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Editor's Note

Living in modern society, attachment rules us. Our days and nights are filled with distractions. We are conditioned since young by society, the media and the advertising industry into thinking that life is all about accomplishing short-term goals for short-term gratification, grounded in the purpose of keeping 'me' happy. Thus we chase after the latest material goods or electronic gadgets, in the mistaken belief that this is what gives happiness. What others have, we must have too. Sadly, excessive consumerism has already brought great harm to the planet we live in. (pg 61 & 38)

Our attachment goes well beyond material goods and our appearance (pg 54). Notice how attached we are to our preferences, concepts and ideas, and how unhappy we become when we don't get things done our way? Instead of accepting things the way they truly are, subconsciously, we're always looking at how things ought to be and trying to force them to conform to our ideals and standards.

Our whole life we strive to be who we are not (pg 57); or we resist people and phenomena that don't turn out the way we want them to be via complaints. But expecting the world to cure our inner dissatisfaction will never bring us happiness, says Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (pg 49). All it really does is cause us to be deaf, dumb and blind to the present moment, and only traps us further in samsara.

The act of giving (pg 56) can counteract our attachment to what we think belongs to 'me' or 'mine'; whilst simplifying our lives (pg 42) by appreciating what we have at any given moment, and letting go of our grasping to our opinions and preferences can help us achieve inner peace.

Buddhist meditation, says Sayadaw Dr Nandamālābhivamsa, can also decrease and calm the unquenchable "thirst" within (pg 46). And practising compassion, tolerance and patience allows us to deal with unfavourable situations and people in a more realistic and relaxed manner. In order to be happy, one needs to cultivate wholesome attitudes towards others in society and towards all sentient beings. (pg 52)

If you're grappling with problems on craving and attachment, read page 62 for a good book that gives further insight and help.

May you start your new year on a right note, contemplating the true nature of life, and may your wisdom grow.



Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien

*Sentient beings follow their thinking
— their concepts, their ideas, their memories and feelings,
thinking them as real,
but a Buddha doesn't follow
and is not attached to his or her thinking,
seeing it as empty.
~ Ven Hyon Gak Sunim*

What Is Spiritual Health to You?

Spiritual practice and growth is not about becoming more complicated, rather it is about growing simpler. When we meditate, we receive information on a deeper level than we do during normal waking consciousness.

We are spiritual beings on a very human journey. The life in this body is an important classroom experience in how much we love. Illness and death are often awakening lessons which offer continuous opportunities to make our love felt. Healing is a return to love. Always, it is about becoming the men and women we have the potential to be. Loving, pure, honest, clear. — Chng Siantiam, 50s, ex-school teacher

Spiritual health to me is about how we take care of our daily thoughts and how we allow these thoughts to affect the way we behave and treat others. Like taking care of our bodily health, spiritually we need to “exercise” our thoughts and “consume” moderately, particularly on days when we are feeling down or stressed. Across any religious beliefs, being “spiritually healthy” is ultimately about how each human being thinks and behaves, and how one’s thoughts affect oneself and others. To have good spiritual health, we can exercise our mind, through mind yoga, prayers, meditation, or by developing faith etc.

— Tessa Goh, 30, Training Manager (Hospitality)

I define spiritual health as being true to the principles of Karma. To be true to these principles you have to examine them, investigate them and see how you can incorporate them to your life in terms of lifestyle, attitudes, perspectives and actions. When one fails to do so, one compassionately and persistently investigates the reasons, and adapts accordingly. One can also make aspirational prayers for courage to face and overcome one’s failings.

— Kelvin Ng, 32, currently in-between jobs

Spiritual health to me means being able to balance and juggle all aspects of challenges and emotions, achieving calmness of mind. One who is spiritually unbalanced may often choose to devote oneself into religious beliefs. For me, music helps me to stay calm and relaxed even when I face difficulties.

— Lim Xinning, 23, Human Resource Practitioner

Spiritual health is important. To me, it means keeping a balanced and calm mind, a mind that is not easily agitated. To achieve that, I try to maintain a simple life and stay mindful at all times through Buddhist teachings and meditation, which is not an easy task. Sometimes, we are swayed by our emotions and we act accordingly. This at times leads to consequences that may not be what we want. But as long as we are mindful every moment, from recognising our emotions, being aware of how we feel, to realising the consequences of our actions, I think that keeps our spiritual health in good condition.

— Janice Soon, 31, homemaker

Ushering Chinese New Year with a Resounding “gong”

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Date/Time : 6 Feb 07, 11.30pm

Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Details : For more information, please call 6549 5300

Y_Cultivation: Who is Amitabha? Understanding the Western Pure Land Teaching (8 sessions)

Date/Time : 5 Jan – 23 Feb 08, Saturday (6.30pm – 8.00pm)

Fee : \$26.00 (Free for students & NSF)

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5345, 9765 4322 or email ycultivation@kmspks.org

PKS English Dharma Class – New Intake

Year 1 Module 1 (10 sessions)

Date/Time : 24 Feb – 4 May 08, Every Sunday, 2.00pm – 4.00pm

Offering : \$30

Venue : KMSPKS Monastery, Dharma Hall

Year 2 Module 1 (10 sessions)

Date/Time : 28 Feb – 15 May 08, Every Thursday, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Offering : \$30

Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300

Would Son Bear the Karmic Debt of the Father?

(Names used here are fictitious)

Q: Tom is willing to lend Dick some money which is badly needed, but Dick is worried that he may not be able to repay the debt in his lifetime. Tom, however, is happy to lend the money, even if he does not get it back before either one of them (Tom or Dick) passes away. Dick worries about being karmically indebted to Tom in both this life and the next. Dick is also worried that his son Harry would have to bear the debt (karmically) on his behalf although Tom has assured Dick that he will not pursue Harry for the money. What are your views on Dick's worries? — *Anonymous*



A: Karma does not always work in the simplistic ways which Dick perceives it to operate. It is more complex than a matter of “balancing accounts”, as there are many conditions involved. Dick has probably mistakenly perceived the effects of karma to be measured only in terms of dollars and cents. Whenever one does an act of evil, be it in the monetary sense or otherwise, one would have already incurred a negative karmic “debt” — in the sense that one has to pay back by experiencing negative experiences — if one does not repent and reform in time.

Negative karmic “payback” however need not always be repaid directly to the person to whom the evil was done, though our karmic affinities from life to life can be closely knitted.

For example, one who steals money is likely to experience some form of poverty karmically — sooner or later — but it does not mean that this will be through repaying money to the one whose money was stolen. It can be through other means. There are two sides to the coin. We need to remember too, that the one who lost the money in the first place is also experiencing the fruition of his own negative karma through the theft.

Notwithstanding so, passively resigning oneself to difficulties in life as “fixed” karma is self-defeating. For instance, a poor person who mistakenly thinks that his karma is a life of poverty, and hence never diligently tries to improve his condition when he could have done so, is living the karma of delusion. He will continuously experience poverty!

In addition, karma does not always work in a “tit for tat” way, that is the person who was stolen from will steal back from the thief. It is a lack of wisdom that leads one to cyclical vengeance. If karma “predestines” one to behave in a “tit for tat” manner, there would be no way to break free from being trapped in a vicious circle of negative karmic rebound since both parties would be karmically “forced” to be unceasingly vengeful, thus creating new negative karma to one another endlessly.

Rather, karma is dynamic. It alters according to changes in our attitudes and actions. We are each responsible for our own karma. We can influence each other to actively create virtuous circles of positive karma, instead of vicious circles of negative karma. When one does an act of good, be it in the monetary sense or otherwise, one creates positive karmic “wealth” — merits — which may or may not be in the form of money. With or without money involved, we are already “indebted” to each other in

the interdependent web of life. We also continually carry over “debts” of kindness in this life, and from life to life. This is why we should practise compassion and wisdom as much as we can so as to repay the often easily-forgotten kindness of others. Moreover, when we help others, whoever they may be, we are creating positive karma that helps to dilute the effects of our negative karmic “debts”.

In this case, Tom has created much positive karma by being unconditionally generous. Although Tom does not expect any return of kindness, he will experience the effects of his positive karma eventually. In fact, the moment one is generous, there is already some joy in the moment.

Borrowing money when in serious need does not incur karmic debts if one intends to use the money for a good cause, and intends to return the money as there is no evil involved. Evil arises only when there are intentions based on greed, hatred and delusion. Refusing to borrow money when in real need shows a lack of wisdom. It is also Dick’s positive karma bearing fruit for him to encounter someone as helpful

as Tom, who is willing to practise unconditional generosity to him. Dick should be grateful for Tom’s compassion in being willing to offer help since a friend in need is a friend indeed. Dick should treasure Tom’s offer to help — by having gratitude — whether he decides to borrow the money or not.

If Dick decides to borrow money from Tom, even though Tom does not require him to pay back, Dick should still do his best to do so, either by returning the money or by other good ways. The point is to do one’s best to repay the kindness of others in this life and/or future lives. This is the expression of gratitude. It is ingratitude that creates negative karma. Hence, if Dick decides to take advantage of Tom and borrows the money with no gratitude or with no intention to repay the kindness, Dick will be creating negative karma. However, one’s karmic debts do not pass down to one’s children. When children seem to bear the negative karma of their parents, it is actually a case of the children having similar negative karma, which they themselves had created in this or a past life. ☺

— Bro Shen Shi’an



“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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Compassion & Wisdom on the journey of life...

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



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Mindfully Green: Going Green the Buddhist Way

SINGAPORE — The Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery embarked on a campaign called *Mindfully Green* to promote environmentalism in November last year.

