

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery works tirelessly in all areas to benefit all sentient beings. We do our best to skilfully bring the Dharma home to each and everyone.

#### Awaken Publishing & Design

Do you yearn for words of timeless truth that talk straight into your heart? Looking for means to overcome your problems, difficulties and the challenges you face in life? Everyone wants to be happy and free of problems. The free Dharma books, CDs, DVDs and magazines published by the monastery tell you simply and clearly how you can achieve happiness in this life and the next... Get them from the monastery and Awareness Place Well-Being Centre at Bras Basah Complex #03-39 or visit [media.kmspsk.org](http://media.kmspsk.org). May the Dharma bring light to your life!

#### Community Development & Training

Community development and training department's mission is to empower individuals and groups of people with knowledge and skills they need to effect change in their own lives and in the community. Training opportunities and materials will be organised where individuals and groups of people can acquire, practise, experience and share skills and knowledge to make life meaningful and fulfilling for themselves and others. Dhammic values and principles are the essence of all the department's programmes. Call 6849 5300 or email [community@kmspsk.org](mailto:community@kmspsk.org)

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Understand what Buddhism really is about. Learn various authentic methods of Buddhist meditation, or realise deep insights through guided retreats by qualified Dharma masters. For these and more, visit [kmspsk.org/featured](http://kmspsk.org/featured) and [kmspsk.org/events/prayers](http://kmspsk.org/events/prayers)

#### Pujue E-Newsletter

Pujue is an interesting weekly Chinese Buddhist e-mail newsletter that encourages all to live each day mindfully. It also informs readers of the latest local Buddhist activities. Sign up for the e-newsletter at [pujue-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:pujue-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) or visit [media.kmspsk.org/category/enewsletter](http://media.kmspsk.org/category/enewsletter) to view past issues.

#### Saturday and Sunday School

Established to sow and nurture the seeds of Buddhahood in our younger generation, it shares the Dharma with the young in a warm, supportive and inspiring environment. Call 6849 5329, visit [pkssss.kmspsk.org](http://pkssss.kmspsk.org) or e-mail: [sundayschool@kmspsk.org](mailto:sundayschool@kmspsk.org) to be a Dharma volunteer, or sign up for the school.

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Our opening hours are 11.30am to 6.00pm daily (Closed on public holidays). For more information, visit [awarenessplace.com](http://awarenessplace.com) or call 6336 5067.




inVibes is a light Dharma and music podcast site for those who seek ancient wisdom and wish to integrate it into their daily lives... inVibes hopes to keep you resonant with the Dharma wherever you are. Meditate a prayer, be someone you care or transform yourself!

WWW.DHARMA.MUSIC.PRAYERS.PODCAST.  
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*Venerable Kwang Sheng,  
Abbot of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery  
Wishes all devotees and their families  
a Happy, Peaceful &  
Prosperous Chinese New Year*



*May you always be blessed and protected  
by the Triple Gem*

*Do all that is virtuous  
Avoid all that is non-virtuous  
And purify the mind.  
This is the teaching of all Buddhas  
- The Buddha*

## Leading a Life of Virtue

Singaporeans may be achieving more but are less happy. They are also enjoying life less. Singaporeans aged 25 to 34 were the most unhappy, according to a local survey. "The findings suggest that money does not necessarily buy happiness... a phenomenon that is seen in other developed countries as well where happiness levels tend to stagnate after a point, even as national wealth continues to grow." (The Straits Time, Nov 29, 2012)

The findings echo the thoughts of 40-year-old Dr Richard Teo who said in his parting speech to dental students, before he passed away from cancer at the end of last year: "The irony is that success, trophies, my cars, my house and all...when I was feeling really down, having severe depression...these possessions brought me no joy."

Dr Teo realised from his own life's journey the fleeting, impermanent nature of life and that true happiness doesn't come from serving oneself but from reaching out to people in need, making a difference to somebody else's life because everyone not just the poor, feels pain and suffering. This spirit of loving-kindness, compassion and generosity is greatly taught by the Buddha in the teaching of the ten virtues and non-virtues. (pg 43)

*Doing all that is wholesome, avoiding all that is unwholesome and purifying the mind* is a core teaching in Buddhism regardless the traditions (pg 34, 49). Non-virtues are to be avoided because they are the roots of all suffering (pg 51, 63). From virtuous and non-virtuous deeds come their corresponding results (pg 36). Stories told by the Buddha and other realised masters such as the *Monkey Boy*, *Princess Kashika*, *The Story of Lekye* and *Story of the Hungry Ghost* etc illustrate this point (pg 54-58). When you read these stories and wonder how much of these are true, recall the recent bizarre incident reported in international dailies of a 63-year-old Korean who was impregnated with 12 baby squids in her mouth. This incident was also reported in a medical journal.

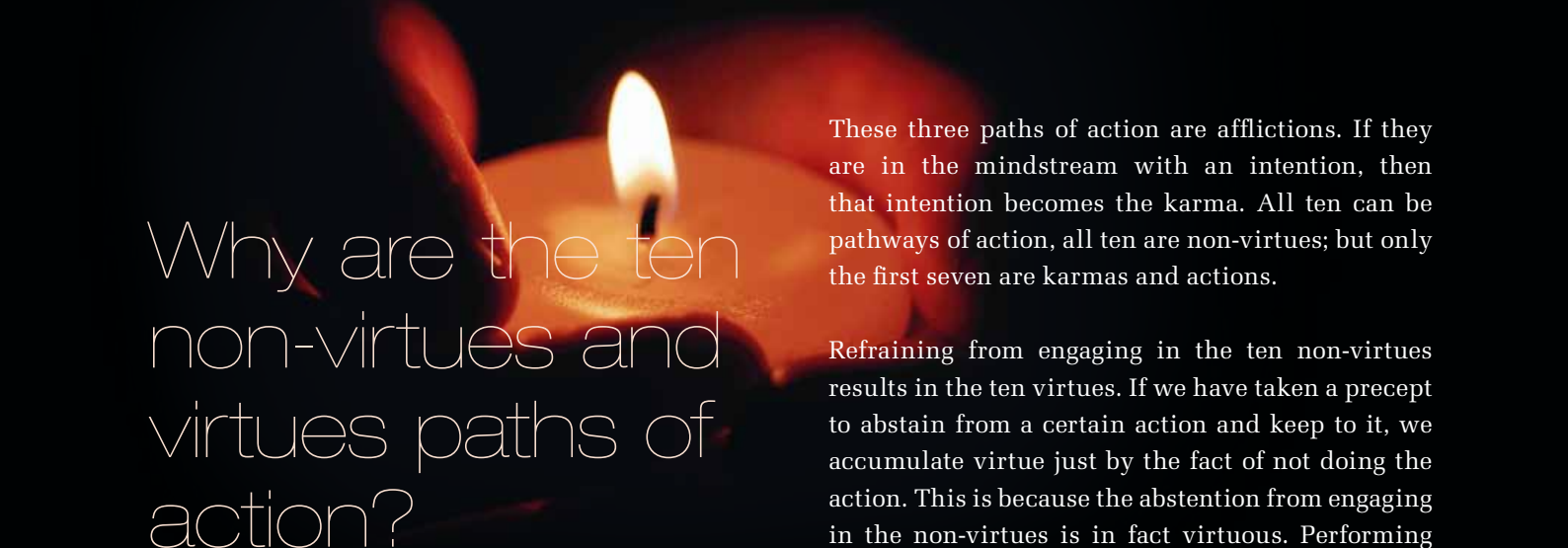
To recognise your pattern of automatic behaviour and break non-virtuous habits, try the tips listed on page 41 and 62.

We should learn the art of being a peaceful warrior (pg 59) by practising the Dharma sincerely, and taming our mind from all negative thoughts.

As we keep Dharma practice grounded in the centre of our hearts, a world of peace and happiness is possible (pg 42, 60). Have a wonderful and virtuous new year!



Yours in the Dharma,  
Sister Esther Thien



# Why are the ten non-virtues and virtues paths of action?

**Q:** Why are the ten non-virtues and ten virtues paths of action? — N.K.

**A:** The ten non-virtues are all paths of action but they are not all actions. They are called paths of action because they are conduits leading to future lives. An action becomes a path of action when all four parts of the action (object, intention, action, completion of action) are complete. Then, if the karma is strong enough, it will result in a future rebirth. In that way it becomes a pathway to a future rebirth.

Not all of these ten non-virtues are actions though. The seven non-virtues of body and speech (killing, stealing, unwise and unkind sexual behaviour, lying, disharmonious speech, harsh speech, idle talk) are karma or actions, but the three mental ones (covetousness, maliciousness and wrong views) are actually afflictions.

Covetousness is a form of greed or attachment, maliciousness is a form of anger and hatred, wrong views are a form of confusion. When they arise in the mind, the mental factor of intention is also present. That mental factor of intention is the karma, but the attachment, anger or confusion makes it non-virtuous.

Covetousness occurs only when the greed or attachment has gotten so strong over time that a person has a firm wish and starts to plan how to get somebody else's possessions. Similarly maliciousness is hatred that's built up over time so the person has a clear wish that wants others to experience misery. Likewise wrong views arise when confusion has built up to a point that a person holding distorted views thinks they are true.

These three paths of action are afflictions. If they are in the mindstream with an intention, then that intention becomes the karma. All ten can be pathways of action, all ten are non-virtues; but only the first seven are karmas and actions.

Refraining from engaging in the ten non-virtues results in the ten virtues. If we have taken a precept to abstain from a certain action and keep to it, we accumulate virtue just by the fact of not doing the action. This is because the abstention from engaging in the non-virtues is in fact virtuous. Performing the opposite of the ten non-virtues is also virtuous. Instead of killing, we preserve life; instead of stealing, we guard others' possessions and respect their possessions; instead of unwise and unkind sexual behaviour, we have wise and kind sexual behaviour or remain celibate; instead of lying, we uphold the truth; and so on.

