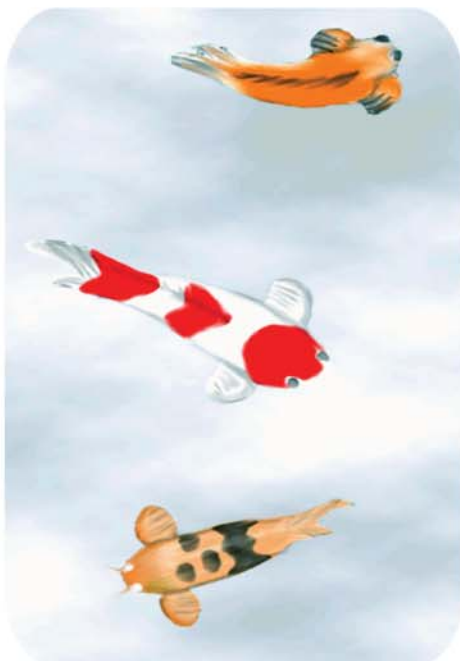
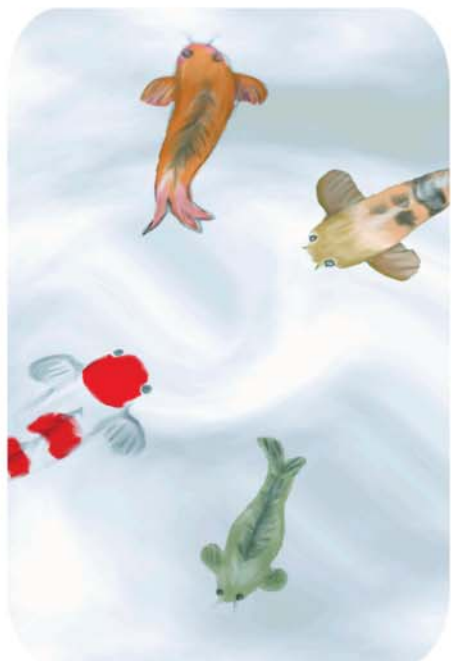
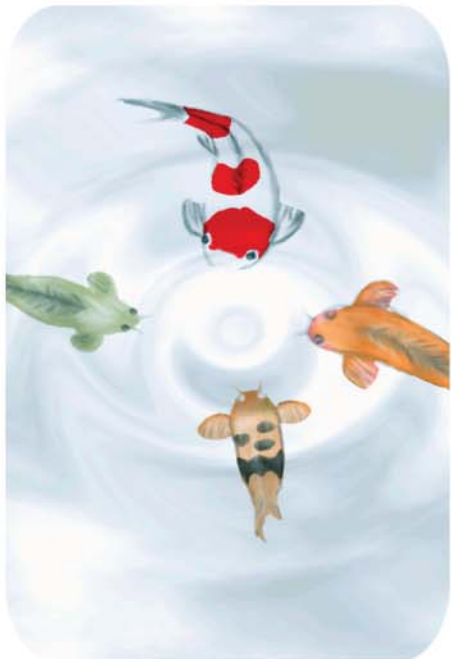


Levelling of Mind



UNIBUDS
ANNUAL
MAGAZINE
2006

Levelling of Mind

To level one's mind from any tendency of pulling things we despise and grasping of things we crave for, we need training and practice to be able to do so. By keeping a level or balanced mind, it helps to enhance our observation ability and to look at situations and conditions in a bigger perspective. Through a level mind we are able to develop inner strength or stability that helps to cultivate inner calmness, well-being and confidence. As our inner strength develops equanimity follows.

The cover illustrates the process of equanimity - a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight. The fish symbolises the mind that reacts to the water that symbolizes the constantly changing conditions and situations that we encounter day by day. When the conditions and things in the world are trembling just like the ripples of the water, it will cause an overjoyed or depressed state. A well developed mind that stays firm like a rock, unattached and undisturbed to sensual things will stay unaffected and eventually calmness and peace will arise.

Acknowledgements

This magazine would not have been possible without the efforts, encouragements and kind contributions of many people. The editor expresses her sincere thanks for everybody involved in the production of this magazine. May the good merits we have done for spreading the Dhamma be shared by all.

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Editor's Note

Dear reader,

One year journey has gone in a wink of an eye and here is another entry for the UNIBUDS Annual Magazine. This 26th edition entitled 'Levelling of Mind' will guide us to understand more of the Buddhist concept of equanimity - a perfect, unshakable balance of mind, rooted in insight. Going through life, we are faced by the two extremes of like and dislike, satisfaction and disappointment, hope and fear, happiness and sorrow. When good things happen, an unmindful one will be often eluded by it and when bad things happen, he/she will often stumble and fall. To free ourselves from these two extremes, a level mind needs to be cultivated. By keeping a level mind, we are able to develop inner strength or stability. The strong presence of inner calmness, well-being and confidence keep us upright in all matters and as our inner strength develops equanimity follows.

The theme 'Levelling of Mind' will be further explored throughout the magazine. Some of the transcription and articles will include the understanding of the causes and conditions that influence the stability of our mind, the way on how to achieve stability of mind and the practice of meditation itself.

The editorial team has transcribed some of the UNIBUDS weekly Dhamma talks that were given this year by Venerables and lay Buddhists alike. Where the talk was given in Chinese, we have provided the English translation. Please note that all transcriptions and translations have been approved by the respective speaker. In addition, throughout this magazine, we have adopted Pali terms for standardization purposes but wherever possible, Sanskrit terms have also been included in the Glossary for readers who are more familiar with the latter. Poems, sketching and drawing have also been embedded throughout the magazine to compliment the contents nicely.

The collages of activity pictures throughout the year can be found in the photo sections. We can see that the friendship and the Dhamma in UNIBUDS have been blooming beautifully and have remained strong year after year. Towards the end of the pages are the sponsorship sections whereby we were very fortunate to receive some donations for the production of this magazine. All are done in the faith of sharing Dhamma and promoting peace and harmony. Thank you for the sponsorship team who has worked hard and spared their time to seek sponsors. Credit must also be given to the design and graphics team who has nicely put all the contents together and cre-

ate the final product that is this magazine. All photos and images used have come from UNIBUDS members.

As all Dhamma articles are the original work of the respective speakers and individual contributors, whilst much care and effort have been made to ensure the accuracy and propriety of the material, we apologize in advance for any inaccuracy and/or misrepresentation in this magazine. Many thanks from me for everyone involved in the production in this magazine. Thank you for your efforts, supports, and dedication, and thank you for making it possible. In turning each page, we hope that you would be able to gain more insight and motivation towards practicing the Dhamma. Hoping you will find the inspiration to live happier each day with more wisdom, peace and clarity.

Illustration: Chong Khai Chuah



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UNIBUDS
Patrons'
Messages

Balancing of the Mind

After 25 years of seeding, fertilising, watering and ploughing, UNIBUDS has finally grown stronger. What we have in UNIBUDS today did not come easily; it relied on the support of many causes and conditions. Any object that is made of causes and conditions is conditional and is subject to changes. Neglecting any factor/element that made up this object will affect its stability, and if this negligence goes on for too long, the impact/effect will be even greater. It is especially important to remind ourselves about impermanence when we are at the peak. Therefore, Executive Committees of every term shall identify, cultivate and maintain the causes and conditions that contribute to UNIBUDS success so that UNIBUDS will keep on growing healthily. Stepping into the 26th year of UNIBUDS, I hope that UNIBUDS will continue to progress steadily.

In this modern society that emphasises heavily on material comfort, many of us compete against each other for money and fame. How can we uphold Right Understanding in our practice of the Buddha's teachings and maintain the purity of UNIBUDS while living in this world that is full of confusing thoughts and deluded views? We need to have a clear and thorough wisdom to achieve this. This is the only way to ensure the prolongation of UNIBUDS' purity for many generations to come. The next obvious question is how can we cultivate a clear mind so that we can have clear thinking to make wise judgments and keep our steps on the right path, so that we would not be confused by our environment? This is very important for both UNIBUDS and our own practice. Hence, UNIBUDS has chosen the theme of "Unshakable Balance" for the Bodhi Nite and "Levelling of the Mind" for our Annual Magazine. I hope that everyone will progress steadily in the practice of Dhamma. Establish Right Faith and Right Understanding in the teachings of the Buddha, and let the Dhamma be our guide in daily life. By grasping the correct direction in learning the Dhamma, we will gradually develop a mind that is balanced and pure.

How can we maintain a balanced mind in our daily life? Is it like standing in the middle of a see-saw and keep our balances by not moving? Isn't this the same as living like a robot/statue? According to the Buddha's teaching, to cultivate a balanced mind, we have to train ourselves to see everything in life with a clear and calm mind, and to make wise decisions in accordance to the Law of Dependant Origination. We shall not act based solely on emotions, personal likes and dislikes. Attachment to self is the main factor that contributes to unbalanced mind. Due to self-centredness, when our welfares are being threatened, we would have self-love, pride, view, delusion and other unbalanced emotions. Consequently, we fall into wrong decisions and judgments. Therefore, we

have to use our wisdom to transform our emotions and guide our actions. By using the truth of impermanence and non-self as our guides, we can learn to eliminate attachment towards 'self' and understand the Law of Dependant Origination. Consequently we will be able to adopt approaches that are more right and just when confronting problems in life. By doing this, we will lead ourselves towards righteous acts and driving our minds towards states of balance. This is also what we call the Middle Path in Buddhism.

How then can we cultivate this state of mind and wisdom? Firstly, we have to listen to the Dhamma and develop Right Understanding in Buddhism. In this way, we would have the ability to make judgments according to the Dhamma and prevent ourselves from making wrong decisions that depend solely on emotions. Through contemplation and understanding, we transform what we learn into action. By using precepts as the guides in our actions, speeches and minds, we learn to subdue our desires and untamed mind and holding it back from moving outward aimlessly. Besides, keeping precepts also help to develop our compassionate quality. We uphold precepts not only to prevent ourselves from suffering, but also to remind ourselves not to bring harm to others, instead bring happiness and benefits to all. Subsequently, by cultivating Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration to strengthen the stability and focus of our mind, our Right Understanding can be transformed into true wisdom; only at this stage that we can achieve a truly balanced mind. What I have mentioned above is the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, which is in fact the practice of precepts, cultivation of mind and wisdom. This is also in line with the cultivation of faith and determination, wisdom and compassion. This type of training is an important practice in developing a balanced mind. It helps to minimise our self-centredness, and assists us in developing our sense of empathy and self-reflecting ability, consequently, eliminating our self attachment and allowing our wisdom to grow.

We need wisdom to see the true nature of all things, so that we can make right decisions and judgments, as well as keeping ourselves on the Middle Path. Therefore, I wish that everyone will be diligent in the path of practising the Buddha's teachings. By befriending with wise people, listening, contemplating and practicing Dhamma, we develop our Right Faith, Right Understanding and Right Actions in learning the Dhamma. Under the guidance of the Dhamma, may everyone's mind become brighter, more balanced and at ease each day. I also wish that by having the Bodhi Mind, steady faith and determination, boundless compassion and bright wisdom, everyone can observe all surrounding phenomena with objectivity and preserve the pure mission and simplicity of UNIBUDS. With sincerity and passion, may everyone be able to share the peacefulness and wisdom gained from Dhamma with many more students in the campus, and let the light of Dhamma continue to shine for many years to come.

心的平衡

經歷了廿五年的播種、施肥、灌溉與耕耘，慧命社終於逐漸茁壯起來。慧命社的今日得來不易，一切有賴眾多因緣的促成。因緣和合之物乃條件性，變動性。對於某些因素的忽視，就會造成此緣生物的不穩定，長久的疏忽，則會形成更大的影響。巔峰之時，正是警惕無常的時候。因此，如何認清成就慧命社的因緣，培養及保持這些善緣，使之不斷健康的成長，是每一屆理事所不能忽略的。今年是慧命社第廿六週年，希望在這新的里程碑中，慧命社繼續穩健邁進。

在這日新月異，物質至上的社會，大家爲了功名利祿明爭暗鬥，如何在這混雜的大環境中掌握學佛的正見，保持慧命社的純潔與清淨，不爲外界混淆？這需要明澈的智慧。也唯有如此，才能使這股清淨之流源遠流長。怎樣培養一顆明睿的心，讓我們在生活中有清晰的思維，作智慧的判斷，不被迷惑，時時行於正道？這無論對慧命社或個人的修持都是重要的。因此，慧命社拈了『不動的平衡』爲今年菩提之夜的主題，並以『心的平衡』爲此年刊的論題。希望大家在佛法的修學上日益深入、紮實，在生活中時時以佛法作觀照，建立堅固的正信與正見，掌握學佛的方針，養成一顆平衡明淨的心。