In fact, the monastery has been actively encouraging devotees to go green since 2004, through public education on the appropriate ways to conduct animal liberation and on the benefits of burning less joss paper. Every Vesak Day, the monastery also holds exhibitions such as the *Green Initiative* to reach out to the public. Even the Tender Loving Care student care centre operated by the monastery has launched an *Environmental Kids Club*. Every week, 17 kids play their part to help make Singapore a cleaner and greener place to live in by picking up litter in the community. They also learn to make recycling a part of their lives by making it a habit to recycle their unwanted plastic and paper items.

Within the monastery itself, the setting up of the *88 Recycling Kiosk* was another notable initiative. The public can deposit recyclables at the monastery daily, and these items are then given a second lease of life to needy organisations in third world countries or resold during regular jumble sales. So far, the *88 Recycling Kiosk* has sent humanitarian relief to various charitable homes, orphanages and schools in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and India. Come end January 2008, another container of humanitarian relief including clothing, medical equipment, computers, milk powder, packet noodles, stationery and books will be shipped to a children's home for the tsunami kids in Sri Lanka.

Major events in the monastery today also incorporate an environmental team to better manage recyclable waste as a means to proactively develop gratitude for the environment and walk the talk.

Answering the government's call for its citizens to be more eco-friendly, the monastery decided to consolidate and further strengthen its green efforts by launching the campaign. The monastery believes everyone can play a part by being mindful of small actions in everyday life; for example, remembering to turn off appliances when one leaves the room. As reminders, posters and banners carrying simple green messages on sustainable living and compassion to our environment will be prominently displayed in the monastery compounds.

Contrary to popular belief, environmentalism is closely related to Buddhist practice. Recognising the interdependence of Nature and all sentient beings, the practice of respecting and caring for Nature and reducing the suffering of sentient beings is in line with what the Buddha taught. Indeed, one aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path — Right Action — is not to harm sentient life directly or indirectly. Therefore, by extension, we should help protect their living environment.

Visit <http://www.kmspks.org/community/88kiosk/> for more information on the campaign, to donate recyclables or to sign up as an environmental team volunteer. ☺



“Lojong can Help One to Regain Control of the Mind,” said Geshe Dr. Thubten Jinpa at the Fifth Global Conference on Buddhism

PETALING JAYA, Malaysia — According to one speaker at the *Fifth Global Conference on Buddhism*, Geshe Dr. Thubten Jinpa, it is the taming, purifying and transforming of the mind that lies at the heart of the practice of Buddha-Dharma. And *lojong* or Tibetan mind training can help one to regain control of the mind, he added.

Invited to talk about “Taming the Monkey Mind” through *lojong* at the 2-day conference, Dr. Jinpa elaborated that the practice of *lojong* can be summarised as the training of two facets of *Bodhicitta* — the first facet being the conventional awakening mind to counter self-cherishing, and the second being the ultimate awakening mind to counter self-grasping. It is a method of mental transformation which can be cultivated, enhanced and applied even during post-meditation activities, and helps to bridge our spiritual practice and everyday life, he explained.

To counteract afflictions, Dr. Jinpa strongly advised all to overcome them through a single means of practising compassion via the *tonglen* meditation. Known as the “giving and taking” meditation, it involves visualising the giving away of one’s own happiness, virtues and good fortune to all beings as one exhales and taking upon oneself their suffering, misfortune, negative traits and behaviour as one inhales.



Image: <http://tibet.emory.edu/news/tibetweek.html>

“Practitioners are advised to use compassion as the overarching principle in other spiritual practices,” he urged.

However, Dr. Jinpa cautioned that as it is a natural human tendency to reify what we deem as important, it is crucial that we remain mindful and not end up grasping at the very means itself.

“It is important to detach from the remedies themselves, so that the practitioner does not grasp emptiness as an absolute,” he said.

The *Fifth Global Conference on Buddhism* was jointly organised by the Buddhist Gem Fellowship (BGF), Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia and Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia (YBAM).

Themed “Transforming the Mind to Create Happiness in Our Lives”, it showcased a sharing of experiences from renowned Dharma teachers and practitioners from all over the world including Ven. Mahinda, Ven. Robina Courtin, Ven. Heng Sure and Ven. Ajahn Brahm. ☺

What Is Spiritual Health to You?

To me, spiritual health is about how we value the spiritual path. To value the spiritual path means to have the courage to go beyond our rational mind. The real world seldom follows what we assume to be “logical”. We will not be spared from death just because we followed the rules. As Dzongzar Khyentse Rinpoche taught, going beyond our rational mind is what makes us more spiritual. Our identities will have to go. Our feelings at this moment will have to go. When we begin to let go of these, initially we may feel a little depressed, but that’s what Rinpoche called “good depression”. We should have that kind of depression. Only then would we begin to become a more spiritual person.

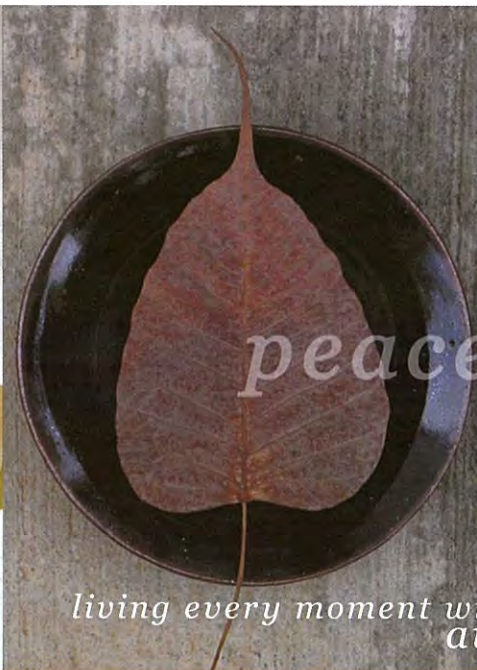
— Frank Lee, 33, Private Investor



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Want your story to be heard too?

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

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

Whatever your story or poem may be, we welcome you to write in to us. Share your inspiring tale of faith and awakening with the rest of the world.

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

The curry puff is a favourite local snack of most Singaporeans and Malaysians. If you love this mouth-watering crispy snack, try your hand at making our vegetarian version to serve your guests during this festive season.

Curry Puff

Ingredients : Green Peas 100g, Curry powder 25g, Flour 600g, Margarine 200g, Potatoes 900g — peel skin and cut into small cubes
Carrot 100g — peel skin and cut into small cubes

Method : 1. Deep fry potatoes and carrot. Add green peas. Mix a little salt, sugar, and curry powder. Fry well.
2. Mix flour, margarine and 100g of water into dough. Divide into smaller pieces and roll it with rolling pin until flattened.
3. Fill with one spoon of filling. Fold up and make design at the edge. Deep fry until golden brown.

咖喱松角

材料 : 青豆100克, 咖喱粉25克, 面粉600克, 马芝玲菜200克。
马铃薯900克 — 去皮切丁。
红萝卜100克 — 去皮切丁。

炒法 : 1. 将切丁的马铃薯和红萝卜用油炸熟。加入青豆、少许盐、糖和咖喱粉炒均即成。

做法 : 2. 将面粉, 菜油, 清水约100克搓成一团然后切成小粒。
将每小粒粉团用木棍压扁成薄片。

3. 每一片中央放上一汤匙的馅料, 然后对折再作花边用油炸至香脆。





Ven. Thubten Chodron gives some pointers how we can cut some slack and simplify our lives.

Simplifying Our Lives

Many people talk of simplifying their lives, but find it hard to do so. Not only are we conditioned by the society around us, we have also bought into this conditioning at some level. This gives rise to fear of not being happy, successful, loved or financially secure. By observing our mind in meditation, we become aware of the external conditioning and our internal fears as well as the inner war that occurs in our mind when we try to simplify.

One part of our mind says, “Simplicity is the way to go. It will help the environment and lead to more equitable distribution of resources on the planet.” Another part says, “Are you crazy? What will other people think?” or “You won’t be secure in your old age!” or “My kids won’t have what all the other kids have and won’t fit in with their peers.”

One way to overcome this internal struggle is simply to identify it as such and press the mental pause button, breathe, and return to our compassionate motivation.

Another way is to remember the benefits of simplifying our lives. Here are a few advantages to contemplate: **Simplicity involves letting go of life’s complications and learning to appreciate**

what is in front of us at any particular moment. Instead of longing for what we don’t have or craving for what we think we should have, we turn our attention to what is present at the moment. Thus we begin to connect at a deeper level with the people we live and work with. We have time to have a good conversation with them. We have time to become friends with ourselves. We are able to experience spring’s crisp air and summer’s feeling of abundance, to see the full moon in autumn and the snow in winter. We find beauty where we hadn’t noticed it before.

Simplicity brings contentment. Don’t think simplifying your life entails forfeiting pleasure and security, and condemning yourself to a life of sacrifice. Instead, think of the contentment that will arise in your mind. Think of the freedom from craving and dissatisfaction that you will experience. After all, discontent arises not from lacking what we want but from the strong craving to have it.

Simplicity brings less worry, not more. We don’t have to worry about getting what others have, maintaining knowledge of the latest digital gadgetry, or wearing the latest-style glasses. We are at peace within. We know that the people who are our friends like us for our qualities, not because we



exemplify a certain image (whatever the image of our social group happens to be at that time).

Simplicity brings more security, not less. We cease being afraid of having our things stolen or our reputation trashed. We know that nobody has ever had enough money to feel completely secure, and so we are contented with what we have.

By living simply, we regain our freedom to think for ourselves. Instead of allowing ourselves to be manipulated by the media into thinking that we need this and that or believing that we should become what we aren't, we are free to set our own values and live by them.

