

普觉awaken



国王的一念之间

禅的艺术境界

为人辛苦为人甜

Enlightened Leadership

Learn some of the basic principles of leading with compassion and wisdom

What Meditation Isn't

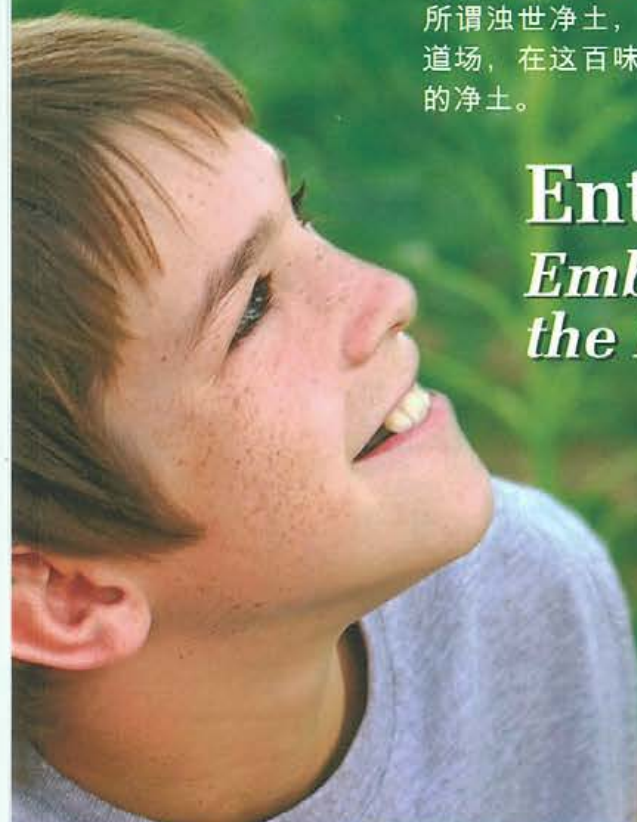
**Introducing Mantras
the Musical Way**

Imee Ooi speaks of her work as a Buddhist producer-composer-vocalist

佛教的心灵环保理念

所谓浊世净土，其实就是要求我们把滚滚红尘当作人间道场，在这百味杂陈纷纭复杂的人世里开创出一片心灵的净土。

Entering Santi Asoke
*Embracing Nature, Loving
the Earth*



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9 - 12月 / sep - dec

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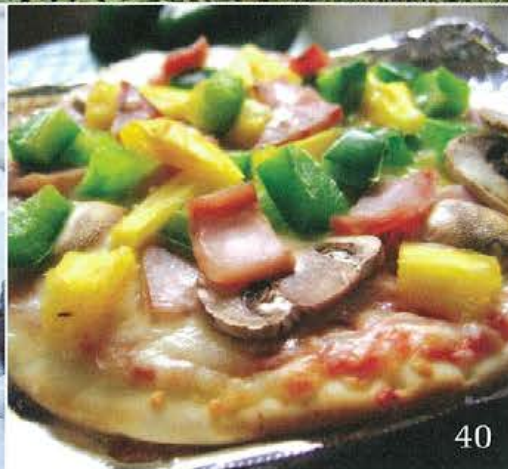
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For advertising enquiries, contact

65 6849 5341 / 342

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This year has been a pretty eventful one. The world weathered Cyclone Nargis and the Sichuan Earthquake (pg 38) and witnessed the untold suffering and destruction they brought to the human world. Often, we take many things in life for granted until something drastic happens — internationally, nationally or personally — to shake us from our ‘stupor’ that things will always be the way they are, or that life is essentially one long joy trip when in fact it is full of all sorts of dissatisfactions big and small.

In the last of the three themes for 2008 — attachment, anger and ignorance — we close this year by looking at how to deal with life and all its complexities with greater wisdom. Hence in this issue, we learn how karma can affect free choice (pg 36) and how through mindfulness and contemplation, we can learn to be an enlightened leader instead of being a victim of our karmic winds reacting impulsively to our inner drives (pg 41).

Mindfulness leads to awareness. In Vipassana meditation, our goal is to achieve an awareness so intense that Venerable Henepola Gunaratana says we will be able to pierce the inner workings of reality itself. However, first we need to clear our misconceptions about meditation (pg 53).

Ordinarily, people behave like the foolish, timid rabbit (pg 60) or the man in the story of *Half a Rice Cracker* (pg 58), but with greater insight into the nature of life that comes from mindfulness, awareness and contemplation, we learn to appreciate the powers of gratitude (pg 37), humility, kindness (pg 35) and pure motivation (pg 57). Our hearts soften and we are transformed. We learn to restrain the mind (pg 63) and start to see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas as role models (pg 47). We understand that life can really be simple yet happy with few wants. Exuding great energy and light with abundance in our hearts, we would be able to care for others sincerely in every moment (pg 49) instead of being saddled with judgments and expectations.

May all awaken to greater insight and wisdom with the Dharma. May all find peace and happiness in their hearts.

Yours in the Dharma,
Esther Thien

Vege Fast Food Class

Date/Time : 21 & 28 Sep, Sun, 2.00pm – 4.00pm
Fee : \$30 (2 lessons)
Conductor : Conducted by Mr. Wong Kew Yew

Organic Educational Tour

Date/Time : 1 Oct, 8.30am – 6.40pm
Fee : \$60 (inclusive of 3 organic meals)
Conductor : Mr. Wong Kew Yew

Vegetarian Cooking Workshops – Reunion Dishes

Date/Time : 16 Nov – 30 Nov, Sun, 2.00pm – 4.30pm
Fee : \$60
Conductor : Mr. Oh Chong Fah
Details : Please visit www.awarenessplace.com, email semd@kmspks.org or call 6336 5067 to register or enquire.

Relaxation & Vipassana Meditation

Date/Time : 26 Aug – 28 Oct, Tue, 8.00pm – 9.30pm
Venue : Pagoda of Ten Thousand Buddhas, 2nd Level
Fee : \$10
Conductor : Ven. Chuan Ren
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300

PKS English Dharma Class

Year 1 Module 3

Date/Time : 7 Sep – 23 Nov, Every Sunday,
2.00pm – 3.30pm
Fee : \$30
Venue : KMSPKS Monastery, Dharma Hall

Year 2 Module 3

Date/Time : 11 Sep – 13 Nov, Every Thursday,
7.30pm – 9.00pm
Fee : \$30
Venue : 1st floor, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300

AP @ Shan You Charity Concert 2008

Date/Time : 27 Sep, 5.00pm – 10.00pm
Venue : Hong Lim Garden
Details : Awareness Place will be taking part in the meaningful fundraising project with Shan You Counselling Centre. Member can enjoy up to 30% discount. For more information, please call 6337 7582

AP Sale @ Holistic Festival

Date/Time : 10 – 11 Oct, 11.00am – 8.00pm
Venue : Fort Canning
Details : Awareness Place take part in this Bi-annually holistic festival. Do come and spend this time with family members. For more information, please call 6337 7582

Spiritual Countdown 2008

Usher your new year with party, fellowship, Buddhist hymns and aspiration puja
Date/Time : Wed evening, 31 Dec 2008 (overnight to Thursday morning)
Venue : KMSPKS
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5346 or email youth@kmspks.org

*w*s*d*p

an excellent 1st step in learning about Buddhism and its application
Date/Time : Every Thursday 7.30pm – 9.30pm
Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5346 or email wsp@kmspks.org

Y_Cultivation

short courses introducing Buddhist teachings, concepts and practices
Date/Time : Every Saturday evening
Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5345 or email ycultivation@kmspks.org

3GEMS Guided Tours

Buddhist guided tours to various Buddhist monasteries by experienced volunteers
Details : For more information, please call 6849 5346 or email 3gemstour@gmail.com

Visit www.kmspks.org/youth to learn more about the above programmes.

Medicine Buddha Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

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

Pureland Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

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

Diamond Sutra Recitation (Chinese)

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

The Great Compassion Puja (Chinese)

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

Recitation of 25th Chapter of the Lotus Sutra (Pu Men Pin)

Date/Time : Every Friday, 8.00pm – 9.30pm
Venue : Hall of Great Compassion

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300

Words of Wisdom Heard or Read

I've never seen anything like this in all my time in jail. As soon as this Venerable walked in, the whole wing just stopped and went dead quiet. The aura he gave out was so strong yet humble at the same time. I knew I may never meet a man again with so much wisdom. So I asked, "What is my purpose in life?" He said my purpose was to do as much kindness as I can. I was expecting something more, cos' the answer seems so simple. But the more I contemplate, the more it makes sense to me. For starters, the kinder and more loving you are, the better your next life is going to be. Also, if your every action comes from a heart of kindness, imagine the amount of good karma you are going to get back. The Buddha's teaching is so simple, no big words or anything, just plain, simple and straight to the point.

— Les, Inmate at Long Bay Prison, Australia

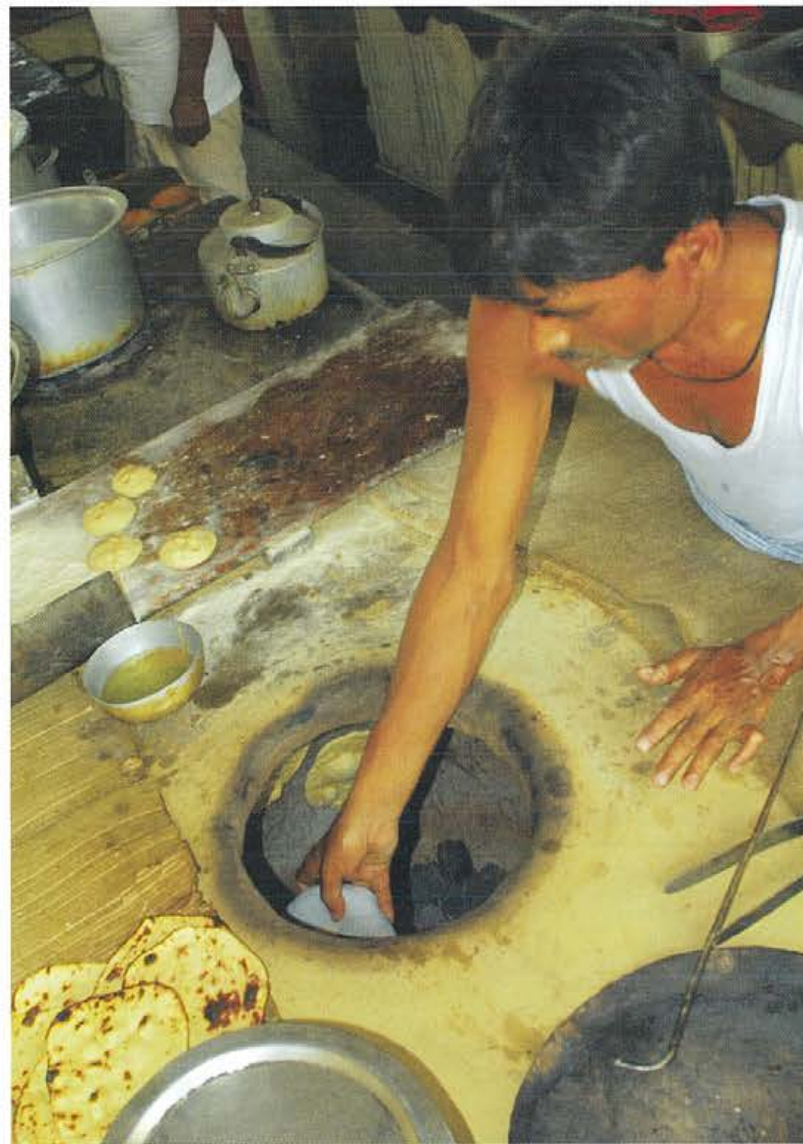
Can Karma Affect Free Choice?

Q: Can karma affect free choice? How is free choice affected by karma?
— *A senior citizen*

A: We all have karma, or mind-habit. It is not a special quality or condition. When a person is attached to his thinking, he develops a habit. When he is attached to his habit, he gets karma. And if he's attached to that karma, he gets more karma. It's just a case of unending cause and effect. Although the person still has free choice in that cause and effect, it is affected by the karma he has created. Thus, the person creates karma and in turn, the karma affects his free choices, either severely or lightly limiting his free choices. In Buddhism, when a person really meditates, he will see that his karma is fundamentally empty, that it has no nature. But when you think your karma is real, it affects you. In meditation, when you see the substance of karma, of thinking and of the mind is fundamentally empty, then karma cannot affect you and your free choice is unhindered.

