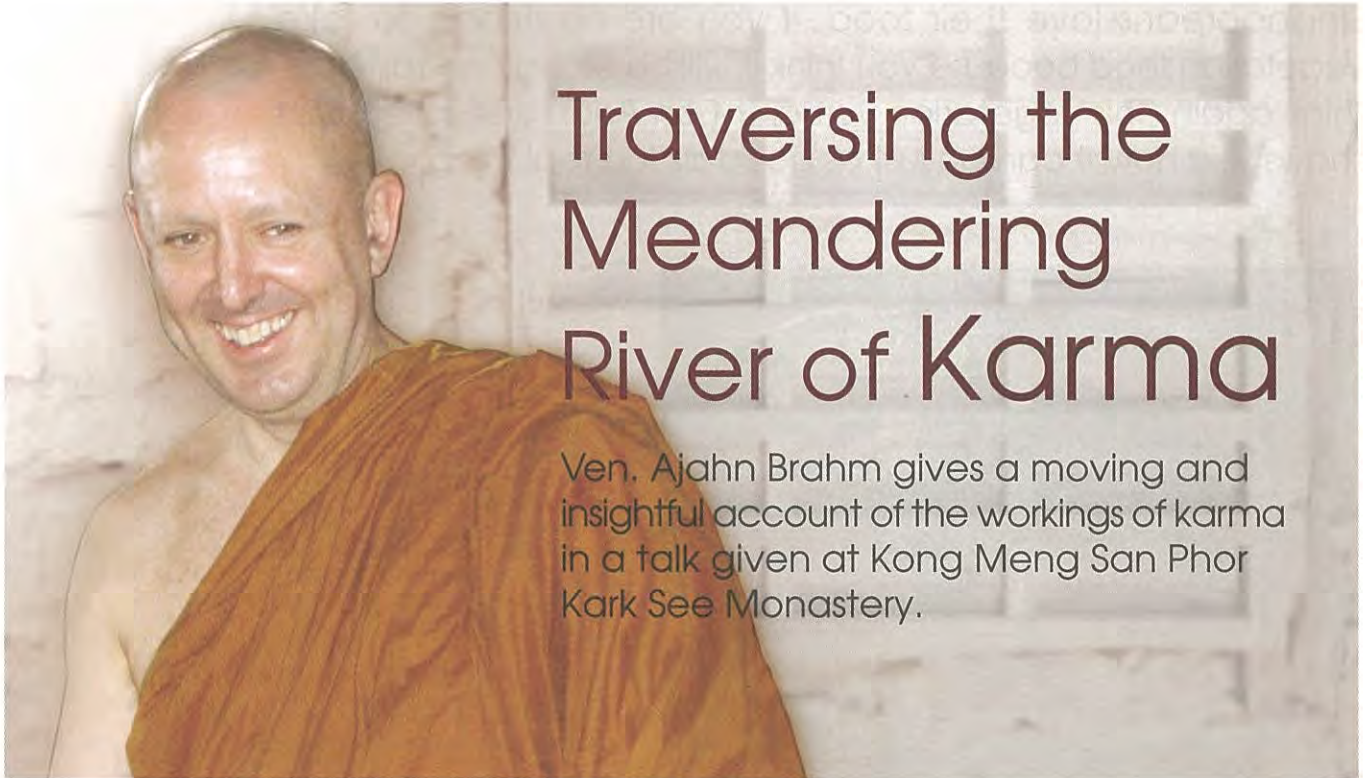
Method

1. Heat up 1 litre of cooking oil in a wok. Add in lemon grass, langkuas, tumeric, buah geras, vegetable belacan and fry till fragrant.
2. Add in chilli paste. Fry for 30 to 40 mins till red oil surface with fragrance. Add salt and sugar to taste.

* Cooked chilli paste can be store in the refrigerator. Allowing chilli oil to surface before storage will enhance its shelf life in the refrigerator.

This basic chilli paste, when added with other ingredients, can be used for stir frying, preparation of Mee Siam, Mee Rebus, Lotong, Laksa, and other kinds of Curry gravy.

For more information about Vegetarian Cooking Class, please e-mail thhauw@kmspks.org or call 6849 5332 to enquire.



Traversing the Meandering River of Karma

Ven. Ajahn Brahm gives a moving and insightful account of the workings of karma in a talk given at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.

Selflessness matters

When I was growing up as a monk in a Thai forest monastery, we had to make the robes we wear ourselves. It was not an easy task. Not only do we cut and sew the cloth, we also had to dye it ourselves by boiling chips of wood from the jackfruit tree to get the sap. Even without sleep, it took literally days to make them. I remembered there was this group of monks who had no rest for 36 to 40 hours due to making the robes. Out of compassion, I decided to help them after the evening meeting to mind the fire for the dye throughout the night, so that they could get some sleep. I went without rest that night. But do you know, instead of being drowsy and tired the next morning, I had lots of energy. I couldn't understand why I was more awake that morning than most other mornings, so I asked a teacher, "Why?" My teacher told me if you sacrificed your sleep to help others, and you get more energy than you had a good rest, that proved that you had done some good karma. Because of my selfless service to others, I had gotten immediate karmic rewards of energy, happiness and, of course, the friendliness of other monks.

If you show selflessness, kindness and a caring nature to other people, even for other beings, you get immediate reward and positive mental energy, which is happiness. Sometimes, you also get a reward afterwards that last for a very long time. The law of karma is the law of happiness.

If you want to be happy, don't think that the world conspires against you, or you have to be stuck in a difficult situation. Go out there and do something about it. The karma from your past gives you what you have to work with. But the most important part of karma is what you are doing about it right now.

For instance, if, due to your past karma, you have a terrible boss who gives you all his work and goes off to play golf the whole day, what are you doing with your present karma? Because whatever you have to experience in life, you can always do something about it. You can get friendly with your boss. Take him out to lunch or dinner, find out what he likes or what his problems are. Talk to him, but choose your opportunities, at the right time and place, not when he's busy.

Generally, in life, be it in relationships, business or others, it is about finding the right time and the right place to say the right things. So you wait. If you have a girlfriend who's giving you trouble, take her out to an expensive restaurant. Give her a sumptuous meal and when she's at her final course, speak to her so softly that you can ask her anything you like and she won't get angry.

When a person is treated kindly, they like to treat you kindly in return. It's just the law of karma. You may experience a difficult situation due to your past karma, but what you are doing in the present is more crucial. Are you using that experience to be a better person? To learn from it?

Transforming the negative into positive

In my life as a monk, I've been in sticky situations. I've counselled other people in difficult situations and I've always found this active law of karma very, very powerful - "Well this is what you're experiencing, something negative, and what are you doing about it?"

Once, there was a woman who told me she had been raped. I looked at her and used my mindfulness to find out what kind of a person I was talking to. I quickly found out this was quite a strong and wise person, who had enough good karma from the past to be able to deal with it in a special way. So I told her how lucky she was. She looked at me in utter surprise. I don't usually say this to everyone who had been in this terrible situation. I told her, "I'm not saying that it's good or whatever, but you can actually use that experience and turn it into something wonderful, by contemplating and understanding, to go beyond your pain and to help other women move beyond that experience into freedom."



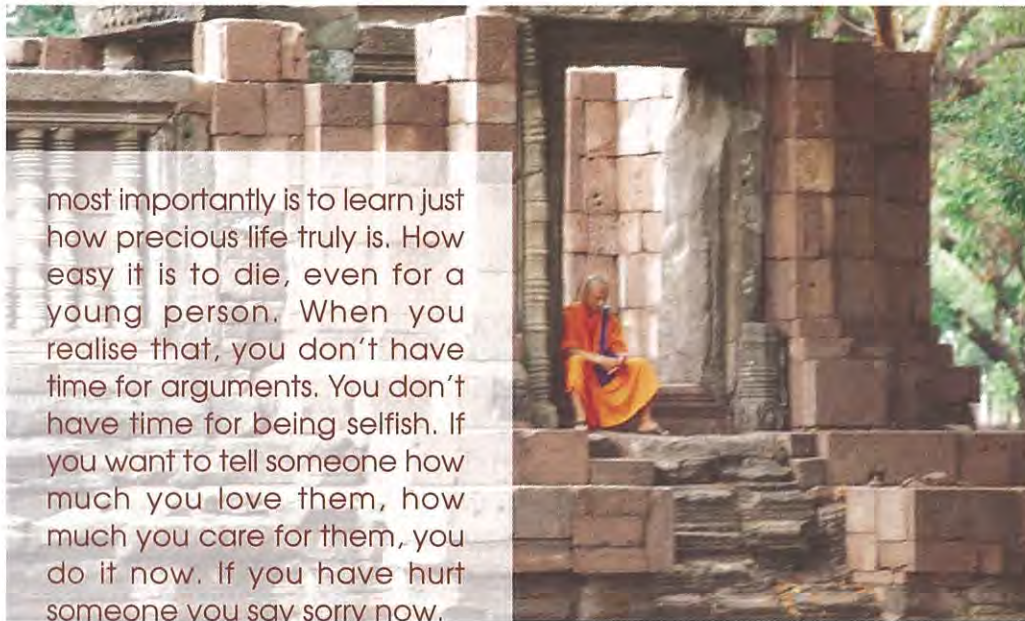
"Only people who had such experiences has an opportunity to help others," I said. "I, as a monk, as a man, can never know how you feel, but I can tell you if you make use of that terrible experience, you can turn it into something amazing. You can be the counsellor, the friend, the wise one. Only you, because you've been there. You've felt that pain, that abuse, so only you can take somebody else's hand from the place you've been and lead them out into freedom." That I said is how you use a terrible karma and turn it into something wonderful and beautiful. She nodded. She understood and I think she's on the way not just to her own recovery, but also to be a special person in our society who can lead other people out of such terrible situation. Sometimes, only those who felt the very worst of emotional suffering that gets deep inside, not just the physical pain, can actually take the hand of somebody else and say "I know not just how hard it feels but I also know the way out. Come."

This is an example of how we understand the law of karma even if a devastating thing happens in our life. We can make use of that for the benefit of all.

Sometimes, you are hurt and tortured by the untimely death of a child, a loved one, maybe a fiancée whom you're about to get married to, due to an earthquake, a tsunami, a heart attack, or an accident they passed away. So close to happiness and they're taken away. Sometimes you ask why. Why do these things happen? I say stop asking that question and get out and do something about it. When we waste time asking why, we are not actually doing something about the situation.