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**When we do virtuous actions, think of the effects they will bring, such as having a good rebirth. Through abstaining from killing in this lifetime, we create the cause to have a long life in the future.**

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By abstaining from harming others and by taking care of them, we create the cause to be safe. By abandoning stealing and through sharing, we create the cause to have wealth in future lives.

Contemplating this will encourage us to create virtuous actions. Also reflect on the good things you presently enjoy in this lifetime. If you enjoy abundance, that comes from being generous. If people trust your words and listen to you, it comes from speaking kindly and at appropriate times. If you are born into a good family and have the opportunity to go to school, that comes from not being arrogant, from being kind to others and seeing them as equals. If you have a beautiful appearance, it comes from practising patience and abandoning anger. Contemplate these in terms of your own experience and the experiences of the people you know. Doing this is very helpful for understanding karma. 🙏

— Ven Thubten Chodron  
[www.thubtenchodron.org](http://www.thubtenchodron.org)  
[www.sravasti.org](http://www.sravasti.org)

## KMSPKS Youth Activities

### Y cultivation

Mindful Sunday - A bi-monthly group session where we share the Buddha's teachings that can be applied in the daily life of a young Buddhist. Experience recitation of Sutra, relaxation meditation, movie sharing and more.

Date/Time : 3 & 17 Mar, 7 & 21 Apr

Venue : Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall, Classroom 5

### Y care

#### Kopitiam outing with Bright Hill Evergreen Home Residents

Date/Time : 17 Feb & 14 Apr, Sun

Venue : 21 Senja Road Singapore 677736

#### Ration distribution to low income families

Date/Time : 13 Jan, 10 Mar, 14 Apr, Sun

Gathering Place : Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

### Y talk

A series of self-improvement and self-help talks in relation to Dharma.

Date/Time : 28 Feb, 28 Mar, 11 & 25 Apr, Thu

Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre,  
Blk 261, Waterloo St #01-42, Waterloo Centre

Fee : Free

### Y arts and culture

#### Y Zen Drum I (Teens, 13-16 yrs old)

Date/Time : 27 Jan – Nov, Sun, 10:30am – 12pm

Venue : KMSPKS, Music Room

Fee : \$100

#### Y Zen Drum II (Adults, 17-22 yrs old)

Date/Time : 13 Jan – Nov, Sun, 8.00am – 9:30am

Venue : KMSPKS, Music Room

Fee : \$100

#### Y Zen Drum Class (Children, 8-12 yrs old)

Date/Time : 2 Mar – Nov, Sat, 10.00am – 11:30am

Venue : KMSPKS, Music Room

Fee : \$50

#### Y Zen Drum Class (Adults, 23 yrs old & above)

Date/Time : 2 Mar – Nov, Sat, 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Venue : KMSPKS, Music Room

Fee : \$450

Details : To register: Email youth@kmspks.org  
or Call 68495345/5359

### CNY Vegetarian Cooking 新春素食菜肴 (Mandarin)\*

Date/Time : 27 Jan, Sun, 3pm – 5pm

Fee : \$42 (ingredients fee \$6 to pay separately to Mr Wong on 27/1)

Instructor : Mr Wong Kew Yew (Bach. Biotech), dedicated to public education including interviews and cooking demos on Capital 95.8 FM

### Organic CNY Lunch @ Real Food\*

Date/Time : 24 Feb, Sun, 12.30pm – 2.30pm

Venue : Real Food Café

Fee : \$35

Instructor : Mr Wong Kew Yew

### Taiji (Yang Style) – Beginners\*

Date/Time : 20 Jan – 7 Apr, Sun, 10.30am – 12pm

Fee : \$160 (10 sessions)

Instructor : Ms Jasmine Koh, accredited coach with The Singapore Sports Council

### Project Rebirth: Rediscover, Reflect, Recharge\*

Date/Time : 19 Feb – 23 Apr, Tue, 7.30pm – 9.30pm

Fee : \$40 (10 sessions)

Instructor : Bro Shen Shi'an, MA (Buddhist Studies)

### Yogalates\*

Date/Time : 16 Jan – 27 Mar, Wed, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

Fee : \$140 (10 sessions)

Instructor : Ms Leong Pek Yew, certified Yoga Teacher

### Hatha Yoga – Lunchtime\*

Date/Time : 15 Jan – 2 Apr, Tue, 12.45pm – 1.35pm

Fee : \$140 (10 sessions with 1 free organic take-away every session)

Instructor : Ms Ong Ju Lee, Diploma in Teaching the Science and Art of Yoga

### Hatha Yoga\*

Date/Time : 17 Jan – 28 Mar, Thu, 10.30am – 12pm

Fee : \$160 (10 lessons)

Instructor : Ms Ong Ju Lee

### Rainbow Child Yoga\*

Date : 3 Mar – 5 May, Sun

Time : 3pm – 4pm (age 4 to 6)  
4pm – 5pm (age 7 to 10)

Fee : \$180 (8 sessions)

Instructor : Ms Regina Chua, a Yoga Alliance certified Children Yoga Teacher and Kundalini Yoga Teacher. She started practising yoga at age 20, and participated in transformational and inner-child work.

### Children's Art\*

Date/Time : 13 Apr – 29 Jun, Sat, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Fee : \$60 (12 sessions)

Instructor : Mr Soh Chin Bee, graduate from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts

\* Venue : Awareness Place Well-Being Centre,  
Blk 261 Waterloo St #01-42  
Waterloo Centre

Details : Please visit awarenessplace.com, email sem@kmspks.org or call 6336 5067 to register or enquire.

### English Buddhism Course

#### Year 1 Module 1

Date/Time : 4 Mar – 6 May, Mon, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue : Level 1, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

#### Year 2 Module 1

Date/Time : 3 Mar – 5 May, Sun, 2.00pm – 3.30pm

Venue : Level 1, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

#### Abhidhamma and Me Module 1

Date/Time : 28 Feb – 9 May, Thu, 7.30pm – 9.00pm

Venue : Level 1, Ven Hong Choon Memorial Hall

Fee : \$30 per module

Details : For more information, please call 6849 5300



# Groundbreaking Ceremony for New College Building and Multi-storey Car Park in KMSPKS



**Singapore** – A spanking new building for the Buddhist College of Singapore (BCS) is in the pipeline. Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery (KMSPKS) held a Groundbreaking Ceremony last December to commemorate this new milestone.

Witnessed by about 200 devotees, the ceremony began with a blessing prayer led by Abbot of KMSPKS and Rector of BCS, Ven Kwang Sheng. Ven Kwang Sheng together with Ven Yan Jue, Deputy Secretary General of the Buddhist Association of China (BAC), conducted the groundbreaking ceremony for the new College building. Ven Yan Jue and three other BAC representatives flew in specially for the occasion.

Established in 2005, The Buddhist College of Singapore is the brainchild of Ven Kwang Sheng. The only monastic tertiary college offering Buddhist Studies in Singapore, it aims to nurture outstanding Buddhist leaders of the future and is the first educational institution for Sangha members in Singapore. It offers five-year degree courses taught in both English and Chinese. The English degree is jointly awarded by the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka, and the Chinese degree, by the Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University in Thailand. The students are educated on subjects ranging from Buddhist history and culture, sociology, secular philosophy, management, economics to conflict management.

Besides attending five hours of classes each weekday, the student Venerables also perform morning and evening chants, observe monthly Dharma practices and participate in the annual 3-Step-1-Bow ceremony. The new six-storey college costing \$35 million is expected to be ready by end 2014. With a floor area of 12, 618 square metres, it houses a pleasant student hostel, cutting-edge computer labs, language labs, lecture halls, tutorial rooms and a sports hall.

The monastery is also building a new four-storey car park with 270 parking lots comprising a 4.5m-high ground level for heavy vehicles and an unsheltered top level. Estimated to cost S\$12 million, the car park will significantly ease traffic congestion around the monastery especially during major festivals and grand prayers.

The groundbreaking ceremony for the car park was officiated and graced by Guest of Honour, Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister of State for Finance and Transport. 🙏

BY | Esther Thien

Editor: Due to the massive scale of construction works, there is limited parking space in the monastery. The public is advised to use public transport instead during major festivals and events. We regret any inconvenience caused.

## Stellar Cantonese Opera Performances to Raise Funds for the Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic



**Singapore** – If you enjoyed the offering of Cantonese Opera presented by Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in 2011, watch out for more of the same good fun this 23 March.

To be held at the Esplanade Theatre, Cantonese Opera lovers can expect stellar performances from acclaimed Cantonese opera performers Ni Hui Ying, Ding Fan, Jiang Wen Duan,

Su Chun Mei, Li Jun Sheng at this two-night operatic songs charity gala. Enjoy the elegant repertoire of favourite classics such as *A Ghost's Grievances* (鬼怨), *Battle of Ba Hill* (战巴丘), *House of Hu* (扈家庄), *Princess Fong Ji* (凤吉公主), *White Ape Fetches Peach* (白猿取桃) and *The Capture of Zhang San-Lang* (活捉张三郎). All funds collected from the performances will be donated to the Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic Medical Fund in support of the newly opened Cancer Treatment Centre. Tickets are available from Sistic at \$500, \$188, \$148, \$88, \$68, \$48 and \$38. Book now for good seats. 🐾

## After Touching 40,000 Hearts Regionally, Award-winning Princess Wen Cheng The Musical is now in Singapore

**Singapore** – After touching the hearts of 40,000 people in Taipei, Beijing, Xi'an and Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian-produced *Princess Wen Cheng The Musical* will be staged for the very first time in Singapore from 11 to 13 January 2013 at the Esplanade Theatre. Costing \$600,000 to produce, it has been described as a marriage of Eastern history with Broadway flair.



BY | Poh Yong Hui

The Mandarin musical follows the tale of the titular Tang Dynasty princess who left home some 1,300 years ago to marry the Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo as part of a peace treaty. Thrust into the unknown, the princess faced a myriad of difficulties along the journey but went on to win the hearts of the Tibetans with her kindness and compassion.

