



jan - apr 2007

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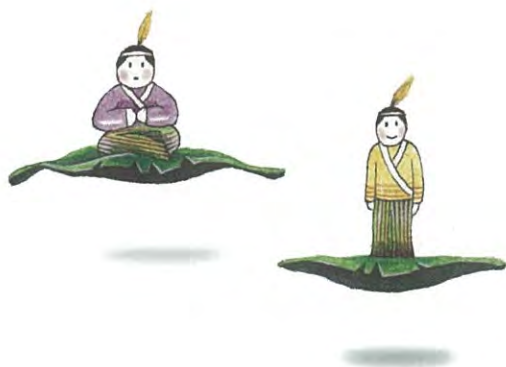
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Starting the New Year on a Note of Gratitude

Let us all usher in the new year of 2007 with the Buddhist value of gratitude. When we are thankful of all that we are blessed with, and grateful to all who have helped us in one way or another, we will naturally develop the wish to repay all for the infinite kindness they have showered upon us, be it big or small.

As we think of others' kindness with gratitude, feelings of fulfilment arise, opening up our hearts and reining in our compulsive desires and ego defences. When we focus on what we have rather than what we lack, our mind generates feelings of satisfaction and contentment, which in turn enhances our self-confidence and our ability to connect with others. This, invariably, promotes feelings of loving-kindness and compassion. It is for this reason that the monastery uses "Gratitude: Connecting Lives" as its motto for commemorating the 100th year birth anniversary of the eminent Ven. Hong Choon.

Cultivating gratitude may seem simple, but it is a fundamental practice in Buddhism, (pg 52). Recollecting the kindness of our parents (pg 59), our teachers (pg 41) and all sentient beings (pg 56) who were once our mothers, caring and nurturing us, just as our mother in this life, is a Buddhist practice that cannot be emphasised enough.

Just as a great Dharma master said, "When we human beings are small children, we very much depend on the kindness of our parents; without their kindness it would be difficult to survive." That is why the Buddha says it is difficult to repay the kindness of our parents (see back cover). Holding the welfare of others in mind when making day-to-day decisions also brings happiness for oneself and others (pg 45).

Let us now take a moment to reflect, plant a seed of gratitude in our mindstream, in remembrance of our parents and all who have touched our lives with kindness, and dedicate the merits gathered from this grateful heart for the benefit of all mother sentient beings.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with all sentient beings always.

Happy reading.

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien



Thousands of candles can be lighted from a single candle, and the life of the candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.
~ The Buddha ~

WSDP - Weekly spiritual and personal programmes for non or new Buddhists. Talks or workshops on basic Buddhism, psychology, wellness and sharing on applying Buddhism in daily life by professionals and Dharma teachers.

Day : Every Thursday
 Time : 7.30pm – 9.30pm
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre, Bras Basah Complex #03-39
 Details : Call 6849 5346 or email wsdp@kmspks.org to enquire or register.

Introduction to Drumming

Participants will be taught basic elements of drumming as well as its theory. Participants who are interested in more advanced drumming lessons are welcome to join our regular training group after the basic class. Promising participants will be groomed to join our Drum Ensemble.

Age 14 -21

Fee : \$40 (10 lessons)
 Date/Time : 6th Jan 07, 2.00pm - 4.00pm

Age 21 & above

Fee : \$50 (10 lessons)
 Date/Time : 4th Jan 07, 7.30pm - 9.30pm
 Venue : 1st floor Music room, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall
 Details : For more information, please email yiren@kmspks.org or visit www.kmspks.org/culture/drummingcourse.htm

Monthly Group Mani Recitation

Date : 3rd Jan, 2nd Feb, 4th Mar, 2nd April 07
 (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.

Ushering Chinese New Year with a Resounding “gong”

Pujas & prayers • Sounding of the bell 108 times
 Date/Time : 17th Feb 07, 11.30pm
 Venue : Hall of Great Compassion
 Details : For more information, please call 6549 5300

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

My Most Inspiring Buddhist Lesson

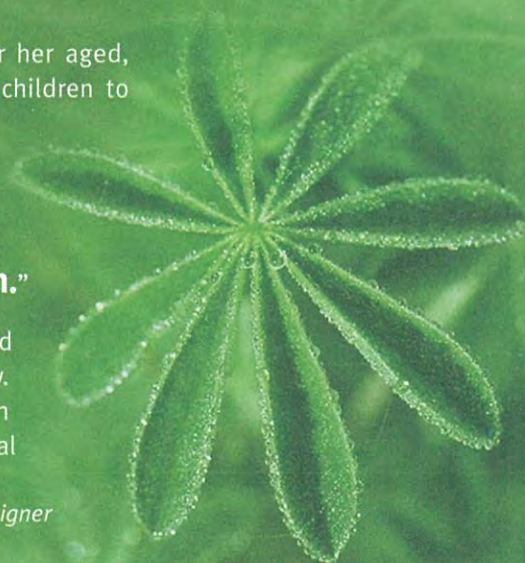
We remember having a profound and touching moment with Khensur Kangur Lobsang Thubten Rinpoche. We experienced a tremendous amount of soothing, peaceful energy radiated by Rinpoche when we came in contact with him months back. His smile exuded great warmth, sincerity and loving-kindness, while his soft and gentle gaze evoked the softness within our hearts. He inspired us so much that we hope to develop and cultivate ourselves to be like him. In addition, we also found Rinpoche's humanitarian work towards the sponsorship scheme for the education of monks, nuns, the poor children of Tibet and lay Tibetan people admirable.

– Benson Yu & Lizzie Woon, 40s, Healing Therapist & Holistic Reiki Healer / Teacher

A devotee once asked the Teacher, what should she do for her aged, very ill father, who is a Catholic and has the wish for his children to practise his faith. Here's the advice given by the Teacher: have good wishes for him. Encourage him to continue his prayer, to Mother Mary... as you do yours to the Buddha and Guan Yin Bodhisattva... **There are no boundaries, as we are all the same in love and compassion."**

To me, this advice contains simple but profound Dharma, and is especially relevant in our multi-faith families and society. Instead of asking one to give up their faith and beliefs in troubled times, it seeks to strengthen all through self-spiritual improvement. Sadhu!

– Tan Lee Lim, 30s, Graphic Designer



Where is the Pure Land of Gautama Buddha?

Q: Chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha may lead to rebirth in the Pure Land. How about chanting Gautama Buddha or even Guan Yin? Where does one go to upon death (assuming there is good karma)? Why is Gautama Buddha known as the founder of Buddhism when there are other Buddhas before him? And where is Gautama Buddha's Pure Land?

- CK

A: Gautama Buddha, or more commonly known as Shakyamuni Buddha, refers to the historical Buddha who was a prince in ancient India (Nepal today) and became an ascetic, practised meditation and became a perfectly Enlightened Buddha. Shakyamuni Buddha is known as the founder of Buddhism as He was the one responsible for the arising of Buddhism in our era.

An innumerable number of Buddhas exist and in some Sutras, Shakyamuni Buddha would list out some to highlight certain teachings. According to the Pureland teachings, chanting the name of Amitabha Buddha mindfully (or Amituofo in hanyu pinyin) is a factor for rebirth in Pureland. Likewise for chanting the names of Gautama Buddha or Guan Yin Bodhisattva. But other factors, like one's aspiration for rebirth in a Pureland, are important as well.

In the Mahayana tradition, it is believed that our world is Shakyamuni Buddha's Pureland, meaning the Earth is his Pureland. But filled with defilements, we are not able to "connect" with this Pureland. Let me give you an example - with good intentions, a doctor sees all as patients who need his help. With a greedy intention, a con man simply views everyone as a potential victim. With perfect compassion and wisdom, the Buddha and the enlightened beings see all as potential Buddhas!

In the Pali Canon, when the Buddha was asked the question "Does the Tathagata (referring to the Buddha) exist after parinibbana?", He did not answer the question. He explained that such a question is irrelevant. Consider this: When we really think about it, even with all the descriptions of the Purelands of the Buddhas etc, perhaps the important questions to ask are: "What is conducive to happiness? What are the things that are not conducive to happiness? And what is the path leading to true happiness?"

- Ven. Chuan Guan

Q: With advances in medicine and technology, lives are being prolonged beyond its physical limits. In AMD (Advance Medical Directive), if one's intention

to sign it is out of concern for his family and friends (for not being a financial and psychological burden), would it be considered a premature release from one's karma? What is the Buddhist view on this?

- CK

A: First, we need to define what is considered "premature release from one's karma". Ending one's life by suicide is a situation that results in premature release from one's karma. Suicide is an unnatural act that is undertaken intentionally with the purpose of ending one's life.

Singapore's Ministry Of Health defines "an Advance Medical Directive (AMD) as a legal document that you sign in advance to inform the doctor treating you (in the event you become terminally ill and unconscious) that you do not want any **extraordinary life-sustaining treatment** to be used to prolong your life."

I bold "extraordinary life-sustaining treatment" (ELST) in the above quote to highlight that AMD does not reject ordinary medical treatment, but specifically rejects ELST. Under normal conditions, a person who requires ELST would die without it. Taking up AMD should not be considered a premature release as it does not cause an unnatural intervention to end one's life.

Having said that, signing the AMD should be done with the focus of NOT to end one's life, but to avoid taking up extraordinary life-sustaining treatment.

In Buddhism, intention is crucial in everything we do. The tricky part is that most of us are often not mindful enough to be clear about our own intentions.

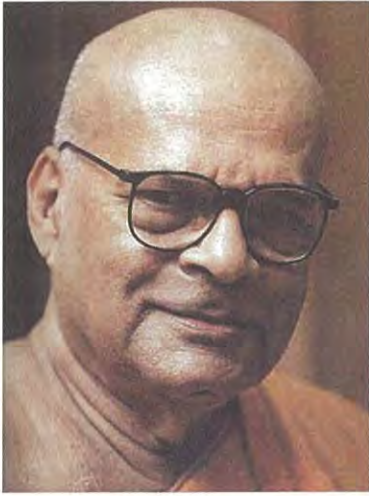
Hence, Buddhism emphasises strongly on the need to practise meditation, develop concentration and become mindful. Only then can we focus and act mindfully with compassion and wisdom.

- Ven. Chuan Guan

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

By Esther Thien



Buddhist Chief Dhammananda passed on at 87

Malaysia – One of Buddhist community's most foremost Venerables, Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda Maha Nayaka Thera

passed on peacefully at the age of 87 on 31 August 2006.