We also become free from the complications of having so many choices. We usually think that having a variety of choices is freedom, but if we observe, we find that it actually brings confusion. We go into the market "for a minute" but get stuck in front of the apples. There are so many varieties, which do we choose? The same thing happens when we go to the isle with crackers or noodles. When we buy a new appliance, tool or gadget, we can't just sit down and use it. First, we have to spend hours selecting and programming all our preferences. We could be using our minds to follow the path to

enlightenment, but instead our attention is enmeshed in choosing minute details that supposedly give us happiness, but in fact make us more confused.

Living simply, we no longer need a checklist. Have you noticed how glued we are to our daily checklists of things to do? We think the items on our lists are crucial and scurry around trying to finish these tasks. But the more we do, the more we have to do and our list doubles. The sad thing is that our lists seem to lack really important items such as, "Look my children in the eyes with love and listen to how their day went"; "Tell my friends how much I appreciate their good qualities"; "Be generous to those who are destitute or ill"; "Sit down and be peaceful inside my own heart"; and "Meditate on the great kindness of all."

Living simply frees up time and energy. Consider how much you need to buy just to have the job you have. Let's say you work in an office — you need to have certain clothes, drive a particular type of car, and watch the movies your colleagues recommend. All these things cost money. So you work hard to get the things you need to maintain your job. Quite a vicious circle. In contrast, the mental state involved with simplicity lacks the neurotic caring about what others think of us.

Living simply doesn't mean just simplifying our environment and possessions. It really **entails simplifying our ideas, opinions and preferences.**

We become aware of our own judgmental mind that puts others down. We notice how attached we are to our preferences and how unhappy we become when we don't get our way.

We recognise how many opinions we have about so many different topics. Slowly, we let go of these and close down the internal opinion factory. The resulting silence in our mind is blissful.

Initially, it may take some self-discipline to remove ourselves from the wheel of complications and desires and to overcome the fear of doing so, but when we stick to it, the joy of simplicity will gradually blossom in our lives. ☺

Understanding the Different Traditions



Photo: Raymond Poon

Renowned Buddhist scholar and practitioner Professor Cheng Chen-huang speaks to Esther Thien on how Buddhism today is really like a big tree.

A waken: In this modern day and age, there exist many different Buddhist traditions. How do you think a Buddhist should go about selecting the tradition that suits him or her best?

Prof Cheng: All the different traditions are designed for the different mental capacities of the individuals. Before a Buddhist can select the tradition and practice most appropriate to one, one has to understand oneself in terms of personality, characteristics and one's conditions such as how much time one can devote to the practice and the level of knowledge one has.

Awaken: Buddhists of various traditions can't seem to agree on a common path to practise. For example, *Theravada* Buddhists stress that meditation is very important for practice while for some *Vajrayana* Buddhists, it is secondary. How can we improve the understanding of Buddhists between the various traditions?

Prof Cheng: In the beginning, we should have a holistic and panoramic view of Buddhism. We should

understand the basic principles of the Buddha's teaching, which is nothing but the understanding of life, and the ways to eliminate our suffering.

However, because different cultures exist in different countries, in the process of the development of Buddhism, different traditions emerge. A beginner should learn the outline of Buddhism at the very beginning, including its historical development. With that understanding, the Buddhist would realise that Buddhism today is just like a big tree and would accept the various traditions which develop in the process of history.

Shakyamuni Buddha is like the roots of this tree, the *Theravada* tradition is the trunk while the *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana* traditions are the branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. They are the same having come from Shakyamuni Buddha but not identical. Due to the cultures of the different countries, they develop their own characteristics. These traditions are the manifestations and the results of dependent origination. They have the same root cause (comprising the basic teaching of Four Noble Truths,

Noble Eightfold Path, *Anicca*, *Dukkha*, *Anatta* and dependent origination) but various conditions cause them to appear dissimilar.

Awaken: In the course of your lifetime, you have met numerous great masters such as H.H. the Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh, just to name a few. What is the most important lesson you have learnt from them? And which master has the greatest impact on you?

Prof Cheng: Actually all these great masters have a huge impact on me as I have learnt quite a lot from them. I'm very fortunate to have the opportunity to meet so many great masters of the 20th and 21st century. What particularly struck me is their great compassion. They are all exceedingly kind. They love all sentient beings and are always eager to share their experience of practice. They are not concerned about themselves, and they have the wisdom of the various traditions. I have also learnt that I need to pay careful attention to the detailed theories of the Buddha-Dharma or I can't translate competently. But the greatest impact perhaps comes from Professor Lee Bing Nan. He was the one who introduced the Buddha-Dharma to me when I was an 18-year old youth. He was a great Buddhist scholar and practitioner who first inspired me.

Awaken: Professor, earlier on, you talked about understanding oneself before one can choose the tradition that is appropriate to one's inclination. How can we achieve this understanding?

Prof Cheng: Very simple. We just spend a few minutes to calm our mind down by concentrating our attention on our in-breath and out-breath. Just a few moments and we can understand our thoughts and what is happening within us and around us. This leads to achieving an understanding of ourselves.

Awaken: Different schools teach different methods to attain insight and wisdom. Can Professor explain the difference between *Zen* meditation and *Vipassana* meditation?

Prof Cheng: The technique of *Vipassana* is to observe what is happening in our sensation, perception, mind and body. That is, *Vipassana* observes what has already happened. But the technique of *Zen* meditation is quite different. One technique to

handle the wandering thoughts that arise in the mind is by making a loud sound or by shouting out, "Who are you?" to clear away such wandering thoughts.

In *Zen* Buddhism, what has arisen is nothing but the manifestation of our Buddha-nature. They're the leaves, branches and trunks of the root. The root is our Buddha-nature. Therefore *Zen* meditation tries to revert to the very root of all phenomena, including ourselves and the external world. That means when we want to chop down a diseased tree, we don't have to eliminate its leaves, branches and trunk. Rather, the most important thing is to uproot the tree and this can solve all the problems at once. This is the *Zen* meditation technique of uprooting all phenomena that goes directly to our very fundamental ground — our Buddha-nature, our primordial state of mind or wisdom. We can say that *Vipassana* is a step-by-step practice but *Zen* meditation is a direct practice to uproot all the phenomena.

Awaken: *Theravada* Buddhists define enlightenment as arhantship and for *Mahayana* Buddhists, Buddhahood. What is *Zen* Buddhists definition of enlightenment?

Prof Cheng: *Zen* Buddhism defines enlightenment in different stages. The first is to understand the emptiness of ego or self. The second is to understand the emptiness of all phenomena and the third stage is to understand that everything — ourselves, all phenomena including even emptiness — is emptiness. Therefore, there is nothing which can be labelled emptiness or non-emptiness. The very basic essence is ultimate emptiness. To elaborate the different stages of enlightenment in *Zen* Buddhism, when one gets a glimpse of the emptiness of oneself, it doesn't mean this is the final stage of practice. We have to practise again and again, as the momentary glimpse of realisation is not solid, stable or permanent. Eventually, with constant cultivation, we will get the ultimate realisation or enlightenment. We will achieve the insight of emptiness as emptiness. Because emptiness and form is neither identical nor different. They are just skilful titles or names of convenience to explain the subjects. That is the final stage of *Zen* Buddhism when one achieves the realisation of non-dualism and non-sameness. ☺

Lessening Attachment Through Meditation



Sayadaw Dr Nandamālābhivamsa explains to Esther Thien how Buddhist meditation can help to reduce attachment in this consumerist world.

Awaken: How can meditation help in these modern times?

Sayadaw: Most people nowadays cannot calm their minds. Everyday, whatever we do, our mind precedes our actions. If we cannot take notice and control the mind, we will do whatever we desire and wish. This causes a lot of problems to arise within us. On the other hand, if we check and control our mind, we will have control over our actions. We will not be blindly led by our mind. We know what should be done and what should not be done. When we recognise this, we will choose what is virtuous and what should be done before we take action, rather than according to our mental wish. In this sense, meditation provides the necessary mental checks and balances. Through meditation, we can realise the nature of the mind — understanding that this thought precedes good action and that thought leads to bad action. We can comprehend our mind and this is very important for us to realise what should be done or what should be avoided. If our mind gives rise to a thought of an act that should not be done, we can quickly control and rein back our mind. Through meditation, we can realise the nature of things and be at peace.

In meditation, we select an object of focus and concentrate our mind on it to realise the nature of our mind and the nature of the object. In this way, we understand what should be done and avoid committing non-virtuous actions. This is one of its key benefits. More than that, we also realise the infinite powers of the mind. We are able to enlarge it, control it and realise its nature. When we achieve that, we can lead a worry-free life having understood the nature of our mind. We can reduce our attachments and in turn lessen our worries. Little attachment, little worries. No attachment, no worries. This leads to greater peace of mind. Therefore, meditation is a great beneficial practice that promotes peaceful living.

Awaken: Many meditation techniques exist in this world. How is Buddhist meditation different from the rest?

Sayadaw: Firstly, I think many meditation techniques teach one to concentrate only on the object but not to realise the nature of the object. There is no insight knowledge for these meditation methods even though they lead to mental concentration. The meditators of these other techniques may be able to keep their minds peaceful for a temporary period when

their minds are intensely concentrated during meditation but after that, they are unable to control them as they do not realise the nature and conditions of object and of the mind. Secondly, the purpose of meditation is to reduce attachment. If a method of meditation, Buddhist or otherwise, can lessen and eliminate attachment for us, then it is a good meditation technique. According to the Buddha, the aim of Buddhist meditation practice is to completely remove attachment. If you practise appropriately, you will achieve it. When the mind is not grasping, we have no worries about things. It is a perfect and peaceful state of mind. In addition, when we manage to eliminate attachment, hatred and delusion will cease to exist. This is because Buddhist meditation is based on right understanding. Through right understanding, we can eradicate attachment, which in turn eliminates hatred and delusion. If attachment, hatred and delusion still exist within us, we are unable to maintain a peaceful mind and to eliminate suffering in samsara.