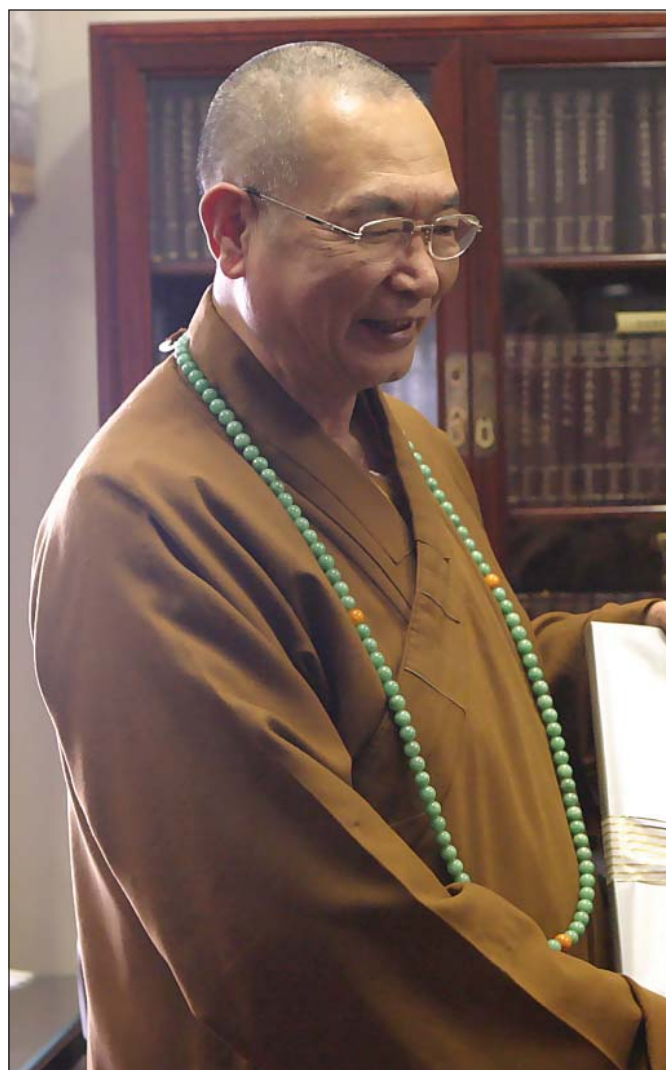
要如何在生活中保持平衡的心？這是不是叫我們像站在一個蹺蹺板的中間，保持平衡點，不要動呢？這樣不是活得像個木頭人嗎？

佛陀告訴我們，所謂平衡的心，是要我們在生活中以一顆平靜理智的心看清事情的真相，正觀緣起，做明智的抉擇。不要單憑感情，個人的喜好與情緒對應事情。心不能平衡的主要原因來自我執。由於自我為中心的意識，使我們常常因自我利益受到威脅而產生我愛，我慢，我見，我痴等不平衡的情緒，進而落入偏差的抉擇與判斷。因此，我們要「以智化情」，「以智導行」，運用無常無我的道理作觀照，破除自我的愛染，了解緣起的道理，而採取中正的相應對治方法。這樣，我們所作的事才儘可能處於正確，我們的心也才能趨向平衡。此亦即佛家所說的中道。

那麼，要如何培養這樣的心情與智慧呢？首先我們要聽聞佛法，建立起佛法的正見，讓我們在生活中有如法的判斷的能力，使我們不至於因為情感而作出錯誤的決定。經過思考與理解，我們把這知見化為行動。以戒作為準繩，審查自己的身口意行為，規範我們的欲望，收攝狂妄之心，讓它減少往外奔馳。同時，培養慈悲心，不但為自己的修持，也為不觸惱眾生，利益眾生而持戒。然後，培養正念與正定，加強我們心的穩定與專注，最後，將先前的正見轉化成真實智慧，這時，才有真正的平衡可言。以上乃八正道的修學，亦即戒定慧的修持，信願，智慧與慈悲的培養。這樣的訓練幫助我們減輕以自我為中心，長養我們的同情心、自我觀照的能力，破除我執，啟發智慧，是促進平衡的心不可或缺之修習。

唯有智慧，才能讓我們正觀事情的真相，而作中正的抉擇與判斷，行於中道。因此，希望大家在學佛道上精進不已，多親近善知識，聽聞、思惟、實踐佛法，培養正信，正見與正行。盼在佛法的引導下，大家的心日趨光明，平衡與自在，同時，發大菩提心，以平穩的信願，廣大的慈悲，明淨的智慧，正觀大環境的種種現象，把持慧命社淳樸的宗旨，真

誠純潔，熱忱精進的精神，在校園中與更多同學分享佛法的祥和與智慧，使正法之光在校園裡源遠流長。



Source: Shanty Joeng

Levelling of Mind

If we would like to practise the teaching of the Lord Buddha seriously, we have to do our best to improve our mind. Through our continuing effort and patience our mind would move up slowly to the level of our satisfaction. If the bad habit is not removed there is no chance for the good one to be in place. Greed, hatred and delusion are the roots of evil that cause turmoil in the mind. Only when facing a strong army of generosity, morality and meditation they could give them up and surrender. Just wishing them to run away so that our life would get better and find more happiness, there is no such a thing in Buddhism!

As being the case, before we could come up to the level of calmness and equanimity, much loving kindness has to be done regularly, plus having good compassion for all living beings. Everyday, we must maintain our sympathetic joy, being always happy with anyone who might be happy, fortunate or successful in life.

Metta, loving kindness as we normally know is the first and foremost virtue to protect oneself and to protect others. Like black gathering clouds that produce rains from sky, they make no distinction between mountains and valleys, no difference between trees and shrubs. Once they fall over them, heat would disappear, the air would be fresh and all living things would start to grow. Because of strength and the continuing presence of *metta*, anger has no supports, envy finds no friends. Only when the inner enemy is not on the move, peace of mind would prevail and then we can spread this spirit of good will to all living beings.

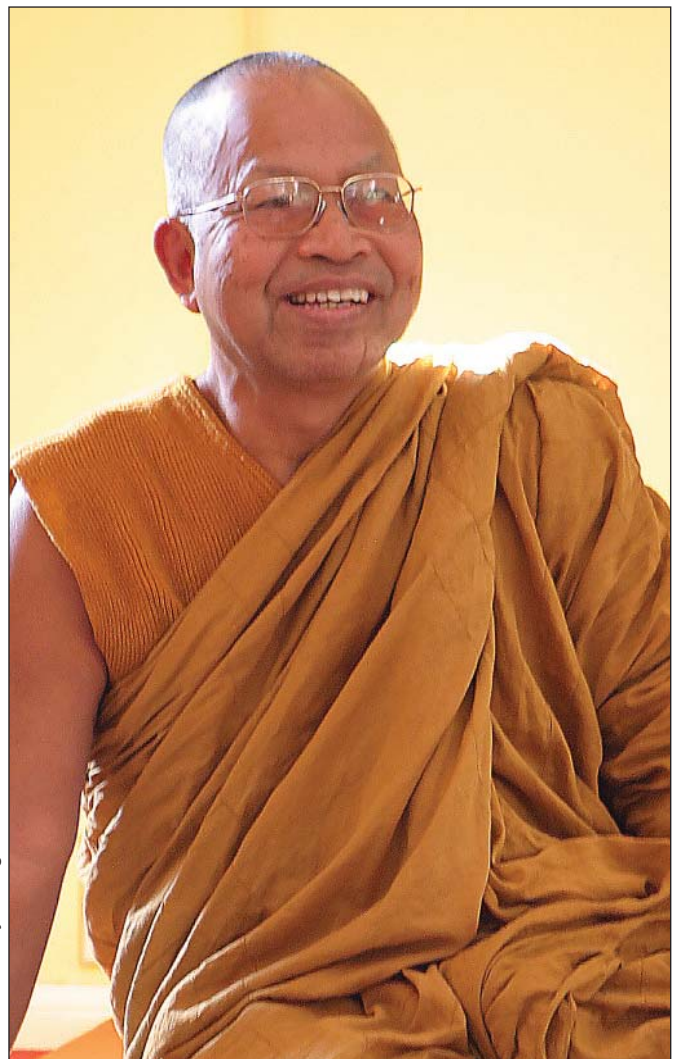
Compassion, known as *karuna* in Pali, is the transformation of *metta* that runs directly to the desperate and most unfortunate living beings. We should bear in mind that there are so many people who live in great difficulties and miseries due to their bad *kamma* in their past lives. If there is no compassion from those who have gone through troubles and already live a better life, human race would not last very long, and more importantly, this noble virtue will never be fulfilled.

Our Lord Buddha attained enlightenment through his great purity and his great wisdom. Only after being blessed by those two noble virtues, great compassion has arrived in his heart. Seeing that all living beings are struggling to survive in the sea of suffering, he

started to pick them to the land of safety, one after another. Anyone who is not moved by the suffering of others would not achieve any success in the spiritual life. No matter how long he would survive and how rich he would be, at the end of the day, he would be depressed and left alone exactly in the same way he has done to others.

Moving up to a higher level, we would deal with people who are happy in life. Compassion would transform itself to *mudita*, sympathetic joy. No envy, no jealousy would be left in that wonderful mind. Only when *metta*, *karuna* and *mudita* cannot be applied, *upekkha*, equanimity would be on the show. Among many living beings who can be helped, there are a lot of them who go beyond our direct support. Those who commit serious crimes, those who do the very bad kamma regularly are the hopeless people. Our direct loving kindness and compassion would not work, only equanimity is the best for them. Everyone is the architect of his own fate. If this present Buddha cannot help, let the future Buddha take care of them. As for our own peace of mind we have to stay calm with equanimity.

Venerable Chao Khun Samai



Source: Shanty Joeng

President's Message



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

Dear friends in Dhamma,

I believe that all of us here are interconnected in some way or another and that everything travels in a circle and always looping like the dependent origination in Buddhism. Similarly, the Executive Committee is looping each year, while some would stay, but most of the other existing committee members would leave and the newly elected members will take over. Together with the guidance of our both patrons, Venerable Tsang Hui and Venerable Chao Khun Samai, and the countless support of members, UNIBUDS has continued to flourished for 26 years.

Being involved for the past year in UNIBUDS, we have had truly rewarding experiences that we went through and shared together with the rest of the members. It was through these countless of encounters that we were exposed to the insights about the members and society as a whole. But above all, the opportunity of being exposed to Dhamma, the Buddha's Teachings, has certainly been the most valuable experience in life.

The learning experience in UNIBUDS is made more pleasant through the friendship and bond among the members that have grown over the years. It is these friendship and bond that have driven the success in UNIBUDS activities and events because all these require great contributions and countless of efforts. All of us would have our own reason in joining the society; however I believe that we would be approached with the warmth, friendliness, and thoughtfulness of the members when we first step into the society. As I recalled my early days in UNIBUDS, I remembered that it was also these friendship and bond among the members that I felt so strongly in the beginning which had encouraged me to be part of the society and share this experience with others.

It was truly an opportunity of a lifetime to serve and be part of UNIBUDS over these years. I am very grateful and even more thankful to be given the chance to lead UNIBUDS Executive Committee 2005-2006. I would like to use this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to both our patrons, Venerable Tsang Hui and Venerable Chao Khun Samai for their guidance and continuous supports, Dhamma speakers for teaching and sharing, members and friends of UNIBUDS, and sponsors of this annual magazine. Last but not least, congratulation to the 27th Executive Committee members for continuing UNIBUDS's baton. May all be well and happy.

With utmost respect and loving kindness,

Wilsen Lius Lau

DHAMMA INSIGHTS



Illustration: Siang Yee Chuah

Taking Refuge in the Triple Gems

The Buddha's teaching is free for everyone, and we do not impose it on any person in particular. In Buddhism, we believe that you have freedom to choose what you want to learn and who you want to be. A person may listen to the stories of the Buddha, examine his teachings and put them to practice. Once they understand Buddhism properly, they will get the best benefits from the teachings. Only then do they start to take refuge in the Triple Gems. Thus, taking refuge in the triple gems means you have commitment to Buddhism, to the Buddha, and to follow his teachings. When you see Buddhists all over the world, you could say that many of them practice Buddhism because they have commitment to the Buddha in the past. They could have been born as Buddhists in many lifetimes. So once they are exposed to Buddhism in this life, they just like it.

At the physical level, how do Buddhists show that they are taking refuge in the triple gems? The tradition is that whenever Buddhists go to a temple, they will pay respect to the Buddha and chant to pay homage to the Buddha, Dhamma (i.e., the Buddha's teachings), and Sangha (i.e., the monks and nuns). They will chant *Buddham Dhammam Saṅgham saraṇam gacchāmi* (i.e., I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha) three times. Why are there the second and third times? This is to show that the person who pays respect have a firm commitment to take the triple gems as their refuge. After that, such Buddhists will chant the virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha, and request the five precepts where they start to take the teachings and put them into practice. They may also listen to Dhamma talks and do some more chanting.

At the spiritual level, those who take refuge in the triple gems will be developing the following qualities. First, they will try to be sincere and honest to others. Second, they will be kind, compassionate, and grateful to their mother and father. Third, they will be developing *Hiri* (i.e., shame of doing bad things) and *Otappa* (i.e., fear of the consequences of the bad action). If anyone has these virtues in their mind, they are very good people. Such individuals will inevitably appreciate the teachings of the lord Buddha. So when it comes to the practice of this body and mind, you will have to take these virtues as the house of the teachings.

An excellent way to purify your thought, speech, and action, is to uphold the five precepts. To be a moral person, your actions have to be free from harming others. When you uphold the five precepts, you are in control of your thought, speech, and action. The result is that you

can only do good things in your life. Though it is quite easy to control your action and speech, it is harder to train your mind to consistently have wholesome thoughts. This is why upholding the precepts is a foundation of Buddhist practice. Once you have purity of speech, action, and mind, you will realise that it is so easy to practice generosity and kindness to others, because you have no intention to harm anybody. Your wholesome deeds should be done to all living beings and not just humans. This is because even animals can be enlightened. In future lives, they could be disciples of the Buddha or even the Buddha themselves. Once you start to see the benefits of upholding the precepts, you will develop more confidence in *kamma*, knowing that the consequences of all your deeds will come back to you. For example, if you are good to your friends, they will later give you support. Your wholesome deeds could be as simple as sending out *metta* (i.e., loving-kindness) when you meditate.