If we are attached to desire, anger or ignorance, we make karma and this karma consequently controls our free choice, like a wind blowing on a moving object.

If you just follow your karma, it controls you and many kinds of actions appear. Therefore, if you are attached to your karma, you make more karma. You have to see that your karma is essentially empty. It is like when you have a dream of a big, hungry tiger chasing after you. In the dream, you think it is real, so you run really, really fast to get away. But when you wake up, you realise you are in your room, on the bed and that the tiger is not real. When you thought the tiger was real, the tiger affected you. But the whole time, the tiger wasn't there. It was completely empty. When you wake up and realise the tiger is a dream and see that it is empty, there is no more running. Karma is exactly like that. Any kind of karma is just a dream, created by the thinking which you are attached to. When you let go of the attachment and see that karma is empty, then you are free. 🐾



Photos: Samuel Lim

— *Ven. Hyon Gak*

Celebrating Gratitude with a Musical Fare



SINGAPORE — The Gratitude Concert (感恩快乐音乐会) conducted on May 31 and June 1 to a total of 3,200 people at the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery did not merely entertain; it encouraged its audience to practise and celebrate gratitude and environmentalism as a way of life.

A minute's silence was observed before the concert to mourn for the victims in the recent Sichuan earthquake and Cyclone Nargis. It was the organisers' hope that by promoting gratitude as a way of life would help create a positive future for the well-being of the Earth and reduce future natural disasters.

Said the monastery's abbot, Ven. Sik Kwang Sheng, "We cannot take the environment we live in for granted; many positive conditions were needed to create it. The Earth's temperatures are currently rising — how would our future generations live? We must do what we can before it's too late. Don't ever belittle the collective power of individual actions that seem trivial."

Four video clips featuring environmentally-aware youths and Xiaohuang, the resident canine of the monastery, also educated the audience about soil, water, air and sound pollution in a light-hearted way. Renowned Y.E.S. 93.3 FM deejay Peifen (佩芬) also made a cameo appearance to share green lifestyle tips.

Gratitude towards our parents was another theme emphasised at the concert. Playing the violin for the first time in public, Ven. Kwang Sheng put up a moving rendition of the familiar tune *Mother's Love Is the Greatest Love on Earth* (世上只有妈妈好), together with budding theatre actress and singer Joanna Dong (董姿彦) and the monastery's percussion ensemble. He also performed *Praise to the Buddha* (赞佛曲).

A short but memorable skit performed by veteran entertainer Marcus Chin (陈建彬) and concert host Dennis Chew (周崇庆) brought out the importance of filial piety, where they comically satirised the drastic differences in how children from past generations and modern times treated their parents. Apart from drawing much laughter from the audience, the lively everyday situations portrayed struck a chord with them and helped them reflect upon the way they interacted with their parents. Marcus Chin also touched the hearts of many with his rousing delivery of *Call My Name Again* (叫阮的名), a Hokkien song depicting the profound sadness of losing one's mother.

Another excerpt on filial piety is performed by Mediacorp artiste Nick Shen in a Teochew opera duet, titled *Liu Ming Yue Saves the Orphan* (柳明月救孤儿) with his mentor Goh Gek Lan, a veteran local Teochew opera actress.

Next, Joanna Dong serenaded the crowd with her outstanding performance of *Mai Phen Rai*, a song from the musical *Chang and Eng*. Meaning "Never Mind" in Thai, the Siamese twins' mother sings this comforting song in the musical to give her sons strength in the face of discrimination.

The diverse array of performing talents ensured there was an item that everyone can resonate with. From rap-and-breakdance by the Malaysian Buddhist hymn group Messengers of Dharma (MOD) to the pitch-perfect songs by veteran singer Julie Ng (黎川).

Towards the end of the concert, the audience was invited to pen their words of gratitude on the Gratitude Card, before joining the performers in the emotionally-uplifting finale *Paradise on Earth* (快乐天堂). ☺

Monastery Raised S\$1.02 Million for Sichuan Earthquake Victims

SINGAPORE — The recent spate of natural disasters caused much suffering to many, but it also brought out the best in humanity. Many were moved to help in any way they could, volunteering in relief efforts or making monetary contribution.

The monastery did its part by putting together a touching and astounding fundraising concert in just 18 days for Sichuan earthquake victims. Titled *Great Compassion, Great Aspiration Charity Concert*, this fundraiser was co-organised with Super Coffeemix Manufacturing Limited and Scorpio East Holdings Limited. Voluntary performers for the night include Gallen Luo (罗嘉良) and Perry Chiu (焦媛) from Hong Kong, Zhou Hui (周惠), WOW and Alan Kuo (柯有轮) from Taiwan,



Mindee Ong and Qi Yu Wu of 881 fame, Jack Neo & J Team, Kelly Poon, Tan Di Ya and many more talented local artistes.

About 2400 people attended the three-hour long show, and a total of S\$1,026,366.90 was raised from this concert. The cheque was presented to the China Embassy on 24 June 2008.

Auspicious Phenomenon Unfolded During Taiwan's Shanti Stupa Ceremony

TAIWAN — An amazing and auspicious phenomenon was witnessed unfolding in the sky by thousands during the opening ceremony to unveil the Shanti Stupa in Taiwan. Held on the 22nd of June this year, the phenomenon was observed in awe shortly after the speeches by various dignitaries and ribbon cutting. First, a halo around the sun appeared.

Next, a pair of dragon and phoenix-like cloud formations materialised like a backdrop to the Stupa. A red beam that seemed to issue from the tip of the Stupa was also captured on photographs by many cameras. Everyone at the ceremony marvelled at the spectacle.

Thousands of people from Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Singapore and Canada, including 22 delegates from China and the Mayor of the province and county attended this historical event.



World Peace Auspicious Stupa

世界和平吉祥宝塔

兩千年前，印度的阿育王篤信佛教，興建了八萬四千佛塔。一千年前，中國五代十國時期的吳越國王錢俶重踐聖學，在中國境中也建了八萬四千塔。事隔千年，第三次八萬四千塔的偉大事業則將由八萬多位平民百姓，善男信女，佛門大德和在家居士來完成它。

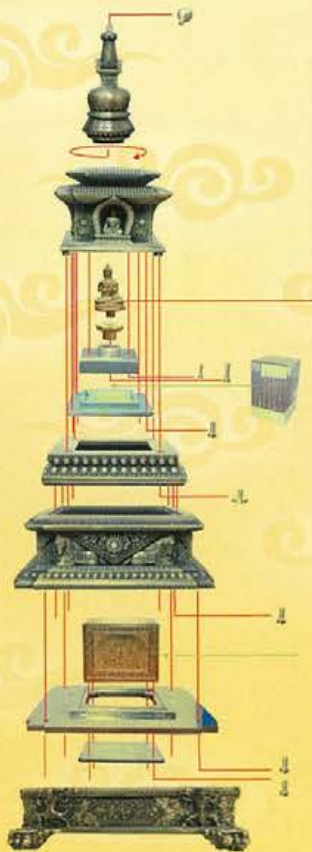
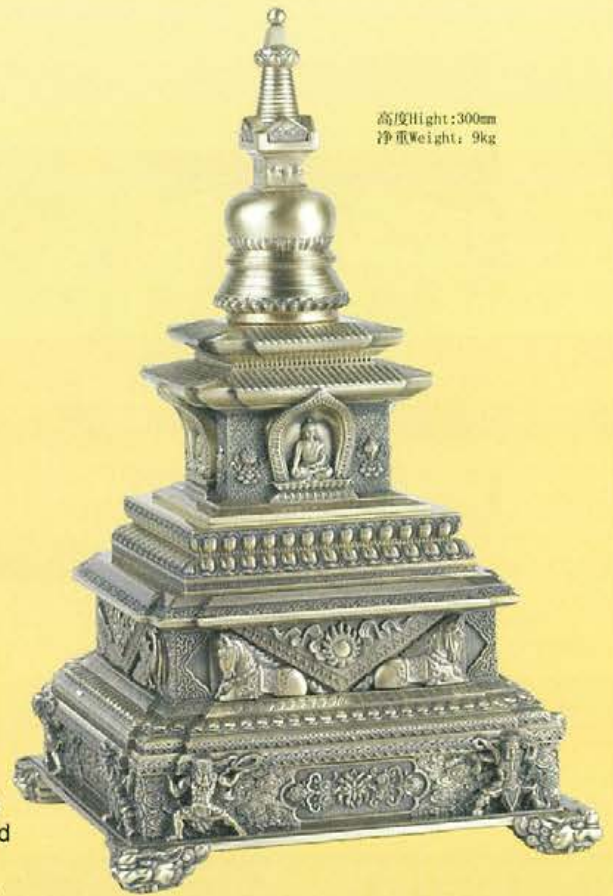
此功德項目由中國佛教在線發起，國內外眾多佛教寺院和團體加盟參予。經過兩年時間的研發，設計和籌塑。經過對塔身以及對裝藏法物制作的不斷的改良，經過對它組裝和諧調的完美苛求，此宝塔终于在今年流通于世。

此塔之称为世界和平吉祥宝塔，原因在于塔中安置了三藏十二部中之《一切如来心秘密全身舍利宝篋印陀罗尼經》和其陀羅尼咒幢。供养此塔將若供养三世一切如来舍利。功德不可思意。

迎請此塔的功德主亦參予了興建九大和平寶塔。此九塔其中會有一座將建在星加坡的延慶寺。

由於配額有限，新加坡僅分有一千座。請諸大德率先迎供，功德無量。

高度Height: 300mm
淨重Weight: 9kg



Two thousand years ago, out of his deep devotion to the teachings of Buddha, King Ashoka of India constructed 84,000 stupas throughout his kingdom. 1000 years ago, Emperor Qianshu of China repeated the feat in China. The third attempt to construct 84,000 stupas is now! It will be accomplished not by a powerful emperor but by over 80,000 devoted lay and ordained Buddhists.

This meritorious project is coordinated by FJNET online (www.fjnet.com), the largest online Buddhist community in China, and supported by various Buddhist monasteries and communities. After two years of trial and error in designing and constructing a prototype of the stupa and the accompanying sacred objects, they are finally ready for sponsorship.

We have named the stupa as "The World Peace Auspicious Stupa" since the Mahayana Sutra "Casket of Secret Relic" and its sacred Dharani Mantra are embedded within. Offering and paying homage to this stupa will be equivalent to giving offerings to the sacred relics of the Buddhas past, present and future; creating unimaginable merits.

Sponsorship of this stupa will also contribute towards the construction of nine (9) large World Peace Auspicious Stupas, one of which will be constructed at Ean Keng Si Temple located at Frankel Avenue, Singapore.

Singapore has been allotted a quota of 1000 of these stupas for sponsorship. Please register now to be a part of this historical event. May all be auspicious!

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It is that time of the year again when people generally loosen up for some merriment and celebrations. But in the midst of all that merry-making with family and friends, do not forget about the need to spread kindness, offering respect and embodying love to all sentient beings, big or little. With pure motivation and bodhicitta, here are two vegetarian recipes you can cook up a storm during this festive period.

Pizza 意大利饼



Skin ingredients:

- (a) Milk 200ml, yeast 11gm, sugar 2tsp, salt 1¹/₂tsp, Planta margarine 2tbsp — all mixed well
- (b) Flour 500gm

Filling ingredients:

- (c) Tomatoes, green pepper, vegetarian ham, canned pineapple, button mushroom, cheese — cut into small strips
- (d) tomato sauce, chilli sauce, sugar, sour plum sauce, vegetarian oyster sauce — mixed well

Method:

1. Mix (b) and (a) into a smooth, soft dough, cover with a towel and let it rise in a warm place for 1 hour.
2. Roll dough flat and round. Apply oil on baking tin and place dough on it. Spread (d) evenly on dough followed by (c).
3. Let oven heat up for 5mins, bake at 200°C – 250°C for 30mins and serve.