Awaken: There are various Buddhist meditation methods in the different traditions. How can one choose the meditation method that is most suitable for one?

Sayadaw: The Buddha taught different meditation methods, stating about 40 objects for meditation, such as fire, water, and many others, to establish concentration. This is because establishing mental concentration on an object is merely the starting point. Through any of these objects, we are able to achieve concentration. Once sufficient concentration level is reached, we must try to realise the true nature of the object and the mind. This insight knowledge can only be obtained in one manner through the Noble Eightfold Path. To achieve Right Understanding and Right Thought, we have to practise Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood to obtain perfect morality. Only with perfect moral conduct can we achieve concentration easily. When we have perfect morality, we must cultivate Right Effort to remove mental defilements and establish wholesome traits; Right Mindfulness to see things as they really are; and Right Concentration to realise the nature of things. With the help of Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, Right Understanding will emerge and Right Thought will become stronger. With perfect Right Understanding and Right Thought, we can eliminate attachment,

and in turn eliminate hatred and delusion. Having removed the three poisons, suffering will cease. Even though the meditation techniques may be different for various Buddhist traditions, the goal of liberation, of attaining insight knowledge, is the same for all.

Awaken: Can Sayadaw please elaborate more on how meditation can work to remove attachment?

Sayadaw: These days, people's needs and wants are increasing. Their needs and wants are getting more and more, and thus their attachments are also escalating. In life, only four necessities are actually required. They are shelter, clothes (not for beautifying but to protect the body from the weather and harsh conditions of the environment), food and medicine. But today, people's needs and wants are ever-increasing. People want luxurious houses, cars with great performance, the latest cellphones and all kinds of electronic gadgets. Because of these wants, people are placing greater emphasis on money and are more attached to money. They desire and crave for many things. Hence, they need jobs to earn money to buy these things. If they don't earn enough money, they cannot obtain the things they desire and crave. They have no satisfaction and no contentment as they are always craving and wanting. The Buddha said, "Contentment is like a precious wealth." But people these days are getting less and less contented because they want more and more. Due to having more attachments, our worries multiply too. Buddhist meditation can work to reduce attachment. For instance, the purpose of shelter is to offer us protection from the dangers of weather and predators. It is not necessary for us to beautify it. The same goes for food. Food is meant to sustain life. Today, it has become an enjoyment instead. Because people crave for pleasant-tasting foods, they often take food that don't agree with their body and thus suffer from poor health.

The Buddha said you must have a purpose. Accordingly, we must consider the proper intention of whatever we do. Through deliberation, contemplation and meditation on the nature of the object, we can control our craving and reduce attachment. Eventually, we can eliminate attachment completely when our meditation advances. When there is no attachment, no aversion can arise as aversion depends on attachment.

We must have Right Understanding of our life. First to reduce attachment, we must understand that we will all die one day. Death is unavoidable. We are getting older and closer to death with each breath we take. So we only undertake what is important and abandon what is not. Understand and contemplate that at our deathbed, we are unable to take any of the luxuries we enjoy in life with us. Hence we should not bring undue suffering and worries onto ourselves because of them. One should only be concerned about the requisites of life. What other things that one craves for which are not useful to one or bring about suffering, one should give up. This is contemplation, or considering in correct ways about the nature of life. Often many people do not consider in this manner. They do not think about death but instead only crave and search aimlessly for more unnecessary things to enjoy. That is why the Buddha advised that we have to consider our life in the right perspective — contemplating that death is inevitable, that we are responsible for our actions, good and bad, and as such we should only do what is virtuous or good and refrain from the negative and bad. By contemplating in this manner, we can change our mental attention to reduce our craving and lead more meaningful lives.

Awaken: Some teachers taught that the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* are equal to the *Noble Eightfold Path*. Are they equivalent?

Sayadaw: In the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, the Buddha emphasised Right Mindfulness. However, Right Mindfulness by itself cannot work. It depends on three parts of morality — Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. Without Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, we cannot keep a peaceful mind. Even though people hide their flaws and faults from others, deep down, each individual knows if he or she is a wholesome and good person. With morality, one would maintain a happy frame of mind knowing fully well that one only does what is virtuous and never what is unwholesome. From morality, the other five factors work together for a successful meditation. For example, when you want an arrow to hit its target, it depends on numerous factors. First, you need to point out the target (Right Understanding), then you need to concentrate on the target (Right Concentration); next you must be mindful of the target (Right Mindfulness) and put in effort

(Right Effort) to hit the target after considering how to shoot (Right Thought) when shooting takes place. When these few factors work harmoniously together hand in hand, the person succeeds. It's the same in meditation for it to work. You need Right Effort, Right Concentration, Right Thought, Right Understanding and Right Mindfulness, and not just only Right Mindfulness even though it's a leading factor. If any one of the factors is lacking, meditation cannot succeed. However, the Buddha taught the *Four Foundations of Mindfulness* as the objects, the place of work, for the mind to focus on to obtain realisation.

Awaken: Sayadaw, do you have any last advice for our readers?

Sayadaw: These days, people have more and more wants, especially in developed countries. As this craving cannot be stopped, there is a lot of tension in the society. According to the Buddha's teachings, we must learn to be content. Only contentment can produce a peaceful mind. Therefore, if you want to live your life peacefully, learn to cultivate contentment. Otherwise, even if our country is very advanced materially and the economy is booming, we will still not be at peace in our mind. ☸



Dr Nandamālābhivamsa was born in Myanmar in 1940 and was ordained as a Novice Monk at the age of 10. At 16, he was conferred *Dhammacariya* (Teacher of the Dhamma) by the Government of Myanmar and at 21 he was conferred

Abhivamsa (Higher Lineage). He obtained an M.A. degree from Kelaniya University, Colombo, Sri Lanka, and a Ph.D. from Magadh University in Bodhi Gaya, Bihar, India. In 2000, he was conferred the title *Aggamahapandita* (Senior Scholar) by the Government of Myanmar. Dr Nandamālābhivamsa is one of the founders of Buddhist Teaching Centre, Maha Subhodhayon in Sagaing, Myanmar, where about 200 monks receive education in Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhist Literature annually. Since 2003, he has been travelling regularly to Europe to conduct Abhidhamma courses. He was also appointed the Rector of the International Theravada Buddhist Mission University (ITBMU) in 2005, which he still holds today.

NO Complaint

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche tells us how complaining only trapped us further in samsara.

On my visit to Tibet in 2001, I frequently performed ceremonies outdoors. On one of these occasions, many thousands of people had gathered in a high, beautiful valley. It began to rain — just a light drizzle — and at 13,000 feet, any precipitation turns the weather cold. Fifty of us were under a brightly decorated traditional Tibetan tent that also protected the ritual implements, paintings, and shrines, but most of the other people were sitting on the grass.

The ceremony lasted for many hours. In spite of the weather, everybody seemed happy for the opportunity just to be together. Although there were many babies and children in the crowd, none were crying. Many of those present were nomads, and they already knew that complaining isn't a very helpful state of mind. Their response to complaint is usually just to laugh, because there is never that much they can do to change their environment.



Photo: Samuel Lim

The Buddhist teachings emphasise that being grateful for what we have is more beneficial than complaining about what we wish were different.

Appreciation is a relaxing and peaceful state of mind. It creates a space in which we can accommodate the daily vicissitudes and even think of the welfare of others. Complaint, on the other hand, is frustrating and painful. There's an element of anger and fixation involved. We are believing our thoughts, taking them to be real. Our attachment to the concept of how we want things to be is stressful, because it is always disintegrating. What we wanted to happen is not happening. We think complaining is going to get the world back on our track. It results in our being deaf, dumb and blind to the present moment. Narrowing our mind with complaint is unpleasant and claustrophobic, the opposite of contentment.

When we complain, we're saying that the world needs to change in order for us to be okay. If only our parent or partner would behave differently, if only the food were cooked differently, if only there were less traffic, if only the service were quicker — then we'd

be happy. There's always room for improvement, of course, but seeing how we could make things better is different from expecting the world to cure our inner dissatisfaction. Asking outer conditions to make us okay will never bring happiness, because outer conditions are always changing. We are asking instability to bring about stability. According to the law of karma — cause and effect — that's impossible. When we're asking for the impossible, the world can never be good enough, and we'll always be complaining.

Why is it that one day something hardly bothers us, and the next day we're complaining about the same situation? We haven't yet found the peace that comes from resting within the inherent stability of our mind. That's really what we're complaining about. Complaint is the byproduct of an untamed mind. Because we're unable to relax, we're not in tune with the environment. Our fantasy of how things ought to be is colliding with how things really are. No wonder we're grumpy. We're fixated in our complaint, imagining that it's "me," and setting ourselves up against the world. This is unpleasant for us as well as others. Nobody wants to be around somebody who's constantly complaining. Why? Because when we complain, we are looking for our own comfort. Complaint is rooted in self-infatuation.

Self-infatuation gives birth to negative emotions. What comes forth might not be as overt as anger, jealousy or desire. It can be a subtle discursive undercurrent. Negative emotions are temporary experiences. When our mind is in their possession, we start complaining. When we engage in life with self-centredness and negative emotions — *nyonmong*, obscurations — two things happen. We bring about more pain and stress, for ourselves, and we hurt those around us. Nobody gains from *nyonmong*. Maybe the waiter brings food quicker, but now he is irritated as well. With everyone's mind in a closed state, we're not able to fully appreciate our meal.