The author of over 70 Dharma books translated into more than 16 languages, Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda was born in the small village of Kirinde, Matara in southern Sri Lanka on March 1919. Ordained at the age of 12, his Buddhist name Dhammananda means "one who experiences happiness through Dhamma".

Venerable received higher ordination when he was 22. In January 1952, he reached the shores of Malaya (now known as Malaysia) from Sri Lanka, and had since resided there. His contribution to the development of Buddhism in pre-independence Malaya and modern Malaysia is beyond measure.

Originally to tend to the spiritual needs of the Sinhalese community in Kuala Lumpur, he was responsible for bringing basic Buddha-Dharma teachings to lay people, especially among the English-speaking Chinese, and was key in promoting Buddhist education to the grassroots.

Ven. Dhammananda, who was widely referred to as "Chief", was a leading figure in the Buddhist community in Malaysia and Singapore, doing over half a century of missionary work. He dedicated his life towards promoting peace, understanding and harmony.

According to Malaysia's Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting, who delivered a speech at the eulogy and last rites ceremony, Venerable had conveyed the Buddha's message on peace to every part of Malaysia as well as throughout the world. He was a household name in the Buddhist world and would be deeply remembered for his vital role in promoting inter-religious harmony in Malaysia. He added that Ven. Dhammananda never wanted any fame or glory and had lived the life of a simple monk. Since the 1950s, he gave

regular Dharma talks, three times weekly, even as recent as two months before his demise, despite his advanced age and failing health.

In a condolence message from Australia, Ven. Ajahn Brahmavamso advised devotees that instead of grieving over the loss of their much beloved Chief Venerable, they should instead feel grateful that they have come to know such a great being and reflect on how they have benefited from his teachings.

He also said that now is the time to reflect on impermanence, the non-satisfactory nature and non-self characteristics in ourselves, on our loved ones and all compounded things.



Photo is the copyright property of Kooi Fong / Oon Yeoh / Bugs Tan

Others who delivered eulogies at the ceremony included Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanayake, Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism Deputy President Pradip Kumar, BMSM President Ang Choo Hong and Malaysian Buddhist Association President Ven. Sik Jit Heng.

Ven. Dhammananda was the Chief Monk of the famous Maha Vihara Temple in Kuala Lumpur and was technically the head of the Theravada tradition in Malaysia and Singapore.

A Resounding Success for the *Great Prayer to Liberate All Beings of Water & Land*

Singapore – Ven. Hong Choon used his entire life to propel the development of Buddhism in Singapore. He actively sought to promote social welfare, charity, education, religious harmony and world peace.

In memory of the vast contribution that this *Mahathera* had unceasingly made in his lifetime, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery organised *The Great Prayer to Liberate All Beings of Water and Land* in October 2006 to commemorate the 100th year birth anniversary of Ven. Hong Choon. The prayer was carried out in a bid to recollect and reciprocate the kindness shown by the great Venerable.

Held over seven days from 19th to 25th, this prayer, which is the biggest, grandest, most elaborate and meritorious of all Chinese Mahayana Buddhist prayers, involved over 100 monastics and countless laypersons and volunteers.

By inviting and making offerings to all Enlightened Ones and all sentient beings, reciting numerous Buddhist sutras,



and dedication of merits to all samsaric beings, this prayer helps to liberate sentient beings in the lower realms from their pain and suffering.

To end the event on a most joyous note, the monastery also conducted an alms offering round for the 100 monks.

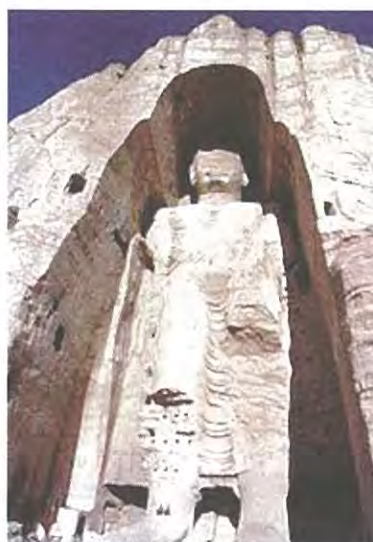
Secret Sutra found in Bamiyan Buddha

Afghanistan – One part of a Sanskrit Buddhist Sutra was found inside one of the two giant Buddhas of Bamiyan, providing clues for uncovering the mystery surrounding the creation of the statues, reported a Japanese news agency.

Believed to be the original document, the portion of the scripture was written with the letters often used in the sixth and seventh century, according to Kyodo news dispatched from Kabul.

A German team of researchers from International Council on Monuments and Sites found the Sutra in July 2006 inside the rubble of the Buddhas' remains, stated the report. The researchers believed the Sutra was placed in the inner recesses of the eastern part of what used to be the world's tallest standing Buddha statues.

They were destroyed in 2001 by Taliban extremists. According to Kyodo, it was the first time a Sutra was found in an Afghanistan Buddha statue.



The script was written in Gilgit/Bamiyan type 1 characters, which were used in a region that spread over what is now northern India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Written on pieces of birch bark and wrapped in a piece of cloth with mud balls, possibly as symbols of Buddha bones, the document contains the starting segment of a Sutra that denoted the basic belief of Buddhism that all things were mortal.

Amidst the rubble, the team also excavated a small metal plate, decorated with a flower-like pattern,

and a clay seal with a snake and a bird-like creature.

Experts believed the decorations and signs might symbolise a specific group, which might have been a sponsor for the construction of the giant Buddhas. The news agency also said the sutra was being kept at an Afghan facility in Bamiyan.

Don't you think time flies? Another year has passed. And before you know it, Lunar New Year is around the corner once again.

“Lou Hei” Vegetarian Yu Sheng 七彩捞起鱼生



Ingredients

250gm white radish, carrot & cucumber - washed, peeled and shredded finely
200gm lettuce - washed and shredded finely
2 segments pomelo - separated into small pieces
3 tbsp lime juice

**There is a small cutter available in the market to shred the ingredients neatly.*

Dried Ingredients

Mocked fish slices, preserved tangerine, preserved shredded ginger, shredded angled luffa, “Gua Ying”, crushed peanuts, shredded chayote, chilli paste, plum syrup, tangerine syrup, sesame seeds, cinnamon powder, wheat crackers, pepper, sesame oil, vinegar, fine sugar & fine salt.

Method

1. Arrange all vegetables neatly on a big shallow plate.
2. Pour in the sauces and the rest of the ingredients.
3. Mix the dish thoroughly with chopsticks before consuming.

Serves: 10 persons

用料

白萝卜、红萝卜、黄瓜250克 - 洗净，去皮，切成细丝
包心生菜200克 - 洗净，切成细丝
柚子2瓣 - 分成小块
酸柑汁3汤匙

**市面上有小型切割机，可以把材料切得精细美观。*

现成配料

素鱼片、桔饼、酸姜丝、茶瓜丝、瓜英丝、花生碎、佛手丝、辣椒酱、酸梅酱、桔油、芝麻、桂末粉、脆薄、胡椒粉、麻油、醋（唐山）、幼糖、幼盐

做法

1. 将各种蔬菜整齐排列在一大浅盘中。
2. 进食前，倒入酱料及其他干料。
3. 参与者利用筷子把材料搅拌均匀，然后进食。

份量：10人

To kick-start the year on a good note of virtue by protecting lives, try these yummy dishes for your New Year celebrations.

Seaweed Bread Roll 紫菜面包卷



Ingredients

1. 1 loaf cut bread
2. 5 sheets seaweed - cut into 2
3. 2/3pc vegetarian ham - cut into strips
4. 2pcs of cucumber and carrot - cut into strips, marinate in vinegar and sugar for 10 mins, dry and put aside
5. 15pcs mushroom - soak in water to soften; cut into pieces and stir-fry with light sauce
6. 5 tsps flour - mix with water into paste

Method

Spread seaweed and place bread on top, add #3, #4 and #5 above. Roll it, dip into #6 and fry. Cut diagonally to serve.

Serves: 10 persons

用料

1. 切好面包1个 - 备用
2. 紫菜片5张 - 一开二
3. 素火腿三分二条 - 切成粗条
4. 黄瓜、红萝卜各2条 - 切成粗条用醋和糖，腌约10分钟，滴干水分备用
5. 冬菇15粒 - 浸软切成粗条用酱油炒香
6. 面粉5汤匙 - 用水拌成面糊备用

做法

把紫菜铺开铺上面包放上#3、#4和#5材料卷成长筒形，沾上面糊投入油锅炸酥捞起，用刀切成斜形排在碟上即可。

份量：10人

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

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.



光明学苑
TLC STUDENT CARE CENTRE

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 • website: www.tenderlovingcare.sg



Want your story to be heard too?

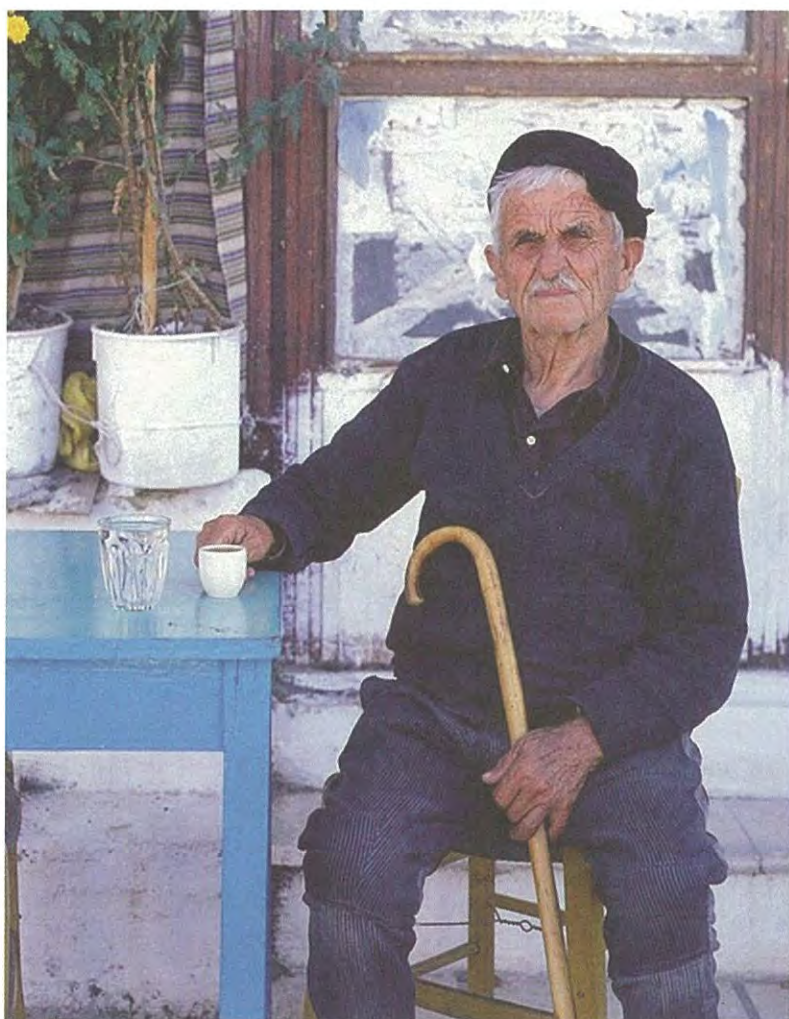
Are you touched by the stories and interviews featured in this magazine?