皮材料:

- (a) 奶水200毫升、酵母粉11克、糖2茶匙、盐1¹/₂茶匙、面包油2汤匙 — 全部打均匀
- (b) 普通面粉500克

馅料:

- (c) 番茄, 灯笼椒, 素火腿, 罐装黄梨, 白蘑菇, 乳酪 — 切条状
- (d) 番茄酱、辣椒酱、白糖、酸梅酱、素蚝油 — 混合

做法:

1. 将(b)倒入(a), 揉匀后盖上湿毛巾, 让发酵约1小时。
2. 用木棒碾平圆薄片, 放入涂油的烘盘上, 用叉刺小孔, 涂上(d)及排上所有馅料(c)。
3. 烘烤炉先热5分钟, 将备好的意大利饼放入200°C至250°C烤约30分钟既成。

Chocolate Banana Pudding 香蕉巧克力布丁



Ingredients:

- 2 cups of ripe bananas
- 1 pc of soft tofu
- 1 tbsp cocoa powder
- 1/2 tsp of cinnamon powder
- 1/4 cup organic honey or raw sugar

Method:

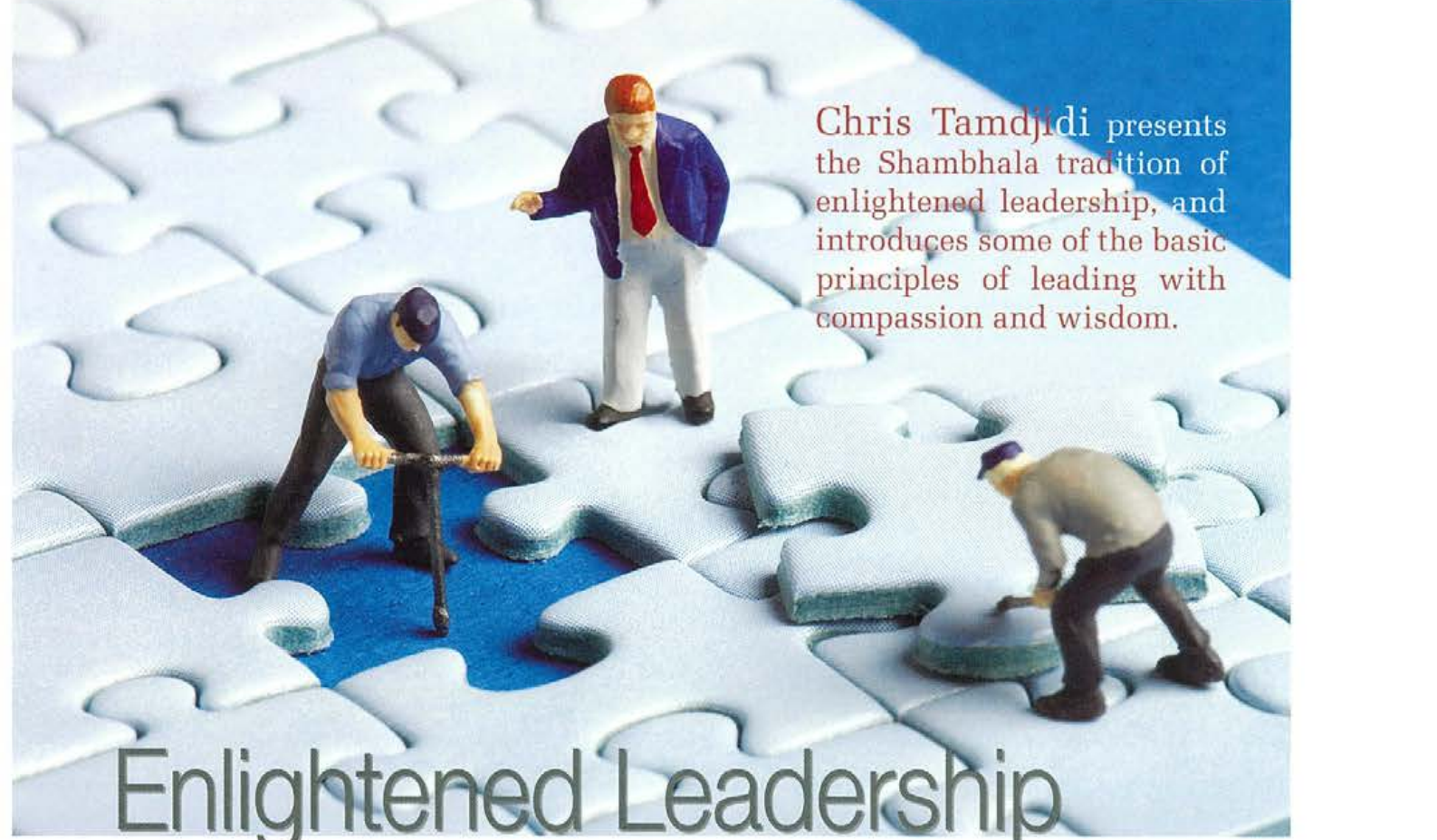
1. Place all the ingredients into a blender. Blend until smooth.
2. Put in a bowl and chill for an hour.

材料:

- 两杯熟香蕉
- 一块豆腐
- 一大汤匙可可粉
- 1/2茶匙桂皮粉
- 1/4杯有机蜜糖或蔗糖

做法:

1. 把全部材料搅拌均匀。
2. 倒入容器, 冷冻一小时即可。



Chris Tamdjidi presents the Shambhala tradition of enlightened leadership, and introduces some of the basic principles of leading with compassion and wisdom.

Enlightened Leadership

Buddhism is a spiritual tradition best known for its emphasis on meditation to cultivate wisdom, and compassionate activity to help others. Within the many Buddhist teachings, there are also teachings on leadership. The Buddha gave Dawa Zanpo, the first King of Shambhala extensive teachings on how to be a King and bring about a good society.

Introduction

Leadership is commonly defined as a process by which a leader (or group of leaders) persuades or convinces by example or manages a group of people to do something which is treasured in the value system of the group or the leader.

In today's working world, faced with multiple challenges — tighter deadlines, increasing complexity and growing financial pressure — the typical example of leader we see is often a stressed individual, who partly manages, partly pressures his or her subordinates to achieve short-term financial results or deadlines, often to benefit mainly themselves or their companies.

In contrast to this, we all have an innate longing for wise or enlightened leadership from leaders, who by virtue of their example and their skills, can

motivate a group of people, an organisation or a society to realise goals that fundamentally improve their situation and unlock the potential that exists in all humans. Such leaders are not self-serving, but see leadership as a way to serve others — they demonstrate true, selfless, compassionate, wise and thus enlightened leadership.

In this article, we explore the path to such “enlightened leadership” and in particular, the initial steps on this path — something we could call “mindful leadership”.

The disciplines of meditation, mindfulness in life, contemplation and decision-making form the basis of such mindful leadership.

These disciplines and the concept of mindful leadership are almost conventionally sensible. Almost nobody, when presented with these concepts, would have any problem accepting their usefulness to the modern working world. They serve as very important first steps in the development of what we could call compassionate or even enlightened leadership.

In the Shambhala tradition of Buddhism, which contains extensive teachings on leadership and on how to create a good society, the development of the virtues of an enlightened leader is taught. These virtues are called Tiger, Lion, Garuda and Dragon. What we have described so far in terms of mindful leadership is presented by the Sakyong, Mipham Rinpoche, in his book *Ruling Your World* as some of the aspects of Tiger. The Shambhala teachings go on to describe the path of developing the qualities of enlightened leadership in steps, and these steps are closely connected to the practices and disciplines of a bodhisattva.

Enlightened Leadership — Realistic or Unrealistic?

It might seem difficult, or even naïve, to try to be a compassionate or enlightened leader given the pressures leaders face nowadays. However, one should not give up. If one looks a little more deeply, a different picture emerges. There are many reasons why it is both necessary and possible to cultivate wisdom and compassion in the working world, and become an example of an enlightened leader.

There is an emerging interest from modern management and leadership thinkers about the benefits, and in fact the necessity, of mindful or even enlightened leadership for the corporate world. Consider these three points:

- Managers and employees in today's organisations are faced with an avalanche of information and a need for speed to deal with all the urgent tasks at hand. The result is too many activities in too little time — and there is a growing realisation that people are suffering from a permanent state of inner distraction. An article in the *Harvard Business Review*, a leading journal of management thinking, speaks about the dangers of this: "Modern office life and an increasingly common condition called 'attention deficit trait' are turning steady executives into frenzied underachievers." Out of this realisation, there is an emerging interest in mindfulness practices and a style of being at work that we could call "mindful leadership". Clearly, just applying basic Buddhist teachings on mindfulness and awareness could potentially provide great benefit.

- In a recent study of 1435 US Fortune 500 companies by renowned management researcher and author Jim Collins, only 11 were identified as displaying long-lasting greatness — garnering three times the return of the stock market for a period of at least 15 years. What did they have in common? They each had an exceptional leader at the helm, who displayed tremendous personal humility and exceptional discipline. In the book *Good to Great* and a *Harvard Business Review* article, he describes such qualities as humility, lack of an overbearing ego, commitment to inspire standards, calm, quiet determination, channelling ambition to the company or others and not to oneself. And he talks of those leaders who have the seed of this kind of leadership in them — perhaps we would describe this seed as Buddha nature manifesting. These people seem to display what we could call "authentic" or "compassionate leadership".
- Businesses are affecting more and more aspects of our life and societies. They determine the nature of our work life and income; productivity, social opportunities, equality and economic wealth of societies; and our views of what a good, successful human being is. Consider what the benefit will be if there are examples of compassionate, enlightened leaders, and what the dangers are if businesses are run primarily on the basis of a self-centred and materialistic model of leadership.

So we can see that the world of businesses and organisations are recognising that both "mindful leadership" and "compassionate leadership" are necessary, helpful and in fact successful. In essence, the working world is endorsing the need for the wisdom and the sanity of the Buddhist traditions.

So, how do we actually practise it?

How to Start — Meditation

The basic starting point of such a journey, and in fact of the entire Buddhist path, is the basic practice of mindfulness-awareness meditation. As Buddhists, we all know the benefits and different aspects of this practice. Two important points to highlight in this context are:

- Cultivating mindfulness of the breath or a mental object leads to a degree of mental stabilisation. We are able to remain in the present moment, undistracted, aware and with a stable mind. Less buffeted by the winds of our own thoughts or the phenomenal world, we are able to bring out the inherent strength and clarity of our minds. This naturally has a direct benefit in the working world.
- Mindfulness leads naturally to awareness, a degree of environmental and spacious awareness. We learn to raise our gaze from our own endless self-concerns to begin to take in a wider picture of the world. This also allows true insight to arise. We begin to see our nature — to see our personality and also to see deeper into the wisdom that exists in us and all other people.

A regular practice of mindfulness-awareness is an essential element for us as Buddhists if we actually want to extend our spiritual path into the working world.

It is a little like exercising our body — if we know we are going to face a challenging period, we all know it is good to be physically fit. We can handle more stress then. In the same way, we can look at meditation as a training of our minds to better equip us to handle the working world and not be swayed from our determination to be compassionate and wise.



Extending Our Practice — Mindfulness in Life

Our formal practice of meditation may only be 10 minutes or 30 minutes a day. So the question is how do we extend this throughout the day? There are two approaches to this, which naturally mix over time.

The first is exerting ourselves in mindfulness in a formal sense for some particular activities. So we could select certain activities and do them with heightened mindfulness, potentially almost making rituals out of them. Many examples exist, that include taking moments to rest, acknowledge, appreciate and consciously tune into our current experience. So for example, rather than jumping out of bed first thing in the morning, we could rest in bed when we wake up and just realise we are awake and present. We could continue this by showering or brushing our teeth with heightened mindfulness or dressing with a sense of mindfulness, perhaps even ritual. Reflecting on the nature of the day ahead of us, reflecting on our state of mind and beginning to discern what clothes seem suitable for this particular situation. This leads to a heightened appreciation of the flavours of the days, and how we appear in the world. The table on the next page includes many further tips for mindfulness at work in Singapore.

Naturally, such a practice of mindfulness is strengthened by having basic time management skills. In fact, one can develop a rather profound “mindfulness-based time management,” which is more conducive to avoiding fragmentation and is as, if not more effective than ordinary methods of time management.

Once you have become a little familiar with active exertion of mindfulness at work, the second manner of extending mindfulness becomes more apparent. This

is the ability to ride moments of mindfulness when they suddenly arise and extending them. Once we are familiar with the observance of mindfulness in our life, we notice that throughout the whole day, our thoughts suddenly stop and we are present — even if only for a short second. Recognising this, we can rest in this presence and extend it.

MINDFULNESS AT WORK

Driving mindfully, or being mindful in the MRT on the way to work. Or potentially leaving the MRT one to two stations early on purpose and walking slowly to gather one's mind and energy before getting to work.

Watching the breath and not doing 10 other activities impatiently while Microsoft Windows starts up on the office computer.