For someone to wholeheartedly take the Buddha as their refuge, they must develop wisdom. Wisdom here refers to the understanding of the full truth: suffering, the cause of suffering, the end of suffering, and the path leading to the end of suffering. In order to understand suffering properly, your mind must be calm and peaceful. When your mind is in this stage, you will be able to see the true nature of the world, including your body. You will see that your body is going through an ageing process. You will also realise that the knowing mind does not face the same problem. Instead, this knowing mind is what will take rebirth, one after another, if you are not fully enlightened. Once you have understood this, you will be less fearful (or even completely fearless) of what will happen to your body. You will realise that your body is subject to the process of nature, which is *anicca* (i.e., impermanent), *dukkha* (i.e., full of suffering), and *anatta* (i.e., selfless). With wisdom, you will understand why taking care of our knowing mind is so important. Specifically, it is because even though our body will get sick and eventually decay, our knowing mind will not.

How does the knowing mind have anything to do with upholding the five precepts? I saw a picture that explains this quite nicely. In the picture, a monk is being followed by a young lady. A number of murderers and thieves holding swords and arrows are chasing the young lady, wanting to take this innocent girl from the monk. What they try to say here is that our knowing mind has no protection in itself, just like the innocent girl. Two forces can take over: the positive and the negative. If the positive takes over, the negative has no chance. When the negative takes over, the positive has no place to live. Why is this so? It is because our mind can only think of one thing at a time. If good thoughts are there all the time, bad thoughts cannot take place. In other words, more generosity means less greed. More compassion means less anger. More wisdom means less delusion, and so on. This happens to all human beings. However, the knowing mind cannot be perfected



Source: Wilson Lius Lau

and strong by itself. Rather, the positives must be developed through moral conducts, meditations, and the development of wisdom. Once you have understood this, you would feel that it is necessary to take refuge in the triple gems. So that you have a commitment to live a moral life and consistently do good things in order to have a calm and peaceful mind.

As said, kindness and generosity are among the important attributes to be developed in Buddhist practice. Take the Buddha as an example. In one of the current Buddha's past lives, he was a hermit who used his body as a bridge for the previous Buddha to cross over. He was told then that he would be the next Buddha. What I am trying to say is that anyone who sacrifices their own life for the happiness of all other beings again and again, one day if they wish to be, they can become a Buddha. Nevertheless, they must make numerous sacrifices. Firstly, they have to give external objects (e.g., money, gifts) to others all the time. If the gifts come back to them, they have to give them away again. Next is sacrificing their loved ones (e.g., children) for the happiness of others. Then they have to sacrifice their own life for the happiness of others. But for us, we can at least give external objects, such as gifts, to others. We can also donate our bodies for the hospital to use when we die. The Buddha once said that once you know the advantages of giving, you will keep giving things to others.

Although the practice of kindness and generosity

is important, upholding the five precepts creates a wider impact. When you give something to someone, the gift only goes to that person; others do not receive the benefit. On the other hand, when you have the moral conduct (*sila*), you are respected by all living beings, because you are not harming anybody. In fact, if you want to be free from suffering, you must have the moral conduct so that your body is the house of Dhamma. As a result of upholding the precepts, calmness comes quickly when you meditate. Once you have understood the goodness of *sila*, you would be a good person for the rest of your life. For example, when a couple follows the teachings of the Lord Buddha and upholds the five precepts, their relationship lasts a lifetime because they are sincere and honest to each other.

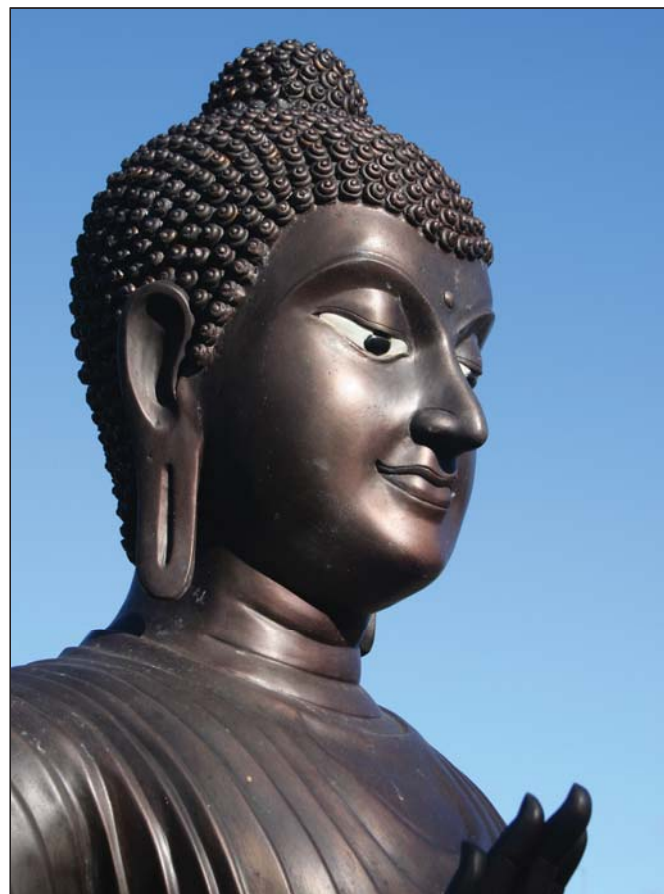
What should you do, you may ask, if you have done bad things in the past? The answer is to keep doing the good things as we cannot undo what we did. If you do good, you receive good. If you do bad, you receive bad. The law of *kamma* is very powerful and it never misses, because it stays in the mind. Therefore you must keep doing the good things so that the consequences of the bad *kamm*as, if they are not too powerful, cannot take over. I happen to know some South-East Asians who died because of rock fishing, one after another. They were very kind people but they could not perfect their five precepts, as they could not stop catching the fish. Why did these people have to die? Because their time had come. They had done so much bad *kamma* against other living beings. Perhaps there are bad living beings such as ghosts and spirits living there who are powerful enough to take the lives of anyone who is equally bad. The point is to keep doing the good things so that you can stay away from the bad easily.

However, just upholding the five precepts is not good enough. Because the ears still hear, the eyes still see, the tongue stills tastes, the nose stills smells, and the body stills contacts other things. Even when you have good speech and action, as long as you have bad thoughts, you still are creating bad *kamm*as. What else should we do then to stay away from doing unwholesome deeds? The answer is to meditate in order to train our mind. When the mind is overly sensitive and does not have good concentration, it can experience many things such as attachment to pleasure, uneasy feelings, sleepiness, dissatisfaction, and doubt. In other words, without good meditation, a certain form of greed, anger, or delusion will take place in the mind. When you observe your mind carefully, you will see that the mind constantly likes or dislikes. In contrast, when the mind has good concentration, we can stay away from the consequences of bad *kamma* through the awareness of our own action, speech, and thought. If we can practice meditation until the mind reaches its one-pointedness and equanimity, our greed, hatred, and delusion will cease. Once the mind is calm and peaceful, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body will not cause any trouble and whatever

information that comes in cannot pollute the knowing mind.

To sum up, the training of morality (*Sila Sikkha*), the training of the mind (*Samadhi Sikkha*), and the training of wisdom (*Panna Sikkha*) are among the cores of Buddhist practice. Unfortunately, these qualities will not just happen by themselves, but you have to develop them. Taking refuge in the triple gems is a must, because it gives you a sense of commitment and motivation in your practice.

In addition, people may think that the Buddha is so different from us. But the truth is that his knowing mind was the same as ours, and we shared our practice of all good attributes such as generosity, morality and mediation. Even the teachings of the Buddha come from this knowing mind. In this sense, the Buddha and Dhamma are right here in the knowing mind. So if you do not respect this knowing mind of yours, what else are you going to respect? This knowing mind is indeed the one who practices the teachings of the lord Buddha. The practice of morality comes from the intentions of this knowing mind not to harm any living beings. Good meditation means peace of the knowing mind. Wisdom also comes from this knowing mind. Once you understand that the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha are here in your mind, you will never want to stay away from the triple gems. You will see the enlightened Buddha, the external teachings, and his enlightened disciples as someone or something that is going to protect you forever.



Source: Christian Tanadinata

Source: Wilsen Lius Lau



The Middle Path

1. Right Observation – the Middle Path

Let us start from meditation. While we meditate, are we able to focus on our breathing? Are we observing our breathing carefully? Are we clearly aware of the true nature of our own breath? What is the true nature of breathing? The physical and mental states of each person is different, and so is the state of the breath at the present moment. However, as long as we are able to observe our present breath mindfully, then we are on the right path of practice. By being able to know our breath as it is, without adding any ideas and concepts to it, we discover the true state/nature of our breath. This is what we call Right Observation, or the Middle Path. The meaning of Middle Path is not to incline towards any directions, but to be able to see the true nature of the present moment, that is, the truth.

Many people have the misconception that the Middle Path is the same as a middle point in mathematics. That is, to find a middle point on a line with equal distances between two points, not inclining to left or right. Mathematically, it is easy to find this point, but it is much harder to find the Middle Path in real life. Many people misunderstand that as long as we do not lean towards any sides, we have found the Middle Path in life. In reality, we have to observe ourselves very carefully and clearly understand the true nature of ourselves in order to see the truth. In this way only will we be able to develop right knowing or proper understanding. However, this does not mean that the understanding that we have is an absolute truth. This is because circumstances are always in the process of changing. Therefore, the real concept of the Middle Path does not mean finding the middle between two points, but seeing the true nature of each and every phenomenon. This is the Middle Path, which is also called the Right Path. When we attain this stage of practice, we are able to have a real insight of the Four Noble Truths.

How then would we be able to penetrate the Four Noble Truths? To attain this, wisdom is required. There are different levels in understanding the Four Noble Truths depending on the level of our wisdom. In order to see the truth, we have to carefully observe the state and condition of our body at the present moment. Take observing breathing in meditation as an example; for beginners, their breathing may be like wind, or they may gasp because the mind has not settled down. By being able to even observe this, we would have gained a proper understanding of our own breathing. However, will our breathing always move like the wind? This is not the case. As the mind settles down, our breathing will also gradually become subtler and it will become a gentle breath. As long as

we are able to clearly know the state at the present moment, without adding our personal concepts and judgments of good or bad, this is considered right observation. In order to be able to have right observation and the understanding of the Middle Path, there needs to be wisdom. There are certain processes of learning and transformation involved when we try to develop our wisdom.

2. Developing Wisdom

2.1 The Process of Cultivating Wisdom

The cultivation of wisdom involves three changing phases. Firstly, it is the wisdom gained from listening; secondly, it is the wisdom gained from contemplation; and thirdly, it is the wisdom gained from practice. Finally, when we penetrate the truth, then only the true wisdom is developed.

Wisdom gained through listening is the understanding of the teachings through listening to the Dhamma. It is impossible for beginners to immediately realise the truth of non-self or selflessness. However, if we are able to observe our physical and mental state based on the present conditions, including the analysis and the understanding of the Five Aggregates to the understanding of the nature of non-self; we are practicing right observation on our body and mind. After that, if we continue to contemplate why the 'self' is empty, we would come to realise that the body and mind are made up of many elements. The body and mind are phenomena arising from a force that brings these elements together. The difference in the elements and the binding force will result in different manifestations of the body and mind phenomena. For example, the difference in muscle tightness between old and young people results in different appearances. We have to observe with full attention to understand this. When we are able to see the true nature of our individual selves and understand the truth of emptiness of the Five Aggregates, then we will develop true wisdom and understanding of the truth of the Four Noble Truths and Dependent Origination.

If we do not observe or reflect ourselves carefully, it will be easy for us to make wrong judgments and choices. For example, when deciding on which university program to enrol, we have to consider our own interests, capabilities and the current conditions and needs of the society. We have to train ourselves to carefully and correctly observe ourselves, make correct judgments and cultivate the right values to avoid carelessness and suffering. Upon contemplation, wisdom gained from listening will become wisdom gained from contemplation. Furthermore, by applying and observing the true nature in our daily lives, there will be wisdom gained from practice which will give rise to the wisdom of realisation.

2.2 Right Observation on Dependent Origination and the Practice of the Middle Path



Illustration: Wai Loon Teng

Buddhism teaches us to have right observation of our lives in order to make the right choices. This is the way of the Middle Path. The objects of observation are all phenomena in life. All phenomena that arise from conditions are subject to change, and thus they are impermanent. They arise from the congregation of causes and conditions and therefore they are non-self or selfless. They cause suffering as it is impossible for us to have full control over them. By seeing this truth, we gain right understanding of the true nature of reality and only through this way can we have proper understanding. Everything arises due to causes and conditions, and they are impermanent and non-self. Therefore there is no inherent nature in things. This is what is termed “emptiness” in Buddhism. “Emptiness” does not mean non-existence or hollowness, but it means an existence that is ever changing and difficult to be controlled. As it is hard to describe this type of phenomena, for convenient sake, Buddhism has chosen the word “emptiness” to describe existence as such. Everything in life is changing and an important concept of Buddhist teaching is impermanence. We need to have the right knowledge of all things and Buddhism trains us to attentively observe all dependent origination or phenomena in our lives in order to gain true understanding. This is called right observation or observation of the Middle Path. We have to apply this in our daily life so that our wisdom can develop. This method of application is the way of the Middle Path which is also the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

All sages who have attained liberation have done so by the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. Therefore, this is also called the 'ancient path of the sages'. To practice the Middle Path in daily life means to maintain a sense of balance in everything that we do. A person without wisdom will make decisions blindly through guessing leading to a lot of mistakes. Those who learn the Dhamma should try to minimise mistakes. For this, wisdom is required. We should try to carefully observe the Law of Dependent Origination, adopt the Middle Path approach in our contemplation, and be conscientious in our practice.