Death comes to all, young and old

During the aftermath of a tsunami, an earthquake, we can give donations, go help look after the injured and the sick, rebuild their homes, rebuild their lives, but



most importantly is to learn just how precious life truly is. How easy it is to die, even for a young person. When you realise that, you don't have time for arguments. You don't have time for being selfish. If you want to tell someone how much you love them, how much you care for them, you do it now. If you have hurt someone you say sorry now.

in which you're about to die, can allow people to be selfless, dying with such grace and inspiration to soar way up into the high heavenly realms.

An act of kindness not just brightens you up, it also brightens up for all sentient beings. It brings inspiration and goodness into our lives. Instead of lamenting and asking why is this happening to me, learn from it, learn from

the mistakes and become a better person.

Because the earthquake tells us that sometimes we don't know how long we have to say these important things to the important people in our life. For life can be snuffed out in an instant. This is what an earthquake does, causing a sudden death, a tragedy to happen. It jolts us back to what is truly important in life. What's important in life is not wealth or fame but your loved ones and your own spiritual heart. Your goodness, your kindness. This is another example of the law of karma. How can we take what most people call tragedy and turn it into something wonderful and beautiful?

the mistakes and become a better person.

A Buddhist from UK visited and volunteered to work in a refugee camp in Africa some years back. It was a terrible situation there, with many starving children and women, but limited food to distribute. Every morning, this lady was given a number. This number represented the number of people she could let in that day. Only that many. The rest had to be kept outside. She knew those who could come in would survive and those outside would die. But if they share the limited food thinly with everyone, nobody would survive. For weeks, this lady had the horrible task of literally choosing who would live, and who would die. Those who heard her story thought that must have been so terrible. But strangely, she told us it wasn't. In fact, it was one of the most inspiring times of her life. Because every morning, when she went outside and said six of you could come in, the starving African women and children said, "Don't take me, take her, that one over there." Even though they knew they would die, they gave up their chances so that others may live. It was most inspiring for her to witness the fact that in the face of death, there were people who were so selfless and compassionate. They would rather sacrifice themselves and give life to somebody else. Her faith in humanity, kindness, compassion, selflessness which religion speaks about, but very rarely act upon, was fully restored. This is another example of how the law of karma works. The situation that you're put in, even terrible ones

If you really want, you can do whatever and anything you like in this life. You can make a beautiful picture out of something you think is hopeless. I have seen it happen and it's wonderfully inspiring to know that is what the law of karma means. All possibilities are open to you; it's just that some possibilities take more hard work than others to fulfil. The law of karma means you are free. You are free to make your future. The present moment, you're confined to that. You may suffer from a relationship problem, cancer, loss of job or divorce, but you can always turn it around. You can make a beautiful cake out of the worst ingredients, that's what it says in my book. That's what the law of karma means. You create your world. You are in charge. Whatever you got to deal with now, you can make it wonderful and beautiful. You don't need to be rich to be happy, you don't need to have the most beautiful girl in the world to have a wonderful wife, you don't need to have a husband who is earning \$200,000 a year to have the most wonderful man by your side. It's up to you what you make of what you've got.

Beauty of the heart

I remember once when I was cleaning the hall in Thailand, sweeping behind the cupboard, a girl ran in. At first, I thought she was a burglar because she was looking around to make sure no one was there. I soon recognised her. She was the village girl who was brain damaged from birth. She could not speak, or go to school, and could hardly do anything. I wondered what she was doing. I hid and looked from behind the cupboard so she could not see me. I saw her put something in front of the Buddha statue in the main hall. She placed her palms together very quickly, looked around and dashed out again. Once she was gone, I went to see what she had left on the altar. It was a paper lotus that she had made. Only a small one, and not very pretty.

When I saw that, and I knew where it had come from, how hard it was for her to do that, and how embarrassed she was that she had to sneak in and put it in front of the Buddha statue, I almost cried. I told the other monks when they came in and the abbot who was much senior than me, "Don't move that paper flower. If you do, I'm going to get angry at you. I'm not going to stand that because I know where that had come from." That had been a gift, which was so hard for that brain damaged girl to do, and she had gone to such extreme lengths to sneak it in, and put it in front of the Buddha statue.

To me, that was one of the most beautiful offerings I've ever seen. Because it came from such a pure and generous heart, one which had put in such efforts. She made something, even in her difficulty and that was a beautiful offering. This is what we mean by karma. It is a joy, a beauty of your heart when you do something like that. It doesn't matter how big the lotus is, how much the donation is, it doesn't matter what the act is. It is where it comes from that matters.

When I see people doing inspiring things, I know that is huge good karma. Huge good karma like that creates happiness in this world, for you and for all the other people. So take the opportunity, any chance you have, to help someone who's crying, someone in pain. Don't think about

being late for work. Take that chance, do something beautiful and you will never regret it.

Be a good person, a kind person, a virtuous person, a wise person. The Buddha said, the person who sees the Buddha sees the Dharma. So having faith in the Buddha is having faith in the Dharma, which means having faith in truth, goodness, virtue and purity. Keep that right at the heart of things and you will make huge, good, beautiful karma.

*Rahula, whatever action of body,
speech and mind, done deliberately,
which creates happiness for yourself, for other people
and for other beings, that is called good karma.
Which helps, which serves, which creates greater peace,
happiness, and harmony in this world
that is called good karma.*

*Whichever that creates more suffering, more pain,
more disharmonies, and more violence in this world.
Whatever that is, that is bad karma.*

~The Buddha~



Spiritual Vibes through Music 佛韵遍四海，法音惊迷梦。

A bi-monthly event where Dharma-Inspired artists gather to share through hymns, poetry and skits. Come and be touched by the wonderful melodies of the Dharma. Feel the Spiritual Vibes within!

Visit www.DharmaResonance.com for latest Events, Music and Videos, Buddhist music write-ups, Resource links etc.

法螺，是一项让佛教音乐人通过佛曲，诗歌与音乐短剧与您分享佛法的双月活动。

愿佛的心曲能摄受，振奋，启发并感动你我的心灵。让我们共赴一场心灵响宴吧！

欲知最新活动摘要，原创音乐与影音下载，佛教音乐文章与资讯连线等，请上网 www.DharmaResonance.com 查寻。

The Key Points of Genuine Dharma Practice

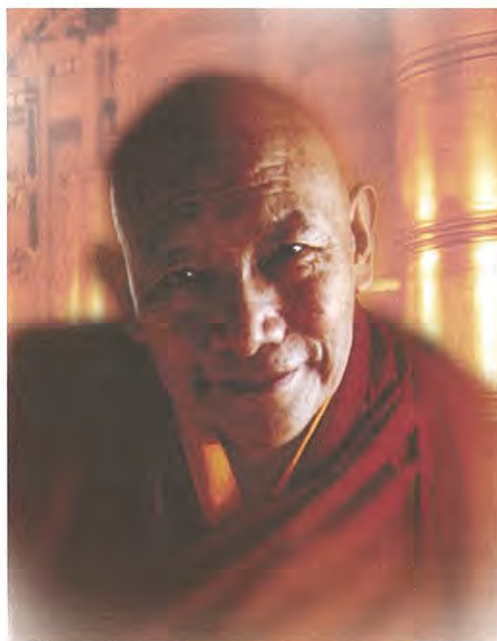
Kyabjè Trushik Rinpoche explains to Esther Thien the key points of genuine Dharma practice taught by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, which form the essence of all Sutras and Tantra teachings.

Awaken: Can Rinpoche please explain the Seven Points of Genuine Dharma Practice teaching gave by His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche on 4 June 1989?

1. Do not forget the Lama. Pray to him and supplicate to him at all times.
2. Do not forget sentient beings. With compassion, dedicate merits to them.
3. Do not forget death. Persist diligently in Dharma practice.
4. Do not let your mind be distracted. Watch your mind essence.
5. Those who are practising in the mountain solitude, be determinedly mindful again and again of impermanence, renunciation and compassion.
6. Be mindful that your mind is inseparable with the guru's mind.
7. It is important to dedicate the root of virtue for the benefit of sentient beings.

Rinpoche: The first point indicates the significance of one's lama teacher. It shows us just how important our lama teacher is in guiding us to enlightenment. Our teacher or guru is the one who shows us the path experientially, such as the Four Noble Truths, teaches us what is right or wrong and guides us on a practice that we can rely on. Without a guru, one will not have the chance of realising the Dharma.

Understanding this, one must be extremely careful in selecting the teacher to follow. This is because if the disciple ever thinks badly about his guru or disobeys him, huge negative karma is created. So ask around to see if there are good teachers. Then check and investigate for yourself



if the teacher is suitable. Make sure you can communicate well with the teacher. Preferably, one should spend three years to check and assess if the lama is suitable to be one's guru. Do not be reactive like a dog when it sees a meatbone. Not checking on the suitability and the calibre of the teacher is akin to drinking poison.

The second point forms the path, and is the foundation of Mahayana practice. One must have genuine Bodhicitta in order to attain enlightenment. This point tells us that mother sentient beings who are numberless and as infinite as space are really more important than the Buddha. For the simple reason that it is due to the kindness of mother sentient beings that allows us to attain Buddhahood. Thus we must always dedicate to them with a heart of gratitude and compassion, and practise cherishing others.

The third point reminds us not to forget the reality of death and impermanence of Samsara. It reveals to us the importance of practice. Existence in Samsara fettered by the three poisons of attachment, aversion and delusion only brings suffering to one. Ultimately, death comes to all. Recognising this, we must apply the Dharma to purify our three poisons. We may not be able to attain the fruitions of all levels of the path at once, but, we must practise consistently according to our level on the path. Only with continuous and diligent practice can we realise our path to enlightenment.



Rinpoche: Always be mindful of your motivation. Make sure it is always strong, pure and selfless. Be patient when obstacles occur and just let them go. **Simply practise to the best of your ability.** If you can, end the day by doing purification with the four opponent powers: regret, determination not to do the unwholesome action again, taking refuge and generating an altruistic attitude towards others followed by an actual remedial practice. This will change negative karma to positive karma instead.

Due to our five senses, it is habitual for us to look outside. It is also precisely this that binds us to Samsara. Thus, point four tells us we should look within ourselves, and watch our mind constantly. With this practice of awareness, one day, we will realise the true nature of the mind, arriving at our pure primordial nature and attain Buddhahood.

I will not elaborate on the last three points as they are specifically instructed to retreatants.

Awaken: The teachings emphasise the importance of the guru. What do you think makes a good guru?

Rinpoche: The guru should be a good lama with perfect or good wisdom, is kind-hearted, compassionate, possesses loving-kindness and equanimity, and is not partial to anyone. When you think you have found such a lama whom you can connect with, follow his guidance and teachings well.

Awaken: If a Dharma practitioner finds that he has many unwholesome and negative thoughts when he is trying to do his practice, what can the person do to overcome his negative obscurations?