Simply sitting in our chair when we arrive for 30 seconds and taking stock of the scene in the office.

Creating a special tea or coffee ritual as a way to cut through endless activities. Actually pausing and taking a moment to savour or appreciate an experience.

Being very mindful of our posture while we work, especially on the computer.

Arriving at a meeting 10 minutes early and settling in quietly into the space. Staying in a meeting room after the meeting is over and just being for a little while.

Being very mindful of our posture and our state of mind during a meeting, and noticing how our change in posture can actually affect our state of mind.

Always taking a moment to really connect with people when talking to them — invite them to take a seat, resting together for a moment before starting to work together.

Taking time to actually savour our lunch. Eating lunch in silence, without reading e-mails, newspapers or engaging in other distractions.

Deepening Our Understanding — Contemplation

Having begun to work with our mind and to create islands of space in our day, we can begin to deepen these experiences and use them for our

lives. Contemplation is a formal method in many Buddhist traditions. Rather than placing our mind on a physical object such as the breath, or a verbal object such as a mantra, we can place it on a mental object, such as a thought. This is a common approach to analytical Vipassana.

So, in our working life, having begun to know how to hold our minds to an object in meditation, and be less discursive during the day by extending our mindfulness, we can begin to hold our minds to a thought in a non-discursive way and penetrate its meaning more deeply.

When we look at our lives, it is actually frightening to see how little we really contemplate things. We usually spend our day in one uninterrupted stream of activities, mixed with mindless relaxation, before we slump into bed. While such a day might include a lot of thinking or strategising how to get what we want (the right coffee, the right result in a meeting, the right bonus....) we usually spend very little time actually reflecting or trying to contemplate the deeper meaning of things.

However, having learnt to hold our minds more steadily and to create islands of mindfulness in our days, we can use these times to reflect more deeply on issues. Spending 10 minutes after a meeting just reflecting on what happened in that meeting, and how the outcome arose, or why it did not, can save hours of further meetings to analyse or implement further projects. We can begin to penetrate the more subtle interplay of phenomena in office life — the kinds of things management trainers get paid thousands of dollars to point out to us — and to learn to be mindful and aware of these factors. We begin to be wise to the ways of teams or projects or management.

Such formal time for contemplation also naturally invites spontaneous insight to arise, often when we least expect it. Having contemplated the nature of successful or unsuccessful meetings or projects, we begin to be able to smell a bad one a mile away — and can take steps to remedy them. Being open and mindful to our day and life, we can see things others cannot. For instance, we may hear a presentation of a new product launch, and we recognise that unless the motivation of the sales force is improved, success will be elusive.

Changing the Course of Things — Decision-making

Once we learn to contemplate more, we begin to discover that actually we hardly make decisions. Most of the time, we are trapped in the chain of karmic cause and effect, and we only actually react impulsively to our inner drives or those of the organisation we are in.



We follow all the other *lemmings* in a headlong rush towards the cliff.

This happens for two reasons:

- First, because we are not mindful of the fact that we are making a decision or mindful of the magnitude of a decision;

- Second, we do not understand the full causes and conditions for taking a decision.

Usually, the first statement is an insult to business leaders or people who work in an organisation. People think they make hundreds of decisions a day — what to wear, what coffee to drink, which e-mails to answer first, what to say in meetings, how to relate to their team etc. But actually, most of these “decisions” are really just speedy responses to impulses, not conscious, deliberate decisions. It is an interesting exercise to think each morning of a single important decision one will make that day, and be mindful of it as it approaches. How will I relate to my employee? Will I contemplate carefully what task he will do well with? And will I explain to him the task carefully and guide him? Or will I just dump a to-do list on his desk? Or bark at him when he does not do it well? How will this help him?

Equally, we may resolve to behave differently, but because we do not understand the causes and conditions for our behaviour, we cannot change it. We might decide to be a better boss and delegate instead of abdicating or dumping our tasks, but if we are too overloaded, too late for work, too stressed inside or unappreciative of the value of our employees, we will find it hard to change the course of our activities. We do not know how to cut our karma. So cultivating mindfulness, contemplating and allowing for space in situations actually allow us the opportunity to decide to behave differently, and not simply be a victim of our karmic winds.

Mindful Leadership and Enlightened Leadership

In the Shambhala tradition, there is a further explanation of the development of enlightened leadership, as the virtues of the Lion, the Garuda and the Dragon. We cannot go into this deeply here, but a small outline of the journey includes:

- Further cultivating our mindfulness and awareness and wise decision-making leads us to a fuller understanding of cause and effect, and the ability to make courageous, selfless decisions and to rouse the motivation of those around us. This is the virtue of the Lion.
- Insight into the interdependent nature of phenomena leads us to having a deeper wisdom and we learn to let go of all hope and fear, including the hope of attainment and the fear of non-attainment. Wisdom begins to flower fully and we learn to make profound and far-reaching decisions. This is the wisdom of the Garuda.
- Through this we realise courage and true conviction to be completely without fear, and to have unshakeable trust in the goodness and potential of all sentient beings. With such unshakeable confidence and the complete flowering of wisdom, we can then become a genuine ruler. This is the wisdom of the Dragon.

sovereigns, such as Ashoka Maharaja, the Buddhist King of India, and Prince Shotoku Taishi, who introduced Buddhism into Japan, as examples of brave, wise and compassionate rulers who are genuine representations of enlightened rulership. Such examples are not distant historical figures. If we open our eyes and heart, we can also see examples of business and political leaders who embody some degree of or a complete flowering of enlightened leadership, and who serve as an inspiration to take this path seriously in our lives. In fact, many people make bold attempts to lead in this enlightened way. By beginning with endeavours to be mindful leaders to make our work experience more pleasant and meaningful, we ourselves can take the first steps on this path. 🐉

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In the Shambhala Tradition, we speak of enlightened

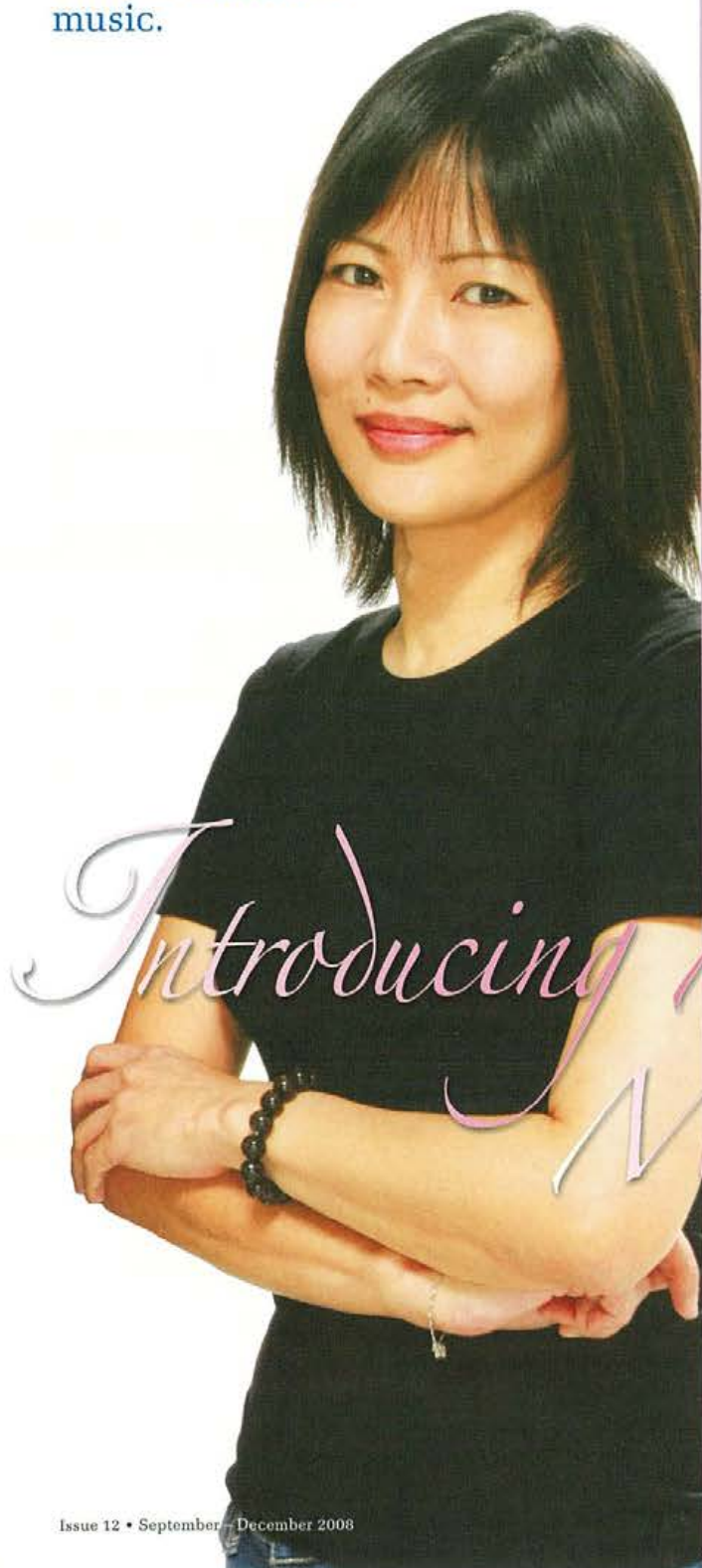
Words of Wisdom Heard or Read

I remember this Buddhist teaching I have read that leaves a deep impression. It says that work is one of the most subtle ways of acquiring discipline. We should not look down on someone who works in a factory or produces materialistic things because we can learn a lot from such people. It continues to say that usually, people interested in spiritual development think in terms of the importance of the mind. But strangely enough the profound and the transcendental are to be found in the factory – that somehow reality is to be found there, in the way in which we relate with everyday problems. If we relate to them in a simple, earthy way, we will work in a more balanced manner, and things will be dealt with properly. If we are able to simplify ourselves to that extent, then we will be able to see the neurotic aspect of the mind much more clearly. The whole pattern of thought, the internal game that goes on, becomes much less of a game but a very practical way of thinking in situations.

— Citra Susanto, a common employee

BY | Esther Thien

Awaken speaks to the widely-acclaimed and well-known Buddhist producer-composer-vocalist Imee Ooi who touches many with her kind of Buddhist music.



Imee Ooi is just like the music she composes — soft, gentle and true to the heart. She is candid and down-to-earth with nary an air around her. Yet this is also the lady who arguably augments the world of Buddhist music with her lovely inspiring chants of Buddhist mantras and dharanis. And perhaps one of the very few in the world who can survive making Buddhist music for a living without having to hold any other day job.

Born in Malaysia, this talented multi-hyphenates (producer-composer-arranger-vocalist) was raised in a family where music was constantly heard. “My mum was a music teacher and she had a music school back then in our hometown. So since young, my siblings and I always knew that we would succeed her when we grew up. Our paths were charted for us — we would finish our education and teach music in the school,” she revealed.

Humility

Imee was actually teaching music when she encountered an opportunity to do Buddhist music in 1997. “I had always liked listening to Christian hymns and wondered why Buddhist mantras have never been presented in a musical and melodious manner.” One thing led to another and today Imee has 22 albums under her belt and is the owner of I.M.M Musicworks which produces and distributes her albums. She is also the musical director and composer of four highly-acclaimed stage musicals, *Siddhartha*, *Above Full Moon*, *The Perfect Circle* and *Jewel of Tibet*.

Introducing Mantras the Musical Way

Yet, she's humble about her own achievements and said, “I wouldn't have come this far if it wasn't for the support of my listeners and the public, and really it's no big deal to produce 22 albums in nine years because each album contains only two, three or at

most four tracks unlike commercial albums with 10 tracks each.” She believed people were moved by the Dharma itself and not solely by the music. “My compositions have to blend in and bring out what the mantras have got to say to bring joy and comfort to people.” And although many may know her as a singer, she does not consider herself as one. “When singing the mantras, I’m merely singing with a very personal touch in translating how I feel about the music more intensely. If you asked someone else to sing, she may have her own feelings about the compositions.” In fact, she’s rather surprised her singing prowess is more recognised than her composing ability.

Pure motivation

Even after 10 years of doing Buddhist music, Imee who is a classical pianist by training is still very sincere and passionate about her work in using “music as a bridge to bring across the Dharma to people, especially those who may never step into a monastery or read a Buddhist book.” Even her company was established based on the motivation “to donate the albums to monasteries and Buddhist centres, especially those from the poorer countries, without too many restrictions from a commercial record company” and to be in control of where her albums go.

