



sep - dec 2007

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# Buddhism – a religion of compassion and wisdom

Buddhism is a religion of compassion and wisdom. Like the wings of a bird, both have to be equally strong in order for the bird to fly well. Thus, the objective of the Buddha's teachings is to encourage people to develop qualities of both the heart and the mind (pg 45). Only then, can one become a truly great and noble human being who is at peace with the world.

To develop the heart, we have various methods. One of them is Bodhicitta (pg 47). By constantly thinking of other sentient beings' welfare, compassion arises naturally (pg 63). Indeed, even our animal friends show the potential to cultivate compassion like us (pg 61).

To train our minds and increase wisdom, we can try meditation. Research has shown that meditation sharpens and clears the brain, enhancing day-to-day concentration and alertness, and helps people achieve a more beneficial state of mind (pg 38). Bearing Zen in mind can also allow one to understand one's true nature (pg 50 & 57).

In fact, sometimes developing the heart and the mind can be interdependent; heightening one through direct experience and realisation brings about the development of another. "Contemplating the welfare of others...in wishing for the happiness of others, we rise above our own attachment and aggression. Eventually, our training will give us the power to flip the mind instantly by letting go of the 'me plan' and considering the happiness of somebody else, whatever we are experiencing, wherever we are. In that moment, we are cultivating peace," says Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (pg 42).

As Mipham Rinpoche says, when we understand we have a choice in how we want to use our mind in any situation we face, we have more control in how we use it. By working with our mind, instead of being reactive and controlled by negative elements, we are empowered and grow as individuals.

At the end of the day, we are different from the day before. We are freer in our hearts and are wiser in our actions.



Yours in the Dharma,  
Sister Esther Thien

*The mind, when undeveloped and uncultivated, leads to great harm.  
The mind, when developed and cultivated, leads to great benefit.  
The mind, when untamed, unguarded, unprotected, unrestrained, leads to great harm.  
The mind, when tamed, guarded, protected, restrained, leads to great benefit.*  
- The Buddha (Excerpt from Ekadhamma Sutta)

## Erratum

Some errors were unfortunately overlooked in our last issue. The date listed on page 38 should be 26 November, and on page 42, it should be the 14th Dalai Lama and not the 15th.

**\*w\*s\*d\*p Sessions**

Date/Time : Every Thur, 7.30pm – 9.30pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Details : Free admission. Please call 6849 5346, sms 9679 0132  
 or e-mail wsdp@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

**Sharing Sessions for Home Caregivers**

Date/Time : 5, 12 & 19 Sep 07, Wed, 2.00pm – 5.00pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Fee : \$20 (3 sessions)  
 Details : Learn the theoretical and practical aspects of how  
 best to care for the elderly at home. Please call  
 6336 5067, visit www.kmspks.org, or e-mail  
 semd@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

**Y\_Cultivation: Power of Loving-Kindness** by Ven. Chuan Ren

Date/Time : 15 Sep – 6 Oct 07, Every Sat, 6.30pm – 8.00pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Fee : S\$12/person (4 sessions)  
 Details : Please call 6849 5345 or e-mail billy@kmspks.org to  
 register or enquire.

**Medicine Buddha Sutra Recitation (Chinese)**

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

**Pureland Recitation (Chinese)**

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

**Diamond Sutra Recitation (Chinese)**

Date/Time : Every Sun, 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

**Moon Light, Moon Bright @KMSPKS — A Joyous Celebration of Mid-autumn Festival**

Date/Time : 25 Sept 07, 7.00pm – 9.30pm  
 Venue : 4th floor, Ven. Hong Choon Memorial Hall  
 Details : Free admission. Please call 6849 5300 to enquire.

**Children's Art Class**

Date/Time : 24 Nov 07 – 16 Feb 08, Every Sat, 2.00pm – 4.00pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Fee : \$40 (12 lessons)  
 Details : Please call 6336 5067, visit www.kmspks.org, or  
 e-mail semd@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

**Y\_Cultivation: The 6 Perfections - Formula for Success**

by Ven Bodhi

Date/Time : 16 & 30 Sep 07, 14 & 28 Oct 07 and 11 Nov 07,  
 9.30am – 12.00pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Fee : S\$25/person (5 Sessions)  
 Details : Please call 6849 5345 or e-mail billy@kmspks.org to  
 register or enquire.

**Spiritual Countdown 2007**

Date/Time : 31 Dec 07, 10pm till late night  
 Venue : Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery  
 Details : Please call 6849 5346 or e-mail youth@kmspks.org  
 to register or enquire.

**Understanding Death, Celebrating Life Workshop**

Date/Time : 17 Aug – 21 Sep 07, Fri, 7.30pm – 9.30pm  
 Venue : Awareness Place Well-being Centre,  
 Bras Basah Complex #03-39  
 Fee : \$32 (6 sessions)  
 Details : Conducted by Sister Sze Gee, please call  
 6336 5067, visit www.kmspks.org, or e-mail  
 semd@kmspks.org to register or enquire.

## Reflections of Pilgrims...

I felt a sense of peace when I visited the Buddhist holy sites. Sometimes you feel the Buddha is far away, so going on such a trip helps a lot because you can almost feel what the Buddha went through in those places. Even though it happened 2551 years ago, these are the places where He has been. Going there is like a kind of spiritual reinforcement. There, you can feel the Buddha's compassion.

– Ven Sik Kwang Sheng, Abbot of KMSPKS

Going on this trip helped me realise how fortunate I am to be able to learn the Dharma in such a comfortable life with nice conditions. It made me want to learn the Dharma more because I found that there are many, like the destitute, who want to learn but do not have the chance to.

– Lee Ting Hong, NUS undergrad, 24

Setting foot on the holy sites, I experienced a certain spiritual energy. Being there gives me spiritual comfort and inspires me to stay true to the Buddha's teachings by striving to become a better person.

– Liew Shi Xiong, NTU undergrad, 21

I came to realise why some cultivators mentioned it is very difficult, almost impossible for those in woeful states to cultivate themselves. Looking at the beggars in Bodh Gaya begging for food and money, their main concern made me understand how immediate happiness for them is perhaps about having enough to eat instead of attaining spiritual awakening.

Through this pilgrimage, I also appreciate the fact that sometimes when we are ready to learn, the teachers may not be around to teach. So we need to cherish every opportunity we have to learn and practise, whether our conditions are good or bad. This trip created an urgency in me of wanting to learn and practise the Dharma. We should constantly watch our mental states.

– Tay Siew Wei, NUS undergrad, 27

# What Do I Do When I Feel Disappointed and Let Down By a Friend?

**Q:** I feel very frustrated by a friend I was very close to. Recently, she became very temperamental and unreasonable over a mutually important matter. I feel thoroughly disappointed and let down. What should I do? – *Anonymous*

**A:** The only right response is to give rise to compassion to embrace her, defilements and all, and not forsake her out of aversion. Be patient too. Look for skilful means to rectify the situation without further aggravating her.

Remember – she is probably suffering from her own problems too, which gave rise to her anger and loss of reason – that she is most probably not aware of.

You may wish to “take a break” from the friendship for a while due to the tense situation. It may be the right thing to do to benefit her now – to let her cool down and reflect. Even so, never give up the intention of doing the right thing at the right time to benefit her, to help her see the light.

It is also good for you to take this opportunity to reflect deeply. Has it ever occurred to you that in your last argument with her, perhaps she, too, saw you as “temperamental and unreasonable”? Perhaps, she also felt sorely disappointed with you?

If she refuses to reconcile later, you may have to graciously let go of your friendship. However, this “severing of ties” should only be external – your heart should always remain open to her. Even if she does not appreciate your care and concern (which you need not always show), it does not have to cease – even if it is not accepted.

This is the way the infinitely forgiving and compassionate Bodhisattvas love all and abandon none, including the stubbornly unrepentant, in the hope that they will eventually be touched, and awaken to their defilements.

The above is the only sensible thing to do – to ensure our negative feelings of hurt and despair are transformed into positive motivations of compassion and wisdom. Otherwise, we will give in to hatred or indifference, which is not only useless, but possibly harmful to the other party’s well-being and for our practice of Bodhicitta. Remember, it is the deluded aspect of hers that let you down, not her true nature, which is pure and perfect like everyone else’s Buddha-nature.

Likewise, should the same situation occur to us as the protagonist, we should take care of ourselves in the same way. Should you realise you have become emotional and irrational, there is no need for self-bashing. Doing so only further compounds your suffering. Give rise to compassion and patience for yourself.



Look for skilful means to dissolve your pain, bearing in mind that you might not be the best “healer” for yourself at the moment. You may want to seek the advice of a teacher or good spiritual friends. Distance yourself from the “source” of your unhappiness for a while to cool down – but do not forget to address the problem eventually. Otherwise, it will most likely haunt you in a similar if

not a worse manner. The braver we are in facing our problems, the sooner will we be free! May we take care of ourselves happily. May we take care of one another happily.

– Bro Shen Shi’an

**Q:** As a lawyer, I have to judge clients' actions and advise them accordingly. I am always "judging"! What is your advice on this?  
– LWY

**A:** There is a difference between "judging" and "evaluating". The judging mind is based on ego. It holds to "my" views and rigidly classifies things as right and wrong, good and bad. Coincidentally, "my" views are always right, even if I change them! The judgmental mind blames and criticises others. Getting rid of our judgmental mind does not mean that we become lost in fog, saying, "There's no good and no bad," and unable to discriminate between things on a conventional level. Such a nihilistic attitude is very harmful because we need to make clear ethical discernments; we must know what is the cause of happiness and what is the cause of suffering, what is constructive karma, and what is destructive karma. We need to evaluate our actions, improving them when they are faulty and enhancing them when they are constructive.

Abandoning judgment does not mean we abandon clear discernment and accurate evaluation. These are necessary for society to function.

– Ven. Thubten Chodron

**Q:** I only have a Guanyin Bodhisattva statue on my altar at home. Can I still chant the *Great Compassion Dharani* and the *Heart Sutra*? I heard from friends that you can only chant the *Great Compassion Dharani* during prayer services and not at home. Is this true?  
– Mdm Loh

**A:** Yes, you can chant the *Great Compassion Dharani* and the *Heart Sutra*. It does not matter what statue or image you have at home. It is not true that you can only chant the *Great Compassion Dharani* during prayer services. In fact, it would be most beneficial if you can chant the prayers everyday. First, set the right motivation of Bodhicitta (the motivation of wanting to liberate all sentient beings from suffering) before you start your prayers. When you are done, end it by dedicating the merits for the complete liberation of all mother sentient beings.

– Ven. Chuan Xian

Are you bugged by any problems in life? Perhaps you have difficulties overcoming some of 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 and queries to [awaken@kmspk.org](mailto:awaken@kmspk.org) or send your letters to:

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

## Reflections of Pilgrims...

What can be more motivating or inspiring than to be able to sit, meditate, pray and chant at where the Buddha sat and walked 2551 years ago? Of course, we should live with the Buddha in our hearts every moment. But the Buddha comes alive even more during the pilgrimage, deepening and enriching our practice. **While learning is important, putting what we have learnt into daily practice, is even more important. Only then can we claim to be students of the Buddha, doing what He taught us about living.**

– Khaw Boon Wan, Minister for Health

While I have been to poor places before, I've never seen so many beggars and homeless people on the streets as I did on this trip. **Anyone who visits the Buddhist holy places is compelled to come face to face with such human suffering, and thus is forced to ask oneself: "Has my practice made me a more compassionate person?"** This trip reminds me that I should learn the Dharma with the motivation of helping others, and not turn it into another mere intellectual pursuit.