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.



Ajahn Sumedho recounts the joyful unfolding of a deep appreciation for his teacher and parents.

The Gift of Gratitude

Gratitude to Our Parents

My father died about six years ago. He was then 90 years old, and he had never shown love or positive feelings towards me. So from early childhood I had this feeling that he did not like me. I carried this feeling through most of my life. I never had any kind of love, any kind of warm relationship with my father. It was always a perfunctory “Hello son, good to see you.” And he seemed to feel threatened by me. I remember whenever I came home as a Buddhist monk he would say, “Remember, this is my house, you’ve got to do as I say.” This was his greeting — and I was almost 50 years old at the time! I don’t know what he thought I was going to do.

My father was an aspiring artist before the Depression. In 1929, the crash came and he and my mother lost everything, so he had to take a job selling shoes to support us. Then the Second World War started, but my father was too old to enlist in the military. He wanted to support the war effort, so he became a ship fitter in Seattle. He didn’t like that job, but it was the best way he could help in the war. After the war he went back to his shoe business and became a manager of a retail store. He never really liked that work either, but he felt he was too old to find another profession. He had sacrificed his own preferences to support my mother, my sister and me.

When I was at university in the 1950s, it was fashionable to study psychology. At that time the trend was to blame your mother for everything that went wrong in your life. The focus was on

mothers and what they had done to cause us to suffer now. I didn't realise then that suffering was natural. Of course, my mother was not perfect, so naturally there were things she could have done better. But generally speaking, the dedication, commitment, love, and care were all there – and directed mainly to making the lives of my father, my sister and me as good and as happy as could be. She asked very little for herself, and when I think back like this, *katannu*, (Pali for gratitude) arises in my mind for my mother and father.

The Buddha encouraged us to think of the good things done for us by our parents, by our teachers, friends, whoever; and to do this intentionally, to cultivate it, rather than just letting it happen accidentally.

Loving-kindness is the Antidote

My students who have a lot of anger towards their parents ask me how they can develop gratitude towards them. Teaching loving-kindness, or *metta*, on too sentimental a basis can actually increase anger. I remember a woman on one of our retreats who, whenever it came to spreading *metta* to her parents, would go into a rage. Then she felt very guilty about it. Every time she thought about her mother, she felt only rage. This was because she used only her intellect; she wanted to do this practice of *metta*, but emotionally felt anything but loving-kindness.



It's important to see this conflict between the intellectual and the emotional life. We know in our mind that we should be able to forgive our enemies and love our parents, but in our heart we feel "I can never forgive them for what they've done." So then we either feel anger and resentment, or we begin to rationalise: "Because my parents were so bad, so unloving, so unkind, they made me suffer so much that I can't forgive or forget." Or: "There's something wrong with me. I'm a terrible person because I can't forgive." When this happens, I've found it helpful to have *metta* for my own feelings.

If we feel that our parents were unkind and unloving, we can have *metta* towards the feeling we have in our hearts; without judgment, we can see that this is how it feels, and to accept that feeling with patience.

Once I began to accept my negativity about my father rather than suppress it, I could resolve it. When we resolve

something with mindfulness, we can let it go and free ourselves from its power. The resolution of such a conflict leads us to contemplate what life is about.

A life without gratitude is a joyless life. If life is just a continuous complaint about the injustices and unfairness we have received and we don't remember anything good ever done to us, we fall into depression, not an uncommon problem these days. It is impossible to imagine ever being happy again: we think this misery is forever.

Gratitude to Ajahn Chah

When I became a Buddhist monk in Thailand, I was very fortunate to meet a teacher, Luang Por Chah, known widely as Ajahn Chah, who became the catalyst for the gratitude in my life. At that time I was 33 or 34 years old, and I must say gratitude was not yet a part of my life's experience. I was still very much obsessed with myself, what I wanted, what I thought. However, after training as a Buddhist monk for some years, in about the sixth year of monastic life, I had a heart-opening experience that was very much the experience of *katannu katavedita*, or gratitude to one's parents.

I had been a Buddhist for many years before I met Ajahn Chah. I had tremendous interest and faith in Buddhism, as well as an eagerness to study and practise it. But it was still coming from the sense of my doing it, my studying it, my trying to practise it. When I became a monk, there was still this tendency: "I want to get rid of suffering. I want to be enlightened." I was not much concerned about other people, about my parents, or even about Ajahn Chah, with whom I was living at the time. I thought that it was very nice that he was helpful to me, but I did not feel a deep sense of gratitude.

I had the idea that life owed all this to me — an unpleasant kind of conceit. When we are brought up in middle-class comfort as I had been, we take so much for granted. My parents worked hard to make my life comfortable, but I thought that they should have worked harder, and that I deserved more than what they gave me. Even though this was not a conscious thought, there was the underlying attitude that I deserved all I had: people should give me these things; my parents should make my life as good as possible, as I wanted it to be. So from that viewpoint, it was Ajahn Chah's duty to teach and guide me!

In Thailand, I practised with diligence and was determined in my monastic life. After participation in five rainy season retreats (*vassas*), a monk is no longer considered a novice

and is free to leave the monastery. I felt that being with a teacher was fine, but I wanted to go away on my own. I left for central Thailand from the northeast. After the *vassa*, I went on a pilgrimage to India. This was in 1974, and I decided to go as a *tudong-bhikkhu*, wandering from place to place as part of an austere form of monastic practice. Somebody provided me with a ticket from Bangkok to Calcutta, and I found myself in Calcutta with my alms bowl, my robe, and, abiding by the rules of monkhood, no money. In Thailand it had been easy, but in India the prospect of wandering around with nothing more than an alms bowl seemed quite frightening at first. As it happened, the five months I spent in India were quite an adventure, and I have very pleasant memories of that time. The life of a mendicant worked in India. Of all countries, it *should* work there, where the Buddha lived and taught.

I began to think of Ajahn Chah and to recognise the kindness he had extended to me. He had accepted me as his disciple, looked after me, given me the teachings, and helped me in almost every way. He lived as an example. If you wanted to be a monk, you wanted to be like him. He was a full human being, a man who inspired me, someone I wanted to emulate — and I must say there weren't so many men that I had had that feeling towards. In the States, the role models for men were not very attractive to me — John Wayne or President Eisenhower or Richard Nixon were not my role models. Film stars and athletes were given great importance, but none of them inspired me.

But then in Thailand, I'd found this monk. He was very small; I towered above him. But when we were together he surprised me, because he had such an enormous presence. There was this feeling about him that attracted people. So I found myself going over to see him in his hut in the evenings, or whenever it was possible; I wanted to take every opportunity I had to hang around. I asked him once what it was in him that drew people to him, and he said, "I call it my magnet." He used his magnet to attract people so that he could teach them the Dharma. This is how he used the charismatic quality he had: not in the service of his ego, but to help people.

The Lord Buddha, after his enlightenment, at first thought that the Dharma was too subtle, that no one would understand it, so there was no point in teaching it. Then, according to the legend, one of the gods came forth and said, "Please Lord, for the welfare of those who have little dust in their eyes, teach the Dharma." The Buddha then contemplated with his powerful mind to see who might understand the Dharma teaching. He remembered his early teachers but through his powers realised that both of them had died. Then he remembered his five friends who had been practising with him before, and

who had deserted him. Out of compassion, he went off to find these five friends, and expounded his brilliant teaching on the Four Noble Truths. This makes me feel *katannu katavedita* to the Lord Buddha. It's marvellous: here I am — this guy, here, in this century — having an opportunity to listen to the Dharma, and to have this pure teaching still available.

Just having a living teacher like Ajahn Chah was not like worshipping a prophet who lived twenty-five hundred years ago, it was actually inheriting the lineage of the Lord Buddha himself. Perhaps because of all the visiting to the Buddhist holy places, my gratitude began to become very strong. Then, thinking of Ajahn Chah in Thailand, I remembered how I had thought: "I've done my five years, now I'm going to leave. I'm going to have a few adventures, do what I want to do, be out from under the eye of the old man." I realised then that I had actually run away.

When I felt this gratitude, all I wanted to do was get back to Thailand and offer myself to Ajahn Chah. How can you repay a teacher like that? I did not have any money, and that was not what he was interested in anyway. Then I thought that the only way I could make him happy was to be a good Buddhist monk and to go back and help him out. Whatever he wanted me to do, I would do it. With that intention, I went back after five months in India and gave myself to the teacher. It was a joyful offering, not a begrudging one, because it came out of this *katannu*, this gratitude for the good things I had received.

From that time on, I found that my meditation practice began to improve. That hard selfishness cracked in me: my trying to get something, my desire for harmony, my desire to practise and have a peaceful life, free of responsibility. When I gave up all that, things seemed to fall into place. What used to be difficult, like concentrating



Ajahn Sumedo is the Abbot of Amaravati Buddhist Centre in England and the most senior Western disciple of the late Thai meditation master Ajahn Chah. Born in 1934 in Seattle, he has a Bachelor of Arts in Far Eastern

Studies and a Master of Arts in South Asian Studies. In 1967, he became a fully ordained monk. He established Wat Pah Nanachat, an International Forest Monastery, where Westerners could be trained in English in 1975. He is also a founding figure of the Thai Forest monastic order in Britain and other countries.

the mind, became easier, and I found that life had become joyful to me.

Love of a Father

The last time I went to see my father, I decided that I would try to get some kind of warmth going between us before he died. In the last decade of my father's life he was quite miserable and became very resentful. He had terrible arthritis and was in constant pain, and he had Parkinson's disease. Eventually he had to be put in a nursing home. He was completely paralysed. He could move his eyes and talk, but the rest of his body was rigid. He was resentful of what had happened to him because before, he had been a strong, independent man.