Relaxed approach

For Imee, her kind of Buddhist music has to be peaceful and calming with slow and steady beats that are able to bring forth feelings of compassion, joy and happiness. But she does not discount other forms of Buddhist music, even those with hard rock tunes “as long as that form of music is able to transmit the Dharma across to those for whom that form of music appeals to and acts as an entry gate for them to learn about the Dharma.”

Inspiration for her albums come from Buddhist friends following various traditions and lineages and from her own search for a sutra or mantra that resonates to her. She doesn’t keep late nights being very much a 9-5 person unless she has deadlines to meet or musical rehearsals to attend.

As Imee is a person who doesn’t plan ahead but goes with the flow of what life has to offer in the present moment, she does not give herself pressure or benchmark that her latest compositions have to fare

better than her preceding albums. Because of that, she’s grateful that she has never encountered mental blocks when creating new compositions. “I use a very relaxed approach, and I just do whatever I have to do as best as I can in the moment. I guess in this sense you will never have a mental block because you are not trying to surpass the last success,” she quipped.

Due to her relaxed approach to life, nothing is too big a problem for her. Even piracy. “Why further stress myself? Since it’s a situation beyond my control, I don’t worry unnecessarily. Instead I would rejoice that more people would be listening to Buddhist music with more pirated copies around because my main motivation for doing Buddhist music is to allow more people to come in touch with the Dharma,” she laughed.

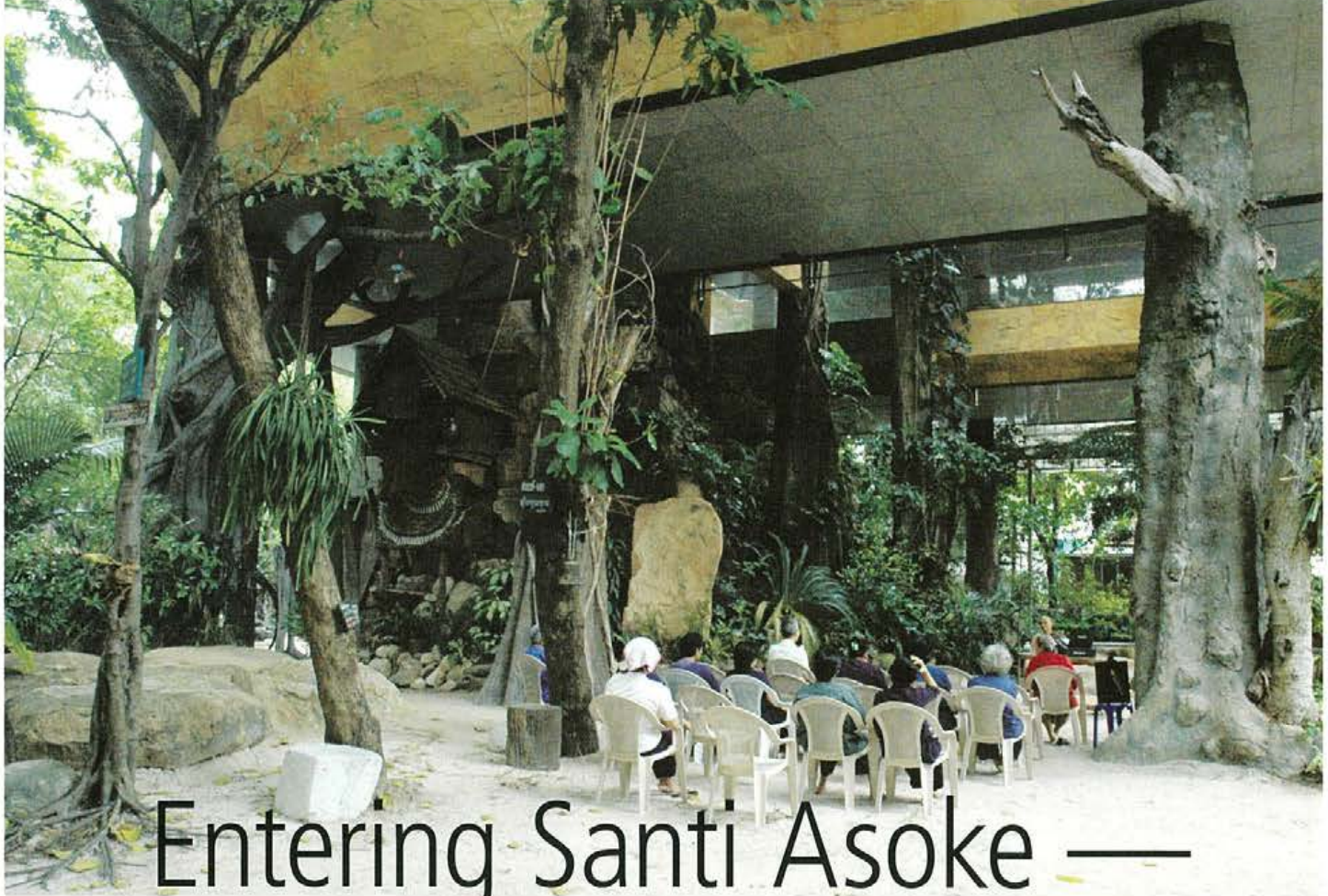
According to Imee, each day is better than the last as she tries to practise and put to use whatever Dharma teachings she has learnt. “For me, Dharma is to be cultivated every minute of our daily lives. I learn from the people around me. Due to the nature of my work, I come into contact with many Venerables, and I try to learn from them. I also try to catch up on my reading of Buddhist teachings from the books that the many kind teachers gave me.”

Guanyin Bodhisattva as role model

Imee, who was brought up a Buddhist — “My parents and grandparents have been such kind and generous people and are exemplary examples of what Buddhists should be.” — shared that since she started producing the albums, she has been having auspicious dreams containing messages of how she should help others.

She disclosed that she has always felt a sense of closeness to Guanyin Bodhisattva since young. “She is someone I have always tried to emulate because she is so compassionate.” Thus, her motto in life is to be kind and helpful to others at all times.

In her own words, “I’m trying as much as I can to practise selflessness when I relate to others, by putting others first instead of thinking about my own personal benefits. By seeing others happy, I feel happy too.” 🌸



Entering Santi Asoke — Embracing Nature, Loving the Earth

Long heard about Santi Asoke, Luo Ning visited the place not expecting to be so richly rewarded in so many ways.

Not speaking much Thai, I placed my faith in the Universe and trust that the bus conductor would inform me to alight at the right stop for Santi Asoke — a self-sufficient Buddhist community. Upon alighting, I was a bit doubtful. Was I at the right place? I had heard from a friend that Santi Asoke is a “village” of natural surroundings. But right in front of me was apparently a main road laden with busy traffic. On both sides of the road were shops and restaurants. I looked around and spotted a shop that seemed to be selling natural products. I entered the shop and after another round of referring to my English-Thai phrase book, it was confirmed that I was indeed at Santi Asoke, except that I had to turn in from the side alley to enter the village.

As I turned into the alley, a beautiful sight — a building with a stupa on the rooftop amidst some lush foliage — at the end of the lane welcomed me. As I walked on, I noticed that all the shops on both sides of the alley were selling vegetarian and natural products.

A wooden signage and a bronze eagle greeted me at the entrance of Santi Asoke. Once I stepped in, I was immediately transported into another realm. All over the place were lush greenery, rocks of different shapes and sizes, wooden tables and chairs, and soft golden sand covering the ground. I felt as if I had stepped into a different space and a different time. Feeling the tranquillity in the air, I almost forgot that I was actually in Bangkok.

Next to the waterfall was a group of devotees listening to a monk’s teaching. The singing of the cicadas accompanied the soothing voice of the monk. A quiet afternoon, free of the bustle of the mundane world, I could feel my own breathing becoming easy and smooth.

Simple Life

It is hard not to fall in love with Santi Asoke. I had wanted to visit the place just for the afternoon. But as I immersed myself in the stillness of the surroundings, a strong thought arose in my mind,

“How I wish I could stay here.” With much blessings, I met a volunteer who could speak a little English. She introduced me to another Mandarin-speaking practitioner, Kun Pa Pa Cha. The helpful Kun Pa Pa Cha brought me to see the elder nun. Generally, a foreigner without any recommendation or guarantee would rarely be allowed to stay in Santi Asoke. The stern elder seemed to be giving Kun Pa Pa Cha a lecture. It didn't sound too good. Eventually the elder instructed, “If she can wake up at 3.30am to attend the teachings, she can stay!”

Later, Kun Pa Pa Cha told me that I was permitted to stay mainly because I'm a vegetarian. This reminded me of what Dr Chiu-Nan Lai and Drubwang Konchok Norbu Rinpoche had said, “It takes a lot of merit and good causes to become a vegetarian. And a vegetarian possesses a lot of merit and good causes.” How blessed and grateful I felt.

All the people at Santi Asoke are vegetarians. The residents consist of male and female sangha members, non-ordained practitioners, volunteers and secondary school students of Santi Asoke. The people here would always greet each other with their palms together, a sincere bow and a beautiful smile. Here, except for the old and the sick, all the adults observe the eight precepts, taking only one meal a day, whereas the students observe the five precepts.

Life here is really simple and basic. Everyone walks barefooted and sleeps on a straw mat on the ground. The lay people wear a dark blue uniform, which serves as their daily wear, school uniform and pyjamas. All the adults wake up at 3.30am daily and gather for Dharma teachings and meditation. When the session ends at 5am, they go about doing their own morning exercise for about an hour. After that they will each attend to their own duties.

Serving the Public, Loving the Earth

At Santi Asoke, there is no separation between Dharma practice and daily life. There are several sections serving the public — library, free haircuts and even a production area making eco-friendly cleaning agents containing natural enzymes. The community has also founded a vegetarian society. They have a café along the main road selling vegetarian cooked food. Great variety, great taste and super low prices. All the fruits and vegetables



used are naturally cultivated without chemicals. The volunteers at the café start working everyday at 3.30am until 2pm when the café closes. Throughout the opening hours, recordings of Dharma teachings are played over the speakers and the volunteers work with mindfulness. No wonder I felt a deep sense of satisfaction eating the food here, with no craving for other junk food like I normally would.

What touched me most is the community's effort and dedication in protecting the environment. All the kitchen scraps from the café are collected everyday. Some are used for making enzymes, some are sent to the rural farm for composting. Within the community's canteen, every single plastic bag used to contain food, no matter how small, would be washed, dried and reused. And the recycling warehouse is filled with items of all sorts from the neighbourhoods — tyres, wooden frames, plastic bottles, etc. The volunteers patiently sort out the



Photography courtesy of Luo Ning

items one by one. Those that are still usable would be sold at very low prices on the weekends.

No excuses, no delays. Everyone simply does it in his or her own little way. Because they know that these seemingly simple actions carry great impact to our earth and for our future generations.

Genuine Conversation

The high school in Santi Asoke consists of six years of education with a total of about 100 students. A few of the senior students who could speak English were very happy to meet me. They were eager to speak with me in order to practise their English skills. During my conversations with them, what surprised me were their simplicity and innocence. 18-year-old Dhong asked me if I liked my job in the city. I said not too much. He was puzzled. He asked, "Then why are you still doing it?" He would also ask me caringly, "Are you happy? Are you tired?" Such a simple question, yet it struck me greatly. I can't even remember the last time I sincerely asked a friend, "Are you happy?"

Children of the Earth

Each week, one level of students would be sent to the community's farm 60km away. They would live on the farm for four days to gain more practical experience. 17-year-old Chim chose to go to the farm every week. He told me that he wanted to strengthen

his body and his heart. I was puzzled by this lad who was close to six-feet tall. He explained that being a single child, his life at home had been very comfortable since young. So he felt the need to go to the farm to build up his physical strength. As for his heart, he said that had he stayed in Santi Asoke throughout the week, he would spend all his time fantasising about the internet and computer games, as these were easily available in the neighbourhood. He felt that spending time with nature by cultivating the vegetables on the farm would be much better for his heart.

I was very fortunate to be able to follow Chim and the secondary one students to the farm, known as Soan Boon, which means "garden of virtues". As soon as we reached Soan Boon, I was greeted by a stretch of green rice fields and an abundance of choy sum, eggplants, dragon fruits, bananas, papayas and so on. There, the sleeping quarters were constructed Thai style "sala" with no walls. It was basically an open hut but equipped with straw mats and mosquito nets.