– Raymond Poon, Freelance writer, 25

The pilgrimage trip made me understand the tough social circumstances that still exist even after the Buddha's time. It made me reflect about the comforts that I'm enjoying at home, and helped me appreciate every single minute of my life. – Alvin Yeo, NTU undergrad, 22

The pilgrimage journey might have been long and tiring, but all the hardship was worthwhile for I realise that although there are obstacles on the path of learning the Dharma, I shall one day be liberated from the sea of suffering. – Billy Loh, Programme Officer, 23

By Esther Thien

## Alms Collection Meant for Food Only, says Ven. Kwang Sheng

**Singapore** – Real monks and nuns go on alms round for food only, says Ven. Kwang Sheng. He makes this comment after *The Sunday Times* reported that fake Thai monks and nuns have been collecting monetary alms from Singaporeans and dodging police by making quick getaways.

Journalists exposed this phenomenon of fake monks and nuns, operated by syndicates, when they discovered that up to 100 of these quacks stayed in a lodging house in Geylang.

According to the paper, the impostors arrive on social visit passes. They put on religious robes in the morning and make their rounds soliciting alms. Come afternoon, many cast off their robes and emerge in civilian attire, often with caps on their heads to avoid being recognised, heading for nearby coffee shops.

When the sham was reported, a large group was seen speedily leaving for Malaysia, boarding coaches after exchanging their Singapore currency for Thai baht.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, Ven. Sik Kwang Sheng, the current abbot of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery advises “the public to call the police upon sighting fake monks or nuns soliciting money on the streets.”



In a letter to the press, he also urges the police to conduct more checks and investigations of suspicious lodging houses to prevent the recurrence of such crimes.

“A Buddhist who recently called the police was told that if a so-called ‘monk’ is just standing there with his alms bowl, and is not disturbing the public, it is not a problem. But this is a problem — because these ‘monks’ are cheating the public of their money. They are damaging the image of Buddhism. Since it is not a practice for real monks and nuns to harass the public for donations or sales, it would be ideal for the police to arrest any ‘monk’ or ‘nun’ on sight, when they are spotted begging or selling,” says Ven. Kwang Sheng.

“The tradition of going around for alms is only for the acquisition of food, as conducted by registered organisations,” he explains.

Ven. Kwang Sheng advises members of the public not to give any money to these fraudsters, as such mistaken ‘charity’ supports crime instead.

“Any well-intended donations should be given directly to registered organisations or monastics,” he adds.

## Science Proves Meditation Sharpens and Clears the Brain

**Australia** – According to a news report by the AAP, science has proved what Buddhists have sworn by for centuries; that meditation really does sharpen and clear the brain.

Research conducted by Scientists at the Flinders Medical Centre’s Centre for Neuroscience has shown that when people go into a deep meditative state, their brain rhythms

shift into a pattern of focus, thereby improving concentration levels and alertness.

Using electroencephalography (EEG), which relies on electrodes placed on the scalp, the Adelaide researchers measured the brain electrical activity in a group of people as they progressed through the five states of meditation as defined in Buddhist teachings.

The results, reported at the World Congress of Neuroscience in July this year in Melbourne, demonstrated distinct changes in brain activity as participants moved deeper into meditative states.



Researchers found that alpha brainwaves, which are linked to focus and attention, increased. And delta brainwaves, connected to drowsiness, decreased in the early part of the clinical trial.

As subjects went further into meditation, the alpha brainwaves also started to fall, as the brain no longer needed to make an effort to be alert.

“Instead of becoming increasingly drowsy, they apparently become more alert,” says PhD researcher Dylan DeLosAngeles.

This supports long-standing beliefs that meditation can enhance day-to-day concentration and alertness.

“Meditation is different from simply closing your eyes and relaxing,” explains Mr DeLosAngeles.

“In traditional Buddhist teaching, it requires a subject to fix their attention on a single object or action, such as breathing,” he continues.

Meditation was developed more than 2550 years ago as a means to explore consciousness and a discipline to help people achieve a more beneficial state of mind.

## Major Buddhist Sites Uncovered Show Signs of Early Dakiniyana Buddhism

**India** – Major Buddhist architectural finds have been discovered due to a chance digging by mulberry farmers in agricultural lands, said a news report by *Newindpress* in July this year.

Two ancient sites in Kanthamanenivarigudem of West Godavari district, seen as prototypes of present-day temples, were unearthed. These amazing discoveries have also provided first-ever proof of the existence of another major Buddhist tradition apart from the existing Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions.

The archaeological finds are just two kilometres away from the famous Second Century rock-cut Buddhist caves of Guntupalli or Jilakarragudem in West Godavari, known as the Ajantha of Andhra.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) extensively explored the areas, and found a decorated pillar in the vicinity of a chaitya. It was excavated along with a

damaged Dhyana Buddha statue, shards of pottery and chaitya pillars. The upper half of the green limestone pillar carries a half-lotus medallion and a frieze of animals such as lion, deer and boar.

According to *The Hindu*, the most important evidence that points to the existence in India of the Dakiniyana school of Buddhism in the second century A.D. was a three-line Brahmi inscription at the bottom half of the pillar.

ASI archaeologists were startled to find a clear mention of the existence of an established Dakiniyana school proving that the village had patronised the Dakiniyana sect of Buddhism. Paleographically, the script dates back to the second century.

The epigraphical discovery contains challenging elements for researchers on Buddhism as it mentions a school unknown hitherto.

# Resonance Within..

## DHARMA TALKS

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You are what you eat. In this issue, we focus on Chinese herbal recipes that are nourishing, purifying and beneficial for the body.

### Almond Pear Dessert 杏仁炖梨



#### Ingredients

Sweet and bitter almonds, 5gm — ground into powder  
Pear (any kind), 1pc — cut into half, discard seeds and core  
Rock sugar, 100gm  
Hot water, 125ml

#### Method

1. Add almond powder gradually into hot water, stir well and soak for 10 mins.
2. Place pear in bowl and steam for 5 mins.
3. Add in rock sugar and almond mixture. Steam for 10 mins and serve.

#### 材料

南北杏5克 - 磨成粉  
梨子 (任何梨子皆可) 1个 - 对半切, 去籽、去心  
冰糖100克  
煮滚开水125ml

#### 做法

1. 边加入边调匀, 把杏仁粉融入热开水中, 浸泡10分钟。
2. 把梨放入碗中, 隔水蒸5分钟。
3. 加入冰糖、徐徐倒入浸泡好的杏仁粉, 再蒸10分钟即成。

### Nourishing Herbal Dish 清肺养颜药膳



#### Ingredients

Lotus root, 1/4 pc — peel, dice and boil for 20 mins. Drain water. (Water can be used for other dishes.)  
Carrot, 1/2 pc — peel and shred.  
*Dang Gui* stock, 1 bowl - soak in hot water. Bring to boil for 15 mins and discard herb.  
Fresh lily fruit, 10 pcs — wash and dry.  
Tomato, 2 pcs — dice into chunks.  
Black Fungus, 1 pc — soak till soft in water. Boil for 10 mins and shred.  
Red Chilli, 1 pc — de-seed and chop finely.  
*Gou Qi* seeds, a bit — wash for garnishing.

#### Gravy Ingredients

Light soya sauce, a bit  
Cooking oil, a bit  
Pepper, a bit  
Edible coconut oil, 1 tsp  
Edible olive oil, a bit  
Rock salt, a bit

#### Method

1. Mix tomato cubes, chopped chilli and gravy ingredients well and set aside.
2. Lightly fry carrot with a pinch of rock salt. Fry other ingredients together.
3. Pour in *Dang Gui* stock, cover and stew for 5 mins.
4. Transfer onto serving plate. Pour tomato gravy and garnish dish with *Gou Qi* seeds

#### 材料

1. 莲藕1/4个 - 去皮、切丁、煮20分钟捞起 (水可用于其他菜肴)
2. 红萝卜1/2条 - 去皮、切成细丝
3. 当归汁1碗 - 当归浸泡在1碗热开水中。再煮15分钟, 去药渣即成
4. 鲜百合10瓣 - 洗净备用
5. 番茄2个 - 横切、再切成块
6. 木耳1朵 - 用水泡软, 再煮10分钟、切丝
7. 红辣椒1根 - 去籽、剁细
8. 枸杞子少许 - 洗净、沥干、作装饰用

#### 献汁调味料

酱油适量、食油适量、胡椒粉适量、食用椰油1汤匙、橄榄油适量、岩盐适量

#### 做法

1. 将番茄丁、辣椒碎以及其他调味品调匀备用。
2. 翻炒红萝卜丝, 加岩盐少许, 再加入其他材料翻炒。
3. 注入当归汁, 加盖焖5分钟。
4. 移入盘中, 淋上番茄等酱料, 以枸杞子装饰即成。



Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche tells us how sitting to contemplate anger, love and compassion can counter aggression in the world.

People often ask me how we can apply meditation in dealing with forces bent on aggression. Without using aggression ourselves, how do we stop somebody determined to harm others?

As practitioners, we try to use whatever we encounter to open up our minds. When the whole world comes to a point of intense aggression, can we go beyond our own anger into openness? Aggression only invites more aggression, and produces further pain. We have no choice but to cultivate peace, which means developing tolerance and understanding.

Cultivating peace is a long and difficult process. The challenge begins with practising peace on the meditation cushion even while we are having aggressive thoughts. Meditation is the best preparation for working in a world where we are increasingly pressed into each other's faces. By engaging our mind on the cushion, we learn to work with our own reactivity.

In *shamatha* meditation, we use the breath as the object of meditation. Instead of reacting to thoughts, we recognise, acknowledge and release them, and bring our mind back to the breath. Stabilising, strengthening and clarifying our mind this way is called peaceful abiding. Once we have achieved a sense of stability and strength, we can shift the technique by using thoughts themselves as the object of meditation. This is a form of contemplative practice. In particular, I encourage contemplation on the principles of compassion and love. But anger is another useful subject. How can we deal with aggression in the world if we don't first work with our own?

Contemplating anger helps us see it clearly, and it also adds an element that is usually missing when we are in the throes of intense feeling: reason. One of the most painful things about any negative emotion is that it feels so solid. Yet, there are always at least three separate components: a subject, an object and an action. For example, when you are angry about being stuck in traffic, the subject

is “me”, the object is the car just in front of you, and the action is being stuck behind it. Your pain is also the object. You are angry with yourself for being stuck, you are angry at the car in front of you for being slow and you are angry at being angry. These are the elements that have come together to create the emotion.

In contemplating anger, we can begin to dismantle it. We start by looking into the feeling itself: “Why am I angry? What has made me feel this way?” When our mind strays, instead of bringing it back to the breath, we use these thoughts as the anchor of our meditation. Soon, we see the components of our emotion: what someone did or said, some disappointed expectation, the simple fact that we are tired. In contemplating how our negative emotions have come together — and how they create pain, suffering and anxiety — we see that they are not as solid as we thought. By dismantling the emotion and looking at the components, we dilute the strength of our attachment.

Practising like this is not about being judgmental. It is not about whether someone is right or wrong. We are trying to take the anger a few stages back and work with it in the privacy of our own mind so that we are not as susceptible to the grip of high emotion. We start to see that the situation or person we would like to blame is not the reason for our anger. The reason is that we have rolled subject, object and action into a reaction and a response, and solidified that thought into a feeling as big as a house.

With determination and motivation, we may eventually be able to let go of our anger and return to abiding in peace. But even in the context of meditation, we can usually do it only bit by bit. Off the cushion, it is very difficult to jump into that



peaceful mind when we are already mad at someone. By the time we are really angry, we are already caught in a reaction. In that case, the solution may be to derail the intensity of the emotion by going for a walk or taking a bath. We can contemplate it later.