When I saw him, his body needed to be stimulated, so I said, "Let me massage your leg." "No, no, you don't need to do that," he said. "You'll get bedsores, because you really have to have your skin massaged. I would really like to do it." He still refused, but I could tell he was considering it. "I think it'll be a good thing," I told him. "So you'd really like to do it?" he asked me. "Yes."

I started massaging his feet, his legs, his neck, shoulders, hands, and face; he really enjoyed the physical contact. It was the first time he had been touched like that. Physical contact is quite meaningful, it's an expression of feeling. And I began to realise that my father really loved me, but didn't know how to say it. I had this great sense of relief and immense gratitude.

Ajahn Chah on Aged Parents:

Sometimes when teachings are given on birth, ageing, illness and death, people aren't pleased. Especially in the West, when you talk about this, people get up and walk away. They don't want to get old. So when people become old, they are abandoned.

In the Western countries this seems to be the custom, to discard the old folks so the youngsters can get on with their lives. Of course the youngsters will get old too, and in time they will be discarded too. When we are young, we should look at and reflect on old people. This is karma, isn't it? I tried to explain this to the Westerners, that if you discard people, you will also be discarded. When we are old, we should think about young people. When we see old people, we should think about young people. They are connected, like links of a chain.

This article, translated from Thai by Paul Breiter, is reprinted with permission. It was first published in the Tricycle: The Buddhist Review.



Making Decisions the Meditative Way

His Eminence Sakyang Mipham Rinpoche tells us how making our decisions with others in mind brings happiness to us as well as to others.

As a Buddhist teacher, I seem to attract people who cannot decide what to do. They are sometimes so desperate they come to me hoping that I'll make a decision for them. The odd thing is after I give them advice, they often can't decide whether or not to take my direction. The problem is not that they don't know what to do with their life. It's that they don't know how to make a decision.

Decision-making is hard, not so much because of the options we face, but because we have to deal with our own mind. We're confused by indecision. That agitation comes from opposing thoughts. We are uncertain about what to do, and we are thrown off balance. Which thought should we follow? Which line of reasoning is best? We haven't developed a clear motivation for our life, or a standard for sorting through the options.

In order to make a decision, we must know what we are seeking. Most of us want long-term happiness, but we can't decide how we would bring that happiness about. It may feel as though life is moving so quickly that we are not really deciding, we are just reacting. We are constantly being swayed by short-term pleasure.

One of the great texts on rulership recommends that the King or Queen carefully contemplates every decision based

on how it will create benefit for others. This is a shortcut to the path of virtue. In the Tibetan tradition, "virtue" doesn't have a heavily moralistic or religious overtone. It is a process of developing the wisdom to see clearly how the world works, and the compassion to always hold the welfare of others in mind.

Path of Virtue Leads One to Happiness

The path of virtue is not a meaningless form of etiquette. The Buddha didn't become enlightened by being polite. He saw how life works and respected the guiding principles of the universe. He learned how to use the law of karma to everyone's advantage by deciding to engage in virtue.

The word "karma" means action. Every decision we make creates action, and every action creates a reaction. Whatever we decide to do will have some kind of effect.

The outcome is sometimes obvious and immediate — we knock over a glass of water and the floor gets wet. Other effects may take longer — we gossip about somebody and later, people gossip about us. With other actions, it isn't clear when the results will come about.

Karma works in two basic ways. If we act virtuously, the effect is happiness. If we act non-virtuously, suffering results.

If we're at the cosmic bank and we give a couple of non-virtues to the teller, what they give us back is based on the currency of pain. If we are self-obsessed and angry, the currency is suffering. If we give the teller virtue, what we get in return is in the currency of happiness. The happiness we get in exchange for virtue could happen on the spot or in the future.

When we're making a decision without a clear motivation, we get confused. We don't know what kind of karma we're creating. Contemplation teaches us through experience and technique how not to be swayed off the path of virtue. It is a way to sharpen our ability to self-reflect.

Sometimes we know what to do, but we lack the strength to do it. The small-minded perspective of "me" is holding us back. What takes us beyond ignorance, self-centredness, and anger? *Payu* reveals to us what to cultivate and what to discard. When we see the best thing to do, we get some perspective and let go of our small-mindedness. We can make a clear choice. Having made our decision, we move forward without doubt.

The text on rulership tells us to sit with our options and contemplate them, and certainty will begin to arise. Having made a decision, stick with it; don't look back. Changing our decision sets up a bad habit. It reinforces decision-making as an expression of bewilderment and ignorance, instead of wisdom and freedom. Lack of certainty then thickens our consciousness, and decision-making becomes even harder.

Looking at our options with the question, "How does this benefit others?" widens our perspective and gives us a barometer to discern what we should cultivate and what we should discard.

In Tibet, this ability to discern is called *payu*.

Payu is the beginning stage of wisdom. It is a moment of reflecting on the results of what we do before we do it. "Will this action take me in the direction that I want to go?" That moment is the first step in taking charge of our life. With *payu*, we become like a tiger who moves through the grass in a confident, disciplined and careful way. When the tiger places his paws, there's an element of respect. What is it that the tiger is respecting? The law of karma.

With *payu*, we begin to develop inner wisdom, *prajna*. *Prajna* is a Sanskrit word that means "the best knowledge." What is the best thing to know? Ultimately, the best thing to know is how reality works. Knowing that life operates according to the principles of cause and effect, we don't have the luxury of being cavalier. We can't blindly engage in negative activity, expecting it to turn out well. We need to now short-circuit this process and do the right thing.



Our decisions have karmic power. With *payu* and *prajna*, we can learn from our mistakes. We see that when we make decisions based on cultivating excitement or desire, things don't work out so well. When we decide to solve our problems by getting angry or greedy, we become trapped by those actions. Our decision results in an ongoing argument or crippling attachment. On the other hand, when we make decisions with others in mind, we are cultivating compassion, patience, generosity or forgiveness. Peace and harmony result.

The more we practise decision-making according to these meditative principles, the more we understand how they move us forward. We come to understand that deciding to expand our minds, to put others before ourselves, and to engage in life with compassion and wisdom is a powerful way to live. Following virtue causes happiness for us as well as others.

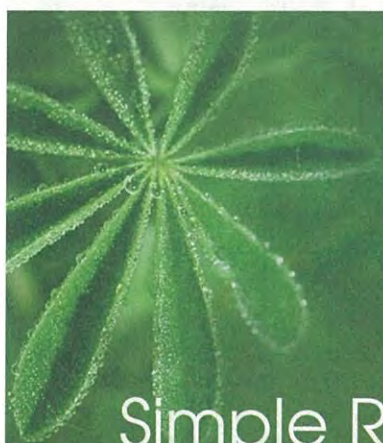
I once heard His Holiness Penor Rinpoche, one of the great meditation masters of our time, advise his monks and nuns that it is important to have big plans. If we do not think big about how we can help others, then we will not be able to accomplish very much. Even if we aren't able to accomplish what we decide to do, if we're thinking of others

instead of ourselves, we will have cultivated some of our qualities for enlightenment in making that decision.

A person who has decided to put others before themselves is known as a Buddha, which means "awake." We have awakened to the best thing to do with our lives — use compassion and wisdom to move forward on the path of virtue. Once we are in tune with life in this way, making decisions isn't so difficult. Our concern becomes how to express what we're sure of — that we can accomplish our own happiness by choosing activities that will bring about happiness for others.

His Eminence Sakyong Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche was born in 1962 in Bodhgaya, India. He is a lineage holder in the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and is the head of the Shambhala Buddhist lineage. He is also the spiritual director of Shambhala, a global network of meditation and retreat centres, and the lineage holder of Naropa University. He has published over 15 texts, four books, two on poetry, and the other two titled *Turning the Mind into An Ally*, and *Ruling Your World*, as well as a CD of modern music.

He has studied extensively with His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (who was like a second father to him), His Holiness Penor Rinpoche (who enthroned him as the Sakyong of the Shambhala lineage), Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche, Jigme Puntsok Rinpoche and a number of other teachers.



Simple Refuge

— Gladys So, 40s, Principal

Breathe..... I take refuge
Breathe..... she blesses me with her purity
Breathe..... Struck by compassion, resting and calm

Breathe..... Fear!
Uneasinesss, my defilements insidiously ooze out.
Dashing here and there,
in shambles, in confusion..... not finding
Ahhh!!!

Breathe..... remember
Breathe..... take refuge
Breathe..... seek forgiveness
Breathe..... stay

Breathe..... pliable, soft, gentleness
Breathe..... In humility and gratitude
Breathe..... basking in her love
Breathe..... faith renewed, free

Love.



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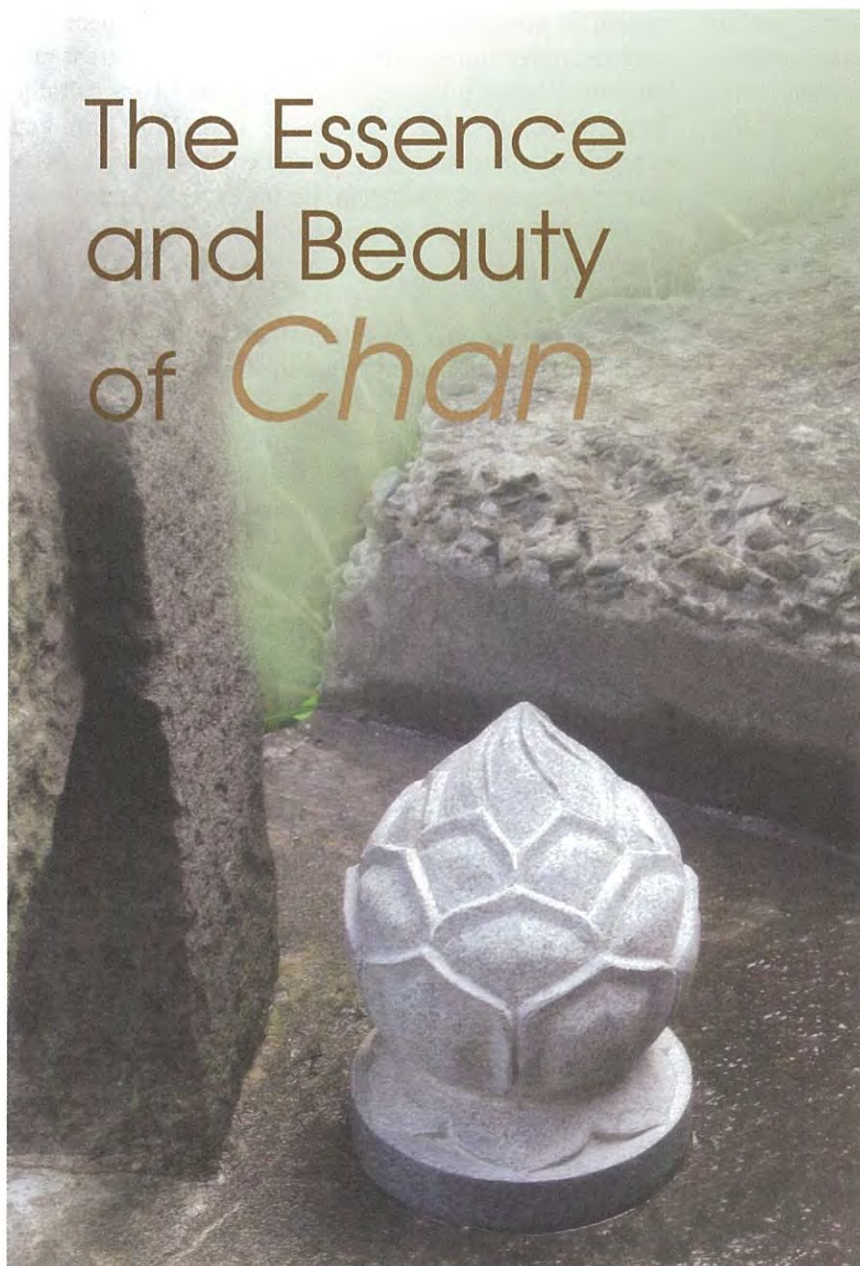
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The Essence and Beauty of *Chan*