The creative team comprises some of the best talents in the Malaysian music and arts scene, who have worked together on the critically acclaimed musicals *Siddhartha*, *Above Full Moon* etc. Every aspect of the production, from the ethereal music composed by Imee Ooi, soulful dance choreography, magnificent sets, right down to the intricate costumes, is the original creation of the all-Malaysian team. At the helm of the 70-strong team is the multi-talented

producer/playwright/director Ho Lin Huay, who has led the company in producing six award-winning musicals since 1999, touring internationally and performing to a total turnout of 250,000 people.

Deeply inspired by the story of Princess Wen Cheng, director Ho Lin Huay embarked on the same journey that the princess took from Xi'an to Lhasa, braving treacherous terrain for 28 days with her team. The princess took three years to travel the same route, said Ms Ho. "Even though we travelled in a four-wheel drive and equipped ourselves to guard against altitude illness, the journey was really tough. The princess did not have these luxuries 1,300 years ago. Her story touched me, and I'm sure it will inspire the audience as well." Get your tickets from [www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg) or visit [www.facebook.com/PrincessWenCheng](http://www.facebook.com/PrincessWenCheng) to enquire. 🐾



Scan to watch trailers of the musical.

The green mung bean is low in fat and high in nutritional value. A rich source of protein, soluble fibre, vitamins and minerals, consuming green mung bean can help to lower one's cholesterol, stabilise one's blood sugar and improve digestion. Try our mouth-watering green mung bean dessert recipes.

### Sesame Ball 芝麻球



#### Ingredients:

(A) 300gm glutinous rice flour, 300gm sweet potatoes (steam & mash it), 45gm cooking oil (B) 150gm tung mein flour, 30gm hot water (C) 560gm mung beans paste, 75gm white sesame seeds, 1 bowl of water

#### Method:

1. Mix and knead ingredients (A). Set aside.
2. Pour hot water to tung mein flour and stir well. Mix and knead with 1.
3. Divide mung beans paste to 20gm portions, roll each portion into a small ball.
4. Divide 2. into 40gm portions. Roll each small dough portion into a ball, flatten, put the filling in the centre, wrap it up and roll to form a ball.
5. Dip it into a bowl of water and then roll it in the sesame seeds coating.
6. Heat oil in a wok. Once the oil is hot add in sesame balls. Cook until the sesame balls turn golden brown.

#### 用料:

(A) 糯米粉300克、番薯300克(蒸熟, 搅烂)、油45克 (B) 澄面粉150克, 沸水30克 (C) 豆沙馅560克、白芝麻75克、水1碗

#### 做法:

1. 将用料A混合揉匀备用。
2. 将用料B的沸水冲入澄粉中, 将澄粉烫熟后倒入1.中一起揉匀。
3. 取20克的豆沙馅揉成圆球作为内馅。
4. 将2.分为40克, 搓圆、压扁、放入内馅、包紧、搓圆。
5. 表面用水沾湿后, 滚上白芝麻。
6. 热一油锅, 将芝麻球放入锅中, 炸至浮起呈金黄色即可。

### Ang Ku Kway 红龟粿



#### Ingredients for skin:

300gm sweet potatoes, 200gm glutinous rice flour, 2tbsp sugar, 3tbsp corn oil, 180ml water, red food colouring, banana leaves - wash and dry

#### Ingredients for filling:

250gm mung beans, 140gm sugar, 3tbsp corn oil, 2pcs pandan leaves

#### Method:

1. Soak mung beans for 2 hrs, steam the beans and pandan leaves until soft. Mash the beans.
2. Boil the sugar in water. Add in mashed beans and corn oil. Stir the mixture until is dry and pasty. Divide them into small balls.
3. Steam the sweet potatoes until soft. Mash the sweet potatoes. Add in glutinous rice flour, sugar, corn oil and red food colouring. Slowly add in water to mix well till soft dough. Divide the dough into small balls.
4. Flatten the sweet potato ball, place a mung bean ball in the centre and wrap it. Apply oil over the ball and place it in the mould, press evenly, knock it loose and place on greased banana leaf.
6. Steam the Ang Ku Kway for 10mins over a high flame.

#### 皮用料:

番薯300克、糯米粉200克、糖2汤匙、玉米油3汤匙、水180ml、红粉、香蕉叶一洗净抹干备用

#### 馅料:

绿豆瓣250克、糖140克、玉米油3汤匙、香兰叶2条

#### 做法:

1. 绿豆瓣浸泡2小时, 加入香兰叶蒸至软熟。搅烂。
2. 水加糖下火煮。把糖水、绿豆瓣馅料、玉米油加在一起, 搅拌成一软团。把馅料分割成小团。
3. 番薯蒸至软熟、搅烂。加入糯米粉、玉米油、糖、红粉后再把水倒入搅拌成团然后分割成小团。
4. 把皮压扁, 馅料包在里面。外皮搽上一层油后放入模定型。把定型后的红龟粿打出来摆放在沾了少许油的香蕉叶上。
5. 放入蒸锅, 以大火蒸10分钟。



By Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of *The Mindful Child*, and Founder of the Inner Kids Foundation which developed the Inner Kids mindful awareness programme for children, teens and families.

([www.susankaisergreenland.com](http://www.susankaisergreenland.com))

**W**e all have habits – some of them helpful or neutral, others that persistently create problems in our lives. It’s easier for kids to change habits than grown-ups. One way to start recognising your pattern of automatic behaviour is to create external signals that will automatically show up throughout the day. These interrupters provide an opportunity to pause and reflect.

### ☺ Create mindfulness reminders

I have seen kids tie a string around one finger, make mindfulness bracelets of ribbons or beads, or tape a colourful sticker to their cell phones. Whenever you see them, just pause to take in what’s happening in your mind and body.

### ☺ Implement breathing prompts

Suggest to your children to practise breath awareness whenever they brush their teeth or put on their socks. Breathing prompts help kids recognise just how many things they do are on automatic pilot. By interrupting automatic behaviour, kids have the time and mental space to make connections between what they’re doing, what they’re thinking and how they’re feeling.

## A String Around Your Finger



### ☺ Notice funny feelings

Kids talk about having a funny feeling in the split second just before they do something that they later wish they hadn’t done, maybe a tightening in their chests, or a sinking feeling in their stomachs. That funny feeling occurs in the “about to” moment.

By noticing their funny feelings, kids pause before they act to ask,

- Why am I choosing to do this?
- How does it make me feel?
- Is my motivation friendly or unfriendly?

If, upon reflection, the action doesn’t feel right, they can choose to act differently. ☺





## How Understanding the Ten Virtues Changed My Life

I used to have a real problem with lying. I lied, because I was afraid to tell the truth and face my real-life problems. Actually what I didn't understand was that each time I lied, I was creating a pit for myself as I had to cover it with another bigger lie. I ended up creating an entirely new picture of my life that was far from the truth.

Before I became a Buddhist five years ago, I had created such a big lie about my life that I didn't truly know what was real any more. I was quite desperate. I met a monk in Bangkok and travelled to a monastery in the forest with him to spend some time in a retreat. While I was there, the monk explained to me about the ten virtues and non-virtues and it was then that I realised my lies were creating all the problems in my life.

When I understood this, half the problem was solved, because all I had to do was simply to strip the lying away from my life. The truth shone like a precious jewel for me. From that day onwards, I started practising the ten virtues in my everyday life. I'm still not perfect, but I'm trying my best to live a virtuous life and I'm a much happier person because of it.

- Mark, aged 28, engineer from Australia.

I was in the bathroom one evening when I spied a small brown ant on my finger. In the past, my first reaction would have been to blow it away with a strong spurt of breath so that it would vanish. As to where and whether I would have injured the sentient being, I had never contemplated on it. Having taken the five precepts and learnt more about the 10 virtuous and non-virtuous actions in Dharma class, I responded differently this time. I paused for a few seconds, and with mindfulness, gently prodded the ant towards and atop a piece of toilet paper, which I then left on the sink so that the ant would be free to find its way wherever it wished to go.

In the past two weeks or so, I have said "amituofo" to snails and what looked like the flattened carcass of a rat, subconsciously hoping they would attain a new form of life that would guide them towards the end of samsara and achieve enlightenment. Last week, I was caught in a dilemma. Thinking of ways to decline politely a request from my aunt, I thought of possible excuses and was also advised by others to offer some flimsy pretext. But remembering what my Dharma Shifu said: "One can be skilful in speech without having to resort to lying," I simply told my aunt that I was not comfortable doing what she had asked for without elaborating further.

- Janice Goh, aged 33, freelancer



## Moral ethics is the basis for attaining a human body

**W**e often hear that it is difficult to find a human body. Not just any human body, but a “precious” one that has contact with the Dharma teachings – that’s what is difficult to obtain. Basically, the cause for attaining a human body is moral ethics, such as the ten virtues. Briefly these are:

- Three virtues of the body – not taking life, not stealing, not engaging in sexual misconduct
- Four virtues of speech – not telling lies, not using divisive speech, not using harsh words and not engaging in idle talk; and
- Three virtues of the mind – not coveting, not engaging in harmful thought, and not holding wrong views

Conversely, the ten non-virtues refer to the opposites of the ten virtues.

Ethical discipline refers to avoiding the ten non-virtues and practising the ten virtues.

# Understanding Virtues & Non-Virtues

BY | Khenchen Konchog Gyaltshen





If we don't keep moral ethics, there is a strong possibility that we will be born in the lower realms where there is no chance to study or practise the precious Dharma teachings. Since without ethical conduct it will not be easy to find a precious human life, bodhisattvas keep pure moral ethics so that in their next life they can again be born as humans where there are Dharma teachings.

The worst result of engaging in the ten non-virtues is to be reborn in the hell realms. The middling result leads to rebirth as a hungry ghost. The least severe consequence of doing the ten non-virtues will cause you to be reborn as an animal. Practising the ten virtues causes you to be reborn in the three higher realms. That is why avoiding the ten non-virtues and protecting the ten virtues are so important for our Dharma practice. There is no possibility of encountering the precious Dharma in the lower realms, let alone studying or practising it. So cherish this opportunity of a precious human rebirth and protect the ten virtues.