Contemplating anger offers the space to become aware that we have a choice: we can try to keep the emotion together by continuing to let it fester and to blame, or we can let it fall apart in the inherent openness of our being.

We can allow that angry individual or that difficult situation to plant seeds of aggression and then water the seeds with angry thoughts — or we can choose not to. One of the benefits of training our mind in meditation is that it gives us more control in how we use it. At some point, we might be able to use it to extend love and compassion towards that angry person.

That is why contemplating love and compassion is so useful in working with aggression. In this practice, we wish that others might have happiness, that they do not suffer. We start by extending this wish for happiness in a small way — that the cut on our friend’s finger might heal. We build in increments until we can hope for it in a big way — that all beings may become Buddha, that all may achieve enlightenment.

Contemplating the welfare of others is the quick path to peace, because in wishing for the happiness of others, we rise above our own attachment and aggression.

Extending love and compassion towards others in contemplative practice is a rehearsal for stepping beyond stinginess and self-centredness in daily life. Eventually, our training will give us the power to flip the mind instantly by letting go of the “me plan” and considering the happiness of somebody else, whatever we are experiencing, wherever we are. In that moment, we are cultivating peace.

When we live like this, we feel happier. The reason is simple: because love and compassion are the basis of our consciousness, we thrive when we let them come to the forefront.

Is sitting by ourselves, doing these funny contemplations, going to counter aggression in the world? Not all at once, but it is a step in that direction. In meditation practice, our mind is no longer pinned against the glass of our life.

By contemplating anger, we become familiar with the rigid mind of attachment and aggression. By contemplating compassion and love, we become familiar with the pliable mind of peace. The practice of meditation creates the psychological space to familiarise ourselves with how to choose our responses off the cushion.

Through practice we grow as individuals, as opposed to just surviving our life. We learn that by working with our mind — the consciousness we are walking around with every day — we can discover our love and compassion and use it, instead of being controlled by negative elements



that bring us down. At the end of the day, we are different from the day before. That's why we call meditation a “path”. It may look as if we are doing nothing on the cushion, but in fact we are engaging our mind in a proactive way. We are cultivating peace. From that point of view, the practice of meditation is a very courageous activity.

His Eminence (H.E.) Sakyong Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche was born in 1962 in Bodh Gaya, 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. He recently gave a public talk and meditation workshop in Singapore. Please visit [www.shambhala.sg](http://www.shambhala.sg) and [www.shambhala.org](http://www.shambhala.org) for more information.

# Have You Got Both Head and Heart?

By Ven. Kanugolle Ratanasara

Compassion and Wisdom are just like the two wings of a bird. If one is weak and the other is strong, it cannot fly properly. Both wings should be equally strong.

Compassion is a virtuous quality which is in the heart while wisdom comes from the head. Buddhism leads to the fulfilment of both these great qualities, helping to transform someone into a noble human being.

## A Heart Without a Head

Universal love, compassion, friendship, good-will, and appreciative joy are the good virtuous qualities that someone can develop in the heart. These qualities should always be developed and practised with understanding. Qualities of the heart should always go hand in hand with wisdom.

If you develop only qualities of the heart without developing your wisdom, you will be a virtuous, kind-hearted good person. However, other people may cheat you very easily, taking advantage of your good nature.

Without wisdom, once you realise you are being bullied or cheated, anger and hatred might arise. But if you practise and develop qualities of the heart with wisdom, having understood the law of cause and effect and the true nature of life, you will not harbour any ill-will.





come to eat the food sometimes become roadkill.

### If You Have Only Head?

On the other hand, if you develop only your head, you will be very shrewd, intelligent and clever. But since you do not understand the value of moral principles of human qualities, you will not hesitate to commit crimes of any kind.

You will not care about the damage you could cause to society. You are ready to do anything using your intelligence and knowledge as long as you get what you want.

Buddha says “life is easy-going to the shameless, which plunders with the skill of a crow that moves hither and thither”. Knowledge without moral discipline is harmful to society.

Friendliness is a good quality. But you should maintain and cultivate it with understanding. If you develop a friendship with criminals or drug addicts merely because you are friendly, you are inviting problems. For without wisdom, you may eventually end up becoming one of them.

Generosity is a good quality. But it should be practised with wisdom. For example, you should not donate money to activities like terrorism just because generosity is a good quality. You should not give your wealth to an organisation that can bring harm and suffering to society. You should not contribute to any form of destruction.

Suppose a man who is addicted to drugs comes and asks you for some money. You should not give him money thinking that generosity is needed, for he might use this money on drugs.

Compassion is another good quality that should be united with wisdom. Dengue fever is spreading in Singapore. Health officers are trying their best to prevent this by advising people to clear stagnant water in unused vessels.

Cultivate compassion with wisdom, by removing the water in unused or empty vessels to prevent creating problems.

Cockroaches, ants and rats normally gather in dirty, untidy places. If you do not clean and tidy up those places because of compassion towards these creatures, you are inviting them to nest in your house.

Some people are very compassionate, often going around feeding stray cats and dogs. Unfortunately, sometimes, they just leave food anywhere they like without thinking about the harm it brings to the environment. Some also unthinkingly leave food by the side of the road. Cats that

A man who has very good computer knowledge, but does not have moral discipline, will use that knowledge to send viruses to other computers, destroying the data in those computers. He could also hack into other's computers to steal confidential information to perform credit card fraud, or other Internet crimes.

If a man who's very good in mathematics is not disciplined enough and works in a bank as an accountant, he can use that knowledge to cheat and steal money from customers' accounts.

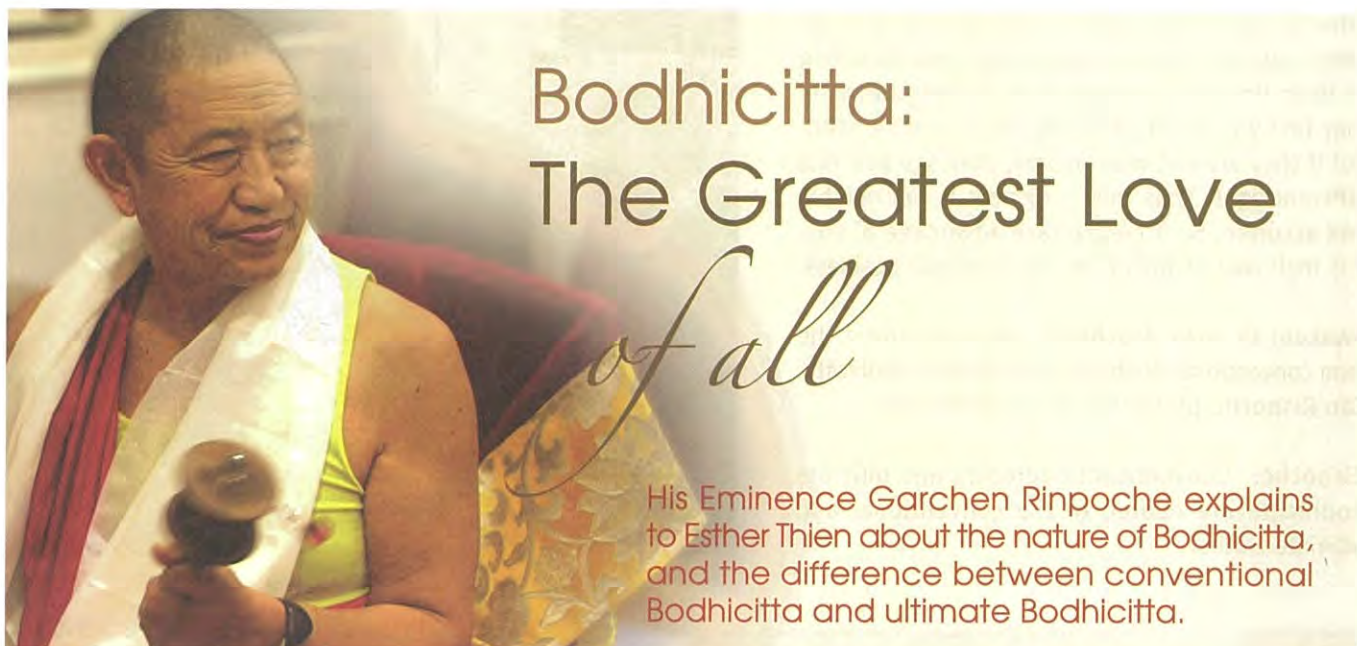
Likewise, someone who has mastered martial arts can use that skill to harm others. Behaving as a gangster, he brings fear and suffering to fellow human beings when he threatens innocent people and forcefully takes money from them. That is why, before training in martial arts, wise teachers discipline their students well. In military forces, this discipline is also highly considered and practised.

### Why Religion?

Unlike animals, humans have minds that can be developed limitlessly. Religions guide you to develop this mental power in a proper way, so as to create a better world. But are the duties of religions being fulfilled?

One of the basic functions of all religions is to discipline man morally. It is to tame his unwholesome mind so as to make him behave, in order to maintain social harmony among his fellow brothers and sisters.

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# Bodhicitta: The Greatest Love *of all*

His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche explains to Esther Thien about the nature of Bodhicitta, and the difference between conventional Bodhicitta and ultimate Bodhicitta.

**Awaken:** Buddhism stresses very much on Bodhicitta. Rinpoche, why do you think Bodhicitta is important in this modern world?

**Rinpoche:** In this world, all the conflicts and disputes arise from a lack of Bodhicitta. When there is no Bodhicitta, there is ego-centricity or self-cherishing attitude. From this arise all the problems. Thus, Bodhicitta is very necessary in this modern age.

**Awaken:** Our world is increasingly getting more and more hostile and negative. How do we maintain the compassion and aspiring Bodhicitta that arise in such a harsh and ever-changing environment?

**Rinpoche:** Once you comprehend Bodhicitta, it is everlasting. Even though it may weaken through the ups and downs of life, it will always be there, once you have it and comprehend it.

You have to practise what you know about the Dharma personally as an individual. Then you can make a difference in this world. For instance, Milarepa was meditating on a rock when his sister came along and asked him what he was doing. He replied that he was practising the Dharma. "What Dharma are you practising by yourself, alone in the mountains, when there are teachers in town who give teachings and receive offerings?" asked his sister. "I'm meditating, that is my way of benefiting others. That is how I practise the Dharma," he replied. He was following the path personally as an individual. Because of that, when he attained the realisations of Mahamudra, it benefited countless sentient beings. Even today, his efforts, this single person's efforts, are benefiting

a lot of people. This is a way to bring about changes to the world.

**Awaken:** We know Rinpoche has gone through really difficult periods in his life. How did Rinpoche maintain Bodhicitta within himself, especially during periods of persecution?

**Rinpoche:** I have complete trust in karma, the law of cause and effect. Because of this implicit faith, when I experience any difficulties, I always feel that these were happening to me because of a lack of Bodhicitta. When I experience good times, I feel that it is the result of virtuous deeds. The experiences I had strengthened my faith in karma. Through the power of the faith I have in karma, I was able to maintain Bodhicitta.

In the beginning, I felt some afflictive emotions towards my persecutors but as I had some basic understanding of karma, coupled with the wonderful teachers I met in prison, I was gradually able to eliminate the afflictive emotions towards my oppressors. The experience, in fact, enhanced deeply my understanding of the law of karma. In the end, my heart was totally free from afflictive emotions towards my persecutors.

**Awaken:** How can a practising Buddhist overcome self-cherishing thoughts and still hold Bodhicitta in his heart if he feels being taken advantage of?

**Rinpoche:** If you are a practitioner of Bodhicitta, what others do with you is their business. If they want to take advantage of you, it is their choice. You have nothing to do with it, as it is what they choose to do. It happens often when you are practising Bodhicitta and others take advantage of you. But in this situation, you should not interfere with what they do.