Natural, relaxed and serene Venerable Hui Men tells Esther Thien why *Chan*, also called *Zen* in Japanese or *Thien* in Vietnamese, is so practical and applicable in our modern society.

Awaken: Can Venerable please explain what *Chan* is?

Ven: You cannot describe *Chan* in words or languages. *Chan* is about seeing one's original nature, the unmoving nature of one's

inner heart. When you experience the unchanging nature of your mind, you can apply it to your daily life, transforming obstacles into the path so that you will not be swayed by any situations, circumstances or conditions favourable or unfavourable, which give rise to all types of emotions. As you have direct experience of the unchanging nature, one's true nature, your faith in the Buddha-Dharma increases, and you become carefree and serene. For example, I had a student, afflicted with colorectal cancer, who attended a seven-day *Chan* retreat. On the fourth day of the retreat, he had a glimpse of the unmoving nature. This experience diminished his fear of the illness and eventually even eradicated it. This is the ability of *Chan*.

Awaken: So what would Venerable say is the essence of *Chan*?

Ven: *Chan* is like a veil, a divider that separates sentient beings and the Buddhas. With the wisdom of *Chan*, one is a Buddha, and without *Chan*, an ordinary sentient being. When you realise *Chan*, sentient beings and the

Buddha become one and the same. *Chan* is not just an experience, but also a method and a path that leads one towards enlightenment. Once you go through this path, you will discover that sentient beings and Buddhas are really one, and undifferentiated. As such, you will find your heart opening up. You will be relaxed and free.

Awaken: How do you think one should learn and practise the Buddha's teachings?

Ven: Many understand Buddhism simply through learning and studying. After reading a Dharma book, a Sutra or listening to a talk, they contemplate and then take what is taught or written as insight acquired from their own experience. Most are unwilling to start from the basics, to go step by step from the foundational level to directly experience the teachings through practice. This can be a problem to Buddhists as they often only grasp an understanding of the teachings on a conceptual level, acquiring an understanding that is only based on their intellect or logic. Thus, when difficulties come along in their lives, they have problems applying their Buddhist knowledge to eliminate their obstacles. When learning Buddhism, one should take a balanced approach of acquiring knowledge and putting it into practice. Both method and insight should be emphasised, just as you need to board a train in order to reach your destination.

Awaken: Any other suggestions for the beginner Buddhist?

Ven: It is very important to obtain an understanding that comes from engaging in direct practice. Over-reliance on logic or conceptual understanding is not a good approach. Buddhists should also not blindly follow certain practices that they hear others say are good, or be attached to Buddha statues and Buddhist ceremonies. For instance, some Buddhists, in their quest for greater merits and longer lifespan, are passionate about liberating animals. But they often do so unskillfully, without wisdom. Let me give you an example. A trader imports millions of baby fishes from Indonesia, half die during the transportation, those that arrive and are released die due to problems of adapting to the environment. Hence, the person who blindly releases the fishes for merit or to lengthen their lifespan is in actual fact killing lives. You don't go around catching children in Europe and releasing them in Africa, do you? Another example is the releasing of birds. Birds caught by hunters using nets often have their heads lopped off due to the sharpness of the nets. Instead, if one is really interested in liberating lives, one should learn from Sixth Patriarch, Ven. Hui Neng. He frequently released preys

caught by hunters in the 16 years he lived with them. You can also buy injured animals from the market, treat and heal their injuries before releasing them into a suitable environment, just like in the olden days. Make sure you properly consider the ecological and environmental aspects before doing animal liberation. Having said that, personally, I think the best way to liberate is to protect lives in a sanctuary.

Awaken: How should we establish and reinforce the faith and confidence in beginner Buddhists?

Ven: Most laypeople are caught up in the busyness of an urban lifestyle. They think too much and because of the modern lifestyle, may also become increasingly egoistic. Although faith and devotion can be developed through intellectual analysis, they are really established only after one has experienced the bliss and joy of practice. Through practice, one can gradually lessen or eliminate this self-centredness. As one realises conditioned arising through practice, one's afflictive emotions decrease thereby improving one's emotional quotient. One's relationships with others become more pleasant and one's life becomes smoother with fewer conflicts. As one experiences the benefits of practising Buddhism, this strengthens one's undying faith and devotion in the Triple Gem. This, in turn, establishes greater tolerance and equanimity in the Buddhist. This is not blind faith, but faith established through one's direct experience of the Dharma. This is particularly applicable to volunteers who help out at Buddhist organisations. Volunteers whose faith is established through direct experience of the Dharma have an unwavering devotion to serve the Triple Gem, even in adverse situations. Otherwise, besieged by frustration, criticism and fatigue, they may just stop volunteering. Therefore, volunteers are strongly encouraged to learn and practise the Buddha-Dharma even as they help out in the organisation.

Awaken: What are your views on urbanisation and the rapid development of consumeristic societies?

Ven: Technological advancements bring benefits and advantages to society. But often, people also feel increasingly disconnected, empty or lonely, because their spiritual development is not able to keep up with the rapid material development. For a sense of well-being, balance and order, both inner and outer developments must be in sync. It is also important to remember not to bring the problems you face in your work to your family and vice versa.

Awaken: What do you think is the role of Buddhism in today's society?

Ven: The essence of Buddhism is to fully eliminate all afflictive emotions, for they give rise to all kinds of suffering, as well as psychological and social problems. But, material

development cannot reduce afflictive emotions, therefore Buddhism plays an important role in this aspect. For instance, if parents of autistic children can understand about karma, that the birth of these children is a result of collective karma, they would look after them wholeheartedly and be more patient, instead of spiralling downwards into anger, frustration and self-pity when caring for their children.

Awaken: How should we practise the Buddha-Dharma in this modern day?

Ven: By incorporating the Buddha's teachings into our daily life to increase our awareness and mindfulness.

We should always put ourselves in the shoes of others and hold their welfare at heart. If everyone in society can do this, there would be fewer conflicts, fights and quarrels. And there would be harmony in society. We can also use *Chan* meditation to bring our mind back to a tranquil state when we are facing unfavourable situations at work or at home. *Chan* helps develop our wisdom. When wisdom arises, all conceptions of duality will disappear, and suffering will cease. This is how we train the mind.



Awaken: Some Buddhists are particularly attracted to supernatural developments. What is your advice on this?

Ven: When one practises *Chan* meditation well, one's six sense bases would be so enhanced that one is extremely sensitive to the external environment. To ordinary beings, the practitioner is perceived to have supernatural abilities. However, most who professed to have supernatural development, in this day and age, are usually tricksters who are still attached to wealth and fame.

Awaken: What about relics? What should Buddhists watch out for when they venerate them?

Ven: Firstly, we should view relics as objects of veneration and respect, and not as supernatural phenomenon or a miracle. The relics are symbols, serving to remind us of our initial aspiration. For instance, when we see the relic stupas of Ven. Zhuan Dao and Ven. Hong Choon, we respect them and give rise to the wish to emulate them in their way of practice, following the path they have gone through. As we walk the path, step-by-step, we can also reach the destination. But if we merely pray to relics to fulfil our many wishes and desires, this is not good and is superstitious.

What are the Bodhisattva Vows?



Professor Cheng Chen-huang, one of Buddhist world's most illustrious scholars, elucidates on why keeping Bodhisattva vows is the very first step and foundation to becoming a Buddha.

Three Undeified Practices

Virtue, concentration and understanding are the three undeified practices of Buddhism. They are called “undeified” because they can cleanse the practitioners’ mental defilements. Among them, the practice of virtue is the very step and foundation of concentration and understanding, and thus in becoming an *Arahant* or a Buddha.

So far as virtue or *Sila* is concerned, among the three major traditions of today’s Buddhism, Theravadin Buddhists practise the *Patimoksa Sila* (literally, precepts or virtues), Mahayana Buddhists the Bodhisattva precepts or vows, and Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhists the *Samaya* precepts.

As pointed out by Bhadantacariya Buddhaghosa in *The Path of Purification*, the virtuous can acquire several special qualities in the process of perfecting virtue:

1. non-remorse,
2. five benefits, i.e. coming into a large fortune, a fair name is spread abroad, entering an assembly without fear or hesitation, dying unconfused, and reappearing in a happy destiny or the heavenly world after death.
3. being dear to the fellows in the life of purity and loved by them, held in respect and honoured by them.

Buddhaghosa defined virtue as volition (abstaining from killing living things, etc. or fulfilling the practice of duties),

consciousness-concomitant (non-covetousness, non-ill-will, and right view), and restraint (by the Rules of the Community, mindfulness, knowledge, patience, and energy).

However, in Mahayana Buddhism which emphasises the benefiting of others over the benefiting of oneself, virtue is replaced by Bodhisattva precepts or vows.