One of the first teachings that the Buddha gave was to point out the ongoing suffering of everyone. We live in a world that is always suffering, in both minor and major ways.

Under these conditions, the world is set up for constant and all-pervasive complaints. Because everything suffers, we could be complaining about everything all the time, trying to make right what's seemingly wrong. If we can relax our mind instead, we might see the humour in how the world works. Running around trying to alleviate our suffering obscures our true nature — basic goodness — which is clear and unchanging.

When we take the path of complaint, each complaint lays the ground for the next complaint and nothing gets any better. Thus the cycle continues.

That is the meaning of the word "samsara" — circular, always feeling the rub of suffering and then looking for a way to make it go away. The remedy for samsara is a reality check. Realising that the world is in constant pain and turmoil, we can be pre-emptive, acknowledging the truth of suffering instead of avoiding it or assuaging it. When we meditate, we are training our mind to relax into the fact that there is always something to complain about, and that complaining about it is not going to bring peace or happiness.

It is strange, but true — recognising the ongoing and all-pervasive nature of suffering can take us towards contentment. If we can learn to relax our discursiveness, we will find that underneath it all, we are already happy. The technique of recognising, acknowledging and releasing thoughts then returning to the stability of our breath helps us see that the frantic agitation of complaint is an unnatural and temporary state. The wisdom and love beneath the clutter of negativity are natural and permanent. In discovering this space, we are spawning a new relationship to our life. We are switching tracks. Instead of obsessing with our own satisfaction, we begin to see what is going on with others. Out of that evolves less desire to complain, and more desire to be of benefit.

Instead of complaining that somebody's not doing something quickly enough, we relax and open our mind. We are instigating a positive cycle. We can see that he needs help, and so we help him. This is how

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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ISSUE 10

life becomes joyful. We are breaking free from our completely contrived preconception of how things ought to be. We are relieving our mind of the burden of complaining. We are no longer draining our life-force energy in a fight with our environment. We are coming out of our shell of self-obsession.

Not complaining doesn't make us docile, just accepting whatever comes along. It puts us in tune with how things are. Now we're able to be proactive, as opposed to reactionary.

Freedom from complaint brings joy. Our life is no longer made of attempts to have the preconceived perfect day. Just like those nomads, we can relax with a light, cold sprinkle on our face and smile, because our heart and mind are big and warm. We appreciate just being alive. We know that we are here to help the world — not to complain about it. We know that when we relax into our goodness, there's nothing to complain about. ☺

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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. In 2007, he gave a public talk and meditation workshop in Singapore. Visit www.shambhala.sg and www.shambhala.org for more information.



BY | Shen Shi'an

Everyone wants to be happy, but happiness cannot be achieved in isolation. The happiness of one depends upon the happiness of all and the happiness of all depends on the happiness of one. This is because all life is interdependent. In order to be happy, one needs to cultivate wholesome attitudes towards others in society and towards all sentient beings.

The best way of cultivating wholesome attitudes towards all sentient beings is through meditation. Among the many topics of meditation taught by the Buddha, there are four specifically concerned with the cultivation of *Loving-kindness*, *Compassion*, *Appreciative Joy* and *Equanimity*. These four are called the *Four Immeasurables* because they are directed to an immeasurable number of sentient beings and because the wholesome Karma produced through practising them is immeasurable.

The *Four Immeasurables* make up “True Love,” which brings joy to ourselves and to the ones we

love. If our love does not bring joy to ourselves and to others, it is not true love. In True Love, there is no sense of ourselves being separated from others. These aspects of True Love, like all aspects of the Buddha’s teachings interconnect; that is to say, each aspect contains all the other aspects.

By cultivating the wholesome attitudes of *Loving-kindness*, *Compassion*, *Appreciative Joy* and *Equanimity*, we can gradually remove ill-will, cruelty, jealousy and desire. In this way, we can achieve happiness for ourselves and others, now and in the future.

Loving-kindness

Loving-kindness is the wish that all sentient beings, without any exception, be happy. Loving-kindness counters ill-will (Aversion). The attitude of Loving-kindness is like the feelings which a mother has for her newborn son. She wishes that he may enjoy good health, have good friends, be intelligent and successful in all that he attempts. In

short, she wishes sincerely that he be happy. One may have the same attitude of Loving-kindness for a particular friend or for others in one's class, community or country.

The extent of Loving-kindness in the instances mentioned above is limited to those for whom one has some attachment or concern. The meditation on Loving-kindness, however, requires one to extend Loving-kindness not only towards those whom one feels close to, but also to others whom one may know only slightly or not know at all. Finally, one's Loving-kindness is extended to all sentient beings in all the realms of existence. Then only does the ordinary wholesome attitude of Loving-kindness found in daily life reach the state of the sublime or the immeasurable.

Compassion

Compassion is the wish for all sentient beings to be free from suffering. It is the intention and capacity to relieve and transform suffering, lightening sorrows while countering cruelty. When a mother, for example, sees her son seriously ill, she will naturally be moved by Compassion to earnestly wish and act such that he may be free from the suffering of his sickness. In the same way, most people have experienced the feeling of Compassion upon seeing the suffering of a relative, a schoolmate or even a pet. For it to become a sublime state of mind, Compassion has to reach beyond the limited group of individuals or beings whom one loves or cares for. Compassion has to be extended to all sentient beings in all the realms of existence before it becomes an immeasurable.

Appreciative Joy

Appreciative Joy is the wholesome attitude of rejoicing in the happiness and virtues of all sentient beings. It counters jealousy and makes people less self-centred.

Appreciative Joy is akin to the joy a mother experiences at her son's success and happiness in life. In the same way, almost everyone will have at one time or another experienced the feeling of joy at the good fortune of a friend. These are the commonly experienced forms of Appreciative Joy. When one meditates on Appreciative Joy and extends it to all sentient beings and not just loved ones, it becomes a sublime state of mind.

Equanimity

Equanimity is the attitude of regarding all sentient beings as equals, irrespective of their present relationship to oneself. While Equanimity counters clinging (Craving) and Aversion, it is not cold or indifferent — it is love that is impartial and without prejudice.

When a grown-up son settles down with his own family, he begins to lead an independent life with responsibilities of his own. Although his mother still has her feelings of Loving-kindness, Compassion and Appreciative Joy towards him, they are now combined with a new feeling of Equanimity. She recognises his new independent and responsible position in life and does not cling to him.



To become a sublime state of mind, however, the attitude of Equanimity has to be extended to all sentient beings. In order to do this, one needs to remember that one's relationships with one's relatives, friends and even enemies, are the results of previous Karma. Thus one should not cling to relatives and friends while regarding others with indifference or hatred. Moreover, one's relatives and friends in this life may have been one's enemies in a past life and may again become enemies in the future, while one's enemies in this life may well have been one's relatives and friends in the past, and may again become one's relatives and friends in the future. ☺

~ extracted from the book *Be A Lamp Upon Yourself. Read Awakening a Kind Heart* by Ven. Sangye Khadro for in depth description on cultivating the Four Immeasurable Minds.



Look, Mummy, that Lady Has No Hair!

BY | Ven. Thubten Chodron

Walking around Green Lake in Seattle one afternoon, I passed a woman with her little girl. The child looked at me and exclaimed, “Look, Mummy! That lady doesn’t have any hair!” Unfazed, I smiled at her. I’m used to it. Although Buddhism is better known in the West now than twenty years ago, people seldom expect a Western woman to be a Buddhist monastic.

When I give talks in high schools, I’m frequently asked, “Why do Buddhists shave their heads?” I respond that not all Buddhists shave their heads, just the monastics. Many people who are Buddhists have long hair; they look and dress like everyone else. It is an individual’s personal decision whether or not to become a monastic; no one forces us to do it or makes the decision for us. However, if someone becomes a monastic, he or she adopts a “look.” Just as some occupations entail wearing uniforms for identification, monastics wear a “uniform,” our monastic robes. Part of our appearance is our hair, or rather our lack of it. Why is shaving off our hair part of taking monastic vows?

Shaving our heads symbolises cutting off confusion, hostility, and attachment — what the Buddha called the “three poisonous attitudes.”

These three mental toxins poison our well-being and our relationships with others. Confusion makes us ignorant about the causes of happiness and the causes of suffering. Hostility and anger ruin our relationships with others, especially with those we care about the most. Attachment clings to people, things, places and ideas in the mistaken notion that they will make us happy. Cutting off these three attitudes eliminates the causes of our misery. It also frees us to direct our energy to cultivating equanimity, love, compassion, joy and wisdom in our hearts.

Whenever we monastics shave our heads, we think about cutting off our own and others' confusion, hostility and attachment. Cutting our hair becomes a way to recall the purpose of our life. In other words, we haven't become monastics in order to look good, be popular, gain prestige, be rich or have a lot of possessions. We don't seek security from family or romantic relationships. We aren't trying to climb the corporate ladder or become acclaimed artists or skilled athletes. Instead, our spiritual practice and cultivating the ability to help others are what make our lives meaningful. Our purpose in life is to subdue our afflictive emotions and attitudes and cultivate beneficial ones through practising the Buddha's teachings. In addition, to the extent that we are able to, we try to guide others to eliminate the three poisonous attitudes from their minds.

Another reason for shaving our heads is that for most people, their hair is an object of attachment. People fuss a lot about their hair, spending a lot of time trying to get it to look right. They talk about their hair a lot and comment on others' hair. People who have blonde hair dye it black; those with brown hair want it to be blonde. Those with curly hair straighten it, and people with straight hair curl it. We're seldom satisfied with our hair or our appearance. Sometimes, people think it's only women who make a big fuss about their hair. That's not so! Men who don't have hair buy toupees or lotion to rejuvenate their hair. They comb their hair a certain way to make it look like they aren't as bald as they are. They put cream on it, cut it in a stylish way and dye it. In short, both men and women have a lot of vanity regarding their hair and appearance and spend a lot of time and money trying to improve them.