## Profile

Whether your bodhicitta is pure or not, you can judge yourself. Other people judge you according to their limited understanding. If they are wise, they find you as you and can see your pure heart. But if they are not wise people, they see you in a different light. Thus their judgment is not reliable and accurate. So if people take advantage of you, it is their way of looking at you, it is their business.

**Awaken:** In some teachings, you hear about the term conventional Bodhicitta and ultimate Bodhicitta. Can Rinpoche please tell us the difference?

**Rinpoche:** Conventional Bodhicitta and ultimate Bodhicitta are related to the conventional and ultimate truths.



His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche is a great practitioner, a Drikung Kagyu lama who was recognised and enthroned in eastern Tibet by the former Drikung Kyabgon Zhiwe Lodro. When he was seven, he was brought to Lho Miyal Monastery, which he administered from the age of eleven. Studying and practising under the direction of the Siddha Chime Dorje, Garchen Rinpoche received vast and profound instructions on the preliminary practices (ngöndro), the fivefold practice of Mahamudra and the six yogas of Naropa.

Garchen Rinpoche is known for his vast realisation, as well as for his great kindness. In 1957, he was put into prison for labour reform together with many other Rinpoches. During that period of labour reform, there was once a famine. Due to the lack of food, each person was given only a small piece of steamed bread each day. Many people died of starvation. Rinpoche could not bear to witness all this suffering. He gave away all his food to others. He did not eat anything for two or three weeks. During the 20 years of labour reform, he practised diligently, without lying down at night. He survived two near-death experiences, due to the blessings of Dharma protectors. Although he had gone through such tormenting experiences, he does not harbour any hatred. Instead, he often says, "I am deeply indebted to the captors. Without them, without suffering, I would only be a rough person who is full of jealousy and defilements, and who does not know how to meditate or practise the Dharma."

Rinpoche is very considerate and humble to all people regardless of their status, age or gender. Drubwang Rinpoche has revealed that Garchen Rinpoche's accomplishment in Mahamudra has gone beyond the level of "One-Taste Yoga".

The conventional truth is that the law of karma is infallible. It doesn't fail. The ultimate truth is that in reality, the nature of such interdependence is empty and devoid of any permanent characteristics.

In this case, conventional Bodhicitta is a conceptual process of loving other sentient beings. There is an agent (you are generating the love), object (other sentient beings) and action (love) and therefore it is false. Ultimate Bodhicitta occurs when your self-cherishing attitude completely dissolves and you see the true nature of your mind, and you realise at that level that there is no distinction between sentient beings and the Buddha. This ultimate understanding or realisation of sameness is ultimate Bodhicitta.

**Awaken:** Can Rinpoche advise how a beginner Buddhist whose afflictions constantly arise in this modern material world can overcome them using certain teachings or methods?

**Rinpoche:** There are several antidotes you can apply when afflictions arise. First, the Buddhist can contemplate on the law of karma, reflecting that the emotions of anger, attachment and ignorance are the causes, which bring the results of lower realms' sufferings as hell-beings, hungry ghosts and animals. Thoroughly understanding this, the Buddhist would be petrified. Through fear, he would get rid of the afflictions. Secondly, to arouse Bodhicitta — the will to benefit others, one can also contemplate that all sentient beings are our parents at some point in time. When there is Bodhicitta, the afflictions dissolve automatically on their own. Thirdly, we can eradicate afflictive emotions by looking at the true nature of our afflictions. For example, when anger arises, we can look at the very nature of anger and observe that it is not substantial, concrete or real as we imagine. In this way, by looking at the nature of affliction, we can be free from afflictive emotions.



Awaken: Rinpoche, do you have any advice to offer for the people of Singapore?

Rinpoche: Each Singaporean should have love and affection for the whole nation. That is a small Bodhicitta. If possible, you should love the whole world. But if you cannot do that, at least love your own nation. There are three objects of love. The first is to love your own parents, because your own parents have been extremely kind and very compassionate. Therefore, they deserve the maximum love and affection. The second is to love your teachers. I notice that in many foreign countries, the students do not respect the teachers. They fight and disobey the teachers, and that is very tragic. The



students need to have love and affection for the teachers. Through the feelings of love and affection, the teacher's knowledge can come into the students' minds. In some countries, the children are given a lot of freedom to do whatever they want and the teachers have little right to control them. This is very unhealthy. The third is to love your country. It may not be possible for you to benefit all countrymen but if you pay your taxes dutifully, it is a way of benefiting everybody, a way of doing something for the whole country. If the whole nation prospers politically and economically, this prosperity brings peace and happiness for the whole nation. This is another way of considering everyone in your country as your own parents.

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However, in this modern age, young people are avoiding religion because many religions are not able to answer their questions. Due to modern technological and scientific development, the younger generation is also smarter and more skilful. But since they stay away from religion, they are more materialistic and do not care much about moral values or character development.



Ven. Kanugolle Rathanasara was born in the Southeastern Sri Lankan village of Bibile. He became a novice monk at the early age of twelve and received his higher ordination (upasampada) in 1998 at the

Malwatu Maha Viharaya in Kandy, Sri Lanka. A resident monk at the Sri Lankaramaya Buddhist Temple in Singapore since 2001, he holds a Bachelor of Arts (Special) degree in Mass Communication from the University of Kelaniya. He is also an articulate speaker who conducts regular Friday evening Dhamma talks and Sunday evening blessing services.

### Duties of Parents

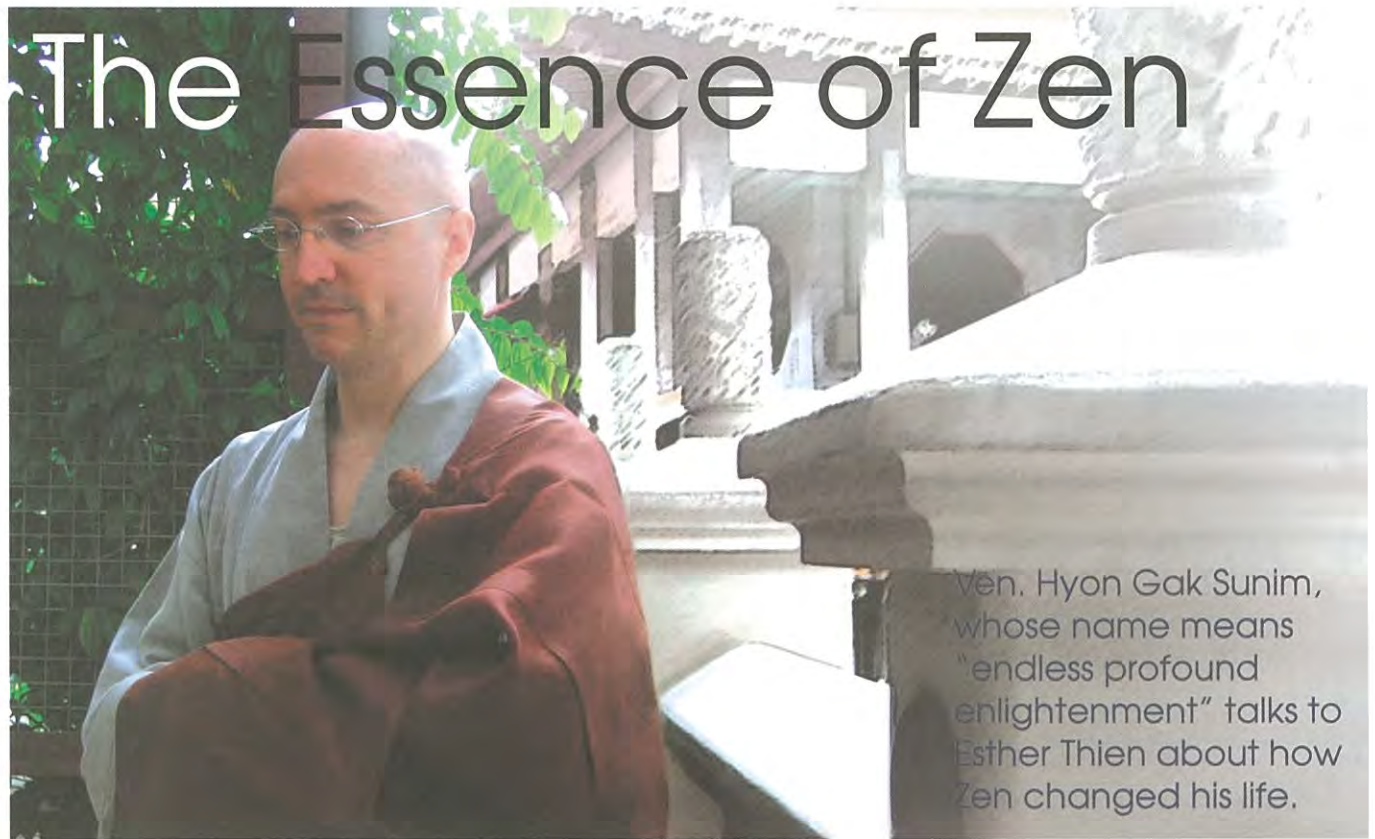
Parents are given the title of *Pubbacariya* by the Buddha meaning "Parents are the first and foremost teachers in one's life." When the children are very young, parents should plant good seeds in the heart as well as the head. Just as you nourish your child's physical body, you should stimulate and feed enough nutritious healthy thoughts for his or her mind. Just as you shower and wash your child's body, you should counsel and cleanse his or her mind of wrong thoughts when it is necessary.

Just as you care for a plant by providing water, sunshine, air and fertiliser for it to grow well, you should bring up your little one, providing for both his or her physical and psychological needs. Doing so will nurture him or her into someone who has both a good head and a good heart.

### What Does Buddhism Teach?

The objective of the Buddha's teachings is to encourage people to develop the qualities of both the heart and the mind.

One who perfects these qualities, physically and spiritually will realise the true reality of the world. That person will be a great and noble human being.



Awaken: Many find Zen very confusing and too profound. What is your take on this?

Ven. Hyon Gak: Zen is really simple. It is a simple way of pointing. Because it is so simple, it seems difficult. It is like your eyes. Can your eyes see your eyes? Someone says your eyes are round, your eyes are brown or blue, but you cannot see your eyes. Nevertheless, everyday, you use your eyes to see. In the same way, someone describes your nose, what shape, size and colour, but you cannot see your nose because your vision goes right past your nose. Yet, your nose is right there. So when someone describes it to you, your nose seems like a mystery because you don't see your nose when you talk. **Zen is just like that. It is pointing to something very close, very clear, something already established which you don't see but you have.** Your eyes cannot see your eyes, but you have eyes. Everyone doesn't see their true nature but they hear, they smell, they taste, they touch, they see. It seems difficult to perceive that, but it is very clear. It is already functioning from moment to moment. So it seems difficult but it is not. It only seems difficult because it's already very clear. It's just that you cannot see it yourself.

Awaken: What is the essence of Zen?

Ven. Hyon Gak: The essence of Zen is when

you are doing something, you just do it from moment to moment. People always think their life is somewhere else, at some other time, at some other place. For example, they think they will really live when they get married, or when they fall in love, or when they get that car or promotion, or when they go on vacation, or tomorrow, or yesterday, or next week, or when they were young, or when they were in college etc. Actually, our life is what we are doing right here, right now. What Zen teaches is to return to this moment.

Awaken: How has Zen changed your life?