### Reflecting on virtues and non-virtues

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When we do something good for another, how good we feel! The benefit of doing virtuous things for others is clear. Apply this knowledge in your daily life – avoid all negative actions, especially the ten non-virtues, and engage in positive actions, including the ten virtues. When you know how to do this, your peace, harmony, joy and

happiness will increase without limit, especially if these noble acts are performed with the support of bodhicitta. These practices are also grounds for achieving enlightenment or Buddhahood.

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Virtue and non-virtue, positive karma and negative karma are not just theories. They are the laws of the universe. Whatever we do becomes a cause that manifests a result. So reflect on the ten virtues and be inspired to live your life based on these and be free of the ten non-virtues.

Do virtuous things for others. This means not causing harm and bringing peace. Peace is the absence of obscurations, negative thoughts, delusion and distraction in the mind.

The ten virtues, six perfections, the good qualities of the relative state, and the qualities of Buddhahood are based on moral ethics. Love, compassion and bodhicitta are planted in and depend on the ground of moral ethics. Meditative concentration and critical insight are also based on personal discipline. The noble Nagarjuna wrote in the *Letter to a Friend*:

*Morality was declared to be the foundation for all virtues,  
Just as the earth is for all things moving and still.*

When we hold and observe the five lay precepts, or monks' and nuns' precepts, we can say that we are real Dharma practitioners. Without at least the five precepts, we are not counted among the Sangha members.



Only one who is disciplined will be able to keep moral ethics. This is clear even in ordinary life. Generally, those who are cautious about respecting others' lives and feelings, who abstain from stealing from others, who always use gentle words and speak the truth, and who use skilful words to bring others into harmony are well respected throughout the world. One who keeps moral ethics well gains great dignity and glory. Such a person has the ability to bring about peace and benefit to others. All the bodhisattvas are pleased with such an individual, and he or she is praised by distinguished and wise people.

Even when such individuals grow old and weak, they are still respected by gods and humans and

are an object of praise. Like a precious shrine, such people are honoured with prostrations and devotion because their behaviour is a source of serenity, integrity and peace. Therefore, keeping the moral precepts is our best form of protection.

As the wish-granting tree bears great fruit, pure moral ethics brings great fruits for oneself and others. Moral discipline will bring about all the temporary peace and happiness of gods and humans. One who keeps pure moral ethics possesses the foundation to increase and perfect the peerless qualities of a Buddha. Ultimately, it will lead to complete Buddhahood. ☺

### Knowing the ten virtues and non-virtues

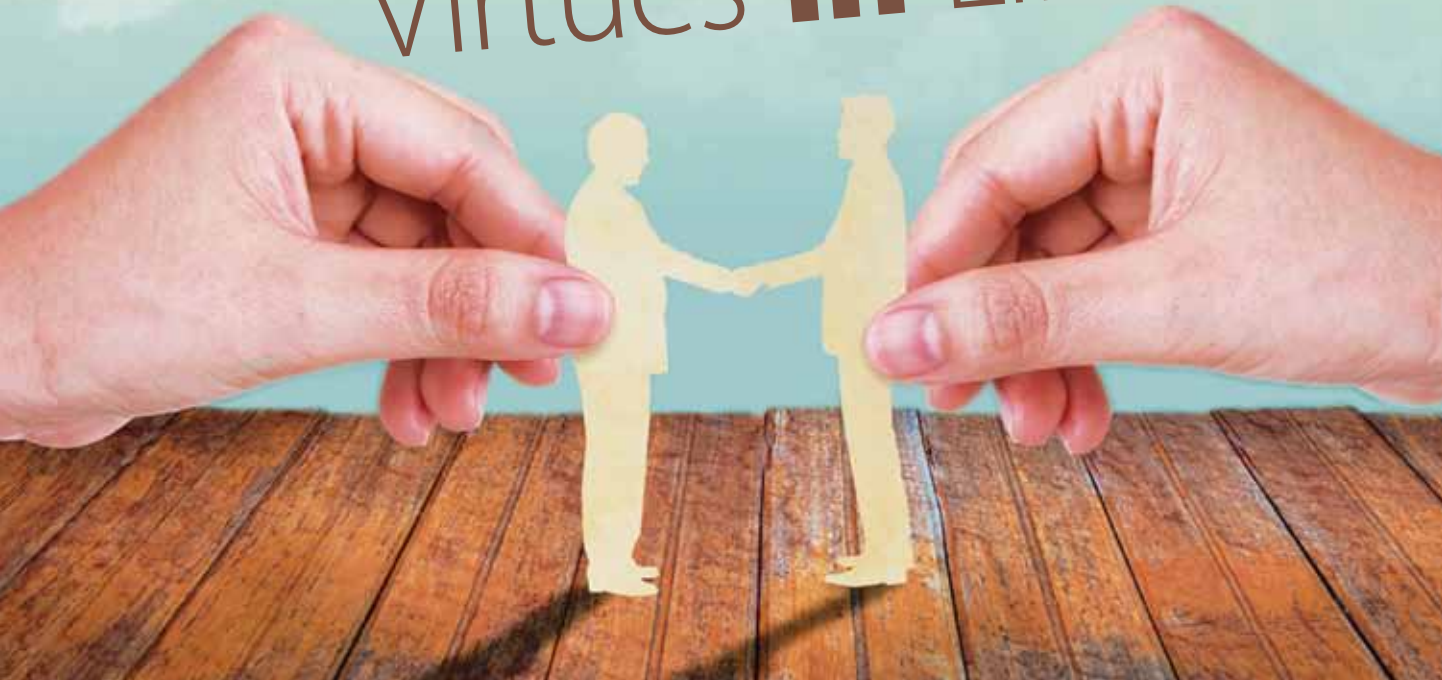
As moral ethics is the foundation for freedom from samsara and attainment of enlightenment of *shravakas*, *prateyakabuddhas* and bodhisattvas, it is important to know the ten virtues. Those who maintain these ten practices are called those with pure moral ethics. All great beings emphasise the teachings of moral discipline and perfectly maintain moral ethics themselves. Morality is the practical way of pure Dharma practice. By practising ethics, we are able to free ourselves from delusion and negative thoughts.

- **AVOID KILLING.** Instead protect and respect others' lives, especially those of human beings
- **AVOID STEALING AND CHEATING.** Everyone cherishes his or her own health and wealth, so stealing from others isn't right legally or morally. Instead practise generosity.
- **ABSTAIN FROM SEXUAL MISCONDUCT.** For householders, this means abstaining from harmful sexual activity. Many couples divorced once or twice in their lives due to the results of sexual misconduct in this life or previous lifetimes.
- **ABSTAIN FROM LYING.** Avoid telling lies, especially spiritual lies. Instead speak the truth.

- **AVOID DIVIDING A COMMUNITY.** Especially avoid dividing the Sangha. Instead, seek to harmonise.
- **AVOID THE USE OF HARSH SPEECH.** Instead speak gently.
- **AVOID IDLE TALK.** Instead speak meaningfully and to the point.
- **AVOID COVETOUSNESS.** Instead practise contentment. We should always rejoice in and appreciate what we have. The non-virtue of covetousness often leads to rebirth as a hungry ghost.
- **AVOID MALICIOUS THOUGHTS.** Instead practise love and compassion. Malice is one of the non-virtues that most easily results in rebirth in a hell realm.
- **AVOID WRONG VIEW.** Instead believe and understand the teachings on cause and effect.



# Practising Virtues **in** Life



Ven Tenzin Palmo, an author, teacher and founder of the Dongyu Gatsal Ling Nunnery was one of the first few Westerners to be ordained as a Buddhist nun. She is well-known for having spent 12 years in a cave retreat in the Himalayas, of which three were spent in full retreat. She speaks to Esther Thien on how one can lead a virtuous life.

**Awaken:** Ven, you were here recently to conduct a retreat on *lojong*. Tell us more about it?

**Ven:** *Lojong* is a Buddhist mind training practice introduced by a Bengali scholar into Tibet in the 11th century. It is very much cultivated in the tradition he introduced and is based on bodhicitta, the aspiration to attain enlightenment not for the sake of oneself but to liberate all others. It especially deals with how we can take difficult situations onto the path instead of getting all upset and depressed or angry when things don't go the way we want them to go.

Through this practice, we accept that encountering difficult people and situations is actually a good teaching for us. We recognise that they are our great spiritual friends for they offer a good way for us to develop qualities like patience and compassion. We are grateful when



difficult things happen as they enrich us spiritually for enlightenment. This is what *lojong* entails. Basically it is taking problems onto the path. Our obstacles turn into opportunity for spiritual growth.

**Awaken: How can *lojong* help one in one's family life and in the workplace?**

**Ven:** Instead of seeing family life and the workplace as obstacles for our practice, we recognise that these provide wonderful opportunities for us to develop many important qualities which are needed on the path. Without these family and work situations, we may not develop such qualities if we live in a quiet and unimposing environment. Thus, *lojong* is the most useful practice for everyday life and for those who are not spending all their time in retreat. The main *lojong* texts one can study and contemplate are the *Eight Verses of Thought Transformation* and *The Seven Points of Mind Training* and their various commentaries.

**Awaken: Doing all that is virtuous, avoiding all that is non-virtuous and purifying the mind is the core teaching of Buddhism, regardless of the traditions. How can a lay Buddhist with his many secular responsibilities practise this firmly in his daily life?**

**Ven:** It is very important that a person realises that he does not compromise on virtues and non-virtues in his daily life. For instance, if one is a businessman, one has to be honest with one's clients and customers and not resort to deceit in the name of profit. It may not make you a very successful businessman in the beginning. But to become a person of integrity is very important on the spiritual path. You cannot pretend to be virtuous on the one hand, and then start telling somebody that something is really good when it isn't. Or when customers seek your advice, in order to close a deal, you give advice which will benefit yourself but is actually detrimental to them. Doing so, you would be living a life of hypocrisy basically.