Rinpoche: There is bound to be obstacles when Dharma practices are engaged. When you find that negative obscurations are hindering your practice, be strong. Pray to your root guru with dedication and hold a heart of compassion for all mother sentient beings. In short, it means to always have faith in the first two points of the Seven Points of Genuine Dharma Practice and you will experience positive results. You can also try to overcome negative obscurations by supplicating to Guru Rinpoche and Green Tara.

Awaken: Is there anything else you would like to add?

If you want to look for a guru,
seek after thorough investigation;

If you want to follow Dharma,
meditate on impermanence;

If you want to practise Dharma,
practise compassion and loving kindness;

If you want to know the view of emptiness,
look at dreams and illusions.

Thus written by Dzarong Trulshik Shartrul, a Shakya Bhikshu called Ngawang Choekyi Lodro, at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in Singapore in the month of Saga Dawa of the fire dog year (2006), as requested by a group of Dharma workers. At that time, empowerment, oral transmission and brief explanation of Jowo Thukje Chenpo (A Beacon to Dispel the Gloom), a pure vision text by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, were given to a gathering of 1800 devotees.

About His Holiness Kyabjè Trulshik Rinpoche

83 this year, His Holiness Kyabjè Trulshik Rinpoche is regarded as one of the most learned and respected living masters of the Nyingma tradition in Tibetan Buddhism. He is one of the main Teachers to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, to whom he regularly imparts rare teachings and transmissions, and has also ordained many thousands of monastic followers throughout Tibet. He was also a very close disciple of Extraordinary Master, the late Kyabjè Dudjom Rinpoche and the late Kyabjè Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. As the closest and most realised disciple of the latter, Kyabjè Trulshik Rinpoche became the spiritual heir and eventual holder of his visionary teachings and transmissions. For many years, His Holiness Kyabjè Trulshik Rinpoche has been actively propagating the Dharma in several western countries. Despite his tight schedules to fulfill his duties as a spiritual guide for all beings without exception, Kyabjè Rinpoche commits himself to regular solitary retreats, continuously praying for world peace and harmony, and for the happiness of all sentient beings.

Practising Calm-abiding the Vajrayana Way

Khensur Kangyurwa Rinpoche tells us step by step how we can develop calm-abiding in a talk conducted at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.

Developing Bodhicitta at the Start

Before we start any teachings, we need to first set the proper motivation of Bodhicitta. Recognising that all beings, ourselves and an endless number of beings around us experience suffering, we generate the motivation to liberate them from suffering. To remove suffering, we must progressively purify our thoughts and infinitely increase our qualities. In so doing, we will be able to attain the state of completion. The cause for progressively eliminating one's faults, completing and perfecting one's qualities is Bodhicitta. Bodhicitta goes hand in hand with the meditation on the ultimate nature of phenomena. When we talk about the union of method and wisdom, we talk about single-pointed concentration and insight.

Required Preliminaries

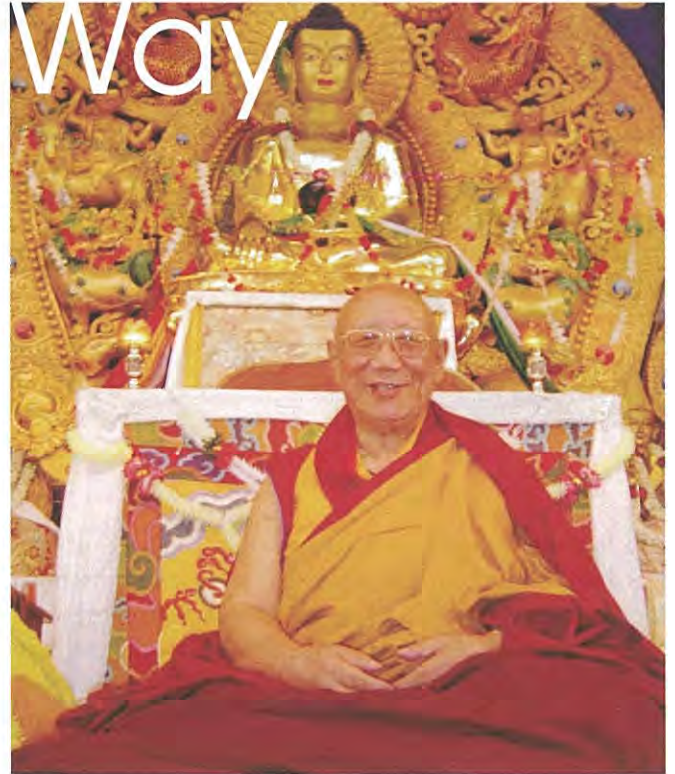
It is important first to engage in the required preliminaries, which include among others, accumulating of merits, understanding the way one should engage in the practice of calm-abiding and engaging in the actual practice.

Before we can practise calm-abiding, we need to have:

1. A suitable, quiet and virtuous place. It should not be noisy, as that will break our concentration, or a place where non-virtuous activities had been committed. We also need sufficient water and food as we will be staying there for quite some time.
2. Good practising Buddhist friends. Compatible friends whose views and conduct are not degenerated.
3. An image of the Buddha and Dharma texts. We should also be able to offer flowers, incense and various clean and fragrant items to the object of refuge.
4. Faith in our practice and the great virtue of contentment. We should be satisfied with little. We shouldn't be expecting to have a lot of possessions.
5. Good effort to practise correctly.

Pure Morality is a Must

Pure morality is also needed. Morality is the foundation of all good qualities. They arise out of morality. Without morality, we cannot generate good qualities. Morality is



the foundation not only of human and divine rebirth but also the realisation of Shravakas (the hearers), Pratyekabuddhas (the solitary realisers), Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. It is on the basis of morality that one can attain rebirth as human being. With morality, we are able to see gods and goddesses. It is on the basis of morality that the grounds and paths of the Shravakas, the Pratyekabuddhas, the qualities of the Bodhisattvas and the attainment of the Buddhas are all realised. Therefore, without morality, without ethics, there are no such qualities.

The entire ethics of the great vehicle can be subsumed under the six paramitas or perfections – giving, morality, patience, enthusiasm, concentration and wisdom. Regarding the first three of these perfections, giving, morality and patience, Buddha said that the foundation is giving because in a sense, the other two can be included under giving.

When we talk of morality, we do not just mean sitting around and not engaging in non-virtuous deeds. Morality is the active choice taken on a daily basis not to engage in non-virtue. That active choice is ethical. Otherwise, ethics is not involved. If you are wondering whether you will attain such a good human body in your next life, the answer to that is very simple. If we have practised morality and ethics in this life, we will attain such a body. If we have not, there is no chance of attaining such a body. If we do not sow any seeds in the soil, we will not obtain any

harvest. The same thing happens with morality. Now is the time to practise it.

It is not enough just to attain a human body in the future life on the basis of morality. One who is wise will also engage in the practice of generosity and giving in this life. It is on that basis that one will gain prosperity and wealth in future lives.

In addition, we should also meditate on patience. Not only do we want a human rebirth with a certain amount of prosperity, we also want to guarantee that in our next human life, we will not be intolerant and easily angry. Some people who do not meditate on patience in this life can generate such anger in their mindstream that they can be reborn as an animal like a scorpion or worse in their future life. This is definitely not something we want. Moreover, with the practice of patience, our complexion will be fair and attractive. If you have a pleasant and beautiful appearance, it is a sign of practice of patience in a past life.

In addition to the first three perfections, we need the perfection of perseverance, enthusiasm or fortitude. Without this perfection, there is no positive behaviour we can engage in because we do not have the energy to do so. As to the last two perfections of concentration and wisdom, they are primarily the practices of those who are ordained. This is so because when one is ordained, one has given up the householder's life. One has no worldly responsibilities, and has time at one's disposal. Because of that, it is possible to engage in extensive studies and meditation. If we engage extensively in the practice of generosity, it is possible to realise it. There are various types of generosity, the generosity of the Arahant, the Pratyekabuddhas, the Bodhisattva and the Buddha. There are many preliminaries to engage in the practices of calm-abiding, and we have to gather many harmonious conditions before actually practising calm-abiding.

The Meditation Posture

We must first adopt a good bodily posture – the seven or eightfold posture of Vairocana, before we engage in the practice of calm-abiding. The first two elements of the seven or eightfold posture, which are named in honour of one of the five classes of Buddhas, represent the purification of the form aggregates. It entails sitting in full lotus posture, placing one's right hand above one's left hand with thumbs joining, and with elbows and shoulders somewhat separated from the body.

If you find it hard to sit in the lotus posture, you can also sit in the posture of Tara which is much more relaxed. Keep your back straight as an arrow, not crooked. The head should be kept in a natural and relaxed posture, neither leaning too far forward nor lifting too high up. If you do so, you will find yourself either falling asleep or your mind

wandering off. Neither should the head be leaning to the right or to the left.

Focus your eyes on the tip of your nose. Your shoulders should be relaxed without lifting one above the other. The mouth should be kept naturally close. The tongue should be touching the tip of the palate directly behind the teeth, to prevent the mouth from becoming dry or saliva from drooling during long meditation. Your arms should not be stuck close to your body as that will make you very warm. Instead, they should be somewhat removed from your body. If your body is straight and stable like this, the inner channels of your body will be straight and the psychic winds will flow freely in the channels. Your meditation will progress in a clear and stable way. This is the goal we pursue.

In addition, we should sit on a cushion that is raised at the back and lowered in front. This will help ensure that our posture is correct with our back straight. By sitting in this posture, we enable the mind to concentrate well during meditation.

Right Motivation is Important

As meditation is a mental activity, the most important thing at the beginning is to set the right motivation. The root of our practice is in our motivation, which is generated at the beginning of the meditation. Our state of mind can be virtuous, non-virtuous or indifferent before the meditation session.

A virtuous mind state leads to a virtuous deed, hence a virtuous meditation. Conversely, a non-virtuous mind state would lead to a non-virtuous meditation, and an indifferent one leads to no results whatsoever.

As Mahayana practitioners, we must generate the mind of Bodhicitta before we begin to meditate. After adopting the lotus posture, we must examine our mind to determine if it is virtuous. If we check our body and mind, we will know that the mind is the marshal, not the body, and that it is the mind which directs us about.

If we examine our mind and find it awash in afflictions and defilements, this is due to causes and habits we had with non-virtues in our past lives. This is similar to a little child who may be good. But if the child has evil friends, they will lead him astray and he will go to waste. This is why we must strive to achieve calm-abiding. Without calm-abiding, our mind is drenched in afflictions and delusions. It is just wandering left and right. The object of meditation does not appear in a clear or stable way and we cannot do anything with our mind.