The Law of Dependent Origination has another special characteristic, that is, it portrays the relationship of Cause and Effect. The dependent originated phenomena are the manifestation of a chain of causes and effects. The process of logical thinking emphasised by science is incidentally the structure of the Law of Cause and Effect. Everything happens in accordance to the Law of Cause and Effect. The concept of cause and effect exists within a framework of relativity. For example, thirst is a cause and drinking is an effect. After drinking, a pleasant feeling will arise which is an effect from drinking. Therefore, drinking is both a cause and an effect. We all live in the concept of relativity which inevitably leads to comparisons. Living in comparison will always result in tension or stress and suffering. To relieve ourselves from suffering, we need to prevent comparison/competition and to train ourselves to go beyond the concept of relativity. Only

then will there be no suffering and disappointment. In order to achieve this, we need to have right observation, practice the Middle Path and possess wisdom.

What is the Middle Path? It is rather difficult to practice this in daily life. We have to make correct and careful observations of ourselves. Therefore, Buddhism trains us to gain the right understanding of ourselves. Sentient beings create many problems in thinking and emotions due to the disability of knowing the true nature of the 'self'. The cultivation of the Noble Eightfold Path is to correct these problems. The practice of the Noble Eightfold Path allows us to start with the observation of our physical and mental phenomena. When there is a sense of 'self', there will be an attachment to the 'self'. However, the 'self' is ever changing and not real. If we can observe carefully, we will understand the Law of Dependent Origination. That is, everything is changing and arises from the congregation of causes and conditions. There is always a possibility of change. If we have this understanding, we will not be too arrogant or pessimistic, but we will work hard to gain more understanding and wisdom instead. It is by practising this way that we will be able to live happily.

Through this we progress one step further from the Wisdom of Listening to the Wisdom of Contemplation. During this process, we have to make judgment through analysis and logical deduction before coming to a conclusion. Many people neglect this in their learning process, and therefore wisdom fails to grow. Acceptance without proper assessment is a blind acceptance which only stops at the level of Wisdom of Listening. It is not at the level of Wisdom of Contemplation. Through contemplation, we will gain more understanding about ourselves.

The next step is then the application or the practice. In this aspect, meditation is a good training. In cultivating the Wisdom of Practice, we try to focus our mind on one single point, so that we can have better understanding of ourselves and see the true nature of things. Finally, we will realise that the 'Five Aggregates' are empty in nature. At this time, we see the true nature of non-self, thereby eradicating self-attachment.

A person with wisdom will be able to see the reality in every moment and not be confused by the superficial appearances of all phenomena. In order to reach the level of a sage, a person needs to have this kind of wisdom. For example 'money', at a superficial level corresponds to 'wealth' but it can also bring suffering. Moreover, wealth does not last forever. If we have a clear understanding about money, there will not be any suffering arising from monetary issues.

3. Cultivation and Upholding of the Noble Eightfold Path

The way to cultivate wisdom is practising the Noble



Illustration: Wai Loon Teng

Eightfold Path. So, what is the Noble Eightfold Path?

The first component is 'Right Understanding'. This is the right way of thinking and having right views. Before we reach the level of the noble ones, we must believe in the difference between good and evil, the existence of the Law of Cause and Effect, rebirth, and distinction between the noble ones and the ordinary worldly beings. These are the worldly right understandings. To become a noble one/sage, we need to have the right understanding that can help us to transcend worldliness. This refers to the profound understanding and faith in the Law of Dependent Origination. The Law of Dependent Origination states that all phenomena are results of the congregation of causes and conditions, which are not stable and ever changing. Through science, we understand that matter arises from molecules and molecules arise from atoms which further arise from nucleons and electrons. The relationship between them is changing continuously which gives rise to the different compounds. If we observe carefully we will realise the peculiar nature of our modern world. We do not understand ourselves fully, but we keep blaming others for not understanding us. Everything that exists is continuously changing and disappearing. If we observe and have proper understanding of all phenomena in the world and also develop a profound understanding of the Law of Dependent Origination, we will have freedom in our lives. Therefore, we need to possess wisdom and to observe reality as it is. We need to develop the right understanding about everything in this world, especially our own body and mind.

The second component is 'Right Thought'. That is, the way to think and act in accordance with being a true disciple of the Triple Gems. For example, this includes respecting the Triple Gems, learning the Dhamma, upholding the precepts, etc. Many people are not willing to take refuge in the Triple Gems, as they are afraid of being restricted. However, if we do not make the conscious decision to take refuge in the Triple Gems, there would be a lack of motivation in our Dhamma learning and hence we would find difficulty in progressing. As a result, right understanding will become difficult to be fully established. Therefore, we need to be good disciples of the Triple Gems and truly apply the Buddha's teaching.

The third, fourth and fifth components are 'Right Speech', 'Right Action', and 'Right Livelihood'. Right Speech and Right Action pertain to our physical and mental actions, while Right Livelihood pertains to our economical activities. As a Buddha's disciple, there needs to be appropriate action, speech and thoughts. We need to be truthful in our speech, upright in our bodily actions, observe the precepts and restrain from alcohol. We need to align whatever we do with the Buddha's teaching. Other than that, our economical activities need to be in accordance with the Dhamma. Buddhists should avoid jobs that involve killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

They should not be associated with prostitution, gambling, selling alcohol, shooting, trading firearms and drugs, etc. We have to train ourselves to follow the Dhamma in our action, speech and mind.

The sixth component is 'Right Effort'. This is to remind us that we need to correct whatever mistakes we have made. On the other hand, we also need to try our best to do good deeds. In addition, whatever vices that have not arisen we will not allow them to arise and whatever virtues that have already arisen we should make sure that they continue to grow. We have to eradicate evil, do good and diligently fulfil what a disciple of the Buddha should do instead of finding excuses for ourselves.

The seventh component is 'Right Mindfulness' which is to maintain our attention relentlessly on every single thought that we have. We need to train our mind to focus on the merits of the Dhamma, Triple Gems, generosity and precepts. We keep our mind on wholesome thoughts or within our object of focus, not letting it wander off. As if using a magnifying glass to focus light to a single point, we need to focus our wandering mind on one single point. This is the practice of holding the mind. With right mindfulness, only then will there be right concentration.

The eighth component is 'Right Concentration'. If we are able to cultivate all of the abovementioned seven



Illustration: Wai Loon Teng

components, the mind will be focused and finally we can develop right concentration. Only with right concentration will our mind be able to settle and focus. Having attained that, we would be able to see all the worldly phenomena clearly when we observe them, thereby developing our right understanding. The initial right understanding was the Wisdom of Listening. When we contemplate and apply it relentlessly, our right understanding will turn into Wisdom of Contemplation. With our foundation in Wisdom of Contemplation we apply the Noble Eightfold Path, thereby transforming the wisdom into Wisdom of Practice. After that, by using the Wisdom of Practice as a foundation, we practise the Noble Eightfold Path diligently, observing our body and mind objectively. This will lead to a breakthrough allowing us to see the true nature of the body and mind. This is like what is stated in the *Heart Sutra* "Seeing the Five Aggregates as all empty". Then true wisdom will be developed, that is, seeing the truth of 'emptiness'. With true wisdom, we will be able to eradicate our deluded views, break all attachments and finally attain Arahathood.

To transform our right understanding into wisdom, we need to apply the Noble Eightfold Path in our daily life. Only with the guidance of wisdom, will we be able to see correctly with right observation and thus live in accordance with the Middle Path in our daily lives. Therefore, wisdom is very important. The goal of learning the Buddha's teaching is to develop true wisdom. How successful will we be in our practice depend on how much we fulfil the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path.

4. Using the Eight Negations Theory of Middle Path to Observe/Penetrates the truth of Dependent Origination

The development of wisdom depends highly on our penetration of the Law of Dependent Origination. We have to understand that all phenomena exist due to different causes and conditions. All phenomena are all linked by causes and effects, which are ever changing and difficult to control. These are the truth of suffering. In the relationship of cause and effect, it is because of the causes that effects arise. We can only talk about cause and effect when they are in relative with one and other. By looking at a particular phenomenon itself, it is difficult to justify whether it is a cause or effect. According to the Law of Dependent Origination, all phenomena arise due to causes and conditions and do not exist forever. Their existences are in transient but they do have their function and influence while they exist. This is something that we often neglect. Everything that exists does not have a stable inherent nature and do not have a permanent form. Everything that arises due to causes and conditions are subject to change. During the process of change its function also changes. This is the reality of all phenomena. Therefore, the *Middle Treatise* states that "All phenomena arising due to causes and conditions, I say they are empty in nature. They are only conventionally named. This teaching of emptiness complies

with the truth of Middle Path". In other words, they are empty in nature but they are in accord with the teaching of the Middle Path. Why do we say that they are in accord with the teaching of the Middle Path? This is because although they do not have inherent natures but they exist in their functions. These functions are ever changing and as a result there is function but no inherent nature. This is the reality of all things. It requires wisdom to penetrate.

The Law of Dependent Origination is a chain of relationships between causes and effects. Therefore, the dependent Originated existences neither arises nor ceases. What does this mean? Something that arises means it exists, develop from non-existence to existence. What does it mean by cease? That is, from existence it becomes non-existence. Let us take the realistic example of a mango and its seed. The seed in the soil through sunlight, water, fertiliser, and human cultivation will germinate, grow, flower and bear mangoes in the end. From the relationship of the seed and the mango, what relationship does the mango have with the initial seed? They are not the same and yet they are not different, they are not permanent and yet there has been no discontinuation, there is no coming and no going. From the perspective of the mango fruit itself, it neither arises nor ceases. From the perspective of the relationship between cause and effect, it is neither identical nor completely different. From the perspective of time, it is neither permanent nor discontinued. In term of the connection between cause and effect, it is neither coming nor going.

4.1 Neither Arising Nor Ceasing

Why do we say that it is neither arising nor ceasing? Let us take the example of the mango. Is it real? It is not real and is a mere illusion. It is only a combination of various elements, and hence it is not real. If there is no real mango, then we cannot say that it arose or that it ceased. We can only say that the phenomenon has both arising and ceasing because this phenomenon is ever changing and disappearing. There is no way of saying that there is something real that is arising or ceasing. From the perspective of the mango existence, the mango is just an illusion/conventional form. Can the mango arise by itself? If it can arise by itself, then why would it need so many different conditions in order to arise? Also, if it is a real thing, then would it be digested if we were to eat it? There is no way of digesting it! Therefore, since there is no real unchanging mango, then how can we talk about arising and ceasing?

4.2 Neither Identical Nor Different

Again from the relationship of the cause and effect, is the mango on the tree and the initial seed the same thing? They are not. However, can we say that there is no absolute relationship between the two? There is a relationship. What is their relationship? They are not the same thing but yet they

are not unrelated, and therefore they are neither identical nor different.

4.3 Neither Permanent Nor Discontinued

From the perspective of time, is there a discontinuation between cause and effect? If there is discontinuation, cause is just cause and effect will just be effect. How could there be cause that becomes effect? It is impossible. The effect is produced gradually from the cause. However, this effect is not entirely the initial cause because it keeps changing. Are the cause and the fruit permanent? That is not the case either as they are ever changing. However, we cannot say that they are unrelated. The fruit has come from the continuous change of the seed based on the causes and conditions which eventually becomes a huge tree, flowering and bearing fruit. If the seed was permanent, then it will always remain as a seed and it will be impossible for it to become a mango. If it was discontinued, then where did the mango tree come from? Without the mango tree, then where will the mango come from? Therefore, their relationship is neither permanent nor discontinued. There is no permanent nature but is a continuum of changes.

4.4 Neither Coming Nor Going

Can we say that the seed went away and become the mango? This is not the case. How can one seed eventually become hundreds and thousands of mangoes? Therefore, it is neither going from here nor coming from there. It is neither coming nor going.

Everything is without an inherent nature. When there is no inherent nature then change is possible. Changes occurred due to variation in its causes and conditions. In turn, it results in changes in its characteristics and functions. It is not the same as what was initially there but yet cannot be separated from that initial seed.

5. Conclusion

The explanation above states that even with a mango, if we are able to observe it as it is we would be able to understand the true nature of the mango that we are eating. Therefore, the Law of Dependent Origination is the Eight Negations Theory of Middle Path. The observation of Eightfold Negations teaches us to observe the true nature of phenomena using these four pairs of eight factors. It helps us to observe dependent origination and develop wisdom. I hope that everyone will learn how to observe objectively in daily life and cultivate right observation so that our lives will gear towards the Middle Path.