As monastics, we don't try to impress people by looking good because we understand that relationships based on superficial appearances don't last long. If someone likes me because I am attractive, what will happen to their affection when I don't look so good? When I am sick? As I age? It will disappear because they don't really care about us as human beings.

In any case, trying to always look good is futile. Our society idolises youth, yet no one is becoming

younger. It is rather ridiculous that the media and advertising exalt what no one is becoming. We are all ageing. Wrinkles are in the process of arriving, hair is turning grey or it will be soon enough. So I have given up trying to look good. In fact, I don't want people to like me because I look good. I would rather have deep and stable friendships with people who look for inner beauty — what a person has in his or her heart. Thus, we monastics are committed to developing our inner beauty because that won't fade with age.

Inner beauty — a kind heart that cherishes others for who they are — will draw others to us, be a basis of true friendship, and enable us to be of benefit to others.

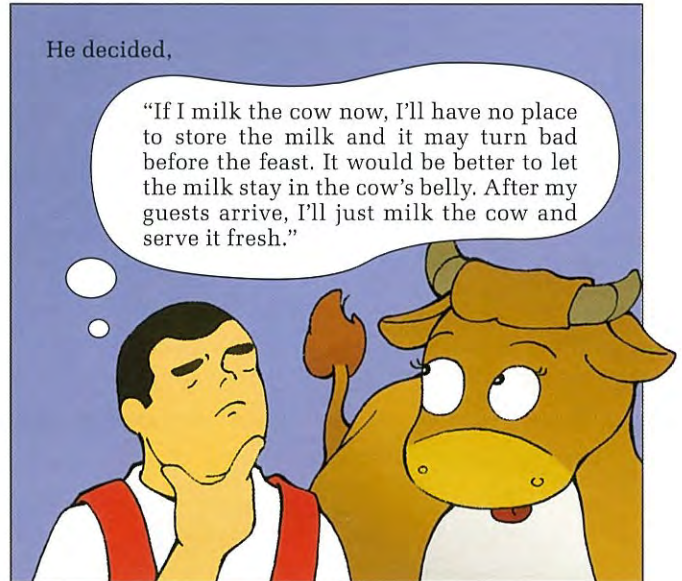


Photos: Samuel Lim

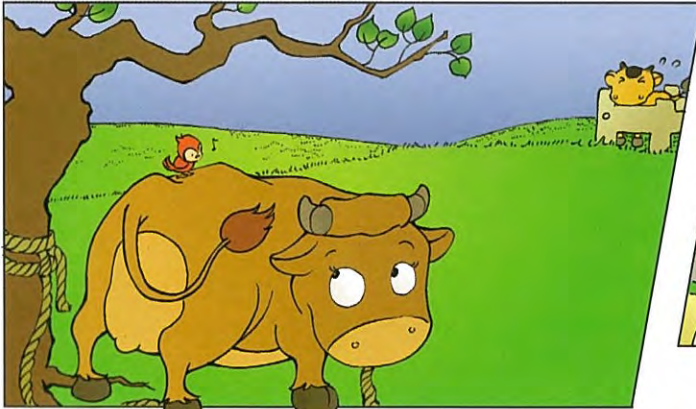
What does this have to do with young people? Am I hinting that they should shave their heads? No! You can still work to cultivate equanimity, love, compassion, joy and wisdom without shaving your head. But understanding the underlying symbolism of a shaved head — that it is not our outer appearances that matter but our inner beauty that matters — will help you to let go of useless attachments in order to find true, lasting happiness. ☺

Fool's Milk

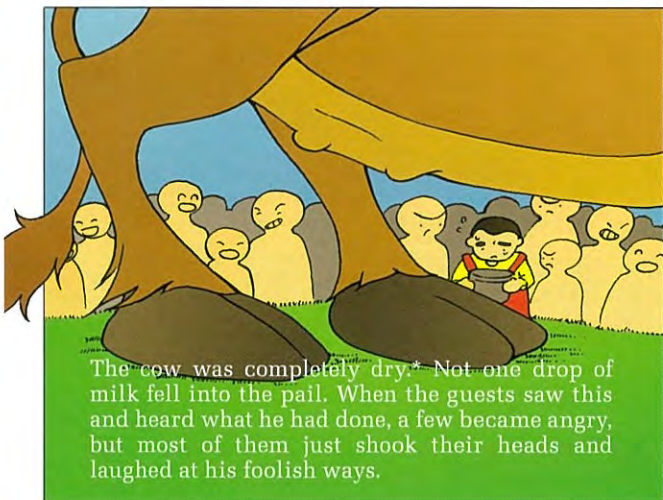
In olden times, a fool sent out invitations to a feast to take place at his home the following month. He planned to serve his guests milk with their meal, but after thinking further...



Pleased with his plan, the fool tied up the nursing calf in one place and the cow in another, so that not a drop would be wasted before the feast.



The day of the feast arrived a month later and the foolish man graciously received his guests. After they were assembled, he brought out the cow with much fanfare, but when he sat down to milk the cow...



This fool is like someone who wishes to practise the act of giving but decides to wait until he has a lot of money. However, no one knows what the future holds, and before very much can be saved something unforeseen takes place: he receives an enormous tax bill or is the victim of a fire or flood, or he is robbed and ends up losing what little he has managed to put away. He might even lose his life. The best way is to give right now. It is so.


~ Story adapted from
The One Hundred Parable Sutra



*Note: For milk supply to be constant, it works on a "Demand and Supply" basis. The more frequent and more efficiently milk is withdrawn will enable more milk to be produced.

The Little Man

BY | Ng Pei Fuen



Once, there was a little man. He was little by size, so to speak, a mere one metre tall at an age when everyone was nearly twice that size. Since young, he was unhappy. He

hated the sight of himself in front of the mirror — a tiny, scrawny figure who barely looked visible in crowds. He always tried very hard to make himself big. He held his breath so that his chest would expand, wore many layers of clothings so that he looked more ample, experimented with higher soled shoes, placed extra padding on his car seat so he looked taller to passing cars, sat on a high stool before his customer service counter — you name it, he tried it. Still, he was unhappy.

Interestingly, people around him loved him. They loved him for his good heart. But he was still not happy.

One day, he was walking gloomily along the streets after work, trying to think of another ingenious way to become “big”. Suddenly, “plonk!”, a small piece of wood fell to the ground before him. He swore and shuddered at the thought that it could have hit him. He looked up to see what it was and where it had come from. Lo and behold, there hanging inconspicuously under the window of the row of shophouses, was an old, rickety sign that said, “Want to look BIG? Come and have a chat with us.”

His heart leapt with joy, and he fell to his knees dramatically, placing his palms together and quickly chanted, “Thank you! Thank you for answering my prayers.” Ending with a few more violent shakes of his folded palms, he quickly darted up the old, dark staircase by the side of the shophouse. Usually, he

would have been too afraid to go anywhere so dark. But this time, he did not care. "Ah, an answer to looking big!" was all he could think of.

When he reached the third floor landing, he quickly located the door labelled prominently with the letters "B.I.G.". This must be it! He quickly knocked on the door, listening out for any sound inside that might tell him that someone was in. He heard the sound of feet shuffling, a cough and the sound of the doorknob turning.

As the door swung open, he saw a pair of eyes staring at him at eye level. At eye level, mind you! He had yet to meet anyone his size from birth till then! Inside his tiny frame, his heart sank. He had expected someone super big to open the door, a testament to the sign outside that window.

The pair of eyes scanned the little man, then an old wrinkled hand stretched out and held his left arm, "Ah, one of us! Welcome, young man, I've been waiting for you for a long time." When the door swung open a little more, the light from the room behind showed the face of a kind, serene old lady. He felt more comforted immediately and trusted her enough at that time to allow himself to be led in.

The room inside was small and bare. The old lady beckoned him to sit down on one of the two bamboo chairs available, and she walked into one of the two rooms in the small apartment. When she returned, she held in her hands an old photo album.

The little man scanned the whole room quickly. Old as it was, the room was neat and tidy. On the wall hung a family portrait and he quickly identified the old lady as the beautiful young woman sitting next to a man (her husband?) with a baby on her lap.

The old lady spoke, "Ah, that is my favourite family portrait. My old man has passed away now, and my son's doing well. But I prefer to stay alone and enjoy the peace." She pulled the other bamboo chair to face the little man and sat down slowly. "I know why you are here, as all the other people before you. Before I start, I want to know why you are unhappy with your size. Don't you have parents who love you? Friends, colleagues, relatives? Do people hate you or look down on you that much?"

The little man blushed. In fact, almost all his family and friends loved him and more than once reassured him that his size did not matter to them. His parents showered so much love on him that when they died, they left all their valuables to him. The cold, hard truth was: he could not love himself, being the size he was.

"Ha! Ha! Another unhappy one..." The old lady crackled. "You people really know how to bring suffering upon yourself. But well, since I started helping people like you and me, I have seen all kinds. I know how miserable it must feel inside. But I better introduce myself now and how I can help, before you think I'm taking you for a ride."

"You see, I was a world renowned seamstress. I trained under the greatest masters of the world. I even got into the World Book of Records for designing, cutting and sewing a full gown in thirty minutes. At the peak of my career, I met the man of my dreams and we got married. A year later, my son was born and we were the happiest family you could find. My son grew up over the years, but his stature was so small that his soccer friends always tackled him and he was often the target of the school bully. He became a very unhappy and angry boy. One day, he came home from secondary school with a bleeding wound on his head. He stormed into my room where I was sewing the day's work and screamed at me, "I hate you! Why did you give birth to me so small?" Those words broke my heart and I wept. I did not dare to talk to him, comfort him or even help him clean that nasty wound on his head. How could I tell him that I had no control over the genes that were imparted while he was in my womb?"