The goal of calm-abiding is to bestow power to our mind, and remove it from our body and the afflictions that are just leading our mind left and right. Once we have attained calm-abiding, the mind becomes powerful. It is autonomous, like a marshal, and at that point we are in control.

The Power of Calm-abiding

When we have generated fully qualified calm-abiding, the mind abides fully on the “object” we place it upon, such as emptiness, without budging. The mind will remain there with the stability and power of a mountain. It becomes like a servant and we are like its lord. We tell the mind where to go and it does so without complaint. Our mind does not wander hither and thither. When we send it to meditate on karma and various other points of the Lam Rim for instance, it will obey us. And if a non-virtuous thought or motivation arises, it will instantaneously dispel it because this non-virtuous motivation will turn the mind into non-virtue.

To dispel non-virtuous thoughts and motivation, we have to use skilful means by visualising these thoughts and motivations as black smoke or light that is expelled from our lungs with our out-breath, as far as possible. Then after a while, we inhale pure white light which we imagine to be the essence of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas - their love, their compassion, all their qualities - and this enters our mind. This process of inhaling and exhaling constitutes one cycle. We repeat this cycle for seven times, or if need be, 14 or 21 times, until our mind is totally clear and we have dispelled the negative thoughts from our mind.

The Actual Practice

Now that we have completed the preliminaries, we shall engage in the formal practice of calm-abiding. The practice entails dispelling the five black thoughts or defects by meditating on the eight qualities. Once we have attained the eight qualities of the mind, we will have attained calm-abiding. According to Maitreya Bodhisattva, the five black defects are:

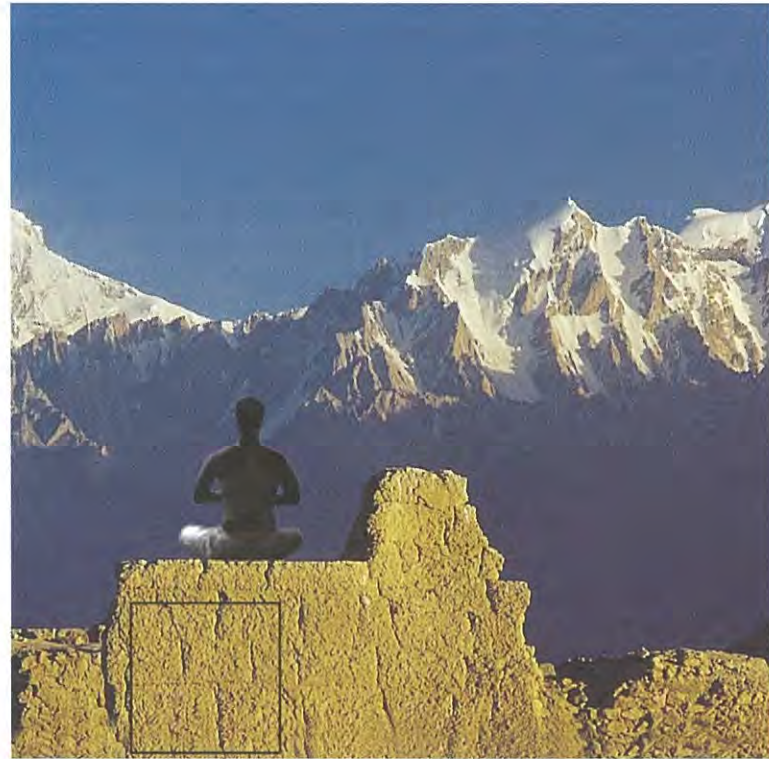
1. Laziness,
2. Forgetting the instructions for the practice,
3. Laxity and agitation,
4. Non-application of the remedies and
5. Excessive application of the remedies.

The First Black Defect

There are three subdivisions to laziness:

1. Laziness by engaging pleurably in what is inappropriate, delighting in non-Dharma, non-virtuous activities;

2. Laziness of deferment, a form of laziness in which one encounters the unavoidable mental turmoil and difficulties when one begins to practise. It makes us give up the goal of Buddhahood easily with the thought, “Forget about attaining Enlightenment in this life, I will do it at some later point.”
3. Laziness of self-deprecation. The last form consistently tells us that we don’t have the capacity or the power to do this, that it is beyond us to do it.



These forms of laziness are particular to Dharma activities. Somehow we don’t seem to encounter such laziness in worldly activities. They always appear when we are to engage in Dharma practice. Laziness is the key obstacle that prevents us from starting and engaging in the practice of calm-abiding. We need to apply very powerful antidotes to prevent laziness from arising.

There are four different antidotes. The first is by reflecting on the nature of *Samadhi*. All calm-abiding leads to and establishes *Samadhi*. The association of calm-abiding inside *Vipassana* is the indispensable foundation for the attainment of all the grounds and paths for the Shravakas, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas. Without the association of calm-abiding and insight, there can be no such realisation. Thus we can reflect on the preciousness of this indispensable association of calm-abiding and insight. If we reflect, we will understand calm-abiding is that from which all the qualities, grounds and paths, and *Samadhi* of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Arahants,

Pratyekabuddhas and all the holy beings arise. We will then generate a strong wish to achieve these goals, which in turn give rise to a strong aspiration to generate calm-abiding in our mindstream. From this strong aspiration comes great enthusiasm. This enthusiasm will completely eliminate any laziness we might have in our mind. It is like the sun rising at dawn. When the sun rises, all the obscurities and the darkness of the night are instantaneously dispelled. Likewise, enthusiasm acts as a powerful antidote to laziness.

With strong enthusiasm, laziness has no opportunity to arise in our mind.

On the basis of this enthusiasm, calm-abiding develops. Calm-abiding then leads to this great bliss of body and mind that we call the pliancy of the body and mind. With such pliancy, we will not experience bodily aches or pains regardless of how long we meditate, even if it is months or years. Instead we will stay in the meditative posture with great bliss and happiness. The other three antidotes to laziness include aspiration, bliss and pliancy.

Eliminating the Second and Third Defects

The antidote to the second fault is recollecting the instructions, that is recollecting the object of meditation. There are two broad categories of the object of meditation in the development of calm-abiding. The first is common to non-Buddhists, the second is not. Normally, non-Buddhists use rocks, stones and other material objects as their object of meditation when they engage in the practice of calm-abiding. However, in the Buddhist tradition, there are many other objects of meditation which are used. For instance, one can engage in calm-abiding directly on emptiness or the nature of the mind. But it is important to use a representation of the Buddha's body because of the benefit it brings.

The quality of recollection or simply memory would help eliminate these five faults. To engage in the practice of calm-abiding, first we need to visualise a Buddha. To do this we need a statue of the Buddha which we will observe carefully trying to memorise its characteristics and closing our eyes periodically to make sure they appear clearly in

front of us. Then visualising our root teacher the size of a thumb on the crown of our head, we imagine he descends and enters into this representation of the Buddha. Then we visualise a small Buddha the size of a thumb either in front of our brows about 15 to 20 cm away or in front of our navel, all the while focusing strongly on it, trying to bring all its characteristics to mind.

We look at the Buddha statue at the beginning, but do not look at it during meditative practice because calm-abiding is not developed depending on the visual consciousness but on the mental consciousness. That's why we do not stare at the statue continuously. At first, our visualisation of the Buddha image is clear but when the two main obstacles - laxity and agitation - of developing calm-abiding arise, it changes. We know coarse laxity has occurred when the core image of the Buddha becomes dull and loses its clarity. If the object remains clearly in front of us but with a certain radiance gone, we know this is a sign of subtle mental laxity.

When we first meditate on the image of the Buddha, it appears clearly, but as we start losing it and it becomes unclear, we have to tighten our concentration and our focus to eliminate laxity. Agitation arises when our mind is holding the object of meditation tightly, perhaps as a response to laxity. The mind is holding it too tightly and at a certain point, as if to escape away, the mind goes off somewhere. This is coarse agitation. Let me give you an example to illustrate what I'm saying.

For instance, if during meditation, your mind goes off to your apartment, you know agitation has arisen. During subtle mental agitation, the object of meditation, the Buddha image, is indeed in front and the mind does not completely run away from the object. But it is a little bit naughty. It tries to get away. It peeks around the object. That is a case of subtle mental agitation.

The moment either laxity or agitation arises in the mind when we are training in calm-abiding, we must instantly expel it. If we don't, it is a fault. And if such a fault that arises is one of the five black defects, we will never attain calm-abiding.

Now if the mind flies off due to agitation, the way to bring it back is to meditate on independent topics such as renunciation, impermanence or the suffering of the lower realms. If on the other hand, the mind becomes dull, sleepy, depressed and starts to lose the object of meditation due to laxity, we apply the antidotes thinking of the qualities of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha or the precious human rebirth, which will lift the mind up.

Eliminating the Fourth and Fifth Defects

The fourth fault is not applying the antidotes when it is

required due to the presence of laxity and agitation. The fifth fault is applying the antidotes for laxity or agitation even when the mind is focusing clearly on the object. Unnecessary application of the antidotes is a fault as it interferes with the practice.

Focusing the mind single-pointedly on the object of meditation without the presence of the five faults will lead naturally to calm-abiding. Once we have attained calm-abiding, we probably have nothing to fear of the coarse mind. With this powerful tool of calm-abiding, we can in turn meditate on renunciation, Bodhicitta, emptiness and realise all the stages of the path.

Although non-Buddhists, such as those in the Indian tradition, do indeed train and obtain calm-abiding, they do not have pure refuge let alone renunciation, Bodhicitta or the correct view. Their attainment of calm-abiding is of

no use to them and cannot prevent them from being reborn, for instance in the lowest of the vajra hells.

Appointed by His Holiness The Dalai Lama as the Abbot Chancellor of Sera Je Monastic University from 1982 to 1986, Khensur Kangyurwa Rinpoche is a distinguished Buddhist scholar, administrator and meditator. The Lineage Holder of the 108 Volumes of Buddhist Canon, his scholarly achievements were recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who asked Rinpoche to provide the oral transmission (in 1972) of the complete Tibetan canon, the Kangur, to an assembly of monks at Dharamsala - a feat that is done about once a generation and takes about six months. The title "Kangyurwa" reflects this honour. In 1984, during his time as abbot, he restructured Sera Je School, which led to the creation of an extremely high standard and diverse curriculum, achieving very exemplary results in examinations. The title "Khensur Rinpoche" means "former abbot". Today, he is still a much sought after teacher because of his extremely high qualifications, advanced knowledge and spiritual insights.

AT KONG MENG SAN PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY, WE TAKE CARE OF YOUR SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND OVERALL WELL-BEING FROM YOUR VERY FIRST STEP!

2 courses just for you !