The Buddha Himself had a number of disciples

who were very successful businessmen. These disciples later also gained a high level of realisation, presumably while still remaining very successful in business. Nowadays, it is very useful for us to know that we are dealing with people with integrity, who are honest and will not mislead us. Hence Buddhists should undertake that as much as possible.

We have to recognise that the Buddhist path, besides being about meditation – as we have to tame the



mind – is also about cultivating mindfulness in our day-to-day activities. We have to remember to centre ourselves as much as possible and bring ourselves back to the moment, by focusing on our breath and so forth.

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**Gradually, we begin to gain the inner confidence that whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, this is still the path.**

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Otherwise, Buddhism has no relevance; so why bother? But the beauty of Buddhism is anyone under any circumstances can practise its teachings. For instance, the people in prison practise Buddhism, and many are very sincere practitioners. They face so much confrontation that they know either they are going to go down or come out, so they practise really strongly, especially in cultivating compassion.

**Awaken: The ten virtues and non-virtues are expounded in many texts. How can a lay Buddhist actively uphold them and have a greater understanding of them?**

**Ven:** Through doing it. Each of these virtues is intended to help us lead a life that is harmless – one that does no harm to others, and no harm to ourselves – and the only way to cultivate that is by doing it. It helps very much for people to formally receive the Five Precepts, because the act of committing to the precepts serves as a kind of barrier when non-virtuous intentions come up, such as “Oh, yes I shouldn't squash that ant because I took a precept not to kill.” One becomes more conscious. All of these precepts can be taken by anyone as they are guidelines how one can live as a decent human being. They are universal qualities of body, speech and mind which has nothing to do with what we wear, eat or our cultural values. If we called ourselves Buddhist, we certainly should try to uphold these basic precepts as best as we can.

**Awaken: How can one actually maintain sanity in this world of madness?**

**Ven:** Well, you start by keeping the precepts. By taking them seriously, the best you can. By not compromising too much without being rigid and by taking care of your mind. Because behind all our deeds is our ‘mad monkey’ mind, and if we don't tame the mad monkey, we will stay crazy.

**Awaken: How can one live with confidence and without fear?**

**Ven:** By having integrity and recognising that whatever happens to us, we should make use of it on the path. Even when things go wrong.

We can live with confidence and without fear by not thinking that things have to proceed the way we want them to go and if things turn out differently, then that's bad. Actually, sometimes when things are different from the way we have planned could end up being more useful to us, for they help us to learn, grow and become strong spiritually. As we develop resilience, we have no fear and whatever comes along, we can deal with it. This is what *lojong* is about and why it is so important in this modern age.

If you say to people that in order for them to become good practitioners, they have to give up everything and go away and live in remote places, people despair. They will think, “I can't do that and so my life is an obstacle to me. I will be a good practitioner if I don't have my family, my work etc”. But this is not seeing things clearly. Meditation is only one aspect. In the Mahayana tradition, there are the Six Paramitas or Perfections, and meditation is one of them. The other qualities like generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligent effort and understanding wisdom, can perhaps be better developed in our ordinary environment because this is where the challenges are. ☺



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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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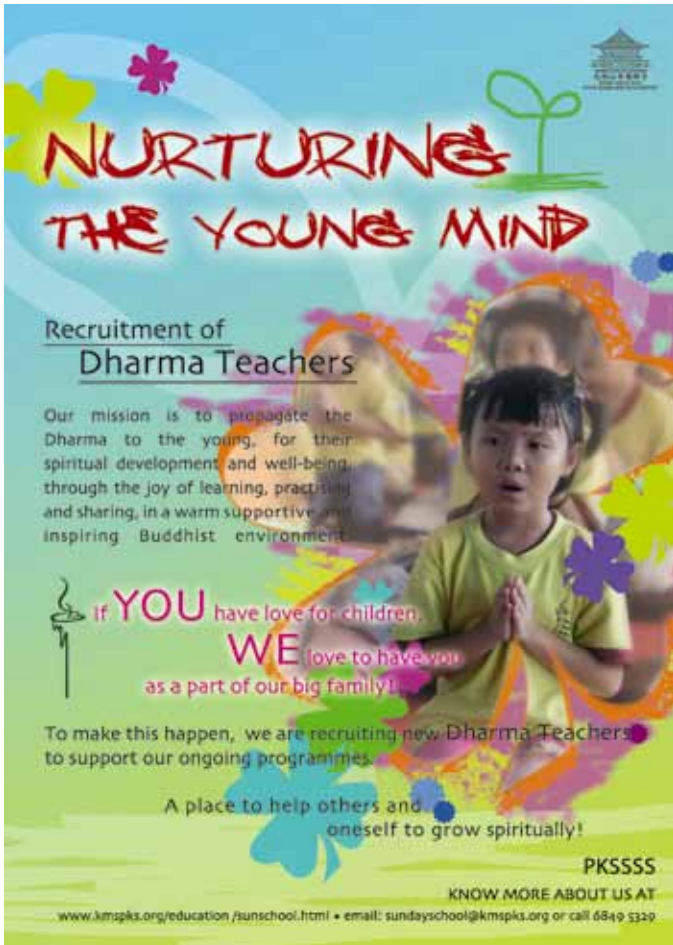
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## The Three Kinds of Morality

**O**f the three kinds of morality, the first is the morality of abstaining from non-virtuous actions. The ten non-virtues are to be avoided because they are the root of samsara – the six realms with their different levels of suffering. All that you are experiencing in your life do not arise without a cause, from an external cause nor by chance. Each and every phenomenon has its own causes and conditions. (Editor: Please read page 54-58)

The second is the discipline of studying and practising Dharma teachings and gathering all wisdom. This is achieved by engaging in the practice of the ten virtues and six perfections. These are the root causes of peace and happiness and the bridge to the attainment of enlightenment. Until we attain complete Buddhahood, we should always be inspired to practise Dharma, to study and gather the two accumulations of merit and wisdom.

The third type is the morality of benefiting all sentient beings. When we are fully established in the Dharma and abide within the pure sphere of bodhicitta, we can then support, help and inspire others to become free from samsara and attain enlightenment.

Here are some guidelines concerning moral ethics:

- Receive precepts of moral ethics

- Abide in a positive environment
- Be alert to avoid even tiny non-virtues
- Perfectly keep moral ethics, which are the basis for all other training
- Guard the sense-organs with persistent mindfulness

Take moral values as precious and beautiful ornaments and use them to adorn your body, speech and mind. This is the path to enlightenment.

The way to embody morality, is first to discard the non-virtuous deeds by contemplating on the deeds and their results; second, to produce the desire to practise virtuous deeds by reflecting on the deeds and their results, and third to transform neutral deeds into virtuous deeds by contemplating on them. Transforming our motivation can change neutral deeds into virtuous deeds.

### Non-virtuous deeds

What is a non-virtuous deed? A non-virtuous deed is any action, physical, verbal or mental, that is committed out of greed, hatred or ignorance. They can be classified into ten types: three done physically, four verbally and three mentally. (Editor: please read page 43)

It is said that all suffering arises from these deeds including rebirth in the lower realms. Each of these



has three results: ripened result, result similar to its cause and result of ownership.

If you indulge in non-virtuous deeds, the ripened result is to fall down into the lower realms. Which lower realm you will be reborn into depends on your motivation and the extent of the non-virtuous deeds you have committed. For instance, if out of hatred, you kill a human being, you will most likely fall into the hell realm; if you kill an animal out of desire for its flesh, skin or bone, you will most likely fall into the hungry ghost realm and if you kill out of ignorance, such as killing for sport or leisure, you will most likely be reborn as an animal.

The result similar to its cause consists of two aspects: the experience similar to its cause, and the action similar to its cause.

For example, if you had caused distress and shortened another life due to the act of killing, even if you are born in the higher realm of human, you will have a short life that is also beset with sickness and distress. Through stealing, you will be destitute and unable to use whatever little you have. Through sexual misconduct, you will have many enemies and lead an unhappy married life.

Through lying, you will be badly slandered. Through speech that divides people and causes disharmony, you will have very few friends, and even then the friendship will not last long. Through harsh speech, you will hear unpleasant remarks and whatever you say becomes the basis of quarrels. Through idle talk, nobody will believe you even when you tell the truth.

Through covetousness, all your wishes will not be fulfilled. Even when fulfilled, you are not satiated. Through malicious thoughts, you will always live in fear of harm from others. Through wrong view, you will have very little wisdom and continue to hold the wrong views.

Actions which are similar to its causes mean the deeds you do in this lifetime are similar to those you have committed in the past. Notice how some people have the predisposed tendency to perform kind acts while others seem more inclined to lie, steal and commit sexual misconduct?

Finally, the result of ownership manifests at the place in which one is to be born and dwell. For instance, stealing causes one to be born in a place with hailstorms and frost; sexual misconduct in a place with dust storms etc.

Even a small negative deed should not be ignored as it will accumulate and eventually cause much harm; like a spark which is able to burn down the entire forest. Doing non-virtuous deeds is the greatest harm one can inflict upon oneself. To counteract non-virtuous deeds, do more virtuous deeds and immediately confess any non-virtue with deep remorse. These will help to purify the results of non-virtuous deeds.

### **Virtuous deeds**


A virtuous deed is any action committed through body, speech and mind that is devoid of greed, hatred and ignorance. The ten virtues are the opposite of the ten non-virtues.

Just like non-virtuous deeds, virtuous deeds also consist of three results: ripened result, result similar to its cause and result of ownership.

All happiness arises from cultivating virtuous deeds. One creates the cause to be reborn in the higher realms of gods, demi-gods and humans.

By abstaining from killing, one enjoys a long and healthy life. By abstaining from stealing, one enjoys prosperity. By not committing sexual misconduct, one will have many friends and lead a happy married life. These are some examples of result similar to its cause.

Being born in a place that is free from natural disasters, enjoys lots of splendour, good climate, and bountiful harvests is the result of ownership due to the act of non-killing.