Wisdom

Dependent Origination

Noble Eightfold Path

中 道

1. 正觀—中道

讓我們先從靜坐開始講起。我們靜坐時，是否把心安住在呼吸上，有無認真的觀呼吸呢？大家能否明確的知道自己的呼吸是甚麼樣子嗎？呼吸的真相是什麼？每個人的身心情況不同，呼吸現狀不同，但只要認真觀察自己當前呼吸的相狀，這就對了。能夠對自己的呼吸如實的認知，沒有添加任何的造作與概念，就是真實相，也就是正觀，亦即中道。中道是指不偏向某一個方向，而能見到當時真實的樣象，這就是實相。

很多人誤以為中道就像數學裡的中點。即在一條線段中，找出與兩個端點距離相等的一點，不偏左也不偏右。從數學的角度來說要找這個點很容易，但在現實生活中要找到中道就不容易了。有人以為在生活中做到不偏不倚就是中道。實際上，我們要很認真的觀察自己，認清自己的真實情況，才能看到真相，這樣才能有正確的認知。但是，這也還不代表我們目前的認知是絕對正確的，因為情況隨時都在變化中。所以，真正的中道思想，不是指在兩端選取其中，而是對每一個事物都能見到其真實相，這就是中道，亦即正道，也就是見到四諦的真相。

那麼，如何才能見到四諦的真相呢？要有智慧。因為智慧的深淺不同，因此見到的四諦真相也會有程度上的差別。要見到真相，我們必須很認真的觀察當下自身的情況和條件。就以靜坐觀息為例，沒有經過訓練的人，呼吸有風相和喘相，那是因為心還沒有平靜下來，只要我們能觀察到這一點，那麼我們對自己的呼吸，就有了正確的認知。但是不是我們的呼吸就永遠像風一樣呢？不是的。隨著心的平靜，我們的呼吸也會慢慢的呈現微細相，直到息相。只要我們能一

直如此真實的觀察，就叫正觀，也叫中觀。所以，只要對當下的現狀能作正確的認知而不摻入任何好和壞的概念與價值，就是正觀了。我們要能正觀，並有中道的思想，一定要有智慧。啟發智慧有其修學和轉變的過程。

2. 啟發智慧

2.1 修習智慧的過程

智慧的修行有三個轉變過程：第一是聞慧，第二是思慧，第三是修慧，最後証入了才啟發真實智慧。

聞慧是指透過聽聞佛法而理解自然的真相。初學佛法的人，不可能在一開始就能見到真實般若的無我真相。可是如果能夠根據現有的條件，對自我身心做最真實的觀察，包括對色受想行識的分析與認知，以了解無我的道理，這就是對自我身心的正觀。然後，慢慢的思考為什麼自身是空的呢？原來身心是由許多元素結合組成的。它是透過某種結構力量收攝與結合而產生的一種現象。由於元素的變化和結構力量的不同，就會有不同的呈現，所產生的現象就有不同的相狀。比如老人和年輕人就因肌肉結構鬆緊不同而有肥肉和肌肉的區別。我們要認真觀察才能了解。當我們能看到自我的真相，透視「五蘊皆空」的真理，這時，真實智慧才得以啟發，見到四諦與緣起的真理。

對自我沒有認真觀察就容易產生錯誤的判斷和選擇。比如選考大學的科系要根據自己的興趣及能力，並考慮社會大環境的條件和需求，方做出選擇。我們要訓練自己認真而正確的觀察自我，作正確的判斷，培養正確的價值觀，這樣就不會糊塗，不會痛苦。經過思考後聞慧也就變成思慧了。然後在生活中再加以實踐及如實觀照，這樣才能有修慧，最後實證而得到現証慧。

2.2 正觀緣起，篤行中道

中道

佛家教導我們如何正確觀察人生的現象，並作出正確的選擇，這就是中道的方法。觀察的對象是一切人生的現象。一切緣生的現象都是變動的，因此它是無常的；它是因緣條件組成的，所以是無我的；它是無法掌控的，所以是痛苦的。這就是對現實的真相有正確的觀察，這樣，才能有正確的認知。一切緣生法是無常無我的，所以它是無自性的。這也就是佛家所說的「空」。「空」並不是表示甚麼都沒有。「空」是說明「有」，但這個「有」又是多變，難以掌控的。這種現象難以形容，因此，佛家以「空」字來代表這樣的一種存在。人生的一切都會改變。佛家認為沒有任何東西是真實不變。我們對一切事物要有正確的認知。學佛就是要訓練我們在緣起的現象中對每件事做認真的觀察並得到真實的認知。這就是正觀，又叫中觀。我們要在生活中去實踐以培養這種智慧。這種實踐的方法就是中道的方法，也就是八正道的修持。

所有獲得解脫的聖者都是透過八正道的修學而達到解脫的，所以八正道又叫古仙人道。在現實生

活中要行中道，就是凡事要做得剛剛好。沒有智慧的人做甚麼事都是用猜的，是盲目的，這樣當然容易碰到很多挫折。學佛的人要盡量避免錯誤，就要有智慧，認真觀察緣起法，以中道的方法觀察，培養認真的態度。

緣生法還有一種特性就是因果的關係。緣生的現象是一連串因果系列的呈現。科學講究邏輯思維，恰恰就是因果法則的體現，一切都在因果中。因果的理念實際上是在相對的情況下產生的。比如：口乾是「因」，喝水是「果」。喝水之後感覺舒適，這又是喝水的「果」。因此，喝水既是「因」又是「果」。我們都在相對的概念中過日子，相對就會引發比較，而活在比較中永遠充滿壓力和痛苦的。要解脫痛苦就要避免比較，要訓練自己超越相對比較的概念，這樣才不會痛苦和失望。要達成這一點就要正觀、行中道，要有智慧。

甚麼叫中道呢？在現實生活中需要做到這一點很難。我們一定要對自我正確和認真的觀察。所以學佛就是要訓練我們正確的認識自我。我們世間眾生由於對自我真相的迷惑，因而產生思想與情緒上的種種問題。八正道的修持就是要糾正這些問題。透過八正道的訓練，讓我們從自我身心觀察起。有自我就有自我愛。但是，自我是不斷的在變動，是不實在的。我們若能認真的觀察，就能明白緣起的道理，一切都是變動的，因緣和合的。一切都有改變的可能。了解這一點，我們就不會太高傲，也不會太自卑，而努力昇華自己的智慧，這樣才能活得開心。

這就由聞慧進一步到達思慧的程度。在這個過程中需要經過邏輯思維的判斷與分析，然後歸納出結論。很多人在學習的過程中常常忽略這個過程，因此智慧就沒辦法成長。沒有經過判斷的接受是盲目的，那還停留在聞慧的階段，沒有到達思慧的階段。經過思考，對自我的認識就能得以提升。

再進一步就要實踐了。在這方面靜坐是一種很好的訓練。修慧透過訓練，將精神思想集中在一點

上，對自我可更進一步的透視，看到真實相，最後達到「五蘊皆空」，那時便能真正見到無我的真相，去除我執了。

有智慧的人能看清每一個當下的真相，不會被表面現象所迷惑，只有具備這種智慧才能達到聖人的境界。例如金錢，表面是擁有的財富，但本身也會帶來煩惱，財富也並不是永遠的，我們若能對金錢有清楚的認識，就不會由於金錢問題而引發煩惱了。

3. 八正道的修持

如何啟發智慧，簡而言之即是實踐八正道。那麼，八正道有那些呢？

第一項是正見。正見就是指真實的思想，正確的看法。在還沒成為聖人的時候，我們要相信善惡，因果業報，三世輪迴，凡夫聖人，這些是世俗正見。要成為聖人，就必須具備出世間正見，即對緣起法有深切的了解和堅定的信念。所謂緣起法，即指所有存在都是因緣條件結合的產物，這種結合是不穩定的，是變動的。我們從科學的學習就可以了解，物質是由分子構成，分子又是由原子組成，原子裡還有核子、電子，它們的關係是一直運動改變的，從而有不同的化合物。如果細心觀察，我們將發現這個現實社會的神奇。我們對自己都不了解，卻常常埋怨別人不了解我們。所有存在物都在不斷的變化、消失。觀察世間的一切現象，對其有真實的認識，對緣起法建立深刻的了解，就可以過自在的生活。所以，我們要有智慧，要作如實觀。我們要對世間，尤其是我們的生命身心建立起正確的看法。

第二項正思惟。這就是如何經過思考，進而採取行動，使自己成為合乎佛法的三寶弟子，例如：禮敬三寶，學習佛法，守持戒律等。很多人不願皈依三寶，怕受約束，被人管。但不經過這一番的選擇決定，並發為行動，實際去皈依，學佛將缺少一

股推動力，下一步就很難做下去了。正見亦難以真正具足。因此，我們要做真正的三寶弟子，實際的奉行佛陀的教法。

第三、四、五個是正語、正業、正命。正語和正業是有關身心的行爲，正命是指經濟的生活。作爲佛家弟子，身、口、意行爲要恰當。我們要說真話，身體動作要端莊，持戒、不喝酒，行爲要合乎學佛的相應要求。另外，經濟生活也要合乎佛法的標準。學佛者要避免從事與殺、盜、淫有關的工作，不可參與妓院、賭博等行業，不要賣酒、走偏門，作槍手，販賣軍火、槍支及毒品等等。我們要訓練自己在身口意三方面的行爲符合佛法。

第六個是正精進。這是提醒我們錯了就要努力改正，好事盡量去做，還未生起的壞事不要讓它生起，好的心念要促使它生長。我們要斷惡行善，努力堅持做一個佛弟子應該做的事情，不要找藉口推卸。

第七個是正念，也就是要常常保持自己的心集中，把心安住在我們的每一個念頭上。我們要訓練自己把心安住於佛法、三寶、布施、持戒的功德上，安住在好念頭上，或在我們的所緣境上，不讓它跑走。就像用凸透鏡把光線匯聚在一點一樣。我們要把散亂的心集中在一點，將心安住於一處。這就是攝心的功夫。有了正念，進一步才能有正定。

第八項是正定。能做到上述七點，心能夠統一，最後才能有正定。有了正定后心才能安住，這時候再來觀察世間的現象，就可以看得非常清楚，進而提升我們的正見。以前的正見是聞慧，經過一段時間的努力思惟與實踐，我們把正見轉變成思慧。然後以思慧的基礎實踐八正道，又把思慧轉變爲修慧。再以修慧作基礎力行八正道，如實觀察身心，能夠突破，見到身心的真實相，像《心經》所說的：「照見五蘊皆空」，真實般若就得以啓發，這就是見到了「空」的真理。有了真實智慧，便可斷除煩惱(見惑)，然後再斷情感上的染著(修惑)，最後

證入阿羅漢境界了。

要把正見提升成爲智慧，有賴我們在生活中去實踐八正道。唯有智慧的引導，才能使我們見得真確，有正觀，也才能讓我們的生活行於中道。因此，智慧是非常重要的。我們學佛就是要啓發真實智慧。如何成就則看我們是否實踐八正道。

4. 依八不中道正觀緣起

智慧的啓發有賴我們對緣起法的透視。我們要明白所有存在的現象都是因緣而產生的。存在的現象都存在因果關係當中，都在變化著，是難以掌控的，這些都是苦的事實。在因果關係中果因因立。唯有在相對的關係中才有因果可言，對現象本身則難以斷定是因是果。在緣起法裡，緣起的現象雖無永恆存在，是暫時存在，但卻有其存在的作用，有它的影響力。這是我們常常無略的。所有存在物本身是無自性的，沒有不變的相狀。緣起的東西一定可以改變的，但在變化中又有不同的作用，這就是現實的真相。所以，《中觀論》說：「眾因緣生法，我說即是空，亦爲是假名，亦是中道義。」換句話說，它是空性的，但又符合中道的思想。爲甚麼說它符合中道的思想呢？因爲它雖然沒有自性，可是它存在一個作用。這個作用一直在變動，有作用可是又無自性。這就是現實事物的真相。這需要智慧才能洞察。

因緣法是因果關係的串連。所有因緣法是不生不滅的。甚麼叫不生不滅呢？生就是存在的，從沒有變成有。甚麼是滅呢？也就是從有變成沒有。舉個現實的例子來說，譬如芒果的果實和種子。種子在土壤裡經過陽光、水分、養料和人的耕種，發芽、生長、開花，最後芒果長出來了。從種子與芒果之間的關係來看，這個我們吃的芒果與開始的芒果種子有甚麼關係呢？我們說它們是不一不異，不常不斷，不來不去的。從芒果的自體來說，它是不生不滅的。從因與果的關係來說，是不一不異的。從時間上來說是不常不斷的。從因與果的關聯上來說

不來不去的。

4.1 不生不滅

爲甚麼說不生不滅呢？就拿芒果來說吧！它是真的嗎？沒有真的。是假相的。它是種種元素湊合而成的東西，所以是不實在的。既然沒有真實的芒果，就談不上生，也談不上滅。我們只能說現象有生有滅，因爲這個現象在不斷的變化與消失，沒辦法說有甚麼實在的東西在生或在滅。芒果只是一個假相。這是從芒果的自體來說。芒果本身會生嗎？假如會生，它自己生起來就好了，爲甚麼還要靠那麼多因緣條件才能夠生起呢？同時，如果它是實在的東西，我們把它吃下去能消化嗎？不能消化！所以，既然沒有真實不變的芒果，還有甚麼生與滅可言呢？

4.2 不一不異

再從因與果的關係來說，樹上的芒果與原來的種子是用同一個東西嗎？不一樣。但我們能說它們之間完全沒有關係嗎？有關係。它們之間是怎樣的一個關係呢？它們又不是一件東西，但又不能完全沒關係，所以叫不一不異。

4.3 不常不斷

從時間上來說，因與果之間有沒有斷？如果有斷，因就是因，果就是果，那有因可以變成果呢？不可能的。果是從因逐漸形成的。可是這個果又不完全是原來那個因，因爲它一直在變。這個因與水果的結果來說，它們都是常的嗎？也不是，它們是變動的。但是，我們又不能說它們之間完全沒有關係。果實也是由種子不斷變動，隨著因緣不斷變化，最後長成樹，開花結果。假使是常的，這個種子永遠是種子，不可能變成芒果。若是斷的話，那來這棵芒果樹呢？沒有芒果樹，那來芒果呢？因此，它們的關係是不常不斷。沒有永恆性，可是在變動中不斷的延續下去。

4.4 不來不去

我們能說是種子跑去變成了芒果嗎？不是的。一顆種子怎樣可能最後變成千百顆芒果呢？所以，也不是從這裡去或那裡來。它是不來不去的。

一切是無自性的。沒有自性就可以變動。它是靠種種的因緣而起變動的。因此，在質上、在用上都會有所變化。它既不是原來的，可是又不能離開原來的那顆種子。

5. 結語

以上的解釋說明，單單一個芒果，我們若能如實的觀察，就能對我們所吃的芒果的真相瞭如指掌。所以，緣生法就是八不中道。這八不中道觀教導我們從四對的八個方面觀察法的真相，幫助我們正觀緣起，啓發智慧。希望大家在生活中學習如實觀察，培養正觀，使我們的生活趨向中道。



Illustration: Wai Loon Teng

Confronting Failures and Setbacks

1. What is failure? What is setback?

Our topic for today is “Confronting Failures and Setbacks”. Since examinations are around the corner, every one of you should be optimistic, encouraging yourselves to work hard and face the challenge courageously. You should not be thinking of what will happen if you were going to fail even at the beginning.