Specially brought to you by:

光明山普覺禪寺
KONG MENG SAN
PHOR KARK SEE MONASTERY

ARE YOU KEEN ON BUDDHISM? DO YOU WANT TO LEARN MORE OF IT ? YOUR JOURNEY BEGINS HERE...

NEW INTAKE Basic Course Exploring Buddhism

For the new 'adventurer' determined to seek the wisdom teachings of the Buddha. Discover for yourself how it can transform your life positively.

28 February – 16 May 2007 (7.30 pm – 9.30 pm, Every Wednesday)
Venue: Awareness Place Well-Being Centre #03-39 Bras Basah Complex | * Course Offering: \$60

NEW INTAKE Intermediate Course Stages of the Path To Enlightenment

If you already have basic knowledge of Buddhism and possess great aspiration to progress further in your understanding of the Dharma, this 3-module course lasting 9 months is highly recommended for you.

MODULE 1: 4 March – 20 May 2007
MODULE 2: 1 July – 16 September 2007
MODULE 3: 17 February 2008 – 4 May 2008

Time: 2.00 pm – 4.00 pm, Every Sunday
Venue: KMSPKS, 2nd floor of Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas | * Course Offering: \$30 per module

Stages of the Path to Enlightenment
CONTINUATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE COMPLETED MODULE 1 2006

MODULE 2: 2 March – 25 May 2007
MODULE 3: 6 July – 21 September 2007

Time: 7.30 pm – 9.30 pm, Every Friday
Venue: KMSPKS, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall, 1st Floor | * Course Offering: \$30 per module

* Course is **FREE** for students, NSF, social workers, health workers and senior citizens.

Closing Date: 1 week before commencement of course
Visit www.kmspks.org or call 6336 5067 for more information.

Another Dharma Project by:
KMSPKS • SEMD
—Inspiring Dharma, Inspiring You!

Debunking the Top 10 Myths of the Seventh Month

Shen Shian takes you on an other-worldly journey to debunk the common myths surrounding the Seventh Month

Myth #1: The gates of hell are opened during every seventh lunar month.

Truth: Beings leave hell only when their strong negative karma, which rendered them to be reborn in hell, is exhausted, and when the karma for rebirth surfaces. In this sense, beings leave hell not just during the seventh month, but as and when karmically appropriate.

Myth #2: During the seventh month, hungry ghosts from hell roam the world freely as wandering spirits.

Truth: Hungry ghosts are distinct from hell-beings. Though both are unfortunate beings, those in hells generally experience more intense suffering and do not have holidays in our world.

Meanwhile, we already co-exist with hungry ghosts and wandering spirits, just that they are mostly invisible to humans. Hungry ghosts are beings who are reborn in a state of strong craving, while wandering spirits are the deceased who have yet to take proper rebirths due to strong attachment. Most ghostly encounters are with these wandering spirits, not hungry ghosts or hell-beings.

Myth #3: All go to hell after death in the afterlife.

Truth: Many Chinese believe that everyone will be reborn in hell after death. This afterlife is viewed as similar to our present world. However, only those who have created very negative karma are reborn in hell. There are five other possible realms of existence that we can be reborn in - realm of hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods and gods. Also, hell is not an “interchange terminal” between every two consecutive lives.

Myth #4: Life in hell requires all the requisites of our world, so we must burn these items.

Truth: Since hell is a realm of suffering, “requisites” such as money, houses, cars and cell phones would not be relevant. There is no basis that paper items burnt to ashes will materialise into solid items elsewhere. Also, money



is useless without trade, houses useless without land, and cars are useless without engines and fuel, just as cell phones are useless without telecommunication companies and networks.

If life in hell requires everything in our world via burning, we would need to burn the whole world literally, as everything is interdependent and would be required for any one thing to function.

But to burn absolutely everything is of course highly illogical. Burning expensive paper items not only wastes paper, money, time and effort, it also pollutes the environment and can be damaging to health. Instead of pleasing unseen beings, ironically, the excess fire, ashes and smoke might displease them, just as they displease humans who are irritated.

Myth #5: If we do not even burn paper items out of goodwill, we are being uncompassionate.

Truth: Rather than burning, we can do good deeds in the name of the deceased, whom we believe might have been reborn in an unfortunate realm (or whom might still be a wandering spirit), and dedicate merits to them. We can also offer prayers by chanting, in the hope that they may learn the Buddha's teachings from them, thus alleviating their suffering by practising them. Openly sharing and listening to the Buddha's teachings is also meritorious.



Besides making food offerings to hungry ghosts and wandering spirits, we can also donate food and necessities to worthy members of the Sangha and charities. This action creates more merits than burning items. Actually, this can be done any time, but it is a custom to especially do so on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month in Buddhism to celebrate Ullambana. Other than benefiting deceased relatives, friends and even past karmic “enemies”, this act can alleviate their suffering too. Furthermore, we can celebrate Ullambana by doing good to honour our present parents who are alive.

Myth #6: Why is there more supernatural phenomena during the seventh month? What if I have dreams of a relative asking for paper items?

Truth: There might be more supernatural activity when we create elaborate and rowdy celebrations to gather and honour unseen beings, especially while we also become tense and expect supernatural incidents to occur. Humans disturb unseen beings accidentally, more so than them disturbing us intentionally. In this way, experiencing the supernatural can be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Some of the deceased are attached to the idea that they need paper items burnt for them, which is why they might appear in dreams asking for them. Likewise, surviving

relatives might be attached to the same idea, which is why they dream similarly. Explaining to the deceased might be good, to let him or her realise that burning is not needed. If this does not work, it is perhaps better to burn some items - to let him or her realise the futility of the practice.

Myth #7: Life in hell is eternal suffering.

Truth: Since there is limited evil that one can do in a lifetime, one will not experience karmic retribution infinitely. However, due to great suffering, life in hell is often experienced as a very long duration.

Myth #8: All unseen beings are either mischievous or evil. We need to appease them and ask for protection.

Truth: Most hungry ghosts and wandering spirits exist in states too unfortunate to want to play tricks on us or sabotage us in any way. Just as most humans do not go all the way out to harm each other, most of them do not harm us. Just as only a fraction of humans are downright evil, so are unseen beings. Buddhists take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, not in unenlightened beings. There is no need to appease any unseen being, but we can practise compassion when we encounter them.

Myth #9: It is bad luck to have celebrations during the seventh month.

Truth : If more of us practise Ullambana in the right way, surely, the seventh month will be a time of great joy, merits and auspiciousness. In fact, Ullambana itself is a spiritual celebration.

Myth #10: It is definitely unfortunate to encounter an unseen being.

Truth: Encountering an unseen being is due to your karmic affinity with each other. We should do what we can to ensure there is no enmity, by being sincerely compassionate and understanding, calmly wishing him or her well. If it is a negative karmic affinity, it should be transformed to one of goodwill by urging the being to let go of attachment and take a good rebirth, especially in Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land, where enlightenment is guaranteed. You can do this by reciting “Namo Amitufo” (Homage to Amitabha Buddha) with good intentions and pure motivation, while wishing the being to do the same single-mindedly. Amitabha Buddha vowed that any being constantly mindful of him will be received by him for birth in His Pure Land. When unsure, it is best to consult an experienced monk or nun for help.

Contemplation on Flies

By Ng Pei Fuen

For more than one week, I contemplated daily on the subject of “flies”.

I was in Ipoh for a 10-day retreat and come late morning, hordes of flies would descend on the meditators in the meditation hall and also upon our food in the dining hall.

Everyday while waiting for all to be seated and to chant the food reflection, I would sit and watch the flies that busily flew from one person’s plate to another, buzzing around our faces. At first, I would diligently fan them away, then I grew tired of shooing them and stopped.

I closed my eyes the moment I sat down. “Out of sight, out of mind,” I thought. “One doesn’t die from eating fly-contaminated food. The most I will do is make a few trips to the toilet. But it is too much trouble to unsettle my mind with impatience and intolerance after so many hours of trying to concentrate my mind.”

A few days into the “closed eyes” regime, I noticed that my kind neighbours at the table would help me place a sheet of tissue over my food while I shut my eyes. I felt grateful and a little embarrassed that they had to help me protect my food.

So I started keeping my eyes open. I just looked at the flies that would come and go on my food and the way they descended together onto some bits of food that my fellow yogis placed in the middle of the table to occupy them.

Something struck me about the way the flies would descend together on the food, landing side by side to one other, buzzing around, flying and gathering, moving from one place to another sometimes alone, sometimes in a sudden flurry of movement. What karma did they create to be reborn as flies? This was one question that lingered in my



mind. I suddenly felt a lot of compassion for these flies when I observed how busy they were, always buzzing around to find food, but not staying long at each place before being chased away by people or heading for another target.

One day, during interview time, one yogi asked the meditation teacher, Sayalay Dipankara, about difficulties she faced with a group of people she knew. It had to do with jealousy, with one group ganging up against the other, trying to keep each other away from the person in authority whom they liked to be close to. The image of the flies crowding around the pile of food came to my mind instantly. It just struck me at that point how these people were busy buzzing around, occupied like these flies, trying to hog a person they like. Not knowing why they are always so busy, with only one objective in mind - that of searching for worldly satisfaction.

I shuddered in my heart.

Sayalay has yet to answer my question of what can cause rebirth as a fly, but this is my reflection:

May I not plant seeds of karma that would lead me to a fly-like rebirth, where I have to waste my time mindlessly in search of sensual pleasures, being constantly dissatisfied (flying around), blindly led by likes and dislikes and irking people all around.

May the flies (and all beings!) be free from greed, hatred and delusion, and taste the real food of the Dharma!

The Tea Lady



Buddha taught the Dharma in different ways to different people, depending on their understanding and their ability. He was like a doctor who prescribes various medicines for different ailments. Here is a story, recounted by Venerable Hue Can, that shows us this essence.

Life is hard for China's poor peasants. Once there was a peasant girl who had no skills with which to make a living. She could not find a husband and was not even able to secure a place as a servant. Unattractive and unwanted, she was thrown out by her family. Desperate to survive, she went to the border. She managed to find a kettle and some cups. She then began to brew tea and sell it to the travellers crossing the border. Many of these people were tired and bad-tempered and often treated the poor woman unkindly, complaining that the tea was too cold or too hot. Sometimes they even threw the tea at her. The woman passed her days in shame and misery. She thought of suicide, believing that her life was not worth living.

One day, a monk came to the border post. When he saw the unhappy tea lady, his compassionate heart was moved, and he sat down to talk to her. The woman, unused to kindness, poured out her heart to him. The monk told her gently that suicide was not the answer.

If she wished to find happiness in this life, she should repay cruelty with kindness.