The benefits of cultivating virtuous deeds, even insignificant ones, should not be underestimated. Just as drops of water can form an ocean, seemingly inconsequential virtuous deeds can accumulate to become a significant virtuous deed. Therefore, resolve with a very strong will to practise even tiny virtuous deeds and then perform them diligently. 

A teaching on Love and Relationship given by a well-known Tibetan Buddhist teacher resonates with my heart. I couldn't agree more with what the teacher had taught, especially the part where he said: "When karmic wind blows, relationship will bloom out of nowhere, even from as far as Bolivia or Ghana!"

I had just had such an experience he mentioned. I had only one relationship, and it was with a Bhutanese guy. This was something absolutely beyond imagination – a few years back, I didn't even know of such a place called Bhutan, and suddenly, a few years later, I was with a Bhutanese. I had no idea why my ex-partner came from somewhere so far away. Now I am convinced the wind of karma knows no boundary.

## A Reflection on Love and Relationship

BY I. W. L.

I had a karmic debt with him -- which was why we met, came together and in the end, I had to endure the incredible pain he brought me. The period when we were together was one of the most stressful times of my life. I became painfully aware that maintaining a long distance intercultural relationship without a strong foundation was extremely difficult and was plagued with unique problems that would not be experienced by normal couples. Expectedly, the long period of geographical separation took its toll on both of us and eventually, he broke the sacred trust of fidelity.

Despite feelings of betrayal, disappointment and anger, this episode proved to be a blessing in disguise for me. He is my bodhisattva -- I am grateful to him from the depth of my heart as he had taught me so many things in this short span of a few months.

I can now perfectly understand and relate to how people who go through similar situations as I did, feel. I empathise with the people who have to experience long periods of geographical separation from the ones they love. I feel greater compassion too, as I understand the devastation the people whose spouses are unfaithful, must have gone through, after experiencing the same trauma myself.

I've realised that all relationships are impermanent – I should not hold on to the good old days and previously made promises, as things change. The most important lesson of all is I had learned to forgive. To forgive him was not to be kind to him; by forgiving him, I am being kind to myself, as I release my emotional baggage.



This is something I never thought I could do. After forgiving him, I realise I cherish his friendship even more, because if I had never encountered him, I would not have known so much about myself and about life now.

Ultimately, any pain, suffering or 'obstacles' that do not bring us down, will only make us a stronger and wiser person who is closer to the Path. Without them, we will have no way to gauge our level of practice. In life, we do not have much choice and control in many unfavourable circumstances that happen, because we carry previous karmic baggage along with us.

However, we do have a choice in how we want to see and deal with them – with a positive outlook and calm mental resilience. ♡





## princess kashikā

RETOLD BY | Esther Thien

Once upon a time, there was a king called Tsangjin. His queen gave birth to a beautiful baby. So exquisitely lovely was the princess that she was named “Kashika” or ‘beautiful daughter’. The princess’s beauty soon spread beyond Varanasi until it reached the neighbouring six kingdoms. Each of those six kings wanted the princess’s hand in marriage for their own sons. King Tsangjin had a tough time deciding who the princess should be married to.

One day, all six princes arrived in Varanasi accompanied by great entourages and adorned with splendid ornaments. As King Tsangjin paced the palace in anxiety, wondering what he should do in this delicate situation, Princess Kashika asked, “Father, what is troubling you?”

“The six princes from the neighbouring kingdoms all want to marry you. I do not know what to do. The fathers of the princes I don’t select as your husband will declare war and destroy our kingdom.”

“Father, this won’t be difficult. Tell all six princes to gather here tomorrow and I will choose my own husband.”

The next day, all six princes arrived with their magnificent ornaments, impressive entourages, glorious thrones and so forth. Each one thought he would be the chosen one. Princess Kashika went before each prince unadorned by any ornaments. In

a beautiful and melodious voice, she said, “All kinds of bodies are like a magician’s display, impermanent. All forms are like a rainbow that will disappear without a trace. This body is like an autumn flower that will fade easily and inevitably, so don’t be attached to it. Why invest so much importance to it? Being a householder in samsara is the primary cause of suffering. All accumulated wealth is illusory. I have decided to leave the kingdom, devote myself to the Dharma and meditate in solitude.”

With this, she left and became a nun. The six princes were so captivated by Princess Kashika’s beauty and melodious voice that they followed her. Under her influence, they also practised the Dharma successfully and became free from all causes of suffering. ♪

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***Her power to have such an influence came from previous lives, said the Buddha. Formerly, she was born in a family where lying was practised and encouraged. But as the wife in the family, she never told a lie and always spoke the truth. As she had never told a lie in her previous life, her speech in this life had a powerfully magnetic quality, and the princes spontaneously followed whatever she said.***

***This is the result of abstaining from the non-virtue of lying, and upholding the virtue of speaking the truth.***

RETOLD BY | Esther Thien

## the story of lekya

Long ago, a son was born to a successful merchant. When the baby was born, the family's wealth and prosperity improved. Even crops grew especially well. Due to this, the family named the little one Lekya or 'Well-born'. When the father died, the virtuous Lekya took over the business to support the family.

Once, during a business trip, he rented a room and fell asleep. Unbeknownst to Lekya, the landlord was scheming against him. The landlord coveted Lekya's possessions. He took a golden statue from his own house and hid it amongst Lekya's goods. He planned to frame the merchant of stealing the golden statue the next morning.

But during the night, Lekya dreamt of his father who warned him, "Son, this is a treacherous place. The landlord has hidden a golden statue amid your merchandise. Take the statue out and bury it in the ground."

Awakened from the dream, the curious Lekya searched through his goods. To his surprise, there was indeed a golden statue among his things. He quickly hid it, as advised in the dream.

The next day, as was originally planned, the landlord accused Lekya of stealing his statue. The merchant denied the allegation, and the landlord demanded to inspect Lekya's possessions. The entire household searched every inch, but they never found it.

As the search was futile, Lekya packed all his wealth and returned to his own country. ☺



*The cause of these events came from Lekya's former lives.*

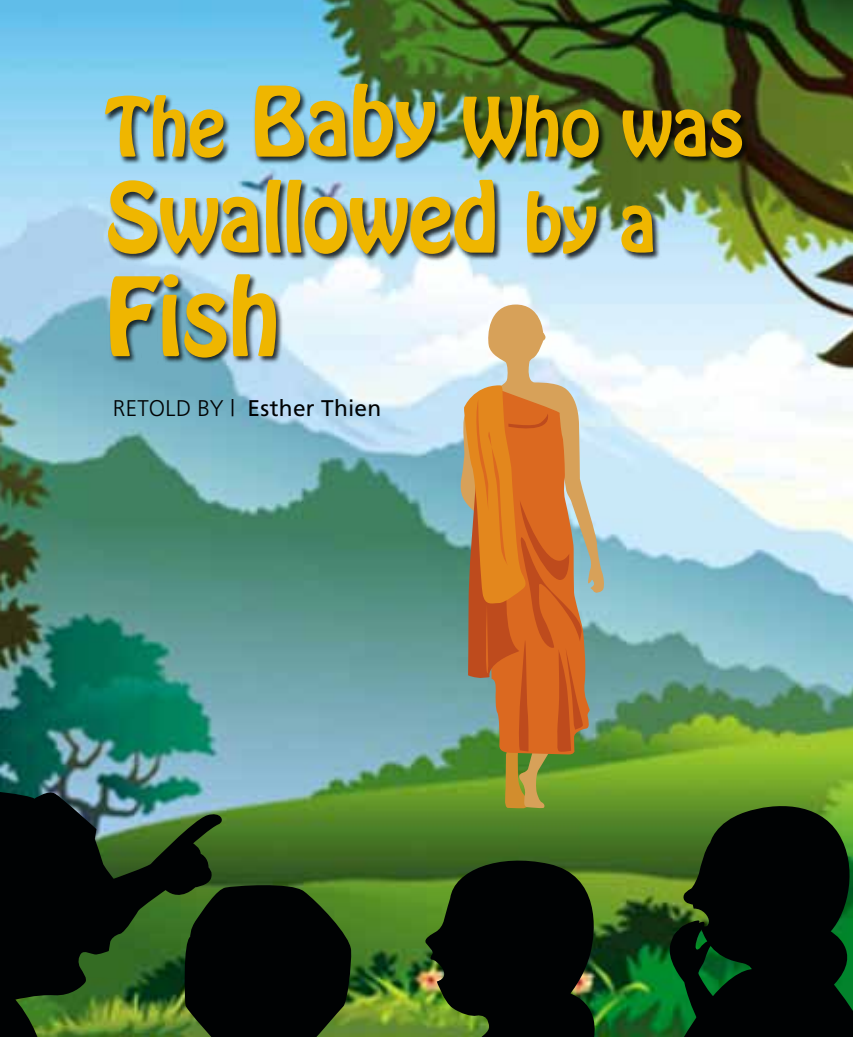
*Previously, Lekya had been born as the son of a merchant too. Although he was involved in business, he always abstained from covetousness, harmful thoughts, sly ways and deceit. He was always satisfied with what he received and content with whatever he had. Having practised non-covetousness for many lifetimes, he always enjoyed prosperous and peaceful lives.*

*This story inspires us to practise the Dharma by freeing ourselves from the grip of covetous and harmful thoughts. We should always rejoice in and appreciate what we have. The non-virtue of covetousness often leads to rebirth as a hungry ghost.*



# The Baby Who was Swallowed by a Fish

RETOLD BY | Esther Thien



A long time ago, there lived a childless couple who earnestly prayed for a baby. Eventually, they conceived a child and bore a fine-looking son. The parents and all their relatives were elated. They held an extravagant party near the bank of a river to celebrate this auspicious occasion. During the celebration, all the well-wishers wanted to hold the baby. Unfortunately, as one woman held him while standing near the river, the child slipped out of her arms into the water. The child sank into the river and was gobbled up by a big fish. But he remained alive throughout.