Three Bodies of Pure Precepts

All Bodhisattva practices are based on the three bodies of pure precepts:

1. *Sambhara-silam* or doing no evils,
2. *Kusalasangvahas* or doing all good, and
3. *Sattvarhakriyas* or benefiting all sentient beings.

In terms of importance, *Sattvarhakriyas* is higher than *Kusalasangvahas* which is, in turn, higher than *Sambhara-silam*. When encountering the conflicts among them, a Bodhisattva path practitioner should adopt *Kusalasangvahas* rather than *Sattvarhakriyas*, or *Sattvarhakriyas* rather than *Sambhara-silam*. As implied by many koans of Chinese *Chan* school, an enlightened *Chan* master would use extraordinary methods such as drinking alcohol, carrying a woman to cross the river, etc. to awaken his disciples or help the sentient beings. This is the quality of benefiting all sentient beings.

Sambhara-silam consists of all *Pratimoksa* precepts and Mahayana precepts. It can eradicate all evils. According to *Fa Yuan Chu Lin*, *Sambhara-silam* has four essentials:

1. No praising of oneself and disparaging others for the cause of wealth and prosperity,
2. No refusal to practise charity because of stinginess,
3. No beating and scolding of sentient beings because of aversion, and
4. No defaming of Mahayana sutras.

Kusalasangvahas assures the goodness of all physical actions, verbal speech and mental thoughts. It consists of the three wisdoms from listening, contemplating and practising as well as the six perfections of charity, morality, tolerance, diligence, concentration and transcendental wisdom.

Sattvarhakriyas renders all benefits to numberless sentient beings.

It consists of the Four Immeasurables:

1. Loving-kindness or giving happiness to sentient beings,
2. Compassion or eliminating sentient beings' sufferings,
3. Sympathetic joy or rejoicing at sentient beings' getting happiness and liberation from sufferings, and
4. Equanimity or no hatred and no attachment in helping all sentient beings.

In short, Bodhisattva precepts include all practices and skilful means in Mahayana Buddhism. They have very special significance in the attainment of Buddhahood.

The Bodhisattva precepts are applicable to both the monastic and the laity. The *Upasaka Sila Sutra* is the only canon which deals with lay Bodhisattva precepts exclusively.

In Chinese Buddhism, there are two main categories of Bodhisattva precepts:

1. *Brahma Net Sutra* which lists 10 major and 48 minor precepts.
2. *Yogacara Bhumi Sastra* which lists four major and 44 minor precepts.

While in Tibetan Buddhism, there is only the category of *Yogacara Bhumi Sastra*.

Since the spirit and wordings of the two main categories are almost alike, I will elaborate on the *Brahma Net Sutra* to display the essence of Bodhisattva vows.

Bodhisattva precepts in *Brahma Net Sutra*

The *Brahma Net Sutra* lists 10 major and 48 minor Bodhisattva precepts. If one breaks any of the 10 major precepts, one commits major offence. If one breaks the 48 minor precepts, one commits secondary offence.

The 10 major Bodhisattva precepts are:

1. No killing,
2. No stealing,
3. No unchaste behaviour,
4. No lying and false speech,
5. No trading of alcoholic beverages,
6. No broadcasting of the faults of the assembly,
7. No praising of oneself and disparaging of others,
8. No stinginess and abuse,
9. No resentment and ill will, and
10. No slandering of the Triple Gem.

In each of the 10 major precepts, a practitioner should practise not only the passive dimension of the precept but also the active dimension of the precept. Take the precept of no killing for instance, "A disciple of

the Buddha shall not himself kill, encourage others to kill, kill by expedient means, praise killing, rejoice at witnessing killing, or kill through incantation or deviant mantras. He must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of killing, and shall not *intentionally* kill any living creature... As a Buddha's disciple, he ought to nurture a mind of compassion and filial piety, always devising skilful means to rescue and protect all beings. If instead,

he fails to restrain himself and kills sentient beings without mercy, he commits a *Parajika* (major) offence."

The *Brahma Net Sutra* says, "Anyone guilty of doing so cannot develop the Bodhi Mind in his current life and will lose whatever high position he may have attained, ... as well as whatever level of Bodhisattvahood he may have reached, ... and all the fruits of the eternal Buddha-nature. He will lose all of those levels of attainment and descend into the Three Evil Realms, unable to hear the words 'parents' or 'Triple Jewels' for eons."



THE 48 MINOR PRECEPTS:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Disrespect towards teachers and friends, | 19. Double-tongued speech, | 35. Failure to make great vows, |
| 2. Consuming alcoholic beverages, | 20. Failure to liberate sentient beings, | 36. Failure to make resolutions, |
| 3. Eating meat, | 21. Violence and vengefulness, | 37. Travelling in dangerous areas, |
| 4. Eating five pungent herbs, | 22. Arrogance and failure to request the Dharma, | 38. Order of seating within the assembly, |
| 5. Not teaching, | 23. Teaching the Dharma grudgingly, | 39. Failure to cultivate merits and wisdom, |
| 6. Failing to request the Dharma or make offerings, | 24. Failure to practise Mahayana teachings, | 40. Discrimination in conferring the precepts, |
| 7. Failing to attend Dharma lectures, | 25. Unskilled leadership of the assembly, | 41. Teaching for the sake of profit, |
| 8. Turning away from the Mahayana, | 26. Accepting personal offerings, | 42. Reciting the precepts to evil persons, |
| 9. Failure to care for the sick, | 27. Accepting discriminatory invitations, | 43. Thoughts of violating the precepts, |
| 10. Storing deadly weapons, | 28. Issuing discriminatory invitations, | 44. Failure to honour the Sutras and moral codes, |
| 11. Serving as an emissary, | 29. Improper livelihoods, | 45. Failure to teach sentient beings, |
| 12. Unlawful business undertakings, | 30. Handling business affairs for the laity, | 46. Preaching in an inappropriate manner, |
| 13. Slander and libel, | 31. Rescuing clerics along with sacred objects, | 47. Regulations against the Dharma, and |
| 14. Starting wildfires, | 32. Harming sentient beings, | 48. Destroying the Dharma. |
| 15. Teaching non-Mahayana Dharma, | 33. Watching improper activities, | |
| 16. Unsound explanation of the Dharma, | 34. Temporary abandoning of the Bodhi Mind, | |
| 17. Exacting donations, | | |
| 18. Serving as an inadequate master, | | |

For detailed explanation, visit
www.purifymind.com/BrahamNetSutra.htm

Gratitude as a Key to Bodhisattva Vows

Bodhisattva practice leads to the attainment of Buddhahood which transcends dualism. To develop the great *Bodhicitta* or ultimate enlightened mind, a Bodhisattva should bear in mind the four great debts:

- 1. The debt to the Triple Gem:**
The Buddha realised and expounded the ultimate truth of our life and world. The Dharma carries the truth. The Sangha practise and teach us the truth.
- 2. The debt to our parents** who gave us our body and brought us up.
- 3. The debt to the country and the world** which support us with our living necessities.
- 4. The debt to all sentient beings** on whom we rely our life.

Gratitude symbolises the six paramitas:

- 1. Paramita of giving:** Because of gratitude, we share good things with others.
- 2. Paramita of precepts:** Because of gratitude, we respect and do not harm others.
- 3. Paramita of tolerance:** Because of gratitude, we accept how we are treated.

- 4. Paramita of diligence:** Because of gratitude, we make progress all the times.
- 5. Paramita of concentration:** Because of gratitude, we don't fight against anyone or anything.

- 6. Paramita of wisdom:** Because of gratitude, we are peaceful and realise the truth.

We rely on each other interdependently. We are co-existent. We are the reflections of others, and others are the reflections of us. One in all, and all in one. Whatever we are or have comes from others. The knowing and practice of gratitude will perfect our Bodhisattva path to attain Buddhahood.



Speaking of Mantras...

Confused about how mantras work? Let Shen Shi'an offers an introduction to the world of mantras

What is a Mantra?

Simply put, a mantra is a string of sonic and written syllables used as a chanting tool for spiritual practice, for invoking within one's mind positive qualities such as generosity, compassion, fearlessness, humility and wisdom. In this way, defilements, such as attachment, aversion, fear, pride and delusion are kept at bay or vanquished in the moment, if not gradually.

Chanting also helps to train the mind's power of concentration and its ability to attain calmness. With such, penetrating insights into the reality of phenomena can be realised. In this sense, chanting when practised well can be a form of meditation.

Language of Mantras?

Traditionally, in Buddhism, mantras are chanted mainly in Sanskrit, which is one of the world's most ancient languages. Some believe it might be the first language in the world, being passed down by the *devas* (heavenly beings) to the earliest humans.

As such, Sanskrit is said to be the "mother tongue" of the *devas* and celestial Bodhisattvas. Due to this unique sacred significance of Sanskrit, and for retaining their spiritual potency, mantras are often left untranslated when it comes to using them for practice. However, later in history, short mantra-like chants also became available in various languages.

Meaning of Mantras?

Mantras might seem foreign and unintelligible to the uninitiated. This reaction is perfectly normal! In a way, mantras are mystical in nature because they are supposed to be the most succinct representation of the Buddha's teachings in the form and energy of sound.

In other words, they are super-compressed summaries of the essence of perfect spiritual qualities. As such, the real way to uncover their meanings in full is to actualise the qualities they represent. Chanting the respective mantra helps us achieve this, as we use our synergised body,



Photography: John Woo Wee Kuan

speech and mind to "tune in" to the qualities the mantra is capable of unleashing and increasing.

The Most Famous Mantra?

Perhaps the world's most famous mantra is "*Om Mani Padme Hum!*" - the heart mantra of *Avalokiteshvara* (Guanyin) Bodhisattva, who archetypically personifies the collective perfect compassion of all Buddhas.

While there are many levels of explanations as to what each of the six syllables means individually and collectively, it is in short the embodiment of the perfect energy of enlightened compassion in sound.

The Best Mantra?

Any words spoken with compassion and wisdom, which destroy the three poisons (greed, hatred and delusion), form the best 'mantra' in the moment.

- Stonepeace

We need to remember not to be attached to certain mantras - to the extent of forgetting the importance of conventional communication in normal languages with those around us! The practice of Buddhism includes doing the appropriate at the right time. *Om Mani Padme Hum!*



By Ng Pei Fuen

Today, let us pay tribute to all those who have given
Their time, their hearts, their efforts, their lives
To bring us what we have today.

Behind every Dharma event, great and small
There are people giving, logging and sacrificing.