Nevertheless, in life there is undoubtedly times when things go wrong. Therefore, we still need to learn how to confront our failures and setbacks. So, what does ‘failure’ mean? Failure means not being successful or not fulfilling one’s wishes. However, our views about failure might be different from others. At times, we think that we have failed but in other people’s point of view, it might not be perceived so. So, what is real failure?

There are people who always score high distinctions in their exams. When they do not get a high distinction, they think they have failed. On the contrary, for those who always get a pass in the exams, will be overwhelmed by happiness if they obtain even a credit. Thus, there is no specific definition for failure. It can be said that if the outcome is different from what we have hoped for, we will treat it as a failure. If things do not progress smoothly as we have planned, we take that as a setback. These are all very subjective.

Life is not a bed of roses and having a smooth sailing life is not necessarily a good thing too. When things go well, there will be no chance for us to challenge ourselves. Moreover, when things go too well we tend to be complacent and not consider things carefully. For instance, you will notice that people who drive frequently are more likely to fall asleep when there is no traffic on the highway. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether smooth sailing is a good thing and whether difficulties mean failure. All in all, it is accentuated here that there is no definite definition of failure.

Also, we consider ourselves having setbacks possibly because we are in a bad mood. When we are in a good mood we will be more optimistic and try to think of ways to solve the problem rather than thinking of it as a setback. There are some young people who are full of vigour and energy. When faced with problems they are excited and consider it something very challenging. On the other hand, there are those who come across the same problem and regard it as a setback. Therefore, if we can face difficulties with an open heart, treating them as stimuli to motivate

us to work harder, the difficulties will not become setbacks but a chance for us to improve instead. As can be seen, this is something to do with our state of mind. Our outlook on life, whether it is optimistic or pessimistic, proactive or passive, will have an influence on our perceptions.

2. Why are we reluctant to confront failures and setbacks?

We are reluctant to confront failures or setbacks because things are not going smoothly in line with what we have planned. We only wish for one particular scenario and hope that things will manifest in a particular way. When the outcome is not as we have thought, we see it as a failure or a setback. Our hearts are discontented and refuse to accept the outcome. In other words, this is a form of attachment within our hearts and we are unwilling to change our expectations. It is as if there are no other options if things do not turn out exactly as we wished. In fact, all roads lead to Rome and there are no absolute dead ends in life.

One student asks, “There are those who fail in their marriages, with their wives and children leaving them. You said that there is no strict definition of failure but isn’t this considered a failure?”

The response: “This is not necessarily a complete failure. We should find the reason for the failure in marriage. If a divorcee can learn a lesson from the failed marriage, and hence turn over a new leaf, this can be a fresh start. Everything in life is ever changing. There is a saying that every cloud has a silver lining. When we meet with difficulties in life, this does not mean that it is a total failure. This could well be an opportunity for us to improve.”

Another student asks, “Does it mean that we have to impose suffering onto others and let them experience it so that they can learn from their suffering?”

The response: “We need to develop ourselves from our experience of suffering but should not intentionally create suffering for others hoping that they could learn from it. We must understand that we are all worldly beings and should think of whether we have the necessary wisdom to guide others using these methods. We must consider whether this is just an arrogance that we have developed. If we are not skilful enough, the person may not be able to understand our true intentions and instead develop animosity towards us. Therefore, proper skills are needed for the use of these harsh teaching methods. Apart from that, there needs to be wisdom and compassion. If not, it is very difficult to produce the desired effects.

The Buddha is one who has perfected himself in love, compassion and wisdom. We must learn from the Buddha to do things based on considerations with wisdom

and compassion. We may rationally say that suffering is just suffering. However, in order to explain this to a person who is experiencing suffering to help him accept the truth of suffering, compassion is required. Only with the fulfilment of both wisdom and compassion will the things we do be ideal. This is what we have to learn in our daily life.

The Buddha experienced for himself that life is suffering. However, sufferings in life are not brought to us by the Buddha but from our own ignorance. Therefore, we need to investigate why we have these sufferings? What is the cause of these sufferings? There are no innate problems in life but the problems are self-inflicted by ourselves. If the Buddha intentionally created sufferings for us and asked us to experience suffering in order to teach us, this may not work as well. On the contrary, this may lead to our dislike.

At the time of the Buddha, there were people who asked questions to Arahats and were given very straight advice. However, some people were unable to accept these teachings as they were too direct and strict. The Buddha taught with love and compassion according to the capacities and inclinations of individuals in order for them to understand their delusions and feel the compassion from the Buddha. Therefore, we need to learn from the Buddha to understand the suffering, difficulties and habitual tendencies of sentient beings in order to guide them according to their individual inclinations. Buddhism is not cold and unrelenting. The Buddha is pure, wise and compassionate, bringing us warmth. This makes us feel that life is full of brightness and warmth although life is not perfect and we do not have full wisdom, the Buddha will still compassionately watch over and protect us.

3. How do we confront failures and setbacks with ease?

3.1. Recognize the truth of failure – impermanent and relative

Why are we not willing to confront failures and setbacks? We are often too attached to a particular situation and will only consider ourselves successful when we achieve it. Therefore, when the situation is not the same as what we have expected, we refuse to accept it. Also, this shows that we do not fully understand the meaning of *impermanence and dependent origination*. If we understand these truths, we will be able to understand that it is impossible for anything in the world to remain unchanged. Everything arises out of causes and conditions and these factors are also subject to change. It is impossible that they are always what we have hoped for. If we prepare ourselves to face changes, then it will be easy to confront failures and setbacks. Some people have a stronger flexibility in facing failures and setbacks. If we are more positive at dealing with failures and setbacks, we will accept things with more ease. We may know the concept of impermanence and dependent origination but we have not penetrated the concept thoroughly, therefore, whenever a

problem arises, we often forget about dependent origination and end up getting upset.

In other instances, we regard ourselves as having failed because we are comparing with others. These comparisons are relative. For example, we feel that we would be happy when we score a mark of eighty-five. Incidentally, we really get a mark of eight-five. However, another friend – who usually scores lower than you – gets a mark of eight-seven. We will become very unhappy, even though we have achieved our desired marks, and will still consider ourselves as having failed. This is because we never expected that a friend, who normally performs worse off than ourselves, has actually surpassed us. Why are we not happy then? This is because we are jealous and it is our own arrogance that is the culprit. We feel that we have lost and therefore, have failed. But then again, is this really a failure? This is hard to say. There are many reasons that make us feel that we have failed and one of the main reasons is our own mental afflictions including jealousy, arrogance and our unwillingness to lose to others. Also, we have forgotten about the truth of impermanence and are unwilling to accept that which is different from our expectations. These are all the reasons causing us to feel down, like a failure.

We have to understand that everything in this world is impermanent. There is no everlasting success or failure. When we get good grades we feel a sense of success but this moment passes by quickly. If we were to take things lightly, the next time may be a failure. Thus, there is no permanent success or failure. They are only like the ebb and flow of waves in our lives. At times the tide will rise and at times it will subside. The highs and lows are not forever and are merely in a continuous flow.

We have to widen our horizon and be far-sighted, looking at things from a long term point of view. A trivial problem is insignificant in our life. We need to think of ways to overcome it and continue on with our journey. It is just like mountain climbing: we scale the peaks, ascending one and descending another in order to ascend another peak once again. We continue to move forward without stopping. The peaks and valleys are only different parts of our entire journey moving forward. If we broaden our views, we will not be too caught up with the minute details. We often push ourselves into our own blind alley and fail to pull ourselves out. Just because of a little problem we feel upset,, roll in our own misery and feel as though it is the end of the world.

3.2. Having Right Understanding of the Law of Dependent Origination and the Three Births Theory of Cause and Effect in Buddhism

We have to understand that success or failure is just a mere phenomenon. It is just a single point within our flow of life. Since it has manifested before us, we should just confront it! Having adjusted whatever causes and conditions that are

present at the moment, we continue to move on.

We have to understand that everything relies on the coming together of causes and conditions. That is, everything has its own causes and conditions. When the outcome of things is different from what we expect, we can investigate the reason behind it. We have to examine whether we have failed to fulfil any conditions. Initially we may have thought that preparing in a certain way would produce a certain ideal outcome. However, when the outcome is not as expected, we should take this as an opportunity to reflect on ourselves and whether there were any conditions that were missing. We must consider if there were anything that we did not do well and whether there is anything we could do at this moment to improve the situation. Since the situation has already manifested before us, there is no point being in a miserable state. This will only cause us to miss the present moment and any opportunities to create the future. This is the Right Understanding that we must hold. We must understand the Three Births Theory of Cause and Effects which covers the past, present and the future. We should not be attached to our past, waste our present and in the end lose our future. When we are faced with setbacks and failures, we need to be more aware. Since we have not put enough effort in the past, we must work harder in the present, so we can create a better future. This is the Right Understanding we must constantly remember in our minds.

Sometimes, we may wonder why some people can do things smoothly whereas we keep facing difficulties and setbacks in whatever we do despite having spent a lot of time on it. Regarding this matter, we need to remember the abovementioned Right Understanding on the Three Births Theory of Cause and Effect. At times we may see others as having a smooth path but to them they may not feel that they are having it easy. We may look at others as though things are easy for them but in reality everyone has their own internal struggles and it is only that we do not know about them. Therefore, we should not keep looking at others or be jealous of them. We have to try to do our best. There are some people whose circumstances may be more favourable and this could be because they have done much in the past and thus they have more merits and support at present. This is just like everyone who has studied since primary school finding learning less stressful at this point. These are all related to our efforts in the past. If we feel that nobody comes to our aid when we need help or nothing goes in when we study and therefore give up on ourselves, there will really be no future for us. We need to understand the Three Births Theory of Cause and Effect. If we have no one to help us when we need help, we should then cultivate better human relationship. However, this does not mean that we should flatter others, rather, we should be sincere in helping, encouraging and being friends with others. Slowly we will see the good fruits of our actions. Similarly, in the process of learning, if we are not as smart as others, we have to put in more effort and we will achieve the

same outcome in the end as well. Therefore, we should not envy or be jealous of others. This will only bring vexation to ourselves. We have to look at our own causes and conditions, fully utilised what is there and courageously confront reality in order to create our future.

3.3. Think from various aspects to ease ourselves from frustration

We must understand that all success and failure are dependently originated and impermanent. They are conditional, relative and unreal, but are also extremely flexible and constructible. However, before we are able to see this truth and be liberated, we can depend on our Right Understanding to contemplate from various aspects in order to regulate our mental state and ease ourselves from frustrations.

3.3.1. Success and failure have variable perspectives

We can think about success and failure from various perspectives. A certain issue may look like a failure, but from another point of view it can possibly be a success. For instance, the sound effects during the Unibuds Bodhi Nite were defective and so that was a failure. On the other hand, the excellent performance on that night was greeted by the audience with rapturous applause. By being there, the audiences had learnt a lot about Buddhism. From this perspective, it was a success. Therefore, success and failure are variable. When we consider things from different perspectives, certain parts may be successful while others may not be ideal. So in this case, should we say that it was a complete failure? Therefore, we must examine from various perspectives so that we can see the variability of things. Studying is also the same. Although we thought that we have failed, in the process of it we still learn something. This is also a form of experience. Therefore, we should not be too fussy in wanting everything to be in a particular condition before considering it a success.

3.3.2. Developing positive conditions in adversity

When we come across setbacks in our life, if we are able to use the right type of thinking to ponder and transform them, it could possibly become a turning point. This is what we call developing positive conditions from adversity in Buddhism. We always hope for a smooth path ahead and that is called 'favourable conditions'. However, under favourable conditions it is easy for us to lose our way and become egotistic especially when our status is elevated. Nobody dares to offend or to criticise us anymore but this may not necessarily be a good thing. Therefore, when the conditions are smooth it is actually not easy for us to cultivate ourselves. On the contrary,



Illustration: Siang Yee Chuah

it is easy for our arrogance to develop. In favourable circumstances, we have to be more careful to be modest and vigilant. In adverse conditions, it may be very distressing but the pain can stimulate us to reflect and find the reason for this suffering. Why is it that we have such great jealousy, hatred and ego? If we can use this opportunity for a breakthrough then we will be able to improve ourselves. Therefore, make good use of adversity as it may lead to our progress and development.

At times, when others deal us a hard blow, this could also allow us to improve. For instance, some people may criticise Buddhism. Why are Buddhists praying so hard and are superstitious? These may be criticisms but because of these criticisms we are stimulated to be more proactive in promoting the true Dhamma. This is what we mean by developing the positive amidst adversity. As for the criticism and those who have given us a hard time, if we can think about it positively, we should be thankful to them. In actual fact, they are helping us to grow.