Ven. Hyon Gak: Before learning and practising Zen, I used to think that life was based on thinking – how much good, deep, philosophical, correct, political or analytical thinking I have. But through Zen, I began to see how thinking just creates an experience of life that's not really real. Japanese thinking makes it a Japanese reality. Buddhist thinking makes it a Buddhist reality. Chinese thinking makes it a Chinese kind of reality. That reality is neither good nor bad, but is not truly as it is. It is just a "thinking reality". Therefore, Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am." But Zen teachings point back to *who is thinking?* From Zen, I began to ask: "*Who is the thinker? What am I?*" Then you realise, seeing is just seeing, hearing is just hearing, smelling is just smelling, tasting is just tasting. Everything as it truly is.

Awaken: Venerable, can you tell us more about your teacher, Master Seung Sahn. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from him?

Ven. Hyon Gak: Zen Master Seung Sahn does not encourage me to hold onto conceptual thinking. One thing that was really powerful about his teaching was he wasn't interested in encouraging people to think, to give rise to conceptual thinking, or to hold onto their thinking and to believe their thinking as thinking. What was surprising and striking about him was he pointed back to our mind before thinking arises. That

was a big shock because all my Yale and Harvard professors only encourage us to think more, reading about this or that. I did all of that thinking but it did not make me any happier. It did not bring me any more peace. Zen Master Seung Sahn was a great shock to me, intellectually, spiritually and personally, because he said, "Who is the thinker? Who are you?" None of my professors at Yale and Harvard pointed back at the thinker. They were just interested in more thinking, what kind of thinking — how complex, subtle, developed, sophisticated or intellectual was my thinking. But this teacher was not interested in all that. "Who produced this thinking? Who are you?" He pointed it right back at me. For that, I respect, love and am eternally grateful to him for his teachings.

Awaken: Venerable, what is the most striking Dharma lesson you learned while working on publishing any of your teacher's books?

Ven. Hyon Gak: I spent four years working on my teacher's book, *The Compass of Zen*. Except during retreats, everyday of those four years, I ate, lived and breathed that book, typing, recording and transcribing the teachings. My teacher even asked me why the book was taking so long and asked me to finish it quickly. But I really wanted to do the best job possible, wishing for it to be really clear and meticulous. Finally, the 400-page book was finished and published. I was really excited when it was printed and delivered to me. I quickly went up to my teacher's room and bowed humbly three times. During those four years, I had images in my mind of how my teacher would praise me when the book is done. "Teacher, I'm sorry, it took so long. Here's the book," I said. My teacher took the book, casually flipped it and then asked me to throw it into the garbage

bin. I was shell-shocked. It was hard work finishing the book. It was my pride. "This book is all demon speech. Even opening one's mouth to talk about the Dharma is a big mistake. 400 pages, too much speech. Many people will read this book, be attached to the words and then lose their way. Better to throw it away now!" said my teacher. I felt like someone had punched me right in the stomach. I took the book and left. I was really hurt. But later, I realise how great he was. First, he was hitting on



Photography: Niki Lim

my ego. He didn't want me to become attached. Second, he's showing he was not attached to his own teachings at all. His non-attachment was a great lesson for me. Third, opening your mouth about the Dharma is already a big mistake. It is a good mistake but still a mistake, because then people get attached to what's correct teaching or not correct teaching; what's correct Dharma or not correct Dharma; what's good Buddhism or not good Buddhism, what's high-class Dharma or low-class Dharma. All these sort of thinking can appear. My teacher knew that, and he was pointing them to me. It really hit me strongly and I cried because of his great compassion. He was concerned that sentient beings would be confused about his teachings.

Awaken: Venerable, we understand that you have attained *Inka* (Zen certificate of realisation) from your teacher. Can you describe what that means?

Ven. Hyon Gak: *Inka* just means that when you are hungry, you eat; when you are thirsty, you drink. And when you are tired, you sleep. That's all it means. People see *Inka* as special because everybody thinks our life is something else, and that enlightenment is something else. Being bestowed *Inka* by the teacher merely points that the student

is seeing and gets it that when you are hungry, you eat; when you are thirsty, you drink.

Awaken: Does *Inka* equate to enlightenment?

Ven. Hyon Gak: Now what is enlightenment? You use that word, but you don't know what that really is. That is *not knowing*. Not knowing where you come from, or where you go when you die. Not knowing what are we. That is what enlightenment is — looking into this *not knowing*, completely perceiving the *before* thinking mind. That is enlightenment, *Inka* in everyday life. It is not special.

Awaken: How can we attain the *before* thinking mind?

Ven. Hyon Gak: Ask yourself, “What am I?” That's how you attain it. Not your body's name. Before your parents give you a name, you have no name. When you ask that in meditation, your thinking stops. That very point before thinking arises again is enlightenment. Some people call that point “salvation”, “perceiving your true nature” and many other names. That point where your thinking is cut off. You are not stopping or preventing thinking. Initially, it is just a flash. But as your experience of it gets deeper, there is no name, no form, no time, no space, no coming, no going, no up, no down, no Chinese, no American, no god, no Buddha. Completely experiencing that, the universe and you become one. It is not far away. It's not after 10 years of practice. Everyone has it.

Awaken: Is sitting meditation the only way to attain the *before* thinking mind?

Ven. Hyon Gak: No. Meditation is a direct way as it takes away choices and cuts off distractions to follow objects of thoughts. Sutra and mantra chanting or bowing are other ways. As you advance in your practice, even walking, eating, showering, sitting on a bus and working can be meditation. Any action becomes meditation.

Awaken: How can we tell if we have experienced the *before* thinking mind?

Ven. Hyon Gak: The *before* thinking mind means when you see, you just see. When you hear, just hear; when you smell, just smell; when you taste, just taste; when you feel, just feel. It is not dependent on thinking. You taste the food you are eating when eating, you smell the trees, see the blue sky and hear the birds as you walk along. You are not following your thoughts. You are fully living in the moment, seeing everything as it is. When we add thinking, we don't see truth as it is. We only see something we like or don't like; we want or don't want; we accept or don't accept.

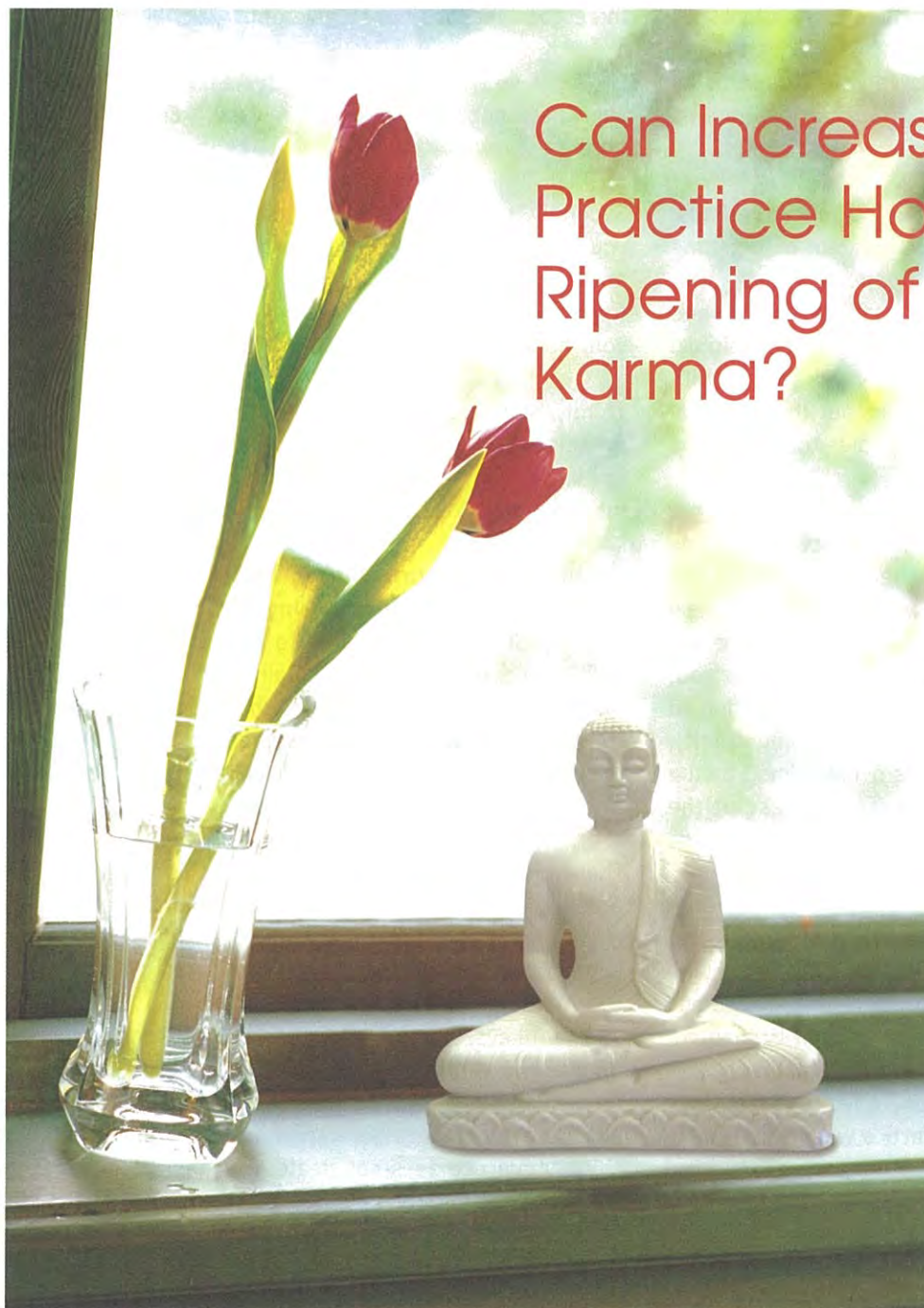
Awaken: How can we practise Zen in daily life?

Ven. Hyon Gak: First, you must decide what is the most important thing in your life. You must find that. Then practising happens automatically from that decision. In my case, I realised that even with a good education, career, good friends and family, soon I will die. So I must find me. Or I would not be different from an animal. You can do that as a layperson in everyday life. Realise that everything — lifespan, relationships, success, comfortable life, health, friends, children — change. They come and go, appear and disappear. You do not know when they will disappear. But, there is one thing that never appears and never disappears. If in this life, you can find that, then coming and going, life and death are no problems. What is the most important thing — find that. If you keep that question alive, practising happens naturally.

Ven. Hyon Gak Sunim is the Head Teacher of the Zen hall at 500 year-old Hwa Gye Sah Temple in South Korea. Educated in philosophy and literature at Yale University and comparative religions at Harvard Divinity School, Ven. Hyon Gak Sunim was ordained in 1992 in the temple of the Sixth Patriarch, Nam Hwa Sah Temple on Chogye Mountain, in Guangzhou, People's Republic of China. He was the first Westerner to be ordained in China since the Communist Revolution. He received the Bhikkhu precepts at the Diamond Altar of Tong Do Sah Temple in Korea, one of the most sacred sites of the nation, and has been doing training in various remote mountain places, including three intensive 100-day solo retreats and some 15 three-month intensive group meditation retreats. In August 2001, he received

*Inka*, certifying his enlightenment, by Zen Master Seung Sahn, the 78th Patriarch in a lineage stretching back to Shakyamuni Buddha.

A highly-sought after public speaker in well-known universities, colleges, divinity schools, and countless temples throughout Korea, he has also compiled, edited and translated several books of Zen Master Seung Sahn's teachings, such as *The Whole World is a Single Flower* and *The Compass of Zen*; translated the 500 year-old classic *So Sahn Dae Sa* into English for the first time, publishing it as *The Mirror of Zen*; and wrote a Korean bestseller *From Harvard to Hwa Gye Sah Temple*, which is widely credited for reviving an interest in Korean Buddhism.



## Can Increased Spiritual Practice Hasten Ripening of Negative Karma?

Shen Shian sheds light on a popular interpretation.