Sometimes, we look at those at the top
And forget to see all those supporting them at the bottom.

Sometimes, we notice people working at the front
And fail to see people striving in the background.

We see successes and well-run events
But not often do we see
Lessons learnt and weaknesses overcome
Even in far from perfect projects.

Every contribution, big and small,
Every helping hand, strong and weak,
Every willingly giving heart,
Every voice, heard and unheard,
Every face, seen and unseen,
Every single person, named and unnamed.

All contribute to what we have today,
And will bring us what we want to achieve in future.

Today, let us pay tribute to all those who have given.
Let us rejoice in their selfless giving.
And may we too take them as our exemplars
And give of ourselves.

And like a candle, which burns itself to give others light
Let us give ourselves to bring others joy.

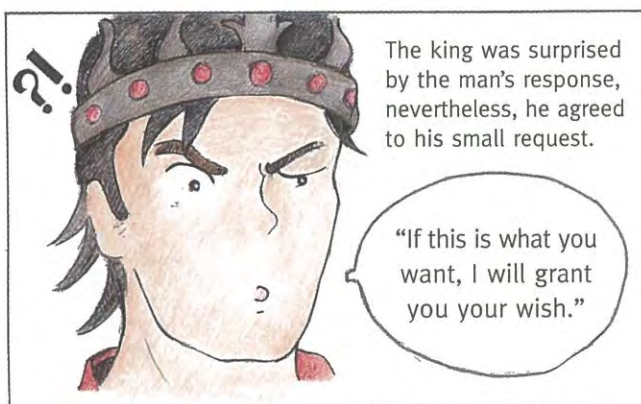
And like a candle, which can pass on the flame
Without extinguishing itself,
Let us give ourselves to benefit others,
Knowing fully well that we too will learn and grow,
Only brighter and better
From our giving.

Let us close our eyes now,
Fill our hearts with gratitude,
And imbue our intentions with the determination to serve.
Let us now say
Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!
In unison and aloud...
Sealing now our gratitude and our aspiration.

The King's Beard

Illustrations: Bee Li

There was once a king who had a loyal servant. He was so faithful and courageous that he risked his life and limb to save the King in a battle. The King was extremely grateful to the man.



When people heard this story, they laughed at him. He could have become an official, or even received great wealth, yet he chose to ask for such a trivial task.



Some people are just like him. The Buddhas perfected their virtues and qualities strenuously for eons until they became Buddhas. To meet with a Buddha or to encounter the Dharma or the Triple Gem, and yet have a human body at the same time, is exceptionally rare. It is like the story of the blind turtle that swam in the boundless sea but ended up putting its head through a hole in a floating log when it came up to the surface. It is almost impossible for these two things to come together and yet they have.

But samsaric minds are weak. They are content with lesser teachings, never seeking further. As a result, their minds do not develop and they commit unskillful and misguided acts. Not considering to pursue the inconceivable and wonderful fruits of Enlightenment, it consequently remains out of their reach.

~ The One Hundred Parable Sutra

Dear Reader,

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Issue 7

The Merits of Producing Buddhist Teachings and Buddha Images

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

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"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

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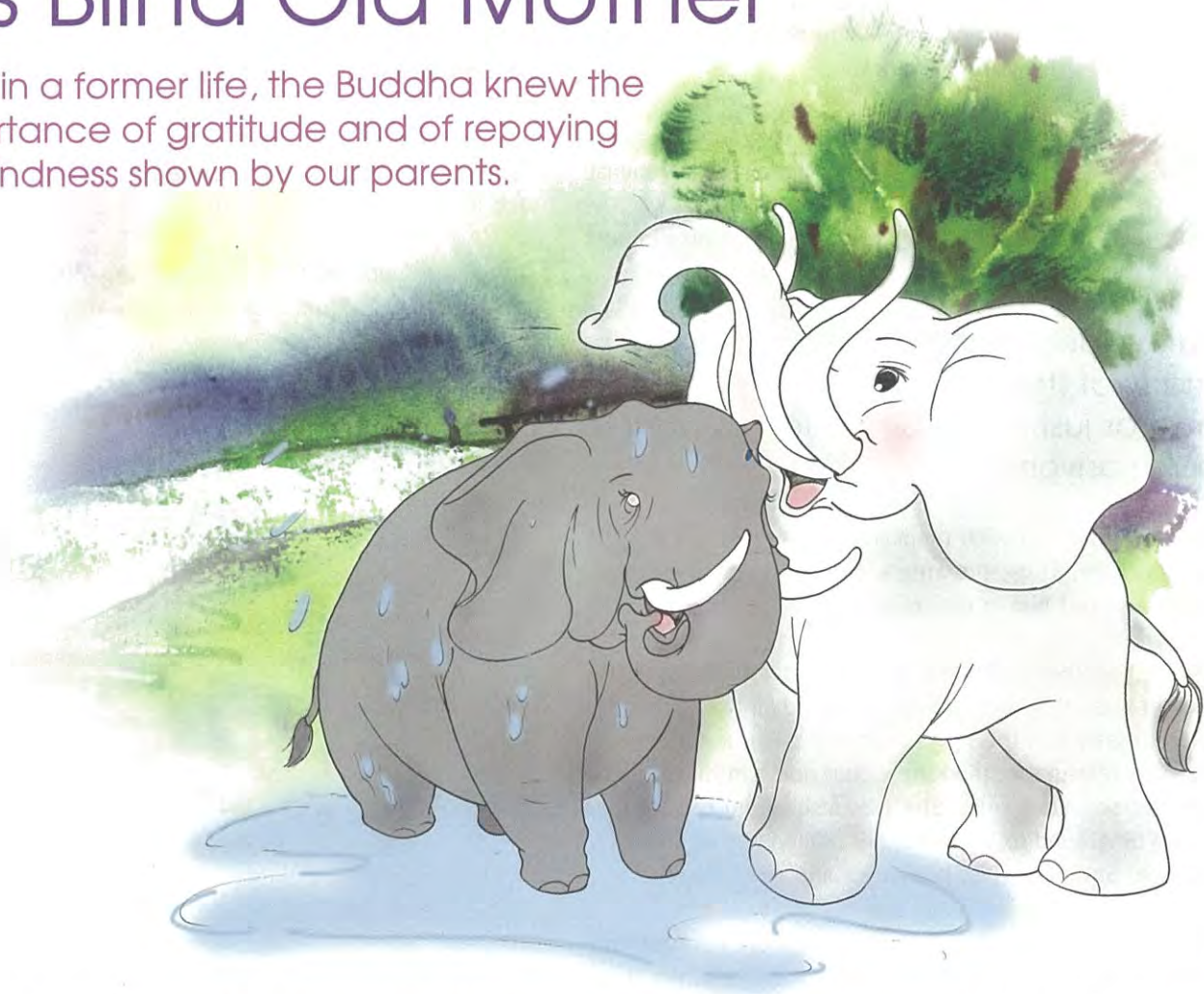
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The White Elephant and His Blind Old Mother

Even in a former life, the Buddha knew the importance of gratitude and of repaying the kindness shown by our parents.



Long, long ago in the hills of the Himalayas near a lotus pool, the Buddha-to-be was once born as a baby elephant. He was a glorious elephant, milky white in colour with rosy pink feet and face. His trunk shimmered like a silver cord and his pristine ivory tusks twirled in a long arc.

He followed his mother everywhere. She plucked the softest leaves and sweetest, juiciest mangoes from the lofty trees and gave them to him. “First you, then me,” she said gently. She bathed him in the sparkling lotus pool among the sweet-smelling flowers, spraying the cool water drawn from her trunk over the top of his head and back with until he glowed. While bathing, he would play with his mother, squirting water all over her. Without blinking, she would squirt back. Back and forth, back and forth, they gleefully splashed and splashed water all over each other.

Exhausted from their activity, they would doze off in the soft muck with their trunks coiled together. Sometimes, the mother elephant rested on her own, under the shade of a large tree while keeping a watchful eye over her son as he romped and frolicked with the other baby elephants.

The little elephant grew and grew until he was the biggest and strongest young bull in the herd of 80,000 elephants, and so became their leader. While he grew taller and stronger, his mother grew older and feeble. Her tusks were yellow and broken and in time she went blind.

Each day this white elephant would go deep into the forest in search of food. He would look for the softest leaves, sweetest mangoes and the best of wild fruits to send to his dear old blind mother, thinking gratefully “First you, then me”. But alas his mother never received any. This was because his messengers would always eat them up themselves. Each night, when he returned home, he would be surprised to hear that his mother had been starving all day. **Frowning upon what his herd had done, he decided to take his mother to live by themselves near the beautiful lotus pool.**

Each day, after feeding her, he bathed her in the sparkling pool among the fragrant and lovely pink lotuses. Drawing

the fresh cool water up in his trunk, he sprayed her over the top of her head and back until she glistened. Then, they rested in the soft muck with their trunks curled together. In the deep shadows of afternoon, the white elephant would guide his mother to the shade of a large tree for a rest while he busied about.

One day, the King of Benares went hunting and spied the noble-looking white elephant. "What a magnificent animal! I must have him to ride upon," thought the King. The young elephant was collecting lotus shoots for his mother's meal when he sensed the presence of humans.

But he decided if he put up a struggle, many of the men would be killed. And he was just too kind-hearted to want to harm anyone.

He decided to go with them and to request the King to set him free. Thus, the king's men caught the elephant easily and put him in the royal stable.

That night, the white elephant did not return home. His mother was very worried. She had heard all the commotion and guessed that the king's men had taken away her son. She was fearful that the King would ride him out to battle and her son would die. She was also afraid that no one would be around to look after her or feed her, as she could not see. Sadly, she just laid down and cried bitterly.

Meanwhile, the King had the white elephant adorned with silk and jewels and garlands of lotuses. He gave him sweet grass and juicy plums and filled his trough with pure water.

But the young elephant would not eat or drink. He just sat there looking completely despondent. Worried that the splendid elephant would waste away, the anxious mahouts reported the situation to the King. "Noble elephant," said the King, "I decorate you with silk and jewels. I give you the finest food and the purest water, yet you do not eat or drink. What will make you happy?"

The young elephant replied, "Silk and jewels, food and drinks do not please me. My blind old mother is all alone in the forest with no one to care for her. Though I may die, I will take no food or water until I give some to her first."

"Never have I seen such kindness, not even among humans," answered the King. "It is not right to keep this young noble elephant in chains. Free him."