If her customers did not like the tea and threw it down or at her, then she should not be upset, but give them another cup of tea which might be more acceptable to them. Most importantly, at the end of each day, she should spend some time reverently and mindfully repeating the chant: *Namo Amitabha Buddha*.

For the first time, the woman had hope and meaning in her life. She began to change her attitude and started chanting. From that day onwards, her life was transformed. But she had not heard the monk quite correctly and was in fact chanting *Namo Amitabha Buddhi*. A very slight difference in pronunciation but one that made the word "Buddha" meaningless.

Many years passed. The tea lady remained at the border, graciously and contentedly attending to her customers. Every evening, she chanted.

One day, another monk approached the border post. With the sensitivity gained through long years of meditation, he became aware of an aura of enlightenment surrounding the

area before him. He searched among the crowd there, finding some who were polite and friendly, but none that might account for the strong feeling that he had of being in the presence of great spirituality.

“Surely,” he thought, “there must be a powerful Zen master here.” Eventually, his eyes fell upon the tea lady. He noticed the calm and assured way she worked, and was impressed. But he didn’t think that she could be the source of the holiness of which he was aware. As evening approached and travellers no longer came, the woman folded her hands and began to softly chant. Convinced now, the monk approached her and asked how she had attained her state of emancipation. The woman told him of the monk she had met long before, of his instruction to change her attitude, and the chant she was to do: Namo Amitabha Buddhi.

The monk was shocked and explained to her that her chanting was incorrect and could not, therefore be effective. “Buddha,” he said sternly, “not Buddhi.”

After he went on his way, the woman, now distressed, began trying to pronounce the word “Buddha” correctly. But it was difficult for her. Despite the happiness of her simple life, she was not educated, and was like many peasants, illiterate.

The monk, feeling that he had been of service to the woman, continued on his way. But when he looked back to the border post, he noticed that the wonderful aura was

gone. The monk stopped and considered. He realised that although the woman’s chant had been technically incorrect, it had worked for her and had been the cause of her emancipation. By insisting on the exact pronunciation of a word, he had caused confusion and sorrow. He hurried back to the tea lady, and found her struggling unhappily with the “wrong” word.

The monk went to her and said: “ I played a trick on you. The words you were chanting were correct in every way.” Greatly relieved, the woman went back to her old way of chanting and once again she radiated tranquility and enlightenment.

Emancipation does not depend upon words or letters but on the sincere and heartfelt practice of the pure mind.

Venerable Hue Can, abbess of Thien Tu Tue Can Nunnery (also known as Sunyata Community and Meditation Centre) in Western Australia, practises Vietnamese meditation taught by the Most Venerable Thich Thanh Tu. She recently published a book, *Stories of Thien*, in which this story was adapted from. She has given Dharma talks in Singapore, Malaysia, America, Korea and India.

Editor: This story is a very popular Buddhist tale. In fact, there are a few versions to it. But the moral of the story is always the same - sincerity in practice is fundamental in the path to emancipation.

Are you worried?

Are you **miserable** and **depressed**?

Do you wonder **how you can subdue** and **prevent anger**?

Or how you can **overcome your problems, difficulties**
and the challenges you face in life?

Do you yearn for words of **timeless truth** that talk straight into your heart?

Everyone wants to be happy and free of problems. The free Dharma books published by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery tell you simply and clearly how you can achieve happiness in this life and the next..

To get these gems, visit **Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery and Awareness Place** at Bras Basah Complex #01-63 or log on to <http://www.kmspks.org/publication>

May the Dharma bring light to your life!

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who was very naughty. But when he stepped into a Buddhist Sunday School, little drops of Dharma seeped into his heart, nourishing his seeds of goodness. He couldn't say it, but how he had yearned to be good!

Yet it was hard to be good when everyone around tried to be rebellious, clever and strong, sometimes to the extent of harming others. To fit in with the crowd, it was easier for him to be naughty.

Then he learned that what gives him happiness now could also give him suffering. One cup of ice-cream was bliss, but ten tubs would be yucky hell.

He learned that if he treats his parents kindly, with respect and humility, they would be angry less often and treat him with the same kindness and love.

He learned not to judge his friends, or to call them names and not to look only at their bad points because that would be very mean. For he knows what it feels like having been treated the same way before, which wasn't nice at all.

He learned that he isn't perfect, but that's okay, because the Buddha started out that way too! But if he keeps polishing his mind and behaviour everyday, one day it would be shining bright.

He learned that if he couldn't be with good and wise friends, it is better to be on his own.

He enjoyed being good, being helpful, being respectful to his elders. He enjoyed doing good service, being a good and caring friend, and listening to the Dharma. He appreciated his teachers, his fellow brothers and sisters and all those who nourished his heart richly with the Dharma.

He rejoiced in the Dharma,
He rejoiced in his virtues.

He learned that it is okay to fail, and that it is okay if others did not understand or misunderstand him sometimes. Because as long as he knows himself, with patience, he can show by his behaviour that he has changed. That is what is most important, to use the Dharma mirror upon oneself.

Dedicated to all Dharma Masters, and teachers of every Buddhist Dharma Schools for all the selfless and amazing work you are doing with all sentient beings, young and old. Happy Teacher's Day!

And for all children everywhere, Happy Children's Day! May there be many, many more little Bodhisattvas born to truly turn our world into a Pure Land of compassion, love, kindness and virtues.



The Little Drops of Dharma

By Ng Pei Fuen



When he realised that he had learned all these, little drops of joy trickled quietly from the corner of his eyes.

"Mummy, Daddy, I'm sorry for all the misdeeds I had done in the past, for all the heartache and troubles I had given you. Thank you for taking care of me, teaching and guiding me all this while."

"I will be a good boy now,
I will grow stronger with the Dharma,
I will plant good seeds everyday.
I will send love to all my teachers,
I will forgive all those who did me wrong."

"Please help me and be patient with me as I try my best to be good."

"Thank you, Lord Buddha, the fully Enlightened One, Light of the World, Teacher of Gods and Men."

"Nathi me saranam annam, Dhammo me saranam varam!"

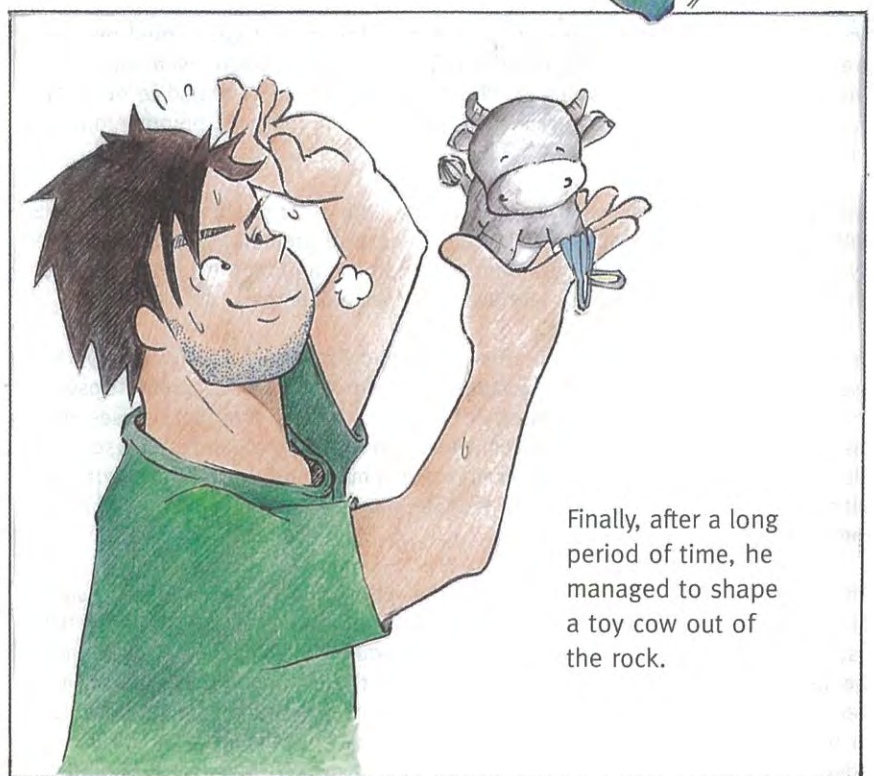
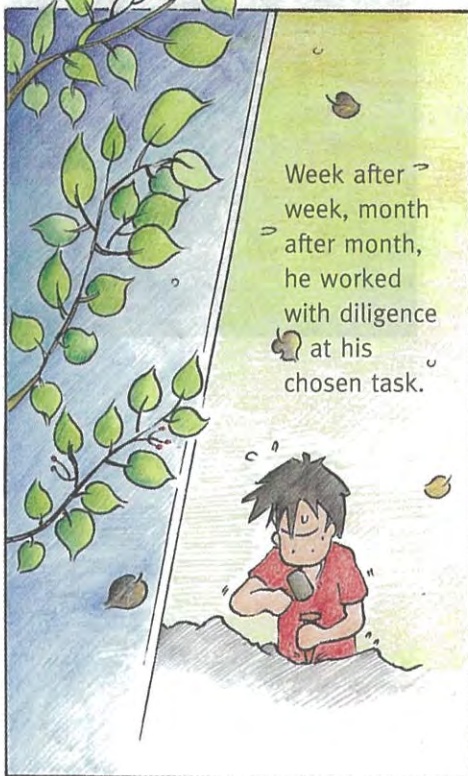
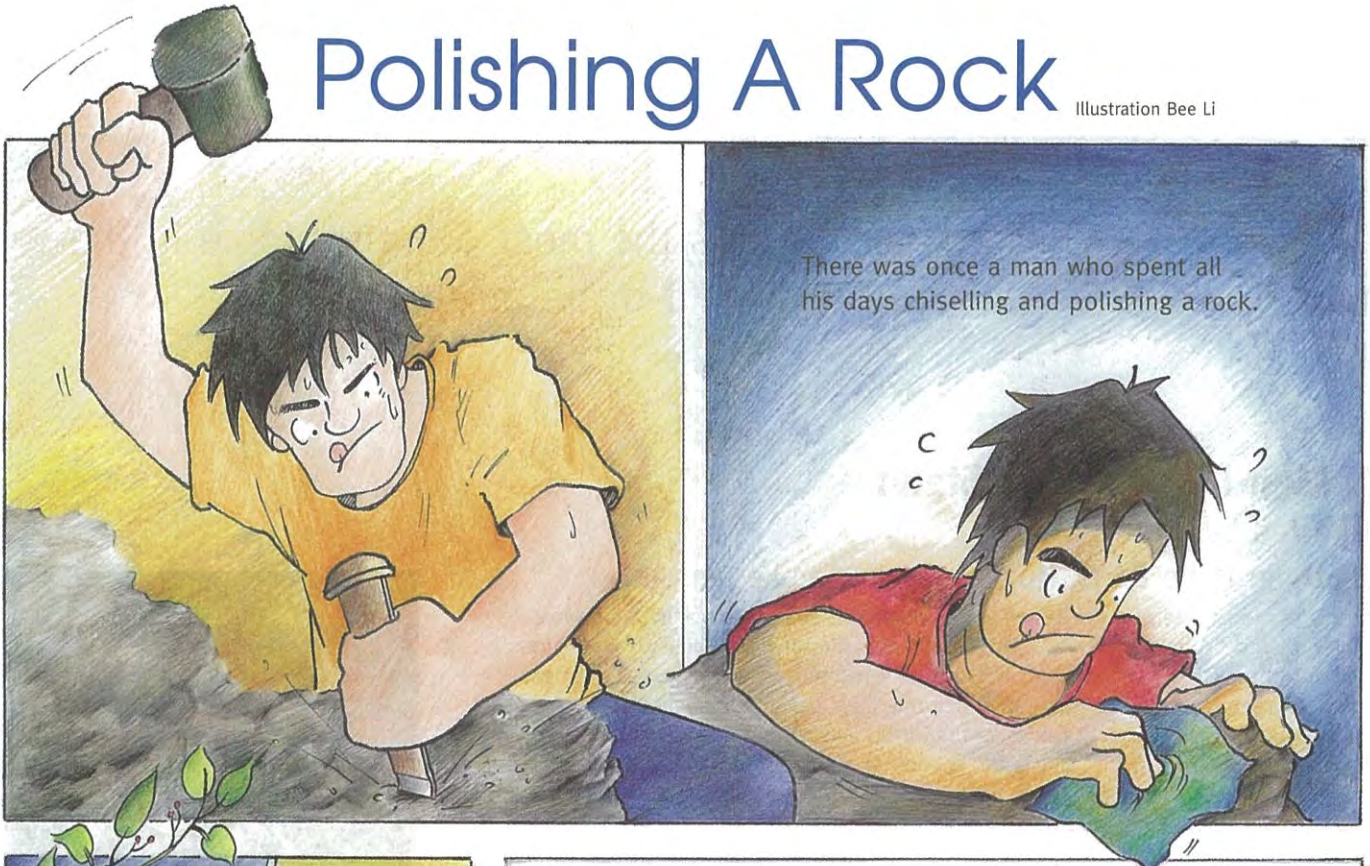
"No other refuge do I seek, the Dharma is my true refuge!"