Not far away was another village. A fisherman from this village happened to be fishing then and caught this big fish. When he sliced through the fish, he was shocked to find a living infant in it. As there was also a childless couple in the second village, the fisherman gave the baby to them. This second couple raised the child tenderly and kindly as their own.

Soon, news of the astonishing baby found in a fish's belly travelled and finally reached the first village.

The real parents heard of the news and embarked on a journey to look for the foster parents.

"Not long ago, our baby fell into the river. It appears your child is really ours. Could you please return him to us?" they implored.

However, the second family was reluctant to give the child up. "Your child must have drowned. Even if he had been swallowed by a fish, how could he still be alive? It wasn't easy for us to have our prayers answered. This child belongs to us. We won't give him up."

As both parties could not come to a settlement, they went to the king for help to resolve this dispute. After listening carefully to both sides, the king said, "This child should be raised by both sets of parents."

In this way, the fortunate child had two loving mothers and doting fathers who raised him up in luxury. When the child grew up, he went to both sets of parents and expressed his intention to leave the householder's life.

"When I was a baby, I fell into a river and was gulped down by a fish. Because of this, I had to experience excruciating pain. I can endure samsara no longer. I want to practise the Dharma wholeheartedly to attain enlightenment. Please allow me to become a monk."

The four parents gave their blessings and permission, and the son ordained as a monk. He successfully practised the Dharma and finally achieved the state of arhathood. 🙏

***The karma that brought about these results was that in the child's previous life, he had offered a gold coin to a great master and vowed never to take life. Due to this virtue, his life was protected and he was raised in luxury by two sets of affectionate parents. When we encounter stories like these, we too will be inspired not to take life, but protect and respect other lives, especially those of human beings.***

RETOLD BY | Esther Thien

# Story of the Hungry Ghost

Once, when the Buddha was staying in Rajgir, Maudgalyayana and Shariputra generated and sincerely practised bodhicitta. Wanting to benefit sentient beings, they then went to the lower realms and encountered a female hungry ghost. An old woman, she had a belly as large as a valley and a mouth as small as the eye of a needle. Hair covered her entire body and fire blazed from her mouth. She was in great suffering, moaning and weeping in anguish. Food and drink appeared to her as blood and pus. Yet, even then she did not have the good fortune to be able to eat or drink at all, not even the excrement and urine she perceived.



“What karma did you create that led you to endure such terrible suffering?” asked the two great Venerables.

“Please ask the Buddha that question,” replied the pitiful hungry ghost.

They went to the Buddha and He told them the cause:

In the past, many lifetimes ago, there lived a rich merchant who owned a huge sugar cane factory. At that time, a solitary realiser with very few possessions resided in a nearby forest. Suffering from an unquenchable thirst, the solitary realiser (Pratyekabuddha) sought treatment from a doctor and was advised to drink sugar cane juice. So he went to ask some from the merchant. The merchant agreed. But as he was rushing to attend to an important business, the merchant instructed his servant to offer the juice.

The merchant’s helper was very stingy. “If I give him enough juice now, he would come back again and again, asking for more,” she thought disdainfully. So to prevent this from happening, the helper disrespectfully filled the alms bowl with goat’s urine and placed some bubbles of sugar cane juice on top, and returned it to the solitary realiser. The noble one understood her nature and threw it on the ground.

This was the act that caused her to be reborn as a hungry ghost, explained the Buddha. ☺

***Considering this story, we should purify our mental stinginess and greed. We should practise the virtue of generosity and regard wealth – our own or others’ – without attachment.***



# THE MONKEY BOY

RETOLD BY | Esther Thien ILLUSTRATIONS | Bee Li

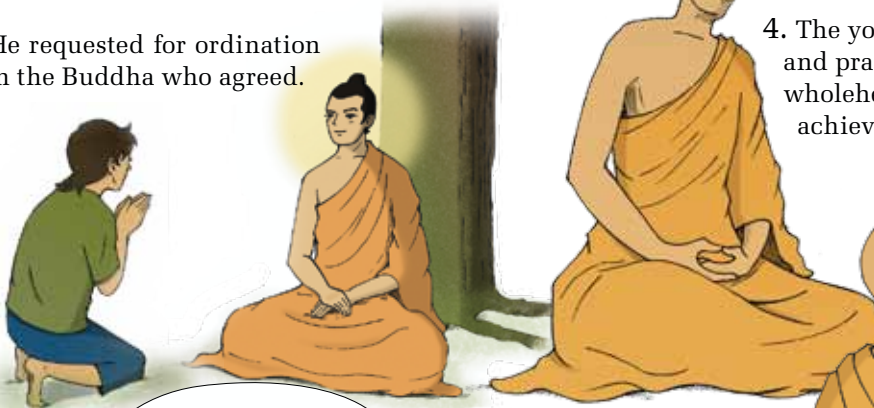


1. Once, during the Buddha's time, a householder gave birth to a monkey. Later the monkey turned into a boy.

2. When the boy grew up, he saw the nature of samsara and decided to leave the householder's life.



3. He requested for ordination from the Buddha who agreed.



4. The young man studied and practised the Dharma wholeheartedly and achieved the arhat state.

5.

Oh Lord Buddha, can you tell me what cause have I created that later changed into a human boy?

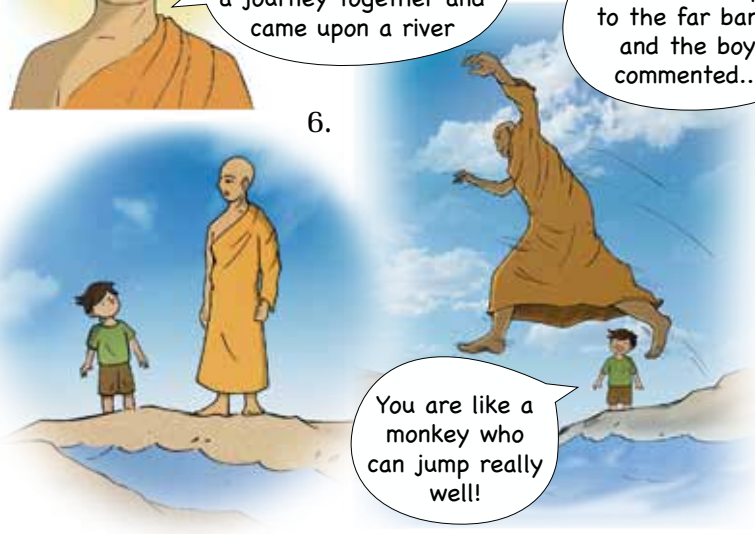
Many lifetimes ago, at the time of another Buddha, you were born a boy who followed after a monk. You once took a journey together and came upon a river

To cross, the monk leapt to the far bank, and the boy commented...

Don't say such things! A monkey is an animal and you will create heavy negative karma by comparing me, an arhat, to a lower being

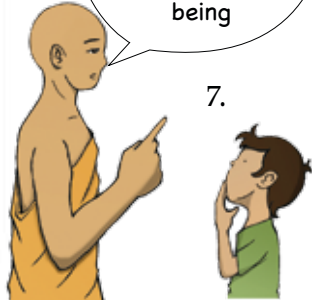
You, as the boy, felt great regret and apologised sincerely. Even though, you didn't speak with anger or negativity, you were born as a monkey for 500 lifetimes. As you apologised, you turned back into a human being each time.

6.



You are like a monkey who can jump really well!

7.



*This story offers an example of the possible results of using harsh words. We should always guard our speech as well as the activities of our mind and body. We have to be very cautious of each type of karma we create, whether big or small. The karma that we create, even if it was created one hundred aeons ago, cannot be ignored because it will not disappear unless it is purified. When the time comes and conditions gather, that karma will surely manifest.*

# SEEN

Learn the art of being a peaceful warrior

## > Peaceful Warrior

**Directed by:** Victor Salva

**Starring:** Nick Nolte, Scott Mechlowicz and Amy Smart

*Peaceful Warrior* is an insightful film on how non-virtuous activities cannot fulfil the true purpose of our lives, and that the way to achieve our personal goals and ultimate wisdom is by being virtuous.

Dan is a university student struggling like all his companions with day-to-day life. He has an extraordinary talent for gymnastics and is preparing for the qualifying rounds for the next Olympic Games along with a few teammates. The first half of the film focuses on Dan's negative mental attributes that cause him general unhappiness.

His ordinary way of life involves the use of egotistical words, drinking, eating junk food, promiscuity, being competitive at all times with his teammates. Due to his competitive streak, he even goes as far as stealing the girlfriend of one of his teammates. However, these habitual ways are challenged by the unshakable 'Socrates', nicknamed as such by Dan. He meets Socrates one fine night as he goes out for some fresh air after being awakened by a nightmare.

One of the first questions that Socrates asks him is, "Are you happy?" to which he replies that he has everything that he needs in life: money, success and girls. The old man retorts, "So why can't you sleep at night?" This unusual man, who runs the local service station, demonstrates a miracle to him by appearing on the roof when he had been on the ground a moment before. Dan's curiosity is piqued and he returns again and again to try and find out how the fellow managed the stunt.

Socrates starts training him to be a 'real warrior', which in his definition is to use his body and mind in ways that most people don't have the courage to and to develop the wisdom to apply the right leverage at the right time. "There's no greater service than service to others," he replies when Dan angrily quizzes him as to why someone who should pretend to know so much about the art of life would end up in a miserable job such as that of a service station attendant.

In order to train Dan, Socrates employs various outrageous methods. When he throws Dan off a bridge into the water by surprise, Dan immediately empties his mind through the element of surprise, so that he becomes present and really sees what is going on. "There is never nothing going on", Socrates tells Dan and shows him a binocular view of the world around them at that moment in the park.

However, Dan faces trouble on the path as he fights with his ego and comes to face the reality and purpose of his life through overcoming non-virtuous ways, giving up attachment and pride, following a path of meditation in every action and not letting emotions control him.