### **Chanting & Meditation**

Some people misunderstand that increased spiritual practices, such as chanting and meditation, can hasten the ripening of negative karma. In reality, done with the right motivation and understanding, proper chanting and meditation give rise to uplifting effects, not just for the practitioner but also to the ones the practice is dedicated to. Some of these effects include increased mindfulness, calmness, clarity, loving-kindness and wisdom.

Note that none of these effects are negative in any way. In fact, these practices create positive karma, sometimes with much instant result. How then can they hasten the ripening of negative karma? In fact, the reverse is true instead — they hasten the ripening of positive karma, while creating fresh positive karma.

### Excessive Practice?

Is there such a thing as excessive practice? Every “ritualised” or formalised practice should be done in moderation — though different practitioners have varying standards as to what is moderate, as depending on their aspirations and capacities.

The definition of “in excess” implies too much. Perhaps, one could be practising chanting to the extent of forgetting one’s daily duties and household responsibilities, even neglecting communication with family and friends, or one’s own health. This is surely unhealthy. In this sense, spiritual practice done in excess can create negative karma, with much instant effect. We need to remember that spiritual practice includes fulfilling our worldly roles too.

### Presence of Unseen Beings

Sometimes, we hear cases of “clairsentience” Buddhists who chant certain scriptures and feel the presence of unseen beings. You do not have to view this as a definitely good or bad phenomenon. The presence of unseen beings can mean they are eager to hear the Dharma from you, or to partake in the merits shared. Generosity in doing so creates positive karma and strengthens karmic affinity. However, if the person chanting feels overwhelmed by the self-imposed pressure to chant, or feels uneasy at the presence of these beings, it is probably better to resume the practice when one is more ready.

Nevertheless, not many have such special encounters. Just as one does not stop taking flights due to rare airplane crashes, with the right intention to chant, one is naturally protected by the truth of the Dharma of what is chanted. Millions of lay Buddhists, monks and nuns chant daily, and have never experienced any negative effects. In fact, they maintain or even heighten their practice when they readily experience its positive effects.

### Interplay of Karma

For some practitioners, it might seem that some obstacles in life seem to pop up when one becomes serious about spiritual practice. This is usually related to karma in a couple of ways. Firstly, one is perhaps not accustomed to the practice. Therefore, when one tries to practise, one may feel uneasy or unsure. But practice makes perfect. Secondly, one might encounter other non-practice related obstacles such as sickness. This could be due to one’s negative karma ripening when one aspires to create positive karma by practice.

This is probably no “coincidence”, but part of the interplay of the dynamics of karma. The more obstacles there are, the more one should persevere in creating more positive karma to dilute the effects of negative karma.

### Three Reasons to Persevere

If you’re thinking, “What’s the point of spiritual practice if

it can seem to ‘invite’ obstacles?” Well, there are at least three good reasons not to give up.

Firstly, if you do not actively create positive karma to overwhelm negative karma, the negative karma will always be there anyway.

Secondly, by not mindfully creating positive karma now, you risk suffering the fruit of your negative karma maturing anytime. Just as, you do not know when a landslide (representing fruition of future negative karma) might bury your house (representing present positive karma).

Thirdly, since we all have to face thorny obstacles before we can reach True Happiness, we might as well do it now. Evading it might cause more thorns to grow when we create more negative karma unmindfully.

### Crouching Elephants and Hidden Monkeys

Sometimes, there are crouching elephants and hidden monkeys in our practice. Due to our negative karma and defilements, obstacles are naturally “set” along the course of our practice. In this sense, the process of spiritual cultivation can be seen as a courageous quest through a thick forest, where obstructing “elephants” and distracting “monkeys” might ambush us.

These elephants represent huge obstacles that block our practice, making it more challenging. For instance, one might be ostracised and discouraged by those who do not understand our practice.

The monkeys, on the other hand, represent our fickle “monkey mind” that entertains doubts and other digressions. As mentioned, these “demons” are manifestations of our already present negative karma and defilements. Proper spiritual practice does not create new inner “demons”, but recognises and conquers present ones.

### Growing Stronger in Compassion & Wisdom

When we overcome our spiritual obstacles, we become spiritually stronger in compassion and wisdom. **This is the purpose of all spiritual practice — to always become better — till we become perfect.** Of course, if one encounters obstacles which are seriously disturbing, one should always seek the advice of one’s spiritual teachers. Take note too that anyone who says that spiritual practice is unimportant, should not be increased, and can be delayed, is almost definitely not a spiritual teacher in the first place.

This is because spiritual practice should permeate our entire lives. Life is simply too short to procrastinate spiritual cultivation, without which, we can never taste the fruit of True Happiness.

# Thoughts from a Cancer Patient...

Qingxiu, a 21-year-old Singaporean was doing her honours degree when she was suddenly diagnosed with leukaemia. Here are excerpts from letters she wrote to Ven. Thubten Chodron in 2006.

By Qingxiu

Dearest Ven. Chodron,

I'm now writing to you from the hospital; it is my third treatment session so far. I pray day and night for strength and faith to move on along this journey. Dearest Venerable, thank you for your precious visit during my second treatment session.

Since then I have learnt to practise showing love and kindness to people around me. I have discovered that rather than focusing on myself and my own self-centred condition, there is much more happiness gained when I try to direct my smiles and concern outwards to people around me. It makes me feel less sour about my ills.

I will keep the five lay precepts in mind and put the Buddha's teachings into thought and practice. So far I fall short of these precepts, but I will work at them with faith and right effort. I'm very thankful and feel it was due to my good karma that I had the precious opportunity to share my fears and deepest worries about my illness with you. Thank you for your kindness, compassion and patience. Thank you for encouraging me not to resort to self-blame or to thinking, "This is so unfair!" Thank you for reminding me and showing me the avenue of peace and happiness via loving-kindness to others, including those I find difficult to love and care for.

I'll be a tough, strong girl, so please do not worry about me. **I have come to accept my sickness as a blessing to help others and myself to live more lovingly and compassionately.** My next step of treatment is bone marrow transplant and the success rate is never certain, but that's life, right? The reality of the future is always uncertain, so why even start fearing the uncertain? I will, in fact, use all my "free time" to seek out the beauty of life by being thankful for all that I already have and by relying on my personal experience to help other patients like me find hope and peace even when they may think there's no way.

.....Things were quite "windy" a while ago, but have since settled down.



Good and bad things come in a cycle, just as pain, health and sickness also come and go. The nature of all things is that they too will pass.

I have chosen to look at this illness as an opportunity to rest more, compared to my peers who in good health, are probably actively seeking worldly desires in delusion.

**There are a few more things I would like to share with others who are cancer patients:**

- Try to understand what you fear when you are diagnosed with cancer.
- Accept your cancer and recognise the fact that it is here to stay for a while before it goes away after many, many treatments.
- Why create more fear and add to the physical stress of your body when, as a patient, all you can do is trust your doctor, trust the treatment you are undergoing, and most importantly trust in the Buddha. So please trust that through chanting and sincere prayers, your physical pain will pass with time.
- As a patient, it helps to recall that when you are diagnosed with cancer, you are not the only one suffering. All your loved ones are also affected and will suffer indirectly too. By accepting the cancer, you will learn with time to love and treasure every part of your healthy body which you may have been dissatisfied with earlier. You will also learn to repay the kindness of your caregivers and loved ones by bravely coming to terms with the illness, emerging with a gentle smile because you know that all negative karma and suffering will end one day.

Being sick now has given me a spiritual, holistic opportunity to reassess my life goals. As long as I'm still living, regardless of my sickness, I can still be useful. I can still make even the slightest effort to bring joy, smiles and loving-kindness to the other patients around me, to the nurses serving me, to the doctors and family caregivers.

It is this power of love I feel around me, this awareness that these very people who shower care on me can in return receive my smiles and joy that transforms my mind. This state of thankfulness has been a driving force that has kept me going despite the setbacks of the treatments.

I have tried challenging my own fears of having to jab myself with needles for a special injection I must have to boost my low white blood cell count. I have tried administering the injection myself by using the visualisations you told me to do when I took other medicines. I imagine Bodhisattva Guanyin

(Chenrezig) or Medicine Buddha blessing the injection or treatment, transforming it into healing nectar that flows into my body, purifying negative karma, blessing my mind, and boosting my bone marrow. I also affirm to myself that this is the right medicine to help me help my body recover. When I breathe in, I mindfully think, "Inhale all the fresh air and oxygen." When I breathe out, I think, "Out with the stress and fears." It works! My fear is overcome.

I'll be going for the bone marrow transplant soon... I will bear in mind your advice to imagine Bodhisattva Guanyin and Medicine Buddha by my side during the bone marrow transplant. I will keep my smiles and good mental energy, and diligently chant every morning and evening. If in pain, I will chant their mantras and imagine Bodhisattva Guanyin and Medicine Buddha giving me the strength to accept the pain and to allow the pain to come and go away with time. I will also remember to be kind to the people around me. May all beings around me, both seen and unseen, be well and happy.

I don't know what will happen during the transplant, but I will always be grateful to have met you this lifetime.

Editor: Conventional hospital treatment is not the only way. Alternative holistic cancer cures are available and success stories have proven them effective in combating cancer. For more information on such natural treatments, visit:

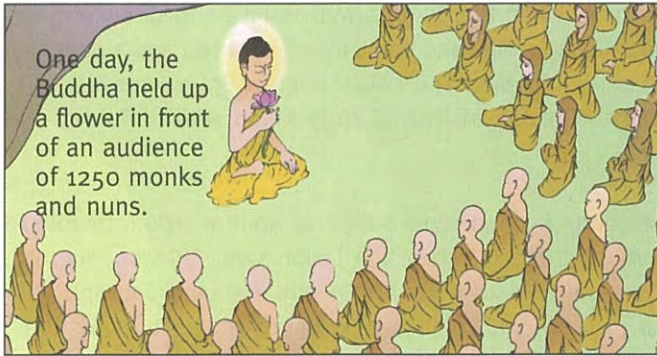
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According to Ven. Chodron, Qingxiu is recovering well and doing fine.

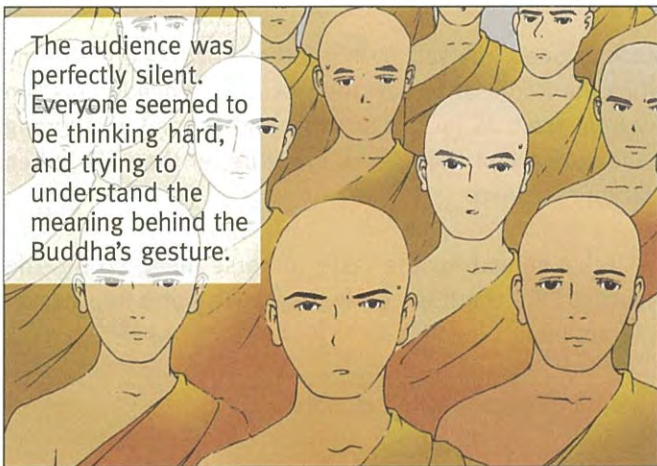


# The Mystery of the Buddha's Flower

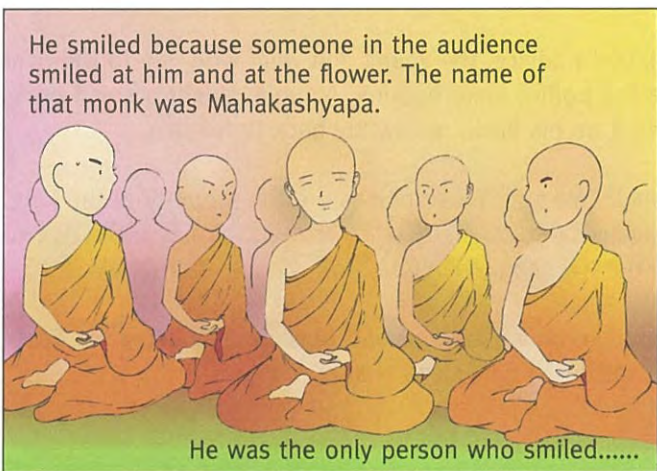
Illustrations: Bee Li



One day, the Buddha held up a flower in front of an audience of 1250 monks and nuns.