3.3.3. Failure is the key to success

Failure is not necessarily a misdemeanour. Failure can also be a form of training. Once we tumble, we learn to stand up once again. If we have not fallen before, we may

not progress. Just like a toddler who doddles along and gradually learns how to walk. If he has not gone through such a training process, he would not be able to walk. In other words, failure is something normal. Through failure we gain experience in order to improve ourselves. Therefore, it is said that failure is the key to success. From the past to the present, we learn from others when we do things. Regardless of their experiences of success or failure, we can use that as a point of self-reflection and use their experiences as our own foundation. Therefore, success can be regarded as a more favourable outcome, while failure is a favourable learning experience. As long as we learn from all sorts of experiences, we would be able to further improve ourselves. In other words, failure is not necessarily a misdemeanour but it could help us do better in the future. If we can think in this way, we will be more light-hearted and will not treat setbacks as dead knots.

3.3.4. Train ourselves to undertake pressure

Failure does not necessarily mean a dead end. Each road has its turning point. It is just that people nowadays have a lesser ability to withstand pressure and face setbacks and failure. Even children these days suffer from depression and anxiety! Facing pressure, failure and setbacks is a form of training. However, most children nowadays are being protected since childhood, getting whatever they want. Hence, there are not many opportunities for them to train themselves. If we compare the difficulties faced by people at present to those who lived in the past, for instance during the world war period, there is a huge difference. Then, why is it that those in the past were able to go on living whereas we cannot live on? This is like in weight lifting; we start by training with light weights and slowly our strength is built up over time and in the end we can lift a heavy object. If we are protected since childhood and we seldom come across unfavourable circumstances, then there are fewer opportunities for us to develop our ability in withstanding pressure, failure or setback. So when we grow up and face immense pressure, we are unable to handle it.

Therefore, at times when faced with unfavourable circumstances we have to learn to accept them and also to endure the unpleasant feelings. Slowly then will our ability to undertake pressure and setback be strengthened. When we come across a more complex situation later on, we will be able to challenge it. This is because with training, gradually we will be more able to take on things and also let go of them.

3.3.5. Do not make judgments too early

All of us have experienced success and failure. Thus, we should not take a certain result too seriously and think that that is the end of everything. Life is not always a smooth path. We should not think that we are the only ones who fail. When we come across a setback, we often think that we are the worst and all unlucky things happen to us. In fact, take a broader look at those around us. They are more or less in the same boat as we are. Everyone has suffered pain and difficulty before. If others can overcome it, why can't we? Actually, sometimes when we think that we have been defeated, is the outcome really that bad? A lost may turn out to be a gain instead. There are many ups and downs in life and it is very difficult to determine whether it is a calamity or a blessing. This is because it is just a little point in the flow of life. Therefore, we should not make judgments too early or feel pessimistic too soon.

We must see clearly our present causes and conditions, maintain our Right Understanding, cultivate good affinities, and change the course of things towards the proper direction. If we are dispirited and our mood is low, this will actually stir up our bad affinities. Then things could really turn difficult. Therefore, maintain the proper view of dependent origination and cause and effect, treat things with a balanced mind and perhaps things will take a favourable turn. If we use a dispirited and negative mind to face the issue, then the result could possibly become worse.

3.3.6. Difficulties allow for faster achievement

The ups and downs in life are part of the phenomena in the continuum of impermanence. In life, at times the journey is smooth while at times it is not as favourable but they are all only a single point in life. We do not have to choose the easier road each time or hope for any particular conditions to come by. Under any circumstances, we should adapt to the present conditions, master the Right Understanding of dependent origination and cause and effect, follow the flow of impermanence and put in effort to create good conditions in order to create our future.

It may not necessarily be the best if things go smoothly and we always take the easier route. *Sakyamuni Buddha* also did not choose the easy road but a tougher road which is called 'the road that is difficult to tread'. That is, to practise *the Bodhisattva path* in the evil world of five obscurities and to help obstinate sentient beings. On the other hand, *Maitreya Bodhisattva* chose an easier method of practice but he will take a longer time to achieve Buddhahood. *Sakyamuni Buddha* chose the road that is hard to

walk but in the end he had a faster achievement. This shows that we do not necessarily have to choose the easier road. If a difficult path manifests before us, we should confront it courageously, transcend it and this will possibly lead towards faster progress.

3.3.7. Do not complain about negative kamma

Some Buddhists often complain that their negative *kamma* is too strong when they come across setbacks. Although Buddhism talks about *kamma*, we must understand that what was done in the past can affect the present, but this does not mean that these *kamma* could not be transformed. We should not be defeated by bad *kamma*. We must know that we ourselves have created this *kamma*. If we keep complaining about it with an unsettled mind, this actually brings more obstacles. *Kammic* forces can be transformed and Buddhism is not a philosophy of fatalism. If whenever we come across failure, we just complain about bad *kamma* and do not examine the reason for failure, this is not the correct way of learning Buddhism. We are all not liberated yet and every one of us has our own *kamma*. So, do not compare who has more or less negative *kamma*. More importantly, we should seize the present moment, work harder, create more positive conditions, transform our bad *kamma* and become a Buddhist with Right Understanding.

3.3.8. Lessons from the past

There are times when we feel down and it is not easy to arouse our willpower. We can read some Dhamma books, biography of famous people or eminent monks to encourage ourselves. We see how the saints and sages of the past have gone through difficulties to finally achieve their goals. The reason they could succeed was not because they were special people but it was because they could endure hardship and had strong determination. Their achievement did not come easy and was the fruit of their hard labour. We can use their courage in overcoming difficulties to remind ourselves. We can also read the biography of famous people and see how people like Thomas Edison and Newton achieved their success. From these biographies, we can see that many of them achieve their goals under very difficult circumstances. All these can give us some inspiration and the knowledge that we are not the most pitiful person in the world.

3.3.9. Positive thinking

When we meet setback or failure, our thinking is usually quite disheartened and negative, feeling that we are useless. We should broaden our horizon. If we can be sitting here today, are we really a useless person? If we are a useless person, how

can we be studying at the university? Have a look at the world and you will see that there are so many people living in misery. There are children starving who do not even have the opportunity to study whereas we are born with such great blessings. So, should we still be thinking that we are useless? We may fall short of the best but we are better than the worst. Have a look at those who are less fortunate than us and we will cherish our lives.

At the same time, we think we are useless because we have not done well in the examinations. However, we are still very productive in other aspects. For instance, we can be good at organising activities. Although we do not do well in the exams, we manage to organise a successful Dhamma class where many people feel grateful for being able to attend. This shows that we are still useful after all. Therefore, if we think positively we will not be that upset anymore.

3.3.10. Meditation

Meditation trains us to concentrate on our breathing. When any thought arises we have to be mindful of it and let it go. Such training strengthens our mental energy. When a negative thought arises, we tell ourselves to stop continuing on that stream of thought. We must know that negative thoughts bring mental exhaustion, so we should not continue with them. We need to arouse our mental energy to cut them off. Nevertheless, our mental energy is often too weak.

Therefore, we must practise meditation more often in order to cultivate our Right Mindfulness and Right Knowing. Right Mindfulness is to focus our mind on the object of meditation while Right Knowing is to be aware of the wandering mind whenever it arises. When we have Right Mindfulness and Right Knowing, we will be able to detect our stress or a negative thought easily. At this point, we can sit in meditation, concentrate on our breathing and clear away the negative thoughts or emotions while focusing on the object of meditation to settle the mind. If we practise meditation often, this will strengthen the ability to regulate our thoughts. Meaningless thoughts will waste our mental and physical energy, and therefore we must quickly stop them. This type of ability needs to be developed through the practice of meditation. This includes sitting or walking meditation whereby we focus the attention on our footsteps, temporarily shutting off all other thoughts.

If we can reduce those meaningless negative thoughts, our mind will naturally become more relaxed and we will become more cheerful. When

we feel that our mind is full of thoughts, our thinking slows and there is tightness and tension in our body and mind. This is a sign of tension. At this point, we must learn to relax ourselves and sit in meditation for some time. We should remind ourselves of the Law of Dependent Origination and not regard failure and setback as something too serious. We can also read some inspiring books, Buddhist quotes or attend Dhamma classes, listen to the Dhamma or chat with friends. We can use these to inspire ourselves and relax our body and mind. These are all methods to help us relieve tension.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Right Understanding of Impermanence and Dependent Origination

All in all, we still need to understand the Law of Impermanence and Dependent Origination. Everything is impermanent and a result of the coming together of causes and conditions. At the same time, we must remember the Three Births Theory of *Kamma* and use these Right Understandings to confront our problems and create the positive causes and conditions. This way we will only have the possibility of changing our future and make ourselves even more successful.

4.2. Application of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path

In addition, we should use Right Understanding to stimulate our willpower in order to progress and work towards that which is wholesome. This is called Right Thought. We have to directly observe what is tension, failure or setback. We should transform the pressure into strength to increase our determination and to take it a step further by putting it into action. We must face up to our problems and not be lost in our meaningless wanderings of the mind but strive hard and show our determination in our speech, thoughts and actions. This is Right Volitional Action. It is also the Right Speech, Right Actions and Right Livelihood in the Noble Eightfold Path. When we eradicate our mental afflictions and concentrate on what we are supposed to do, this is Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Therefore, the Noble Eightfold Path is not just for us to memorise but to apply in our life.

Besides applying the Noble Eightfold Path, we also must apply the Four Noble Truths. When we come across setback or failure, we must understand that this really is suffering. We need to also understand the reason for this pain. If we can eradicate the cause of this suffering we will feel more relaxed. So, we must think of ways to get rid of this cause of suffering. Therefore, the Four Noble Truths is a good way of solving problems. No matter what problems we face or when we feel uncomfortable, we should search for the cause of this misery. We should

reflect on ourselves, do the necessary thinking and use the Right Understanding of Buddhism to contemplate where the root of suffering is. We also need to examine if we get rid of the cause of suffering do we feel more relaxed? When facing with difficulties, if we can use the Four Noble Truths – Suffering, Cause, Cessation and the Path - as objects of observation, slowly we will have some realisation and obtain some liberation. At the same time, our faith in Buddhism will also increase.

Therefore, do not be frustrated when you are faced with a problem. We must find the root of our misery and solve it according to the Buddha's teaching. When we know how to apply the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path to handle our issues, our lives will become more interesting and colourful. Also, we will have a better understanding of the truth pertaining to our body and mind.

4.3. The biggest failure

Thus far, in our discussion about confronting failure and setback, we have only touched upon issues relating to career, study, marriage and others, but in actual fact we have forgotten one basic failure! That is our inability to eradicate our suffering and transcend ourselves. We are still drifting in the sea of birth and death! The Buddha has already attained enlightenment but we are still in the cycle of rebirth! We seem to have forgotten about this failure! We have to remind ourselves that there are still the three poisons of greed, hatred and delusions within our hearts. These three poisonous snakes are yet to be subdued and why are we still going after things externally? In the process of our cultivation, the suffering from greed, hatred and delusions are still active and not subdued. This is the real failure and setback! However, we seem to be not bothered by it at all! Therefore, when we are faced with failures and setbacks in the future, we should bear in mind that we still have a bigger problem that we have not solved! The setback before us is only a trivial matter. The real big problem is a matter of when will we be able to purify our body and mind and when will we be able to attain Buddhahood? With regards to this big problem, we are still constantly failing. And yet, why are we not upset because of this failure but get caught up in trifle matters instead? At this point, we should arouse our energy to confront any setbacks head on in order to transcend it! Compared to transcending ourselves and attaining liberation from the cycle of rebirth, this is but a very simple matter!