"Where are you?"..... "Present"

"What time is it?"..... "Now"

"What are you?"..... "This moment"

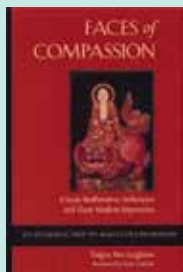
(questions from Socrates to Dan)





# READ

Learn the Ten Transcendent Practices to create an Enlightened Society



## > **Faces of Compassion**

By Taigen Dan Leighton

All bodhisattvas, at every stage, study the ten transcendent practices which are interconnected to develop their capacity to carry out these practices completely in all their activities. Besides introducing the ten transcendent practices, the book acquaints one to the classic bodhisattva archetypes and illuminates bodhisattvas as archetypes that embody awakened spiritual human qualities. A practical, useful and inspiring guide to those who aspire to walk the Buddhist path. Priced at S\$28.90 from Awareness Place stores.



## > **Good Citizens: Creating Enlightened Society**

By Thich Nhat Hanh

A world in peace is possible, but it starts right now with each one of us through applying Buddhist ethics or virtues and by practising mindfulness in our daily lives. As Thich Nhat Hanh said, "If Buddhism is not engaged, it's not real Buddhism. We practise meditation and mindfulness not only for ourselves; we practise to relieve the suffering of all beings and of the Earth itself. With the insight that we are inherently interconnected with all other beings, we know that when other people suffer less, we suffer less. And when we suffer less, other people suffer less." Get it from Awareness Place stores for S\$21.90.

# HEARD

Waltz with the Sounds of Protection in the Moonlight

## > **The Sounds of Protection**

By Imee Ooi

In every Buddha and mantra, there is boundless strength and protection. In this CD of three mantra chants, Kurukulle Buddha Mantra, Peacock Yamashina Buddha Mantra and The White Canopy Buddha Mantra, listen calmly to the chants and find the sound that resonates with your heart. Like the soft, tender caress of a mother's love for her only child, feel your fears dissolve and brightness illuminates your heart. Available for S\$15.00 at Awareness Place stores.



## > **Moonlight Waltz**

By Kim Yoon

If you have always enjoyed compositions by Korean Kim Yoon, you will also fall in love with this CD. Packed with lyrical musical pieces composed in his signature style, every track tugs at your heartstrings with its ethereal and slightly melancholic music. The track, "Dreaming in the Blue Sky" is especially poignant. Retail at \$21.90 at Awareness Place stores.



BY | Esther Thien

# WHAT'S NEW

Usher in the New Year with exquisite and auspicious Buddha, Bodhisattva and mantra pendants

Many Buddhists like to wear symbols of the Triple Gem to remind them of the teachings of the Buddha. If you are one of those who are accustomed to wearing Buddhist pendants, consider the latest selections from Awareness Place.

The protector range consists of eight pristine white pendants. Shaped from mother of pearl, this collection of Buddha and Bodhisattva pendants is delicate yet affordable.

The second pendant selection is crafted from quality *liuli* crystal and comes in various shapes. Choose from nine types of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in rich colours such as emerald green, amethyst purple and lapis blue. The heart mantra of the respective Buddhas and Bodhisattvas is also engraved at the back of each pendant.

If your practice involves reciting mantras or meditating on seed syllables, you may prefer the stainless steel collection. Showcasing movable seed syllables and crystals at its heart, each pendant is surrounded by engraving of various mantras, such as the Six-syllable mantra and Guru Rinpoche mantra.

To find out more, please call 6337 7582 or 6452 1732.





# Dharma Apps

One good thing about having a smartphone or tablet is that if used in a good way, it can bring you closer to the Dharma, as a tool that connects you to the wisdom of the Dharma 24/7.



## > **Buddhist Music**

By Cool Game

Free



Containing 18 short Buddhist tracks of various musical styles, this app allows you to select and set any of the tracks as a ringtone, alarm, notification tone or contact ringtone. Perfect for those who prefer to listen to mantra or sutra prayers in melodious tunes to remind themselves to come back to their breathing or contemplate on the Buddha's teachings. Only available on Google Play Store.



## > **What the Buddha Taught**

By Snoobo the Elephant

Free



Experience concise gems of wisdom with this handy app. Showcasing 25 quotes by Ajahn Chah, the well-known Theravada Venerable, these quotes are excerpts from the teachings published in the book *The Still Forest Pond*. Only available on the iPhone and iPad.



## > **Ten Ways to Keep Anger at Bay**

By Orange Tip Editions

US\$3.99 (full version)



Anger is like a wildfire. If left unchecked, it spreads and propels one to commit non-virtuous deeds. Ven PA Payutto, a recipient of UNESCO's Prize for Peace Education in 1994 and a Thai Buddhist monk of the Theravada tradition, offers methods in this eBook app to quell malcontent and anger of different degrees. Only available on the iPhone and iPad.

*Use your smartphone's barcode scanner to scan these QR codes for the apps.*

*If your phone doesn't have one, download a barcode scanning app from iTunes or Google Play Store.*

If one acts with attachment, aggression or ignorance,  
that is non-virtue.

If one acts with non-attachment, non-aggression and  
unobstructed mind, that is virtue.

– *Nagarjuna*

Each and every phenomenon has its own causes and  
conditions.

All the pleasures and happiness arise from virtuous  
deeds, and conversely,  
all the pain and suffering from non-virtuous deeds,  
including rebirth in the lower realms.

To be free from suffering, you must abstain from the  
causes which are the non-virtuous deeds.

Even a small negative deed should not be ignored  
because it will accumulate and later cause much harm,  
like a small spark of fire having the capacity to burn  
down the whole forest.

Just as an accumulation of drops of water can become  
an ocean,  
similarly, seemingly insignificant virtuous deeds  
can accumulate to form a significant virtuous deed.

– *HH Sakya Trizin*

The source of all good, evil, well-being and harm  
lies with actions, speech and thoughts.  
This is where you must look, right here.  
See if your conduct is faulty or not.

Having cleared away impurities,  
the mind is free of worries – peaceful, kind and  
virtuous.

If our mind is good and virtuous,  
it is happy.

There's a smile in our heart.

So in order to give up evil and cultivate good,  
you don't have to go looking anywhere else.

– *Ajahn Chah*

When you produce a thought of compassion,  
of loving kindness, of understanding,  
that is peace.

But in order to have compassion to offer  
others,

We have to offer it to ourselves first.

We cultivate compassion by looking deeply  
to understand the suffering inside us and  
around us.

When you transform yourself into a  
bodhisattva,

You have a lot of power,

power that helps you be free and

enables you to help and bring relief to many  
people.

– *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Suttas are not meant to be 'sacred scriptures'  
that tell us what to believe.

One should read them, listen to them,  
think about them, contemplate them,  
and investigate the present reality,  
the present experience with them.

Then, and only then, can one  
insightfully know the truth beyond words.

– *Ven Sumedho*



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

**Arhat:** One who has destroyed dualistic ego-grasping/clinging and achieved liberation of cyclic existence.

**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.

**Awareness:** Attentive consciousness of the reality of things (especially of the present moment).

**Bhikkhuni:** A fully ordained female Buddhist monastic, who lived by the vinaya's framework of monastic discipline. Their lifestyle is shaped so as to support their spiritual practice, to live a simple and meditative life, and attain Nirvana. Called bhiksuni in Sanskrit.

**Bodhicitta:** The enlightenment-mind. The mind dedicated to attaining Buddhahood in order to help all sentient beings.

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

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

**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.

**Enlightenment:** same as Buddhahood, full enlightenment/awakening. Highest level of development, having forever eliminated all defilements and karmic imprints, and having developed all good qualities and wisdom to their fullest extent.

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

**Generosity:** The practice of cultivating unattached and unconditional giving.

**Guru Padmasambhava:** or “Guru Rinpoche”: Great Indian tantric master, who came to Tibet in 817 AD With his siddhis he dispelled evil forces which obstructed Buddhism in Tibet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Meditative Concentration:** Calm abiding, Concentration. 1. Meditation method to achieve tranquillity. 2. The resultant tranquil meditative state; the ability to remain single-pointedly on an object

with a pliant and blissful mind. Mental quiescence, stilled and settled state of awareness.

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

**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. ‘Satipatthana’ in Pali language.

**Mindstream:** Continuity of the mind, stream of moments of consciousness proceeding endlessly in a lifetime, between lifetimes, from lifetime to lifetime.

**Morality:** One of three sections of the Noble Eightfold Path and is a code of conduct that embraces a commitment to harmony and self-restraint with the principle motivation being non-violence, or freedom from causing harm. It is an internal, aware and intentional ethical behaviour, according to one's commitment to the path of liberation and wholehearted commitment to what is wholesome. Various described as virtue, right conduct, moral discipline or ethics and precept. Called Sila in Pali.

**Nagarjuna:** Great Indian Buddhist Master who revived the Mahayana in the 1st. century AD, after its' virtual disappearance, by bringing to light the Perfection of Wisdom.

**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.

**Paramita :** Refers to the six practices of generosity, morality, diligence, patience, concentration and wisdom, the perfection of which ferries one beyond the sea of suffering and mortality to Nirvana.

**Patience:** One of the perfections that a bodhisattva trains in and practises to realise perfect enlightenment. Refers to not returning harm, rather than merely enduring a difficult situation. It is the ability to control one's emotions even when being criticised or attacked.

**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.

**Purification:** Preventing negative karma from ripening and counteracting self-identification with negative energy.

**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.

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

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

**Six-syllable mantra:** Om Mani Padme Hung. The heart mantra of Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara.

**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.

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

**Vipassana:** A form of meditation that develops insight into the nature of the mind.

**Virtues:** Blessings which transcend Birth and Death and lead to Buddhahood. Depending on the mind of the practitioner, that is, on whether he is seeking mundane rewards (merit) or transcendence (virtue), the same action either to merit or virtue.

**Wisdom:** The understanding or discernment based on the direct realisation of the Four Noble Truths, Impermanence, Interdependent Origination, Non-self and Emptiness. The Buddha taught that all things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that knowing this — not in a rational, but empirical manner — is wisdom.