The simplicity eradicated all burden of expectations from my mind. With no burden and no expectation, my heart was free and open.

The 13-year-old students impressed me greatly. Farming, cooking, swimming — they performed every task with ease. They would also learn to make curry puff, tofu, pancakes and buns. Besides the practical training, they continued their academic

learning here on the farm. I was pleasantly surprised to see that among the 18 students, only one wore glasses. Sadly, in our own so-called advanced society, many kids start wearing glasses when they are only eight or nine.

These Santi Asoke kids are indeed children of Mother Earth. They run barefooted on the rocky path, swim in the pond, wash their clothes with their own hands. They exude such great energy and light. Watching them, it dawned on me that children should be loved but not pampered. To let our children be in nature is the deepest love that we could give them.

Garden of Virtues

Sooan Boon is managed by three Asoke residents. 39-year-old Ploy Prai is the chief here, while 54-year-old Nam Dee and 25-year-old university graduate Hee De are her able assistants.



They live with great simplicity — wall-less bedrooms, door-less toilets, and they bathe in the river. Seeing their “rooms”, I realised how little possessions they had. Yet from the sparkles in their eyes and the beauty of their smiles, I know that they have great abundance in their hearts.

The first day I spent working with them in the garden, I was already adopted by them as part of the

family. Their openness and sincerity touched me deeply. I was also very honoured to sleep in the VIP room — the balcony outside the bedroom of Ploy Prai and Nam Dee. At night, the dancing stars sent me into my dreamland. And early next morning when I awoke, the stars were there to greet me.

Ploy Prai has been at Sooan Boon for four years. Her physical strength impressed me greatly. She wakes up at 5am everyday for her morning exercise. As soon as the sky lights up at six plus, she starts working in the garden. She rests for two hours during lunchtime. Then she starts working again all the way past 6pm. Whether it's five in the morning or eight in the evening, all the cells in her body seem to be dancing joyously all the time.

Throughout the day, Dharma teachings rang out from the loudspeaker on the farm. Ploy Prai, Nam Dee and Hee De work and listen to the teachings at the same time. Initially, I was a bit puzzled; I didn't see any earthworms. Neither did I see any pest. All the fruit trees and vegetables seemed to be growing happily as well. I believe this is because Ploy Prai, Nam Dee and Hee De work with great mindfulness and a joyous heart.

Although I had spent only four days in Sooan Boon, it felt like four weeks. It wasn't because life was slow-paced there. Rather, my heart had received so much from Sooan Boon, my adopted family and the students that I felt like I had stayed there much longer. The work in the garden was really tough for me physically, but I felt joyful all the time.

Nam Dee was worried that I would be petrified by the tough work and would not visit Sooan Boon again. She kept asking me to go back to see them. Hee De said he would miss me — a sister who laughed at herself non-stop after falling into the mud. Ploy Prai said to me, “Come, come. We will share our food with you. You can stay as long as you like.”

Actually, I've already left my heart there...

I'm deeply grateful. Life can really be so simple and yet so happy. ♡

What Meditation Isn't

All sorts of ideas are associated with the word 'meditation'. We are dealing exclusively with the Vipassana system of meditation ... to watch the functioning of your own mind in a calm and detached manner so you can gain insight into your own behaviour. The goal is awareness, an awareness so intense, concentrated and finely tuned that you will be able to pierce the inner workings of reality itself.

There are a number of common misconceptions about meditation. ... It is best to deal with these things at once, because they are the sort of preconceptions which can block your progress right from the outset. ...

Misconception #1 — Meditation is just a relaxation technique

Relaxation is a key component of meditation, but Vipassana-style meditation aims at a much loftier goal. All meditation procedures stress concentration of the mind, bringing the mind to rest on one item or one area of thought. Do it strongly and thoroughly enough, and you achieve a deep and blissful relaxation which is called *Jhana*. It is a state of such supreme tranquillity that it amounts to rapture. It is a form of pleasure which lies above and beyond anything that can be experienced in the normal state of consciousness. Most systems stop right there. That is the goal, and when you attain that, you simply repeat the experience for the rest of your life. Not so with Vipassana meditation. Vipassana seeks another goal — awareness. Concentration and relaxation are considered necessary concomitants to awareness. They are required precursors, handy tools and beneficial by-products. But they are not the goal. The goal is insight. Vipassana meditation is a profound religious practice aimed at nothing less than the purification and transformation of your everyday life.

Misconception #2 — Meditation means going into a trance

Insight meditation is not a form of hypnosis. You are not trying to black out your mind so as to become unconscious. You are not trying to turn yourself into an emotionless vegetable. If anything, the reverse is true. You will become

more and more attuned to your own emotional changes. You will learn to know yourself with ever greater clarity and precision. In learning this technique, certain states do occur which may appear trance-like to the observer. But they are really quite the opposite. In hypnotic trance, the subject is susceptible to control by another party, whereas in deep concentration the meditator remains very much under his own control. The similarity is superficial, and in any case the occurrence of these phenomena is not the point of Vipassana. As we have said, the deep concentration of *Jhana* is a tool or stepping stone on the route of heightened awareness. Vipassana by definition is the cultivation of mindfulness or awareness. If you find that you are becoming unconscious in meditation, then you aren't meditating, according to the definition of the word as used in the Vipassana system.

Misconception #3 — Meditation is a mysterious practice which cannot be understood

Here again, this is almost true, but not quite. Meditation deals with levels of consciousness which lie deeper than symbolic thought. Therefore, some of the data about meditation just won't fit into words. That does not mean, however, that it cannot be understood. There are deeper ways to understand things than through words... Meditation... is to be experienced. Meditation is not some mindless formula which gives automatic and predictable results. You can never really predict exactly what will come up in any particular session. It is an investigation and experiment and an adventure every time. In fact, this is so true that when you do reach a feeling of predictability and sameness in your practice, you use that as an indicator. It means that you have gotten off the track somewhere and you are headed for stagnation. Learning to look at each second as if it were the first and only second in the universe is most essential in Vipassana meditation.

Misconception #4 — The purpose of meditation is to become a psychic superman

No, the purpose of meditation is to develop awareness. Learning to read minds is not the point. Levitation is not the goal. The goal is liberation. There is a link between psychic phenomena and meditation, but the relationship is somewhat complex. During early stages of the meditator's career, such phenomena

may or may not arise. Some people may experience some intuitive understanding or memories from past lives; others do not. In any case, these are not regarded as well-developed and reliable psychic abilities. Nor should they be given undue importance. Such phenomena are in fact fairly dangerous to new meditators in that they are too seductive. They can be an ego trap which can lure you right off the track. Your best advice is not to place any emphasis on these phenomena. If they come up, that's fine. If they don't, that's fine, too. It's unlikely that they will. If voices and visions pop up, just notice them and let them go. Don't get involved.

Misconception #5 — Meditation is dangerous and a prudent person should avoid it

Everything is dangerous. Walk across the street and you may get hit by a bus. Take a shower and you could break your neck. Meditate and you will probably dredge up various nasty matters from your past. The suppressed material that has been buried there for quite some time can be scary. It is also highly profitable. No activity is entirely without risk, but that does not mean that we should wrap ourselves in some protective cocoon. That is not living. That is premature death. The way to deal with danger is to know approximately how much of it there is, where it is likely to be found and how to deal with it when it arises. Vipassana is development of awareness. That in itself is not dangerous, but just the opposite. Increased awareness is the safeguard against danger. Properly done, meditation is a very gentle and gradual process. Take it slow and easy, and development of your practice will occur very naturally. Nothing should be forced.

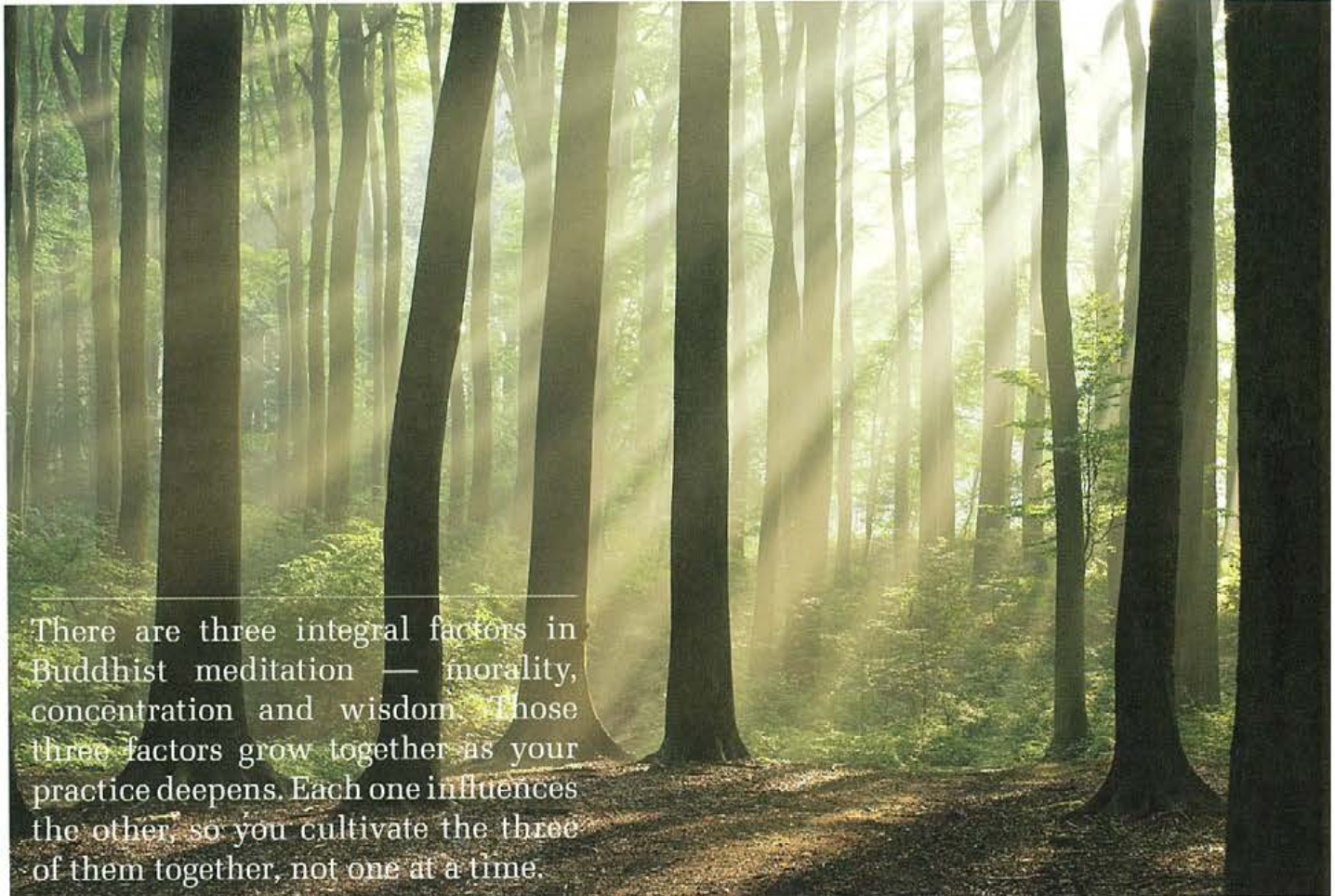
Misconception #6 — Meditation is for saints and holy men, not for regular people

You find this attitude very prevalent in Asia, where monks and holy men are accorded an enormous amount of ritualised reverence... It is true, of course, that most holy men meditate, but they don't meditate because they are holy men. That is backward. They are holy men because they meditate. Meditation is how they got there. And they started meditating before they became holy. This is an important point. A sizable number of students seems to feel that a person should be completely moral before he begins meditation. It is an unworkable strategy. Morality

requires a certain degree of mental control. It's a prerequisite. You can't follow any set of moral precepts without at least a little self-control, and if your mind is perpetually spinning like a fruit cylinder in a one-armed bandit, self-control is highly unlikely. So mental culture has to come first.

Misconception #7 — Meditation is running away from reality

Incorrect. Meditation is running into reality. It does not insulate you from the pain of life. It allows you to delve so deeply into life and all its aspects that you pierce the pain barrier and you go beyond suffering.



There are three integral factors in Buddhist meditation — morality, concentration and wisdom. Those three factors grow together as your practice deepens. Each one influences the other, so you cultivate the three of them together, not one at a time.