For months, my little boy refused to speak to me or my husband and we were distraught. One night, I had a nightmare. I saw my little boy running frantically away from a crowd of huge men. They were looming close, almost catching him and they were so big that they could easily crush him just by sitting on him. Then I saw my boy fall into a hole. The big men surrounded the hole to see where he was. Suddenly, my boy sprang out of the hole -- tall! The men were so frightened that they quickly ran away. When I woke up, I was both amused and worried for my little boy's future. But that dream gave me an inspiration. What if? What if I could tailor a suit for my boy that would make him bigger and taller?

That was way before the first man on the moon, mind you, and all that space suit stuff. But I began to design and conceptualise a suit that would give both height and volume to the wearer. My seamstress training only familiarised me with fabrics, but then I began experimenting with other materials, such as springs and swimming floats, which were inflatable but yet life-like. My dear husband was an amateur scientist and his help was crucial in this process.

In six months, our B.I.G. suit was ready. We happily packed it into a box and presented it to our little boy. When he walked out of his room the next morning, he was a beaming six-footer, looking well-muscled and sturdy. He kissed and hugged us and went around showing off his new build. He became very popular and as he grew older, he progressed quickly in his career and soon found himself a beautiful wife.

When he got married, he became unhappy again. You see, you cannot be wearing the B.I.G. suit all the time. When you shower or when you are with your wife, well, you know what I mean, you cannot be wearing it. So on his honeymoon, his new wife was shocked at how small he

really was and it took her some time to get used to who he really was.

My son tried all ways and means by showering gifts and affection on her, in desperate attempts to make her love this body he hated. But over time, their marriage broke down. There was resentment and anger, but most of all, his wife felt cheated.

How could he be one man before marriage and another man after?

They divorced and our son became unhappy again. This time, he was not so sure about the B.I.G. suit. He was undecided whether to ever wear it again. It was the cause of a failed relationship.”

The old lady suddenly looked apologetic and muttered to the little man, “Oh, sorry for the long story! I forgot to get you tea!”

The little man smiled gratefully and he felt both happy and touched by what this old lady was telling him. His heart was beating furiously with these silent questions, “Can I see the suit? Can I try it? Can I? Can I?” He wanted to see how it would look on him. Incredulous as it seemed, it was still the answer to what he had been searching for his whole life!

A cup of tea later, the old lady opened the photo album and showed him her son’s photographs. At school, he was scrawny. Later at college, the picture of a confident, well-built young man flashed across the pages. The little man felt so excited to see the difference the B.I.G. suit had made!

Then the old lady took out another newer album and showed him the same man, now looking more mature but small, smiling serenely next to a woman taller than him by a head, clutching her by the waist. There were pictures of them with two little children playing and in all the photos, they were smiling so beautifully. “This is his new wife. They married five years ago. He met her after his divorce, or rather, she bumped into his arms! Ha! Ha!”

The old lady laughed. “You see, my new daughter-in-law is partially blind. She cannot see beyond her hand held in front of her eyes.”

The little man gasped. Blind! His heart went out to her. He always had sympathy for people with disabilities. He nodded politely.

“But my dear son has never been happier. And he has given up his B.I.G. suit forever.” The most beautiful smile spread across the old lady’s face as she reflected on her beloved son’s happiness.

“You see, when someone small meets someone blind, who can blame the other for being less than perfect? But the most important thing is, when they



met, they met each other as they were. They were not wearing any suits. They opened their hearts to each other right from the start, with honesty and acceptance of themselves and for each other. This is important for relationships to work. It also makes your own life easier. You just have to be yourself.”

The old lady pulled her chair forward and held the little man’s hands in her warm, loving hands. “My son, do you still want the B.I.G. suit?”

The little man looked into her kind eyes and...

“YES!!!” the yell of the naughty little boy next door pierced through the early morning calm. “Yes, I want! I want it now!”

The little man jumped up from his bed as he mouthed the words, “Yes! Please do let me try the B.I.G. suit!” He looked down at his body which was still the same tiny frame and he looked around him in confusion. Huh? A dream!

The disappointment hit him like a huge baseball bat. It was so clear and real and he could still clearly recall the story and the advice of that old lady. Disbelief was in his mind as he stepped bewildered into the shower, playing and re-playing the dream and the message it held for him.

As he stepped out of the shower, a body tinier than his ran into his

legs and hugged him, giggling and screaming. “Ah, you little cheeky fellow!” As he swept the toddler into his arms, the baby kissed him wetly on his cheeks and his heart softened with love. He looked at that wriggling baby in his arms, this little nephew of his, who loved him truly for who he was.

“Brother, is baby in your room? Come and have your breakfast. I’ve prepared your favourite dish.” As the little man walked out of his room, the morning sun illuminated the room with love and clarity. The room of his heart was brighter now. Perhaps the B.I.G. suit — real or imaginary — was not necessary in the first place.

As he tucked into his breakfast, he scanned the day’s papers from the sports page backwards. Three letters caught his eye. “B.I.G.” He quickly flipped to the obituary column and his jaws dropped wide open when he saw this caption printed in bold, “Maker of the B.I.G. suit passes away peacefully in her sleep”. Below that caption, was the face of the serene and motherly lady who had spoken to him in his dream! ☺

ARE YOU UNHAPPY WITH WHO YOU ARE?

Looking for your B.I.G suit? Or B.E.A.U.T.I.F.U.L suit? Or E.L.O.Q.U.E.N.T. or R.I.C.H. or I.N.T.E.L.L.I.G.E.N.T. or S.U.A.V.E or...?

You know, we could fill up a whole warehouse with these suits and it will still not be enough. Some of us go through our whole lives looking for such suits, to beautify ourselves outside, to make ourselves feel more secure, to make us think that we are happy. We strive endlessly our whole life so that we can afford to be who we are not. It does not take that much suffering to be happy!

Just stop, slow down and look deep inside yourself.

Peace and contentment come from within. Any kind of grasping outside only brings more pain and bewilderment.

- With honesty, comes acceptance;
- With acceptance, comes tranquility;
- With tranquility, comes insight;
- With insight, comes liberation.



SEEN

Turn Mankind's Darkest Hour Into Its Finest

> **The 11th Hour**

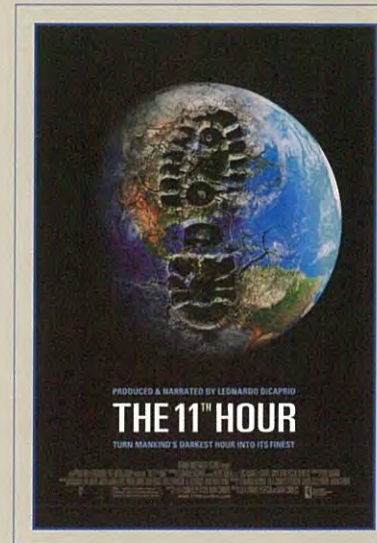
Directed by: Nadia Connors **Starring:** Leonardo DiCaprio

Produced by two-time Academy Award nominee Leonardo DiCaprio, *The 11th Hour* features a diverse mix of field experts on the climate crisis. The climate crisis that Earth faces is a stark certainty. It is not some theory that can be brushed off. The opening of the film attests to this by showing footages of recent global weather gone haywire — from floods to droughts. The warning signs are more than ample. Even if we may not strongly feel this to be the planet's 11th hour, it is the reality. For instance, the very day after this film was aired in the United States, news of California's worst wildfires which razed more than 106,800 hectares of land, destroyed some 655 homes and forced 265,000 people to be evacuated made the headlines.

If we further abuse the environment, it is a matter of time before we personally experience the fuller wrath of nature in person. Modern societies have this tendency to separate humankind from nature but the climate crisis shows us how we are more interconnected than we imagine. Human actions affect the environment, which can rebound to us via the web of cause and effect as the natural "blessings and curses" of nature. The Buddha called this (inter)dependent origination. Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh calls it "interbeing". We do not exist as standalone entities. Life is possible because there is a web of interconnecting exchange of resources. We are not masters of the biosphere that encompasses all life on Earth — we are only a part of it. We are part of nature and not separate lords of it. If humans truly believe themselves to be kings of nature, they should protect it; not exploit it.

Nature's interbeing is so intricate that when flora and fauna within a seemingly self-contained system are jeopardised, domino effects echo to the other elements in the system. Ecosystems interweave with each other more than we can ever imagine. If ecosystems continually break down due to human destruction, a critical tipping point will eventually be reached when the biosphere can no longer sustain human existence.

This documentary is a race against time to make sure enough efforts are exerted to prevent this from happening. As conservationist David Suzuki remarks, "like inside, like outside" — the state of the world reflects our minds. The cause of the planet's illness is our attitude to it. "When the mind is pure, the land is pure." A purified mind would not desecrate the world. The solution to the crisis is "love" (unconditional compassion) for all flora and fauna on Earth by taking care of their living environments — the seas, the lands and the skies. Ignoring the green cause altogether would be mass-suicide. The time is 23:59:59 — this is the moment to save the world; not just for yourself, but also for your kids and their kids.



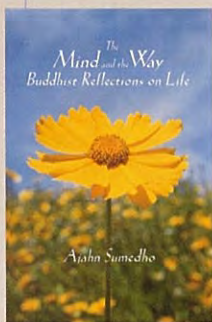
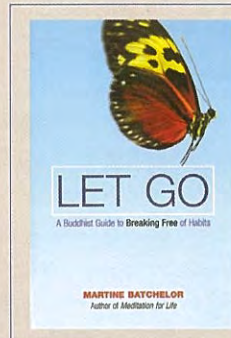
READ

Let Go of Grasping, Comparing & Self-judging with Buddhist Reflections on Life.