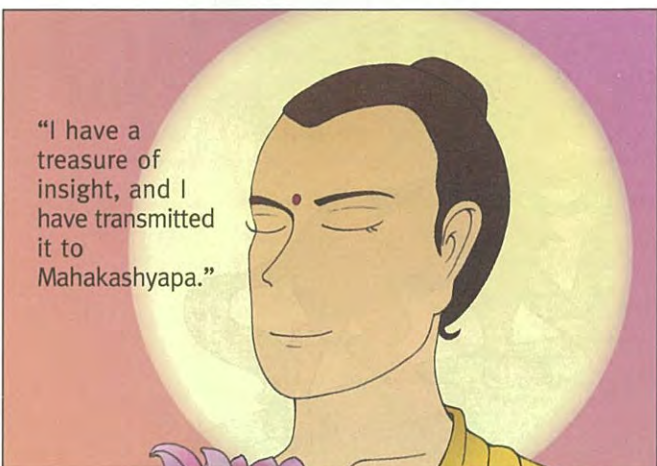


The audience was perfectly silent. Everyone seemed to be thinking hard, and trying to understand the meaning behind the Buddha's gesture.

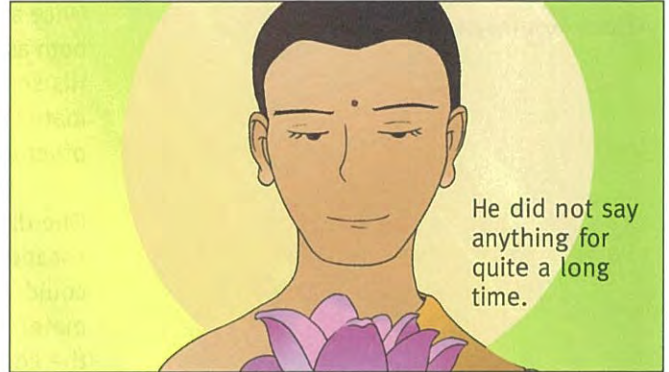


He smiled because someone in the audience smiled at him and at the flower. The name of that monk was Mahakashyapa.

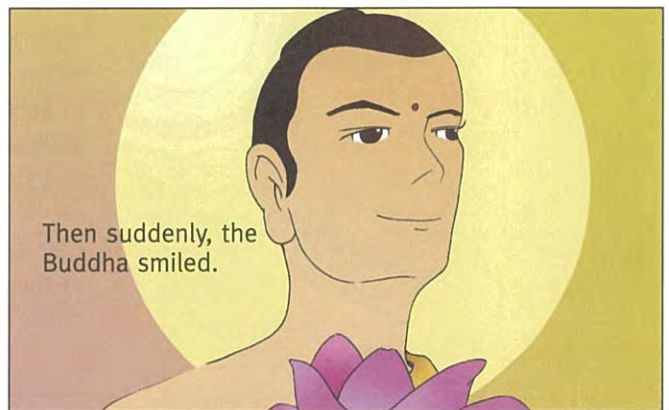
He was the only person who smiled.....



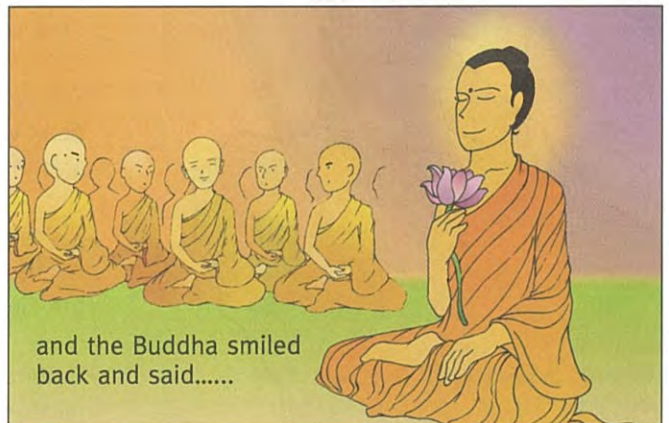
"I have a treasure of insight, and I have transmitted it to Mahakashyapa."



He did not say anything for quite a long time.



Then suddenly, the Buddha smiled.



and the Buddha smiled back and said.....

This story has been discussed by many generations of Zen students, and people continue to look for its meaning. To me, the meaning is quite simple.

When someone holds up a flower and shows it to you. He wants you to see it. If you keep thinking, you miss the flower. The person who was not thinking, who was just himself, was able to encounter the flower in depth, and he smiled.

– *Thich Nhat Hanh*



# The Lion and the Jackal

By Esther Thien

Adapted from *The Jataka Tales* (Story 397)

Once a upon time, when the Buddha was still a Bodhisattva, he was born as a lion. He had a wife and two children — a son and a daughter. His son was called Manoja. When Manoja grew up, he got himself a mate. To feed the family of five, Manoja killed wild buffaloes and other animals.

One day, the young Manoja came suddenly upon a jackal. Unable to escape the young lion's clutches, the jackal said, "Please, my lord, could you take me to your den, and let me live with you and your mate? I wish to serve you." Pleased at being addressed "my lord", the lion took him back to his den where his family lived.

Now, Manoja had been advised by his father not to befriend any jackal. So when the Bodhisattva saw the jackal, he reminded his son to stay away from them as jackals are wily and sly and give wrong advice. But the young lion thought he knew better than his father, and so the jackal remained.

One day, the jackal craved for the taste of horse meat, so he said to the young lion, "Sir, there is nothing we have not eaten except horse flesh; let us hunt a horse."

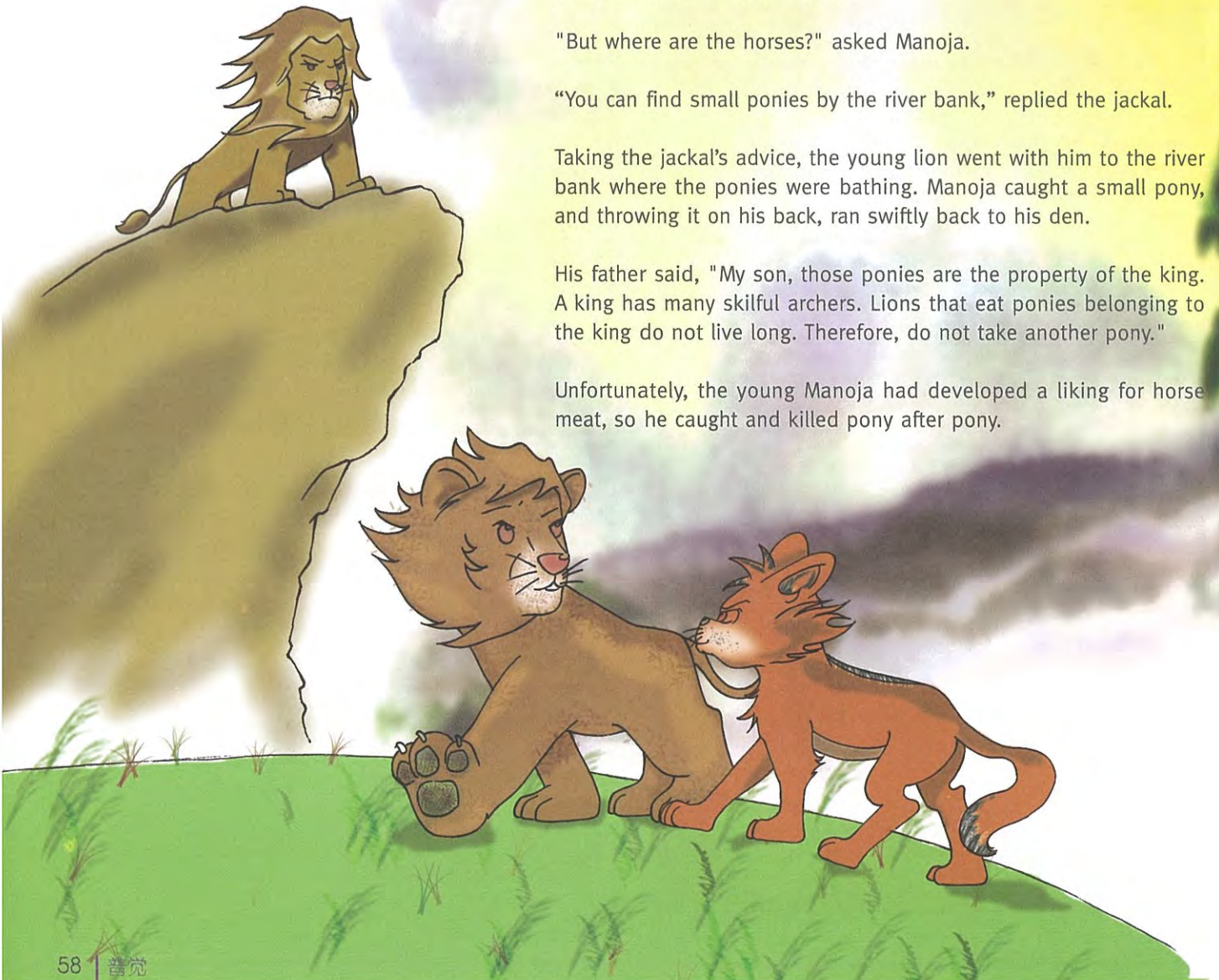
"But where are the horses?" asked Manoja.

"You can find small ponies by the river bank," replied the jackal.

Taking the jackal's advice, the young lion went with him to the river bank where the ponies were bathing. Manoja caught a small pony, and throwing it on his back, ran swiftly back to his den.

His father said, "My son, those ponies are the property of the king. A king has many skilful archers. Lions that eat ponies belonging to the king do not live long. Therefore, do not take another pony."

Unfortunately, the young Manoja had developed a liking for horse meat, so he caught and killed pony after pony.



Before long, the king heard that a lion was killing his horses when they went to bathe in the river. "Build a tank inside the town," instructed the king. "The lion will not get the ponies there." But, Manoja killed the ponies as they bathed in the tank.

Next, the king ordered that the ponies be kept in stables. However, the lion went over the wall, and killed the ponies in their stables.

Finally, the king called for an archer who shot like lightning. "Do you think you can shoot this lion?" asked the king. The archer answered he was sure he could. "Very well," said the king, "take your place in the tower on the wall, and shoot it." Accordingly, the archer waited there in the tower.

In time, Manoja and the jackal came to the wall. The jackal did not go over the wall but waited to see what would happen. Manoja sprang over the wall. Very quickly, he caught and killed a pony. He was hauling the animal away when the archer let loose an arrow.

"I am shot!" roared Manoja.

Hearing the lion's roar, the jackal said to himself: "The lion has been shot, and soon he will die.

There is no friendship with the dead. I will now return to my old home in the woods." With that, he ran off.

Manoja, on the other hand, managed to get back to his den with the horse before he fell down dead. Seeing the blood streaming from his wounds, his family spoke the following:

*The fortune of one, whom wicked folks entice,  
is not prosperous.  
See Manoja lying there due to the jackal's advice.  
Sorrow befalls mothers  
whose children mix with bad company.  
See Manoja lying there all covered in blood.*

*Thus fares the man, in low estate he lies.  
If he follows not the counsel  
of the true friend and the wise.*

*Who follows outcasts is himself cast out.  
Who courts his equal never will be betrayed,  
Who bows before the noblest rises fast;  
Look therefore to those superior for support.*



Do not associate  
With evil companions;  
Do not seek the  
fellowship of the vile.  
Associate with good friends;  
Seek fellowship of noble men.