When you have the wisdom to truly understand a situation, compassion towards all the parties involved is automatic, and compassion means that you automatically restrain yourself from any thought, word or deed that might harm yourself or others. Thus your behaviour is automatically moral. It is only when you don't understand things deeply that you create problems. If you fail to see the consequences of your own action, you will blunder. The fellow who waits to become totally moral before he begins to meditate is waiting for a 'but' that will never come... Meditation is certainly not some irrelevant practice strictly for ascetics and hermits. It is a practical skill that focuses on everyday events and has immediate application in everybody's life. Meditation is not otherworldly.

Vipassana is a practice done with the specific intention of facing reality, to fully experience life just as it is and to cope with exactly what you find. It allows you to blow aside the illusions and to free yourself from all those polite little lies you tell yourself all the time. What is there is there. You are who you are, and lying to yourself about your own weaknesses and motivations only binds you tighter to the wheel of illusion.

Vipassana meditation is not an attempt to forget yourself or to cover up your troubles. It is learning to look at yourself exactly as you are. See what is there, accept it fully. Only then can you change it.

Misconception #8 — Meditation is a great way to get high

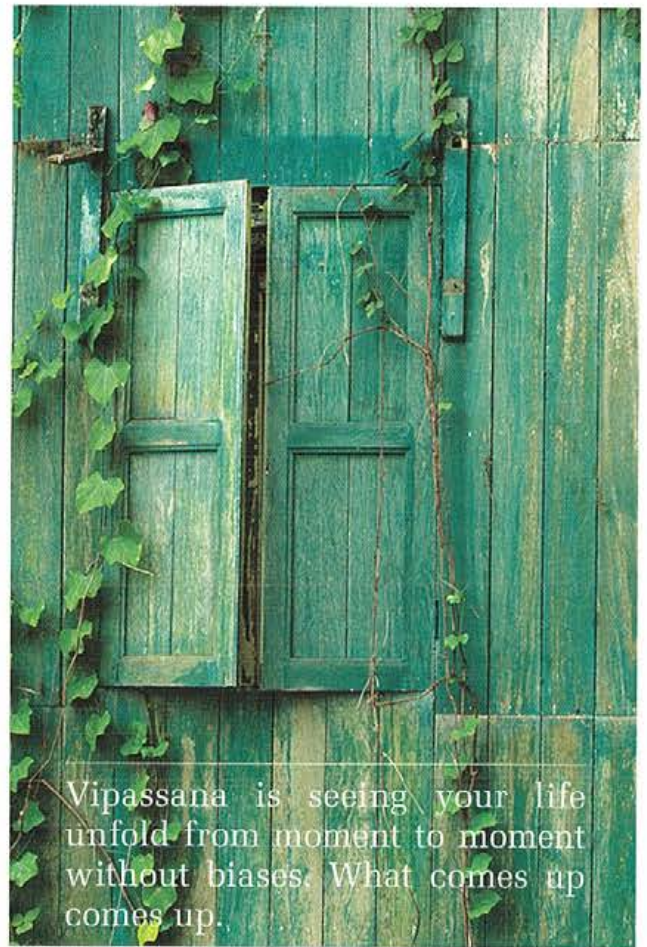
Well, yes and no. Meditation does produce lovely blissful feelings sometimes. But they are not the purpose, and they don't always occur. Furthermore, if you do meditation with that purpose in mind, they are less likely to occur than if you just meditate for the actual purpose of meditation, which is increased awareness. Bliss results from relaxation, and relaxation results from release of tension. Seeking bliss from meditation introduces tension into the process, which blows the whole chain of events. It is a Catch-22. You can only have bliss if you don't chase it... Euphoria is not the purpose of meditation. It will often arise, but is to be regarded as a by-product. Still, it is a very pleasant side effect, and it becomes more and more frequent the longer you meditate...

Misconception #9 — Meditation is selfish

It certainly looks that way. There sits the meditator parked on his little cushion. Why is he doing this? His intention is to purge his own mind of anger, prejudice and ill-will. He is actively engaged in the process of getting rid of greed, tension and insensitivity. Those are the very items which obstruct his compassion for others. Until they are gone, any good works that he does are likely to be just an extension of his own ego and of no real help in the long run... Through meditation we become aware of ourselves exactly as we are, by waking up to the numerous subtle ways that we manifest our own selfishness. Then we truly begin to be genuinely selfless. Cleansing yourself of selfishness is not a selfish activity.

Misconception #10 — When you meditate, you sit around thinking lofty thoughts

Wrong again. There are certain systems of contemplation in which this sort of thing is done. But that is not Vipassana. Vipassana is the practice of awareness. Awareness of whatever is there, be it supreme truth or crummy trash. What is there is there. Of course, lofty aesthetic thoughts may arise during your practice. They are certainly not to be avoided. Neither are they to be sought. They are just pleasant side effects. Vipassana is a simple practice. It consists of experiencing your own life events directly, without preference and without mental images pasted to them.



Vipassana is seeing your life unfold from moment to moment without biases. What comes up comes up.

Misconception #11 — A couple of weeks of meditation and all my problems will go away

Sorry, meditation is not a quick cure-all. You will start seeing changes right away, but really profound effects are years down the line. That is just the way the universe is constructed. Nothing worthwhile is achieved overnight. Meditation is tough in some respects. It requires a long discipline and sometimes a painful process of practice. At each sitting you gain some results, but those results are often very subtle. They occur deep within the mind, only to manifest much later. And if you are sitting there constantly looking for some huge instantaneous changes, you will miss the subtle shifts altogether. You will get discouraged, give up and swear that no such changes will ever occur. Patience is the key. Patience. If you learn nothing else from meditation, you will learn patience. And that is the most valuable lesson available. ☺

- Extracted from *Mindfulness in Plain English* by Ven. Henepola Gunaratana.

Dear Dharma Friends,

I am so thankful to all of you for all your prayers and dedications throughout the surgery and during this recovery.

I wanted to share with you my experience regarding the power of intention and motivation. Several friends had told me about their experience of being under general anesthesia, saying that they had no recollection of the time during surgery. I thought about this, and how this must be somewhat like the *bardo*, the intermediate state between one life and the next. I had no idea what was before me, but I knew that I could set a very strong and clear motivation during the time leading up to surgery. So I thought of all the people in the world who had head injuries but lacked pain relief and hospital care. Reciting the Four Immeasurables, I imagined human beings who faced illness and injury alone and without Dharma practice. Again and again I thought to myself, “May they be happy. May they be without suffering. May they never be parted from precious spiritual teachers.”

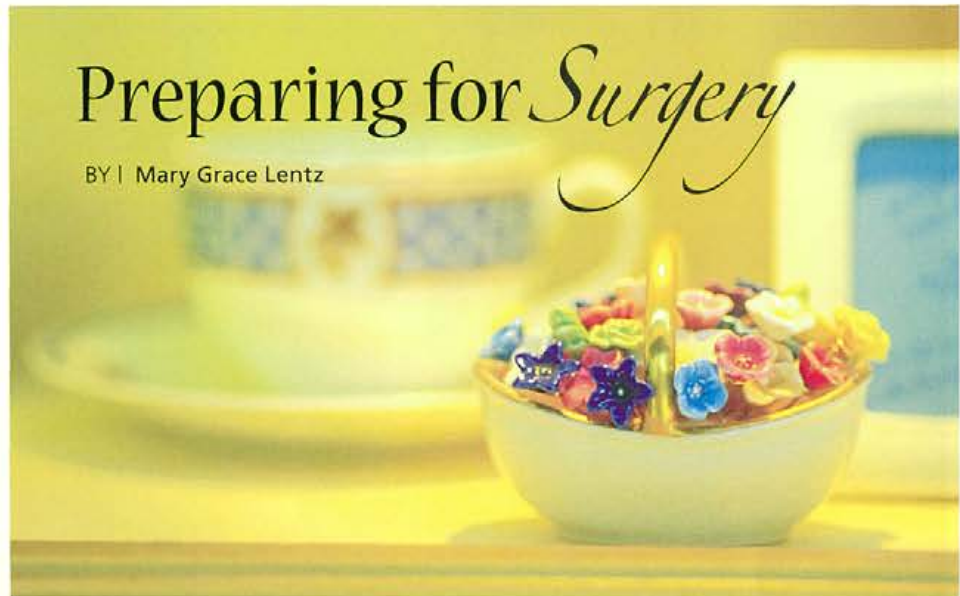
I do not remember coming out from surgery. My Dharma friends, Julie and Leah, were there when I woke up. Julie said the first thing I asked was “It is over?” and then I began to recite over and over, “May all beings be happy.” I do not remember any of this, but I do recall feeling so happy to open my eyes and see my Dharma friends. As far as I knew, I was in the *bardo* and I felt total joy and bliss.

As I share this, I am moved by the loving guidance of my teachers. I thought of Venerable Chodron and

Mary Grace has been practising the Dharma for many years at a Buddhist centre in Seattle. She developed a brain tumor that required surgery. She and her husband visited Sravasti Abbey before her surgery to reaffirm their Dharma connection. This is a letter Mary Grace wrote to the Abbey a few days after the surgery.

could hear her say, “Set your motivation.” I didn’t know what to expect, yet I gave everything I had the few days before surgery. I placed my trust in her lap. I went in thinking that I could die, or come out with severe motor impairment. Today, I am still alive in this reality with a precious human life.

I wanted to share this because throughout the years, we have all heard about setting strong intention and



Preparing for *Surgery*

BY | Mary Grace Lentz

motivation. Previously, I thought I understood it. I’m not saying I do now, but I do know by coming through this experience with five hours of no recollection of consciousness but hours of strong motivation that setting a strong virtuous motivation had helped me come out on the other side. The hour of death will be different. But I can hold onto this experience and know that if we set our heart and mind for a strong altruistic intention, it comes through to whatever reality ripens.

My pain level is tolerable and perfect for practice.

I love all of you. This experience has deepened my trust and faith in the Three Jewels.

Thank you to all — especially to Venerable Chodron for her tireless guidance and constant reminder to “Set your motivation.”

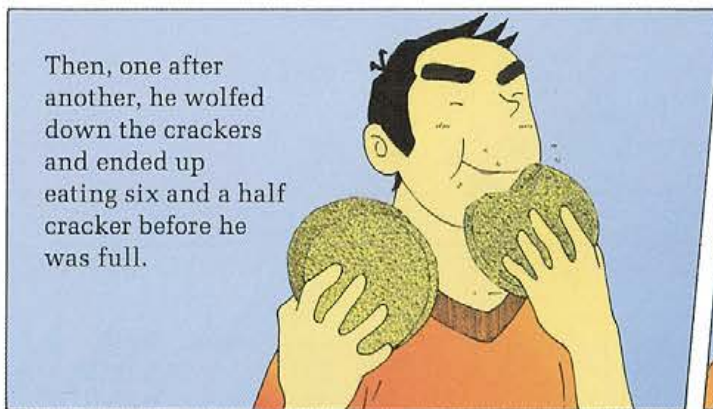
Love,
Mary Grace
July, 2007

HALF A RICE CRACKER

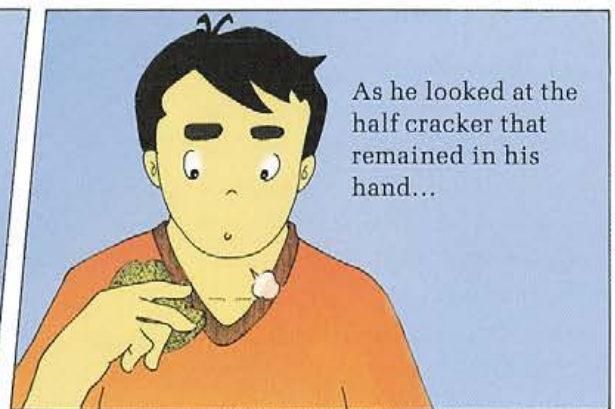
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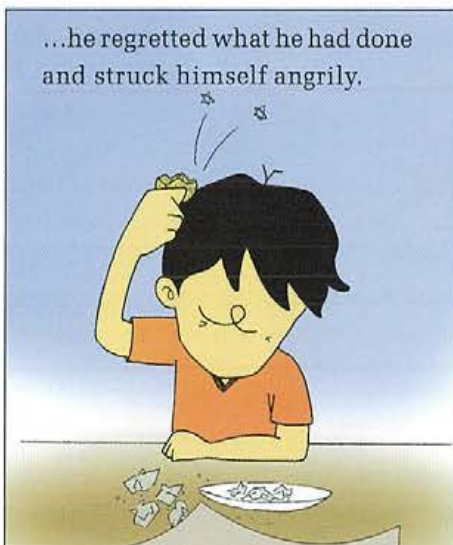
Long, long ago, there was a man who was so famished that he went to his cupboard and grabbed seven rice crackers from his meagre supply.