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

~ Dhammapada verse 122 ~

Polishing A Rock

Illustration Bee Li



In the end, his labour was massive, but the outcome was small indeed. People often work with great diligence, studying for prolonged periods of time, and after much sweat and pain, they acquire some understanding. Yet they use their enormous effort only to try to gain more fame than the next person. How foolish.

Those whose studies are broad enough to give them insight and understanding should continue to work deeply, seeking only the highest fruits of understanding. If all they seek is fame and a feeling of pride, before long they will come to great trouble and all their efforts will be in vain. ~ *The One Hundred Parable Sutra*

By Esther Thien & Shen Shi'an

Seen Truly, the mind is the most powerful force in the universe. Master it or be mastered by it.

X Men III: The Last Stand

Directed by: Brett Ratner

Starring: Halle Berry, Hugh Jackson, Famke Janssen

In this third instalment of the X-men series, humans manage to concoct an assumed but untested “cure” for mutancy. It is seen as a hopeful medicine to transform mutants born with a diverse range of special powers into ordinary humans. Ostracised by the human majority, mutants either see this as a welcomed means of regaining acceptance, or as a hypocritical holier-than-thou way to suppress their birthrights to be who they already are. But in the rounds of rebirth, what is truly permanent? If nothing is, then strong attachment to personal identities or that of others, in the light of *Anatta*, surely causes much suffering.

According to Halle Berry, who starred as Storm, the mutant gene could represent pretty much anything - racism, ageism, religious bigotry, sexism, even speciesism* and unjust societal caste systems. “We all face moments of prejudice on a daily basis and the idea of changing oneself to fit into the ‘norm’ is preposterous and wrong.”

Ending biasness is possible if we can recognise each other as fellow sentient beings with equal rights for happiness. The real disease of prejudice can only be cured by equanimity, trust and respect from both humans and mutants. Having mutual empathy of each other’s hopes and fears is the one panacea.

In the movie, the individual mutants also stand for classic examples of various aspects of human character. For instance, Professor X, the world’s greatest psychic, represents the calm controlled mastery of mind, so much so that that he rises above his physical disability. Storm’s moods, which can affect the weather, represent how ultimately, our world or immediate environment is made and shaped by our attitudes. Ultimately, we have to be mindful of the intentions behind our choices, and ensure they benefit more than harm.

An intriguing story arc in the show involves the aptly named Phoenix, the manifestation of the dark side of Jean Grey’s psyche, who is capable of amplifying individuals’ psychic abilities to a cosmic scale. A vivid illustration of the potential of the mind, we see Jean tormented, struggling to cope with the enormous unbridled power in her. This brings to mind the teaching that the mind is truly the most powerful force in the universe, one that’s capable of destroying entire worlds. As the Buddha advised, “Master the mind or be mastered by the mind.” Professor X attempts to “cage the beast” within Jean, but as Wolverine warned, “Sometimes when you cage the beast, the beast gets angry.” Such is a possible side effect of oppression and suppression. In Buddhism, meditation can be practised instead - to mindfully tame and transform the darker side within us.



*speciesism - the lack of respect for different sentient life-forms, including animals, which leads to animal abuse.

Water is more profound than you think.

Read

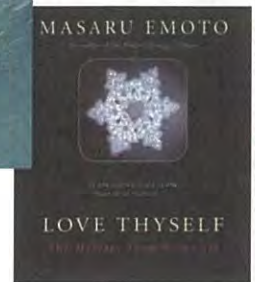
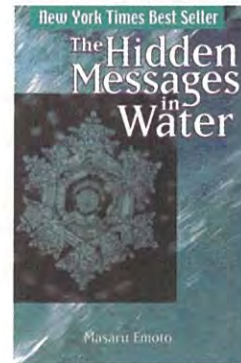
The Hidden Messages in Water Love Thyself: The Message from Water III

By Masaru Emoto

Water not only nourishes and purifies our body, it is also alive and responsive to our every thought and emotion.

In the books, *The Hidden Messages in Water* and *Love Thyself – The Message from Water III*, internationally renowned Japanese scientist Masaru Emoto shows us how human vibrational energy, thoughts, words, ideas and music, affect the molecular structure of water, forming beautiful crystals or fragmented and deformed ones.

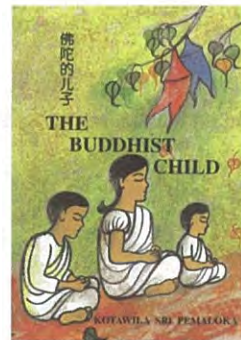
The quality of our life is directly connected to the quality of our water and vice versa, since over seventy percent of a mature human body comprises of water. At last, it is scientifically proven through this groundbreaking research that holding positive wholesome thoughts of love and gratitude, or by saying a prayer, we are potentially healing ourselves and the Earth. Available from Awareness Place for S\$28.80 and S\$29.40 respectively.



The Buddhist Child

By Ven. Dr. Kotawila Sri Pemaloka

A bilingual book with lovely bold drawings, it depicts the story of little Rahula, a royal prince and only son of Prince Siddhartha, who became a novice monk at the tender age of seven. He was very well-liked in the monastery because of his wholesome behaviour. He had a habit of listening to everyone and follows good advice and instructions to become the most obedient child. He was never angry or irritable, but always happy and friendly, qualities which all children should follow. Priced S\$4.00 at Awareness Place.



Children's
Day
Special



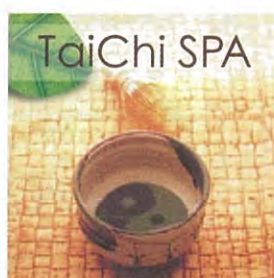
Heard

Reduce exam stress,
relax and sleep
better with these
therapeutic music
albums

Vu Vu's Tales

by Sakinu & Peng Jing

This interesting album of children's music and stories comes with a lovely Chinese picture book with vibrant colourful illustrations telling the legends of Taiwan's aboriginal inhabitants. With exotic beauty, humour and imagination, the melodies serve as wonderful bedtime music for the kids. A good alternative for the parent who would like to give something different to their children. Get it from Awareness Place at \$19.90.



Tai Chi Spa

by Toby Emerson

Featuring therapeutic music with the soothing sound of sea waves, this collection of music is based on the meditative, slow and rhythmic movements of Tai Chi to enhance self-awareness, health and relaxation. Comes with a free bonus CD echoing the pure sounds of mountain streams, allowing you to return to the embrace of Mother Nature. Available from Awareness Place at \$19.90. While stocks last.

Dear Reader,

"The Gift of the Dharma Excels All Other Gifts."

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

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
AWAKEN Magazine
88 Bright Hill Road
Singapore 574117

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

You can also donate online via eNets or Giro at <http://www.kmspks.org/kmspks/donation.htm> (*Please key in 'For the printing of Dharma Books' under the **Other Payment Remarks** column and type in the donation amount in the **Other Payment Amount** column).

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

Name:

E-mail:

(Would you like to receive our FREE weekly Buddhist e-mail newsletter, The Daily Enlightenment? (Yes*/ No)

Address:

Tel: (O) (H) (Hp)

Amount: (Cash*/ Cheque No:)

Do you require an official receipt? (Yes*/ No)

Where did you obtain this magazine?

*Please delete where appropriate

issue 6

The Merits of Producing Buddhist Teachings and Buddha Images

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

AWAKEN to... Compassion & Wisdom on the journey of life...

Published three times a year by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, AWAKEN is a FREE bilingual Buddhist magazine that aims to help readers gain insight and make sense of life's journey using the Dharma.

Get your free copy from these outlets:

SINGAPORE BUDDHIST FEDERATION
12 Ubi Ave 1 S(408932)

SINGAPORE BUDDHIST LODGE
17 Kim Yam Road S(239329)

TAI PEI BUDDHIST CENTRE
2 Lavender Street S(338823)

CI YAN VEGETARIAN HEALTH FOOD
8/10 Smith Street S(058917)

AWARENESS PLACE
Blk 231 Bain Street #01-63
Bras Basah Complex S(180231)

THE HERBS HOME
101 Upper Cross Street #02-77D
People's Park Centre S(058357)

GREENPEACE
International Plaza #02-19
10 Anson Road S(079903)

Whilst stocks last

"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogmas and theology. If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism."
- Albert Einstein



enhance your campus life with buddhism



● find out how you can make sense of this world we live in by first making sense of your life. (and have loads of fun along the way!)