~ Dhammapada Verse 78 ~



Dear Reader,

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Issue 9

### The Merits of Producing Buddhist Teachings and Buddha Images

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

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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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By Esther Thien &amp; Shen Shi'an

# Seen

## Buddha-nature in Puppy with Love Aplenty

### Quill

Directed by: Yoichi Sai

Starring: Keiko Toda

The classic Zen question in my mind before the show was — “Does a dog have Buddha-nature?” The answer is a crystal clear resounding “Yes!” There is overwhelming “evidence” from this film, which is based on a true story of the potential of our animal friends to cultivate perfect compassion and wisdom just like us.

*Quill*, a Labrador Retriever did not have any outstanding characteristics as a puppy. However, he was special in that he just did not seem to follow the “crowd” (his other puppy siblings). He was not slow or indifferent, but possessed faithful patience instead of the typical doggy-waggy eagerness. It was precisely this that got him selected as a potential guide dog for the blind — a job only for the calm obedient few. Without any Lassie-style heroics, this is the story of the life of “man’s best friend”, relating the ups and downs of a dog’s “Bodhisattva path” in training and practice. It might be a dog’s life literally, but one from which we have much to learn.

*Quill* mindfully accepts the inevitable departures in his life as he grows up, in contrast with his attached caretakers’ teary farewells. Assigned to an impatient blind man, we see the contrast of patience and impatience. *Quill* is mostly silent (in fact, he never barked throughout the film), while the latter laments aloud at his new personal Bodhisattva. But through his quiet unassuming ways, *Quill* eventually touches him with genuine friendship, “perfecting” his own patience while teaching his master trust and equanimity.

*Quill* isn’t all blind compassion with no wisdom — he is trained to disregard human instructions whenever they endanger humans themselves. At a busy traffic junction, he refuses to budge although his master rudely tugs at him on the leash.

*Quill* was brought up by volunteer caretakers, in ways not unlike parenting an only child. Theirs was a simple yet beautiful relationship of unconditional love for each other, reminiscent of the oft-quoted but lesser practised verse in the Buddha’s “Discourse on Loving-Kindness” (*Metta Sutta*) — “As a mother would risk her life to protect her child, her only child, even so should one cultivate a limitless heart with regard to all beings.”

*Quill* is not a typical animal-human bonding movie — because it does not focus on the cutesy “stunts” pets pull unwittingly. It shows without excess sentimentality, the naturalness of how we can be family with fellow sentient beings. *Quill* is simply part of the family, if not the reluctant star. He fits in wherever he goes, while doing his “job” ungrudgingly. Readily received by all because of his accepting nature, he makes us wonder why we cannot befriend other beings too, to truly live the *Metta Sutta*. Maybe no particular animal is man’s best friend. Maybe other animals can be our best friends too — as demonstrated in countless animal-human movies. In fact, we let our harmless animal brothers and sisters down in so many more ways than they can ever let us down — through downright cruelty to plain lack of compassion.

*Quill* passed away at the age of 12. A short life? Not in dog years. What matters more is that it was a life well led, one of sincere service to humankind. By his merits accumulated, may *Quill* in real life have a better rebirth. May he attain Enlightenment soon!



# Heard

Refresh yourself with these relaxing and melodious albums

## Buddha Smiles

by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

Featuring local pop stars Ado, Hong Junyang and Abbot Ven. Sik Kwang Sheng, this one of its kind Buddhist music album fuses soothing new age and oriental musical instruments with melodious songs steeped in Buddhist philosophy. Some songs worth mentioning include *Homage to the World Honoured One*, *Vajrasattva*, *Dew* and *Butterfly Flower*. Through this album, Ven. Kwang Sheng hopes to reveal the pure, uncontaminated, unobstructed, intangible inspirational mind of reality where the Dharma dwells. If you can cultivate inner joy and peace when listening to this album, we believe a seed of Dharma connection has been sown in your mind, which in time will help to yield the fruit of enlightenment. Available from Awareness Place at \$16.90.



## Inner Silence: Sense of Silence

by Roy Scoutz

Our lives are filled with much hustle and bustle. When was the last time you stopped to look at the blue sky? As we get lost in our hurry to accomplish and acquire things, our mind gets overwhelmed and our body tense. Return to the basics, take a deep breath, feel the breeze that touches your face, relax and withdraw into an inner realm of calm with the harmonious tunes of *Inner Silence*. The heart of stillness is where spirituality dwells. You can purchase this music album from Awareness Place at \$25.00.



## QI:CHI:KI The music of existence

by Margot Reisinger

This is another music album to help us develop balance in our stressful lives. Conceptualised with the theme of harmonious *Qi* in mind, the soulful and mystical medleys of this album create a meditative atmosphere, perfect for deep meditation and concentration for better health, well-being and creativity. Get it from Awareness Place at S\$19.90.



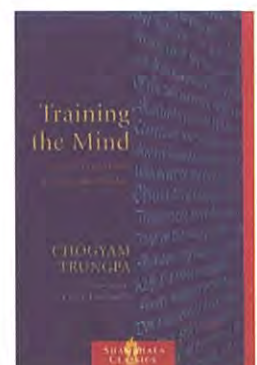
# Read

Cultivate Loving-Kindness with 59 Provocative Slogans

## Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-kindness

by Chogyam Trungpa

Containing 59 slogans to awaken the heart and cultivate love and kindness towards others, practising and contemplating on these words of wisdom can help one to transform all circumstances into the path of enlightenment. Priced at S\$23.30 at Awareness Place.



To be good followers of Buddha,  
we must mainly practise  
compassion and honesty.  
Showing kindness to others, we can learn  
to be less selfish;  
Sharing the sufferings of others,  
we will develop  
more concern for the  
welfare of all beings.

This is the basic teaching.  
- His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

We cannot rely on what we merely believe,  
if we wish to see Truth and Reality.  
We can only rely on  
actual perception and direct experience.  
- Steve Hagen

Look into this *not knowing* of who I am.  
Not conceptually, not intellectually.  
Don't analyse it, describe it or label it.  
But just see it.  
See the *before* thinking mind.  
- Ven. Hyon Gak Sunim



The only certainty in this uncertain world  
is that things must come to an end.  
The only reality is change.  
- Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammananda

A person on the Bodhisattva's path  
should think of helping sentient beings.  
If you can consistently think  
of other sentient beings' welfare,  
Compassion will naturally arise  
in your thoughts and actions.  
- Ven. Sheng Yen

Meditation is the best immunisation  
you can have for health.  
Meditation reminds you that happiness,  
like Truth, is not out there,  
But right here,  
in your heart and mind.  
- Piya Tan

**Afflictions:** Another name for negative or disturbing emotions, also known as kleshas. The three main emotional obscurations are passion or attachment; aggression or anger; and ignorance or delusion. The five kleshas are the above three plus pride and envy or jealousy.

**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.

**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.

**Bhikkhu:** A fully ordained monk.

**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.

**Calm abiding:** The resultant tranquil meditative state; the ability to remain single-pointedly on an object with a pliant and blissful mind. Mental quiescence, stilled and settled state of awareness.

**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.

**Dakiniyana:** A school of Buddhism that focuses on female tantric deities who embody enlightened activity, or woman who have achieved high realisations like direct realisation of Emptiness with the clear light mind.

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

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

**Deity:** The symbolic form of a pure being, manifested from Buddhas' wisdom. Meditational Buddha form.

**Delusion:** See 'Ignorance'.

**Dhammapada:** A collection of sayings by the Buddha.

**Dharani:** A short sutra containing mystical formulas of knowledge that are symbolic. They are usually longer than mantras.

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

**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.

**Five Precepts:** The basic guidelines of moral conduct - not killing, not stealing, not having sexual misconduct, not lying and not taking intoxicants.

**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.

**Gampopa:** One of the main lineage holders of the Kagyu lineage in Tibet (1079-1153 C.E.). A student of Milarepa, he established the first Kagyu monastic monastery and is known for writing the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.

**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 of effect of changing causes and conditions. All living and non-living elements are thus subject to decay and renewal.

**Interdependence:** Also called dependent origination or conditioned arising. The principal that nothing exists independently, but comes into existence only on dependency of various previous causes and conditions. In other word, a phenomenon exists in condition that the other exist; it has in condition that others have; it extinguishes in condition that others extinguish; it has not in condition that others have not.

**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.

**Lineage:** Line of transmission of Buddhist teachers who passed the Dharma from generation to generation in an unbroken line since the time of the Buddha.

**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.

**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.

**Meditation:** A practice to habituate ourselves to positive and realistic states of mind.

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

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

**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).

**Non-returner:** Anāgāmi the non-returner does not come back into human existence, or any lower world, after death. Instead, he is reborn in one of the worlds of the Rūpadhātu called the Suddhāvāsa worlds, or "Pure Abodes", where he will attain Nirvāna; some of them are reborn a second time in a higher world of the Pure Abodes, but in no case are born into a lower state.

**Novitiate:** the period that a novice or prospective member of a religious order who has not yet been admitted to vows has to undergo training in order to be found eligible or qualified for admission.

**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.

**Sambhogakaya:** Enjoyment/bliss Body of a Buddha. The physical (psychic) form of Buddha's wisdom. The transformation result of speech, communication. In tantra, known as the vajra of speech or the Buddha's voice.

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

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

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

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

**Suffering:** The physical and mental feeling of dissatisfaction.

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

**Tantra:** A scripture describing an esoteric Buddhist practice.

**Theravada:** A foundational school of Buddhism.

**Threefold Refuge:** Taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

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

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

**Vajrayana:** Tibetan school of Buddhism.

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

**Vipassana:** Insight

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



# Practise the Dharma

The undeceiving sole refuge is the Three Jewels.  
The essence of the Three Jewels is the Dharma.  
Having unwavering trust in the Buddha Dharma.  
With confident determination,  
Practise the Dharma.

Compassion is the root of Mahayana Path.  
Vast compassion is the only path of all Buddhas.  
Compassionate mind is inseparable from the Noble Path.  
With spontaneous compassion towards all beings,  
Practise the Dharma.

From beginningless time till now,  
We have wandered in Samsara.  
Whatever was done only fuelled  
Greater negativity and further wandering.  
Confess transgressions with heartfelt conviction  
By means of the four opponent powers.  
Practise the Dharma.

What is the outcome of clinging to wealth?  
Look at all the acquisition abandoned at death.  
It is better to cut grasping attachment  
Throw away your intent to amass.  
Practise the Dharma.

The grasping mind is the cause of Samsara.  
So, be generous.  
Offer to the sublime ones and  
Give to pitiful beings.  
Accumulate virtues with your wealth and body.  
And dedicate these merits  
For the Enlightenment of all.  
Practise the Dharma.

Look at the meaningless nature of whatever we have done.  
Now, is the time to forget meaningless action, distractions and activities.  
Stop empty chatter.  
End compulsive eating and drinking.  
Quiet down your thoughts  
For they only cause more delusion.  
Practise the Dharma.

No time to be lax.  
If death comes suddenly, what can we do?  
Better to try accomplish pure Dharma right now,  
Immediately, while we still can.  
Practise the Dharma.

Changes from moment to moment,  
Brings us closer and closer to death.  
Like a shadow drawing near,  
Our lifespan is like the setting sun.  
There's no more leisure time.  
From now, this very moment,  
With haste and urgency,  
Practise the Dharma.

- Acharya Norbu Lama