Out of the stable, the young elephant raced through the hills looking for his mother. He found her lying by the lotus

pool, too weak to move. With tears in his eyes, he filled his trunk with water and sprayed the top of her head and back until she gleamed.

"Is it raining?" she asked. "Or has my son returned to me?" "Yes, mother. I have returned!" he cried. "The King has set me free!"

"Bless the King! May he rejoice today as I rejoice at being with my son again!" she said.

The young elephant then plucked the softest leaves and juiciest mangoes from a tree and gave them to her. "First you, then me."

Adapted from the Jataka Tales, Story 455.

The Buddha said...

If for company,
You cannot find a wise and prudent friend
Who leads a good life,
Then, like a King who leaves behind a
conquered kingdom,
Or like a lone elephant in the elephant forest,
You should go your way alone.

In this world, good it is to serve one's mother,
Good it is to serve one's father,
Good it is to serve the monks,
And good it is to serve the holy men.

Good is virtue until life's end,
Good is faith that is steadfast,
Good is the acquisition of wisdom,
And good is the avoidance of evil.

~ Dhammapada Verses 329, 332 & 333 ~



By Esther Thien & Shen Shi'an

Seen

We are all intricately intertwined in a single web of interdependence.

An Inconvenient Truth

Directed by: Davis Guggenheim

Starring: Al Gore

An Inconvenient Truth is probably the most important film of our decade. It contains a message, which if unheeded, will surely destroy us all. It is about "a global catastrophe of our own making" - which we still have time to undo, warning us of the devastation of global warming so far and how much more havoc it can wreck if we continue to remain indifferent to our environment.

According to the law of karma and rebirth, we are reborn into a world of our making. So what makes you so sure you will not be reborn into a hellish hothouse or ice-age world that is the future Earth, if you are guilty of causing its deterioration now?

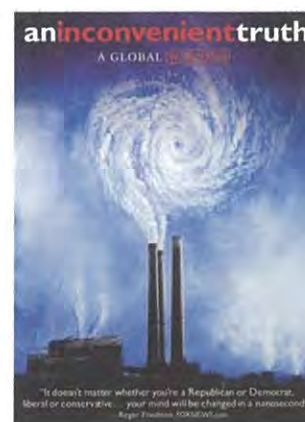
As the Buddha taught, samsaric life is fraught with dissatisfactions or suffering. But to conveniently ignore certain truths from a deluded mindset in our quest for profit and material enjoyment only leads to greater suffering. Inconvenient truths do not go away just because they are not seen. And if our environment is in a derelict state, how can we enjoy life?

The effects of global warming are manifesting, and more will come if we do not change our ways. Even as we speak, abnormal weather conditions like flash floods, scorching heat waves, wild hurricanes, receding glaciers, melting ice-caps, rising sea-levels are recorded worldwide. Countless humans and animals have perished from the extreme weather in recent years, and disease is also on the rise. Remember the massive loss of lives Hurricane Katrina alone caused?

Humans affect the environment, just as the environment affects humans. We are all intricately intertwined in a single web of interdependence. Our actions reap collective karma, and karma can mete out effects through the wraths of nature. Extreme maltreatment of the environment simply leads to extreme natural disasters.

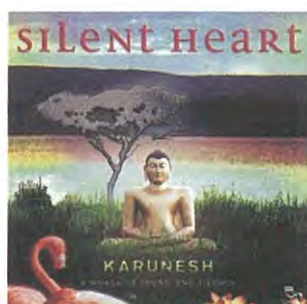
The issue of global warming is a collective problem as much as it is a personal one. To reverse the situation, all of us must play a part. Throwing up your hands in apathy and ignorance is not going to help. Since the solution takes every effort, every effort counts. To save our planet, be as environment-conscious as you can, eat less meat (for reared farm animals are one of the greatest greenhouse gases emitters, which cause the Earth's heating up) and persuade more to join the green bandwagon. If not for yourself, at least for your children's sake, and your children's children's sake!

* Visit <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/whatyoucando/index.htm> to see what else you can do to reduce global warming.



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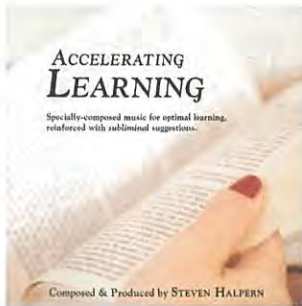
Heard



Silent Heart

by Karunesh

At once haunting, melancholic and captivating, the music here tugs at your heart-strings. Swaying and following the flow of the gentle music, you see the soft, fluid dances of a goddess in your mind's eye. Using Shakuhachi, wooden bass flute, oboe, Tibetan singing bowl and keyboards, this collection of music takes you to a place of oneness and simplicity, where rejuvenation and healing can begin. Buy it from Awareness Place at S\$22.90.



Accelerating Learning

by Steven Halpern

Your children's exams may not be here yet, but if you are a parent who appreciates the importance of concentration and creativity, do not give this CD a miss. The specially composed music in this album is said to improve concentration, reading and creativity, and is proven to be beneficial for students of all ages, even those with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Besides featuring relaxed compositions on the piano, flute and violin, it contains positive subliminal recordings for added effectiveness. You don't actually hear them knowingly, but your subconscious mind does and so responds accordingly.

Steven Halpern, pre-eminent composer of therapeutic music, is the creator of this album. His music is renowned for their ability to help access whole brain learning and improve overall performance, having been used in learning centres around the world, from primary to tertiary levels, for over 20 years.

Recommended by leading educators, this is one album worth investing in. Get it from Awareness Place at S\$28.00.



Buddha Garden

by Parijat

If there are days when your heart feels heavy and constricted, try "visiting" *Buddha Garden*. Featuring the soothing strains of guitar, keyboards and percussion, this album of uplifting melodies and easy grooves will open up your heart in no time.

The easy-listening new age music creates an enriching and affirming ambience, setting a light-hearted environment for rejuvenation, meditation, leisure and celebration. Available from Awareness Place at S\$23.00.

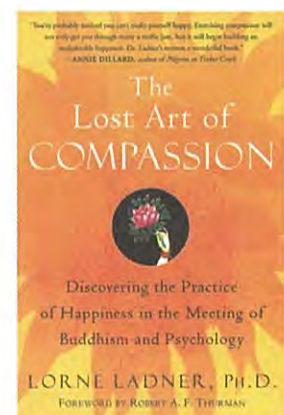
Read

Compassion and kindness
are the real essences of
religion.

The Lost Art of Compassion

by Lorne Ladner, Ph.D

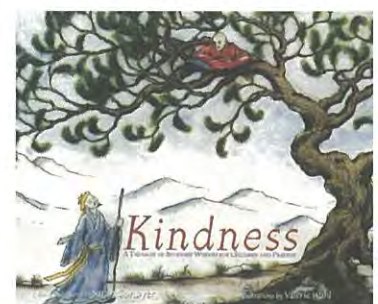
Urban culture has overlooked one of the most compelling inner resources for creating a life filled with happiness and contentment. *The Lost Art of Compassion* combines both Tibetan Buddhist teachings and Western psychology to give 10 very practical, user-friendly methods to cultivate joy and contentment, helping us rediscover the path to happiness in our fast-paced modern society. Recommended for the beginning Buddhist who would like to understand the practical applications of Buddhism, get the book from Awareness Place at S\$26.50.



Kindness - A Treasury of Buddhist Wisdom for Children & Parents

Collected & adapted by Sarah Conover

This collection of traditional Buddhist stories, comprising elephants, monkeys, monks and men, leads us to the type of implicit understanding of ourselves and others that only stories can provide. These concise tales of wisdom give profound and gentle teachings, telling us to let go of our anger, fear and desires to embrace gladness and follow the path that leads towards wisdom and delight. Priced S\$36.00 from Awareness Place.



Monks, these two people are hard to find in the world.

Which two?

The one who is first to do a kindness, and the one who is grateful for a kindness done and feels obligated to repay it.

These two people are hard to find in the world.

- *The Buddha, Dullabha Sutta*

It is wrong to expect gratitude when we do something for others. We should thank sentient beings for giving us a chance to practise the bodhi mind and to cultivate merit and virtue.

Without sentient beings, a Bodhisattva cannot attain Buddhahood. For this reason, we should be grateful to everyone.

If we have not helped them, we should make it a point to do so; if we feel we have done something for them, we should be thankful for such opportunities.

In any case, we should be grateful. Such an attitude will help prevent pride and arrogance, the greatest problems a practitioner faces.

- *Ven. Sheng Yen*



Don't fear.
Keep yourself pure, and nothing will be able to harm you.

- *Chao Khun Nararatana Rajamani*

In the garbage,
I see a rose.
In the rose,
I see the garbage.
Everything is in transformation.
Every permanence is impermanent.

- *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Kindness arises
by standing apart from oneself and
recognising all beings
as companions on the arduous travel
towards highest perfection.

- *Hans Taege*

A thinking mind cannot see; thinking is blind.
A seeing mind does not think; seeing excludes thinking.
Really seeing is not the same as noting.
The more you think, the more you go round and round.
If you see thinking really clearly, it must stop.

- *Ven. Sayadaw U Jotika*

The best Dharma practice,
the most perfect,
most substantial,
is without doubt
the practice of Bodhicitta.
Bodhicitta is the foundation
of all Enlightened Realisations.

- *Lama Thubten Yeshe*

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.

Anapanasati: mindfulness of breath meditation.

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.

Buddha-Dharma: Buddhists do not call the teachings of the Buddha, which they follow, Buddhism; they call them Buddha-Dharma, the Dharma of the Buddhas.

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 and 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.

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Parinibbana: full nirvana.

Repentance: The recognition of misgivings and the resolution to rectify and never repeat them.

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.

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.

Vairocana: 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.

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Extracted from

Anguttara-nikaya

Even if one should carry about one's mother on one shoulder
and one's father on the other, and so doing should live a hundred
years . . .

Moreover, if one should set them up as supreme rulers, having absolute
rule over the wide earth abounding in the seven treasures -
not even by this could one repay one's parents.

And why! Bhikkhus, parents do a lot for their children:
they bring them up,
provide them with food,
introduce them to the world.

Yet, bhikkhus,
whoever encourages their faithless parents,
and settles and establishes them in faith;

or whoever encourages their immoral parents,
and settles and establishes them in morality;

or whoever encourages their stingy parents,
and settles and establishes them in generosity;

or whoever encourages their foolish parents,
and settles and establishes them in wisdom;

such a person,
in this way repays, more than repays,
what is due to their parents.

~ The Buddha ~