Then, one after another, he wolfed down the crackers and ended up eating six and a half cracker before he was full.



As he looked at the half cracker that remained in his hand...



...he regretted what he had done and struck himself angrily.

"That last half cracker has made me full," he said. "The other six that I ate were wasted. If I had known that the last half piece could fill me up, I would have eaten it first."

People often behave like this. Originally, there is no pleasure. But people with little understanding create an idea of pleasure, just like the fool who mistakenly believed he was full from eating only half a rice cracker. Then they decide that having great wealth is pleasurable and begin to pursue it. The truth is that seeking wealth, obtaining wealth and losing it are all very painful. Things like clothes and food are real pleasures only when they satisfy real needs.

Look carefully and you will see that the thought of pleasure arises only in the midst of pain. As the Buddha has told us, "In the past, present, and future there is no ease, only pain. But, nonetheless, those with little understanding are confused and mistakenly cling to the idea of pleasure." Don't let yourself be caught with such wrong-headed views.

~ story adapted from the *The One Hundred Parable Sutra*

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

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"The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion... if there is any religion that would cope with scientific needs, it would be Buddhism." - Albert Einstein



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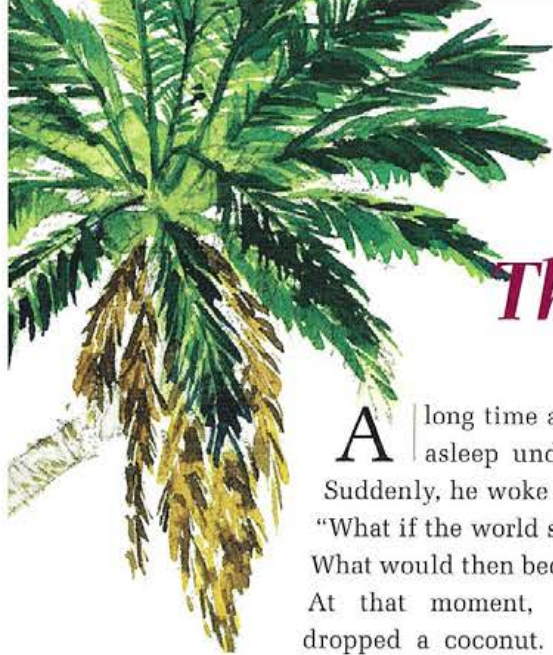
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The Foolish, Timid Rabbit



A long time ago, a rabbit was asleep under a palm tree. Suddenly, he woke up and thought: "What if the world should break up! What would then become of me?" At that moment, some monkeys dropped a coconut. It so happened that the coconut fell onto the ground just behind the rabbit. Hearing the noise, the rabbit said to himself, "The earth is breaking up!" At once, he jumped up and hopped as fast as he could, without even looking back to see what had caused the noise.

Another rabbit saw him hopping, and called after him, "What are you in such a hurry?"

"Don't ask me!" he cried.

But the other rabbit hopped after him, begging to know what the matter was.

The first rabbit replied, "Don't you know? The earth is breaking up!"

And on he hopped, with the second rabbit following closely.

The next rabbit they met too hopped with them when he heard that the earth was all breaking up. One rabbit after another joined them, until there were hundreds of rabbits hopping as quickly as they could. They passed by a deer, and shouted to him that the earth was breaking up. The deer then ran with them. The deer informed a fox to come along because the earth was all breaking up. On and on they ran, and an elephant joined them.

At last, the king of the forest, the lion saw the animals running, and heard their cry that the earth was all breaking up. He thought there must be some mistake, so he ran to the foot of a hill in front of them and roared three times. This halted the fleeing animals, for they knew the voice of the king of beasts, and they feared him.

"Why are all of you running so swiftly?" queried the lion.

"Oh, King Lion," they answered him, "the earth is breaking up!"

"Who saw it breaking up?" asked the lion.

"I didn't," replied the elephant. "Ask the fox. He told me about it."

"I didn't," answered the fox.

"The rabbits told me about it," said the deer.

One after another, the rabbits said, "I did not see it, but another rabbit told me about it."

At last, the lion came to the rabbit that had first said the earth was breaking up.

"Is it true that the earth is all breaking up?" the lion asked.

"Yes, O King, it is," answered the rabbit. "I was asleep under a palm tree when I woke up and thought, 'What would become of me should the earth all break up?' At that very moment, I heard the sound of the earth breaking up, and I hopped away."

"Then," said the lion, "you and I will go back to the place where the earth began to break up, and see it for ourselves."

So, the lion put the little rabbit on his back, and away they went like the wind. The other animals waited for them at the foot of the hill. When they reached the place, the rabbit pointed out the place where he had slept. The lion investigated the area and saw the fallen coconut nearby. The lion contemplated and then said to the rabbit, "It must have been the sound of a falling coconut hitting the ground that you've heard. You foolish rabbit!"

And the lion ran back to the other animals, and told them all about it.

If it had not been for the wise King of Beasts, they might still be running. 🐾



SEEN

Training the Mind as a Quest for the Buddha's Crown

> **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull****Directed by:** Alan Arkin, Steven Spielberg**Starring:** Harrison Ford, Shia LaBeouf, GuangLi, Andy Tennant, Karen Allen

In the latest Indiana Jones flick, Indy (played by the visibly older Harrison Ford) ventures into an ancient temple. With his son (Mutt, played by Shia LaBeouf), he discovers bizarre elongated human skulls. When he explains that they are attempts to shape heads to resemble that of 'god', Mutt rebuts — 'God's head doesn't look like that!' Indy replies, 'It depends on who your god is!' Funnily, Mutt never saw any god personally. How we picture the divine is arbitrary. Whether it exists is another matter!

Unlike past Indy movies which centre on quests for wealth or power, this instalment has a more mature theme. The hidden gold turns out to be something priceless. To quote Indy, 'The word for "gold" translates as "treasure." But their (the ancients') treasure wasn't gold, it was knowledge.' And knowledge can be worth more than its weight in gold. It's a double-edged sword though, as it can be used for better or for worse. Wisdom however, is the ability to wield this sword skilfully — for the betterment of one and all.

An ancient tribe was discovered to have worshipped inter-dimensional beings — who imparted the life skills of civilisation, such as farming and irrigation. Being relatively 'enlightened' by their kindness and intelligence, the tribe worshipped the alien 'gods' out of fear, gratitude, respect and admiration. Unenlightened ones have always felt 'alienated' from powerful and mysterious beings. They are imagined or appeased out of ignorance by some, while questioned and studied by the wise — who then emulate their worthy qualities.

However, shaping your skull to mimic a smart alien's braininess is quite brainless! Attaining intangible knowledge by tampering with the grossly physical without mind-training doesn't work. That said, the Buddha's skull was extraordinary too. On the crown of his head is the *Ushnisha*, which is a supernormal cranial protuberance signifying his supreme wisdom — his literal 'crowning glory'! A Pali term which describes him is *Mahapurisa*, which means 'Great human'. A translation says 'Super-man' — an awakened one who has transcended man!

Superman in the comics is an alien too — with super qualities, including heroic compassion and wisdom. The Buddha is of a super 'alien' species too, of fully enlightened beings with perfectly evolved compassion and wisdom. Buddhas are only as 'alien' to us as the extent to which we have yet to completely comprehend reality. The good news is that all become Buddhas by endeavouring to evolve spiritually. Just as the tribe's ideal was to be 'godlike', Buddhists ultimately aim to be Buddhas — teachers of humans and gods.

Able to penetrate realms like the aliens did (with spaceships though), the Buddhas can manifest myriad forms in various worlds to share the path to Buddhahood — the state of total bliss and freedom. Being a spiritual adventurer extraordinaire, the historical Buddha discovered the 'map' to the treasure of treasures that is enlightenment. If the *Ushnisha* stands for the peak of all spiritual attainments, the ultimate adventure Indy needs before retiring is a quest to 'reach' the 'Buddha's crown'!



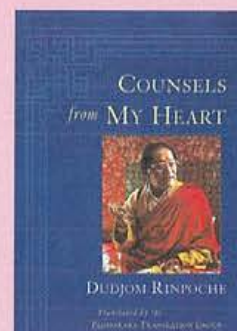
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Understand and realise the Dharma to awaken your wisdom.

> **Counsels from My Heart**

By His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche

If you are looking for an easy-to-read book to better understand Tibetan Buddhism, *Counsels from the Heart* is a good book to start with. It offers the reader a better understanding on topics such as bardo, refuge and bodhicitta, samsara and ego-clinging. It also states the essence of the path and gives a description of the oral lineage of the Nyingmapas. Priced at S\$8.90.



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Karma comes from thinking,
when one thought appears
and you hold that thought,
karma begins.

When thinking arises
and disappears in meditation,
you look and see that
thinking neither appears
nor disappears.

– *Ajahn Sumedho*

In my own experience,
the period of greatest gain in knowledge and
experience
is the most difficult period in one's life.

If you go along in an easy way,
With everything okay,
You feel everything is just fine.
Then one day when you encounter problems,
You feel depressed and hopeless.

Through a difficult period
You can learn
You can develop inner strength,
determination and courage
to face the problem.
Who gives you this chance?
Your enemy.

In the practice of tolerance,
your enemy is the best teacher.
Your enemy can teach you tolerance
Whereas your teacher or parents cannot.
Thus from this viewpoint,
An enemy is helpful –
The best of friends,
the best of teachers.

– *His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama*

What can be said but not practised
is better not said.
What can be practised but not spoken of
is better not done.

– *Ven. Baiyun*

There is nothing to cling to in this world.
The whole path of mindfulness is this:
Whatever you are doing, be aware of it.

– *Dipa Ma*



Unruly beings are as unlimited as space
They cannot possibly all be overcome,
But if I overcome thoughts of anger alone
This will be equivalent to vanquishing all foes.

Where would I possibly find enough leather
With which to cover the surface of the earth?
But (wearing) leather just on the soles of my shoes
Is equivalent to covering the earth with it.

Likewise it is not possible for me
To restrain the external course of things;
But should I restrain this mind of mine
What would be the need to restrain all else?

– *Shantideva*

One drop of dew is enough to sustain life.
So it is with sentient beings
who are plagued moment after moment
by the heat of vexation.
The smallest amount of Buddhadharma
is enough to encourage them
to continue to practise.
It nourishes practice
and helps it to grow.

– *Ch'an Master Sheng Yen*

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.

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

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.

Chenrezig: See 'Guanyin'.

Circumambulate: Act of going round an object of veneration (stupa, Bodhi tree, Buddha image) meditatively three times or more in a clockwise direction as a gesture of respect.

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

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

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

Dharma: An aspect of the Triple Gem - the teachings of the Buddha or the general teachings of Buddhism. 'Dhamma' in Pali language.

Eight precepts: Include the five precepts and add three more: Refrain from (6) using cosmetics or personal adornments and watching song-dance entertainments; (7) sleeping on a luxurious bed; and (8) eating food after lunch. Lay Buddhists who have accepted the eight precepts need to observe them periodically for one day.

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

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

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

Four Immeasurables: Also called the Four Sublime States, it includes love, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity. They are immeasurable because they extend to all beings, who are immeasurable, and because we create immeasurable positive energy and purify immeasurable negative energy through developing them.

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

Guanyin: Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva; the Bodhisattva who personifies the perfect Compassion of all Buddhas, who hears and heeds the cries of the world. Also known as Chenrezig in Vajrayana tradition.

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

Karma: The moral law of cause and effect which states that what we

experience is the result of what we had done, that what we do will result in what we will experience.

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

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.

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. 'Nibbana' in Pali language.

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).

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

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

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.

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.

Shambhala: A legendary kingdom in which inhabitants led meditative lives of bravery, gentleness and intelligence, where they acted with responsibility and delight in caring for one another. Today, it is the name of a Buddhist lineage that draws on the wisdom of the Kagyu and Nyingma schools of Tibetan Buddhism as inherited by its founder, Chogyam Trungpa, and his son and spiritual heir, Sakya Mipham.

Stupa: A pagoda for the remains of the Buddha, whether relics of bones or scriptures.

Suffering: The physical and mental feeling of dissatisfaction.

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

Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Also known as the Three Jewels.

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

Vesak Day: Wesak in Pali, it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Nirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha.

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.