> **Let Go: A Buddhist Guide to Breaking Free of Habits**

By Martine Batchelor

If attachment and constant craving pose problems for you, and you feel caught in the grip of suffering, read this book for some insight and help. Written by a French lady who spent 10 years in a Korean monastery studying Zen Buddhism, this book offers wise and practical tips with guided meditation exercises at the end of each chapter for the reader to work with negative habits in a new and creative way. Get it from Awareness Place. Priced at S\$28.70.



> **The Mind & the Way: Buddhist Reflections on Life**

By Ajahn Sumedho

This is a book that Buddhists of all levels would like to have. Written in a clear, concise and easy-to-read manner, it talks at length the basic concepts of Buddhism ranging from The Four Noble Truths, The Three Refuges, Loving-kindness, *Nibbana*, *Kamma* and rebirth to various mind-transformation techniques such as mindfulness of the breath meditation and themes for daily practice. The last part of the book explains how practising Buddhists can live the Dharma in society and transcend the world when dealing with the unknown future. Priced at S\$30.50 from Awareness Place.

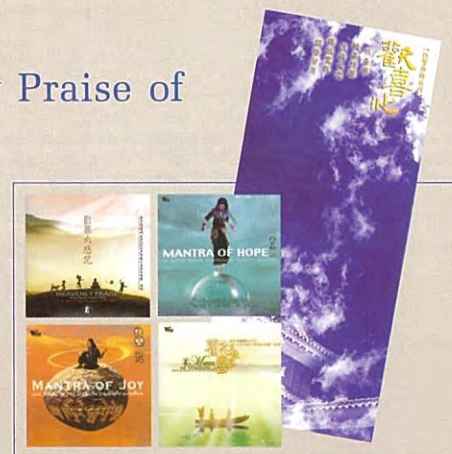
HEARD

Awaken your Inner Child with the Heavenly Praise of the Mantras of Wisdom, Hope and Joy.

> **Celestial Journey To Mantra**

By Wind Records Co. Ltd.

This collection of four CDs contains contemporary tracks of Buddhist mantras given a melodious yet new age twist with high tech recording, innovative vocals, Indian and rural folk songs, Chinese instruments, soothing music and light dance beat. Guaranteed to uplift your energy and mood. You can purchase this collection from Awareness Place at S\$75.00.



How can I hate anyone
with glimpse of a few faults,
if I love myself
despite my infinite flaws?

- Anonymous

Worry is nothing more than a negative state of mind
arising out of attachment to worldly pleasures.
The stronger the attachment to a thing is,
the greater is the fear of losing it.

- Ven Dr K Sri Dhammananda

Sentient beings follow their thinking
– their concepts, their ideas, their memories and feelings,
thinking them as real,
but a Buddha doesn't follow
and is not attached to his or her thinking,
seeing it as empty.

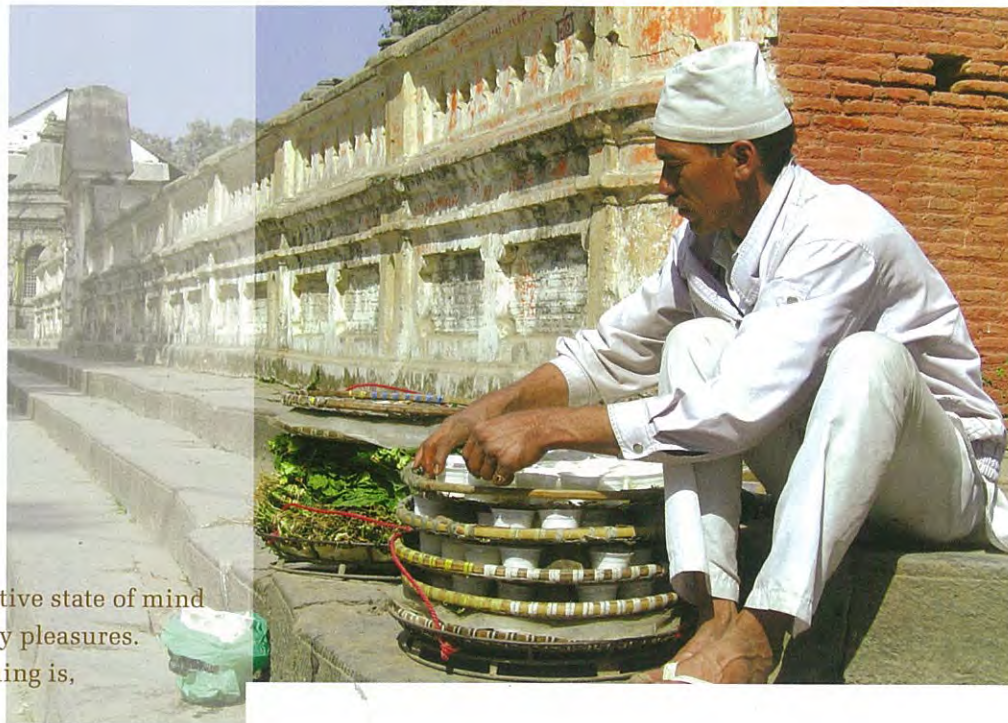
- Ven Hyon Gak Sunim

The most excellent practice
is to eliminate all non-virtues and
use your body, speech and mind in a very pure way,
examining your motivation
for doing whatever you are doing.

If you are interested
just in your own selfish gain
and are involved in different defilements
like desire or jealousy,
then no matter who you are with,
whether parents, friends or neighbours,
you are always going to have problems.

But if you can overcome,
or try to reduce those defilements,
goodness will follow you
wherever you go.

- Her Eminence Jetsun Kushok Chimey Luding



Although the Dharma gates of Buddhism —
the methods of practice are infinite,
before enlightenment,
you should select one path (method),
stick to it, learn it and practise hard.
Do not dabble with one
for a while, drop it and
go to another.

Unless you have faith in one method and
follow it exclusively,
you will not progress in your practice.

The important and essential thing is that
you have confidence in your method
and that you fully enter one gate.
Do not waste your time
trying to enter many gates.

- Master Sheng Yen

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.

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

Anicca: The truth of the constant changing of all mind and matter from moment to moment.

Arhantship: The stage of having fully eliminated the klesha obscurations. Arhants are accomplished Theravada practitioners who have eliminated the klesha obscurations. One who has destroyed the enemy of dualistic ego-grasping/clinging, and thus accomplished liberation of cyclic existence. They are the fully realised shravakas and pratyekabuddhas.

Attachment: Attachments are what keep us turning on the wheel of rebirth. 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) Becoming enlightened is nothing other than severing all our attachments. What is meant by "attachment"? It is the investing of mental or emotional energy in an "object". We can become attached to people, things, experiential states, and our own thoughts and preconceptions. In Buddhist teachings attachments are usually divided into two general categories: attachments to self and attachments to dharmas. For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment.

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

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

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

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

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

Buddha-nature: The original nature present in all beings which when realised leads to enlightenment. It is often called the essence of Buddhahood or enlightened essence.

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

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

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

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

Delusion: See 'Ignorance'.

Dependent origination: See Interdependence.

Dhammapada: A collection of sayings by the Buddha.

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

Dukkha: The truth that life is full of dissatisfactory experiences.

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.

Geshe: A scholar who has attained a doctorate in Buddhist studies. This usually takes fifteen to twenty years to achieve.

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

Guru: Spiritual teacher/friend/mentor.

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

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

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 words, 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.

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).

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

Parinibbana: full nirvana.

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

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

Puja: Ceremony/act of worship, offering.

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

Rebirth: The continual cycle of birth and death.

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

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

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

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

Shamatha: tranquility meditation. This is basic sitting meditation in which one usually follows the breath while observing the workings of the mind while sitting in the cross-legged posture. The main purpose of shamatha meditation is to settle or tame the mind so that it will stay where one places it.

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.

Six Realms of Existence: Also called the Six Paths of Rebirth, it refers to the six categories of living beings who are not enlightened. They are 1) Gods, 2) Humans, 3) Asuras, 4) Animals, 5) Ghosts, 6) Hell-dwellers. The particular category that one finds oneself reborn in depends upon one's karma at the time of rebirth.

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.

Three Poisons: The three poisons or major defilements also called desire, craving or attachment; aversion, ill-will, anger or hatred; and ignorance or delusion.

Threefold Refuge: Taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

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

Vajrayana: Tibetan school of Buddhism.

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

Vipassana: Insight. Meditation that develops insight into the nature of mind. The other main meditation is shamatha meditation.

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

Kosala Sa.myutta

*He who holds his own self dear,
With evil let him not be linked.
An evil-doer's [short-lived] joy
Is not a bargain that is good.*

*Assaulted by the "End-maker" (death),
And losing his humanity*,
What use for him is property
And what can he then take away?
What is it that will follow him
Like his own shadow never parting?*

*Both the good and evil deeds
Which a mortal here performs,
These are his property indeed
That he will take away with him.*

*His deeds will follow after him
Like his own shadow never parting.
Hence noble deeds should be performed,
A storing for the future life.
Good deeds will in the world beyond
Bestow on beings goodly help.*

*~ The Buddha
Samyutta Nikaya 3.4
Part One: The Verse Section (Sagaaathaa Vagga)*

** In Buddhism, a human birth is valuable because it is in the human realm that one may best work for enlightenment. However, regarded as the result of former good acts, it is difficult to obtain because few beings have predominantly good karma.*