● study and play hard with a group of close-knitted spiritual friends.



● find out more about Buddhism!

Nanyang Technological University
Buddhist Society
buddhist@ntu.edu.sg
ntubs.cjb.net

National University of Singapore
Buddhist Society
secretary@nusbs.org.sg
nusbs.org.sg

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Buddhist Society
np_buddhistsociety@hotmail.com
npbuddhistsociety.blogspot.com

Nanyang Polytechnic Buddhist Society
nybs@hotmail.com
get.to/nypbs

Singapore Polytechnic Buddhist Society
spbs_spbs@yahoo.com.sg
spbs-act.blogspot.com

Singapore Management University
Buddhist Society
smu_bs@hotmail.com
smubuddhists.blogspot.com



With a good heart and compassion for others,
 whenever a problem arises,
 you experience it for others,
 on behalf of all sentient beings.
 For them to be free of problems,
 wishing others to have happiness,
 you experience problems
 on their behalf.
 If you enjoy a good life, luxury and comfort,
 you dedicate it to others.
 Bodhicitta makes
 the person's experience of problems
 a cause for the happiness
 of all living beings,
 by transforming problems
 into the path of enlightenment
 - *Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche*

If you live the sacred and despise the ordinary,
 you are still bobbing in the ocean of delusion.
 - *Zen Master Lin-Chi*

Our inability to stand someone
 results from our lack of cultivation.
 Having a wider heart and mind
 is more important than having a larger house.
 Happiness does not come from having much,
 but from being attached to little.
 - *Ven. Cheng Yen*

The purpose of all the major religious traditions
 is to create temples of goodness and compassion inside,
 in our hearts.
 If the love within your mind is lost
 and you see other beings as enemies,
 then no matter
 how much knowledge, education
 or material comfort you have,
 only suffering and confusion will ensue.
 - *His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama*

The fool thinks he has won a battle
 when he bullies with harsh speech,
 but knowing how to be forbearing
 alone makes one victorious.
 - *The Buddha, Samyutta Nikaya*

Develop the mind of equilibrium.
 You will always be getting praise and blame,
 but do not let either affect the poise of the mind:
 follow the calmness, the absence of pride.
 - *The Buddha, Sutta Nipata*

This plate of food,
 so fragrant and appetising,
 also contains much suffering.
 In this food,
 I see clearly the presence
 of the entire universe
 supporting my existence.
 - *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Aggregate: Mental or physical collection.

Amitabha (Amida, Amita, Amitayus): Amitabha is the most commonly used name for the Buddha of Infinite Light and Infinite Life. A transhistorical Buddha venerated by all Mahayana schools - particularly, Pure Land. Presides over the Western Pure Land (Land of Ultimate Bliss), where anyone can be reborn through utterly sincere recitation of His name, particularly at the time of death Amitabha Sutra is one of the three cardinal Pure Land Sutras.

Anatta: Selflessness (non-self or impersonality). All phenomena is without self-nature. Nothing exists on its own as a separate self. As the so-called self is simply a collection of conditioned and changing physical and mental factors, there is no real or concrete element of self in us.

Arhant: Foe or Enemy Destroyer. One who has destroyed the enemy of dualistic ego-grasping/clinging, and thus accomplished liberation of cyclic existence. There are three types of Arhats: Shravaka, Pratyekabuddha, Buddha.

Attachment: In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering: From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear (Dhammapada). For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment.

Aversion: Exaggerated wanting to be separated from someone or something.

Bodhicitta: The aspiration to help all beings attain True Happiness by becoming Buddhas, by being Bodhisattvas.

Bodhisattva: One who aspires to save all beings from suffering, while saving oneself.

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

Compassion: The quality that makes us aspire to help others with no selfish intention; the ending of selfishness.

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

Dedication of merits: Sharing one's own merits and virtues with others.

Defilements: Our negative qualities - chiefly Greed (Craving), Hatred (Aversion) and Ignorance (Delusion).

Delusion: See 'Ignorance'.

Dharma: An aspect of the Triple Gem - the teachings of the Buddha or the general teachings of Buddhism.

Dhammapada: A collection of sayings by the Buddha.

Enlightenment: The realisation of the reality of all things as they truly are. True Happiness is the result.

Emptiness: The truth of all mind and matter constantly changing, thus being empty of any fixed self.

Equanimity: The calm and balanced state of mind of not being affected by attachment or aversion to anything.

Four Noble Truths: 1. Life is full of dissatisfactory experiences - ageing, sickness, separation, death etc 2. Causes of dissatisfactory experiences - craving, aversion and ignorance 3. Life can be without dissatisfaction - by attaining Enlightenment or Nirvana 4. The path leading to the end of dissatisfactions - The Noble Eightfold path.

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

Guru: Spiritual teacher/friend/mentor.

Ignorance: The quality of lacking Wisdom, not knowing the reality of all things. Same as 'delusion'.

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

Karma: The moral law of cause and effect which states that what we experience is the result of what we had done, that what we do will result in what we will experience.

Lam Rim: Lamp on the Path. The stages of the Path to Enlightenment. Systematic presentation of all Buddha's teachings. First presented in this form by Atisha, preserved and further developed in the Gelug-school of Tibetan Buddhism.

Lama: Spiritual teacher. An honorary title in Tibetan Buddhism given to one who has completed particular scholastic and yogic training. It is possible to renounce one's monkhood without renouncing one's lama status, for the purposes of marriage.

Liberation: State after removing the defilements and karma which cause uncontrolled rebirth in cyclic existence.

Loving-kindness: The quality which makes us wish for the happiness and well-being of others. 'Metta' in Pali language.

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

Maitreya: Loving-One. Name of the next coming Buddha, also both teacher and main disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha.

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

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

Merits: Blessings, positive potential. Imprints on the mindstream of positive actions, leading to future happiness.

Noble Eightfold Path: A systematic and complete formula to rid dissatisfaction and attain true happiness and peace by following Perfect Speech, Perfect Action, Perfect Livelihood, Perfect Effort, Perfect Mindfulness, Perfect Meditation, Perfect Understanding, Perfect Thought (pls read Be A Lamp Upon Yourself published by KMSPKS for detailed info).

Paramita: Refers to the six practices, the perfection of which ferries one beyond the sea of suffering and mortality to Nirvana.

Pratyekabuddha: Solitary Realiser. Follower of the Theravada tradition, concentrating on basic Buddhist teachings like the 12 links of Interdependent Origination, Four Noble Truths etc. to attain liberation.

Puja: Ceremony/act of worship, offering.

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

Rebirth: The continual cycle of birth and death.

Renunciation: Determination to be free from all problems and suffering (of cyclic existence), not longer having attachment to the pleasures of cyclic existence which lead to more suffering and defilements. It is inner wisdom.

Samadhi: Meditative stabilisation, concentration. One-pointed involvement in meditation where the meditation object and the practitioner are experienced as inseparable and indistinguishable. As there are many types of Samadhi, the term does not infer anything about the practitioner's realisation or accomplishment.

Samsara: This world of rebirth and suffering. Also known as Saha world

Sangha: An aspect of the Triple Gem - the holy community of monks and nuns.

Sentient Beings: Living beings with feelings in the six Samsara realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods and gods.

Shravaka: Hearer. One who hears, practises and proclaims Buddha's teachings. Followers of the Theravada tradition, concentrating on Renunciation and pacifying emotions, in order to attain Liberation.

Suffering: The physical and mental feeling of dissatisfaction.

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

Tantra: A scripture describing an esoteric Buddhist practice.

Theravada: A foundational school of Buddhism.

Threefold Refuge: Taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

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

Vairochana: One of the five Dhyani Buddhas, representing the form (or body) aggregate and Mirror-like Wisdom of all Buddhas.

Vajrayana: Tibetan school of Buddhism.

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

Vipassana: Insight

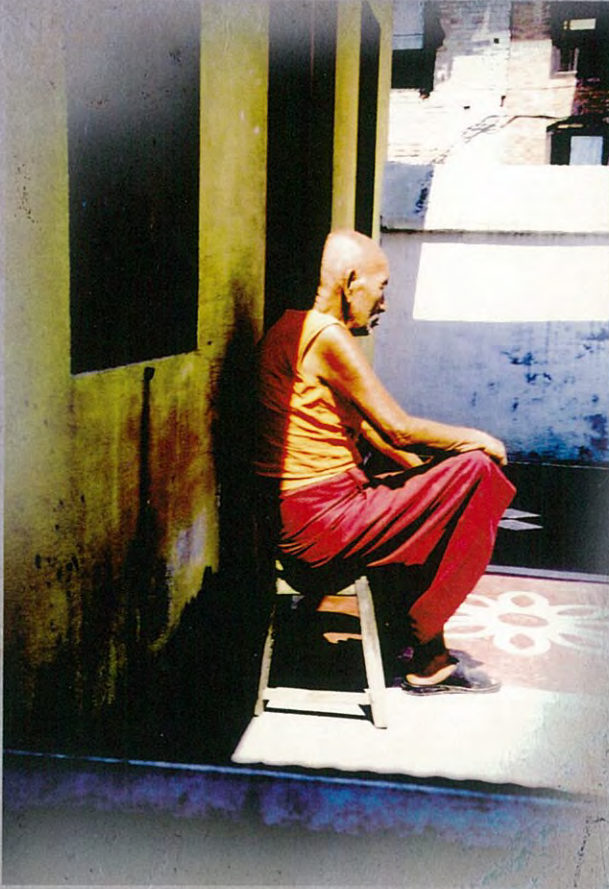
Zen: A school of Buddhism. Also known as Chan.

Your Feedback Matters

We value your comments and welcome your suggestions for improvement to AWAKEN. Tell us how we can improve our magazine to better cater to your spiritual and holistic needs. What new column would you like to see; which articles would you like to read? Send us your praises and flames. E-mail your feedback to awaken@kmspks.org or send them to:

AWAKEN, The Managing Editor
Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
Dharma Propagation Division
Awaken Publishing & Design
88 Bright Hill Road
Singapore 574117

Please include your full name and personal particulars



Bhaddekaratta Sutta

Do not pursue the past.
Do not lose yourself in the future.
The past no longer is.
The future has yet to come.

Looking deeply at life as it is.
In the very here and now,
the practitioner dwells in stability and freedom.

We must be diligent today.
To wait until tomorrow is too late.
Death comes unexpectedly.
How can we bargain with it?

The sage calls a person who knows
how to dwell in mindfulness night and day,
'one who knows the better way to live alone.'

~ The Buddha ~