如何面對失敗與挫折

1. 甚麼叫作失敗？甚麼叫作挫折

今天，我們要談的是如何面對失敗與挫折。考試要到了，大家應該樂觀，勉勵自己好好用功，勇敢的去面對考試，不要一開始就想失敗了怎麼辦！

然而，人生總有不順利的時候，因此，我們還是要學習如何面對失敗與挫折。什麼叫做失敗？失敗就是不成功，不順心。但是，當我們認為失敗的時候，在別人眼裡，卻不見得是失敗，所以，什麼是真正的失敗？

有些人常常考取特優的成績，當他考不到特優的成績，他就認為自己失敗了。如果我們平時總是剛剛及格，有一天突然考到優等成績，我們會興奮不已。所以，失敗是沒有一定的定義。只是說，所呈現的結果，不如我們預想的那麼好，我們就覺得失敗了；事情進展得不如我們計畫中的順利，我們就說遇到挫折了。這是非常主觀的。

人生不可能事事稱心如意，而一帆風順也不見得一定是好事。當一切都很順利的時候，我們就少有機會考驗自己。同時，太過一帆風順的時候，我們容易輕心，不仔細地去思考事情。就如當我們在高速公路上開車，一路順暢的時候，一些開車熟練的人就很容易睡著。因此，順利是否一定代表是好事，逆境是否一定表示失敗，這是難以定論的。總而言之，成功或失敗是沒有實質性的。

同樣地，我們會認為是挫折，可能是因為我們當時的心情不好。當我們心情比較好的時候，我們會比較樂觀，想辦法去解決，而不一定認為那是一個挫折。有些年輕人很有沖勁，遇到問題的時候很高興，認為有挑

戰性；但另一些人遇到同樣問題時則覺得是挫折。所以，如果我們能以歡喜心面對問題，把它當作一種新的學習，難題就不是挫折了，而是讓我們提升自己的機會。由此可見，這是心態問題。我們的人生觀，是樂觀或者悲觀，是積極還是消極，都會影響我們對事情的看法。

2. 爲甚麼我們不願意面對失敗與挫折？

爲什麼我們不願意面對失敗與挫折？因爲事情不如我們的想像。我們心裡只祈求一種情況，而希望它一定要呈現那個樣子。當結果不符合我們的理想，我們就認爲是失敗，或者是挫折了，心裡很不甘願，不願意接受這樣的一個結果。換句話說，這是我們心裡的一種執著，不願改變我們的預想，似乎此路不通即無他路！事實上，條條大路通羅馬，天無絕人之路。

學生問：「可是有的人，婚姻失敗，妻離子散，你說失敗沒有完全的定義，難道這不是失敗嗎？」

答：「這也不一定是絕對的失敗。婚姻不順利，我們要找出它的原因。一個人如果能從這個經驗當中學習，重新整頓他的人生，或許又是另外一個開始。世間上的事情是變幻無常的，柳暗花明又一村。當我們在人生中遇到痛苦，它並不表示我們就徹底失敗了，它也可能是使我們進步的一個轉機。」

學生問：「我們是不是應該盡量給別人嘗試痛苦，讓他從苦惱當中去體驗，然後提升自己？」

答：「我們要從苦惱中去提升自己，但是我們不可隨便故意給別人製造痛苦，希望他能藉此機會提升自己，我們要了解，大家都是凡夫，我們是否有足夠的智慧用這種方法去引導他人？還是我們的慢心在滋長？如果我們不夠善巧，對方不能夠理解我們的用意，反而增加了他對我們的嗔恨。所以，實施苦肉計要有技

巧，要有智慧，還要有慈悲，否則的話，是很難達到預期的效果。

佛陀是慈悲與智慧圓滿的。我們要向佛學習，做甚麼事都要多從智慧與慈悲兩方面去考量。我們或許會很理智地說，苦就是苦，但要怎麼去向一個在痛苦當中的人說明，讓他比較好的去接受苦的事實，這就需要有慈悲。唯有智慧與慈悲兩方面的具足，我們所做的事才能夠比較圓融。這是我們在生活中要常常學習的。

佛陀本身了解到人生是苦。但是，人生之苦並不是佛陀帶給我們的，是我們自己的無明帶來的。所以，我們要探討爲甚麼我們會有這些苦？這個苦的根源何在？人生本來就沒有問題，是我們庸人自擾。如果佛陀爲了要教導我們，特地給我們製造苦，然後叫我們去體會苦，這樣並不一定能說服我們，反而會引起我們的反感。

在佛陀時代，有一些人向阿羅漢提出問題的時候，他們常會很直接的指點。但是，有些人就很難接受這樣太直接與嚴厲的教法。佛陀則能夠很慈悲善巧，隨順眾生的根基，慢慢地教導大家，使我們愚痴的眾生在這引導的過程中，了解自身的問題，並感受到佛陀的慈悲。所以，我們要向佛學習，體諒眾生的苦，煩惱與習氣，隨順著他們的根基，慢慢啓示他們。佛教不是冷酷無情的。佛陀是那麼清淨，智慧與慈悲，給我們帶來溫暖。讓我們覺得人生雖然不圓滿，我們雖還沒有智慧，但是佛陀會很慈祥的照顧，保護與指導我們，使我們的生命充滿光明與溫暖。」

3. 如何坦然的面對失敗與挫折？

3.1. 認清失敗的真相—無常性，相對性

爲什麼我們不願意面對挫折與失敗呢？換句話說，我們心裡執著一種情況，唯有達到這個情況才叫做成功。所以，當情況不一樣的時候，我們就不願意接受。另外，這也說明，我



們不能夠真正了解無常與緣起的道理。如果我們能夠了解無常以及緣起的道理，我們就會了解世間的一切是不可能永恆不變的，它是因緣和合的，而其因緣條件也會隨時改變，不可能永遠如我們想像中一樣的。當我們有心理準備面對變化，就比較容易去面對失敗與挫折。有些人面對失敗與挫折的伸縮性比較強。當我們把失敗與挫折的範圍放寬一點，接納的能力就比較強一些。我們明白無常與緣起的道理，但是沒有透視，所以事情發生的時候，我們總是把緣起的真理忘記了，而感到難過。

另外，很多時候我們覺得失敗，是因為我們與別人比較，它是相對性的。比方說，本來我們想若能考得八十五分，我們就很高興了。結果，我們考到八十五分，但平時比較差的朋友卻考到了八十七分，我們就感到不高興。雖然我們考得了八十五分，但我們卻認為自己失敗了，因為我們沒想到平日比我們差的朋友會贏過我們。為甚麼我們不高興呢？因為我們嫉

妒，是我們的慢心在作祟。所以，我們覺得我們輸了，失敗了。但那是真正的失敗嗎？這也很難說。很多原因使我們覺得自己失敗了，主要的原因來自我們的煩惱—嫉妒，我慢，我們不願意輸給別人。還有，忘記了無常的道理，而不願意接受不一樣的現象，這些都是使我們感到頹喪挫敗的原因。

我們要了解，世間的一切事情是變化無常的。沒有永遠的成功，也沒有永遠的失敗。我們成績考得很好，覺得成功。但它馬上就過去了。這次測驗考得很好，就開始輕敵，結果下一次就失敗了。所以，沒有永遠的成功，也沒有永遠的失敗。成功與失敗，只是我們生活當中的一些浪花而已，有時高潮，有時落潮。高潮不會永久，低潮也沒有永遠，只是不斷地一直漂流。

我們要把視野放遠一點，不要近視眼，往長遠一點去看。這麼小的一個問題，只是在人生當中的這麼一點，我們應該想辦法突破，然後繼續走下去，就像我們爬山一樣，從一山峰爬到一山峰，爬到頂峰，又下山來，然後又爬上去，我們不斷繼續地往前進。有頂峰，有山谷，都是在前進的過程當中的一部分。若我們能把視野放寬一些，我們就不會斤斤計較，鑽進牛角尖，我們常常自己鑽進死胡同，不能自拔，遇到一點問題就心情不好，就覺得失敗了，挫折了，越想越痛苦，最後好像世界末日了。

3.2. 正見佛教緣起與三世因果的道理

我們要了解失敗與成功只是一種現象而已，它只是我們生命流中的一點。既然它呈現在我們眼前，就去面對它吧！以現有的因緣條件做適當的調整，再繼續走下去。

我們要了解，世間的一切有賴因緣的合和，每一件事情的發生都有因有緣的。若事情的進展不如我們想像中那麼理想，我們可以研究為甚麼會出現這樣的現象？是不是欠缺了那一個

條件？本來我們認為這樣準備應該可以達到理想的結果，然而，結果卻出乎我們意料之外。我們就要藉此機會反省一下，是不是還有那些條件漏失了？那些事情沒有做好？現在要怎麼去補救？事情既然已經呈現在我們眼前，苦惱也沒有用。如果一直沉溺在苦惱當中，我們只有失去當下，錯過創造未來的機會。這是我們必須掌握的正見，我們要了解佛教的三世因果觀，有過去，現在，未來。我們不要執戀過去，浪費現在，結果失去未來。當我們遇到挫折或失敗時，更要警惕，既然做不好，以前的努力不夠，現在要比過去加倍努力，才能夠創造美好的未來。這是我們要牢記在心的正見。

有時候，我們會覺得為什麼有一些人做甚麼事都順順利利，只有我們要花了那麼多的時間，而且還是不很順利，都是挫折呢？對於這個問題，我們要記得以上所說的三世因果的正見。同時，有時候我們覺得別人做事總是順順利利，但對他個人來說，他可能覺得不是很順利。我們看別人好像甚麼都很容易，其實每

個人心裡都有著掙扎，只是我們不知道而已！所以，不用去看別人，也不要只是羨慕別人，嫉妒別人。我們要盡量做好自己的本份。有些人做事看起來比較順利，這可能是因為他過去做得比較多，因此現在福報好，做什麼事情都有很多人幫忙，就如大家從國小以來一向用功讀書，所以現在學習起來就比較輕鬆。這些都跟過去的努力有關係。如果我們現在覺得做什麼事情，總是沒有人幫忙，讀什麼書都讀不進去，因此就自暴自棄的話，那我們更沒有未來可言。我們要記得三世因果的道理。如果我們做什麼事情總是沒有人緣，我們就要盡量培養人緣，但這也不是叫我們去巴結人。我們要誠心誠意地去幫助別人，善意地鼓勵別人，以坦誠的心與人交朋友，慢慢地我們就會感得善的果報。同樣地，在學習的過程當中，別人讀一個小時就讀懂了，而我們好像比較笨，那我們就讀三個小時，最後還是會懂。所以，不要去羨慕別人，嫉妒別人，這樣，只有讓自己起煩惱。我們要看清自己的因緣條件，充分的去利用我們現有的因緣，勇敢面對現實，努力奮鬥，開創我們的未來。

3.3. 多方面來思考，開解自己

我們要了解成功與失敗是緣起的，無常的，它是條件性，相對性的，沒有實在性的；然而，它有無限的可塑性。但是，在未能透視這個真理而灑脫自在之前，我們可以依正見，多方面思考，調整自己的心態，開解自己。

3.3.1 成功與失敗是多元化的

成功與失敗，可以從多方面去思考。一件事情看起來是失敗，但從另外一個角度，可能又是成功。就比如說，菩提之夜，音響不好，失敗了，但在另外一方面，所有的表演都令人讚嘆，使人歡喜，大家也從參與當中學到了很多佛法。這一點是成功。因此，成功與失敗是多元化的，當我們從各個角度來思考，某些部分做得成功，某些部分不是那麼理想，那麼我們可以說它是完全失



Source: Wilson Lius Lau

敗嗎？所以，我們要從多方面去看，就可以看到事情的多元化。讀書也一樣，我們覺得好像失敗了，但在這個失敗的過程當中，我們還是學到一些東西。這也是一種經驗，一種進步。因此，我們不要斤斤計較，以某一個特定的情況才叫做成功。

3.3.2. 逆增上緣

在生活當中遇到挫折時，若我們用正向的思考模式去思考，去改造，它可能變成一個轉折點。這就是佛家所說的逆增上緣，我們常常希望一切順順利利，那是順緣。然而，在順利的情況之下，我們較容易迷失，自我容易膨脹，尤其是地位越來越高的時候，沒有人敢得罪或批評我們，那也不見得是好事。所以在順境的時候，其實不好修行，慢心很容易生起。順境的時候，我們要特別注意，要謙虛，要警惕自己。逆境的時候很痛苦，但是痛苦會刺激我們去反觀，探討痛苦的原因。我們的嫉妒心，瞋恨心，慢心怎麼那麼重？如果我們能藉這個機會去突破，就能提升自己。因此，善用逆境，可以使我們增上，進步。

有時候，人家給我們打擊，也可以讓我們進步。比如說有些人批評佛教，為什麼佛教的人都是拜拜的？為什麼都是迷信的？這雖然是批評，但就因為他們的批評，激使我們更積極去推廣正法，這就是逆增上緣。對於批評，給予我們打擊的人，如果我們能正面地去思考，我們會感謝他們。其實他們是在幫助我們成長。

3.3.3. 失敗是成功之母

失敗不一定是一件壞事。失敗亦可是一種鍛練。跌倒了就再站起來。沒有跌到，我們不會進步。就像小孩，跌

跌撞撞，慢慢地才會走路。如果他沒有經過這樣的練習過程，他不會走路的。換句話說，失敗是正常的事情。我們就透過失敗吸取經驗，才會進步。所以說，失敗是成功之母，從過去到現在，我們都是站到別人的肩膀上做事情。無論它們的經驗是成功或失敗，都是我們的借鏡，我們以別人的經驗為基礎，所以，成功可以說是一個比較美好的結果，而失敗則是個美好的經驗。我們從這種經驗中去學習，就能更進一步。換句話說，失敗並不是壞事，它能幫助我們以後做得更好。能這樣想，我們的心情就比較容易開朗，而不會要把挫折當作一個死結。

3.3.4. 訓練我們承擔壓力的能耐

失敗並不代表絕路。每一條路都有轉機的。只是現代的人對承擔壓力，面對挫折與失敗的能耐似乎比較欠缺，連小孩子都有憂鬱症，焦慮症！面對壓力，失敗與挫折，是一種鍛練。但是，現在多數的小孩從小被保護，要甚麼有甚麼，所以訓練自己的機會不多。如果我們把現在的人所面對的問題與過去的人，比如活在世界大戰時代的人所面對的問題比起來，是差得很遠，為什麼人家可以活下去，我們卻活不下去呀？就像舉重，我們從小的、輕的開始練習舉，慢慢的我們的氣力就會增強，最後能夠提起一個很重的東西。如果我們從小受保護，很少遇過不順心的事情，這樣一來，就少有機會訓練我們承擔壓力、失敗或挫折的能耐，長大的時候，壓力突然一來，就承受不了了。

所以，有時候遇到一些不順利的事，我們學習去接受，去承受那種不如意的心情，慢慢地我們承受壓力與挫折的能耐就能加強。以後遇到重一點的問題，我們就能挑一挑。因為已經有些訓練

了，這樣，漸漸的我們就比較能夠提得起，放得下。

3.3.5. 不要太早下判斷

每個人都有失敗與成功的經歷，我們不要把一件事情看得太嚴重。人生本來就不可能萬事如意的。我們不要認為只有我們是失敗的人。當我們遇到挫折的時候，我們常會覺得自己是最差的，所有倒霉的事情都發生在我們身上。事實上，放眼觀看周遭的人，其實也都跟我們差不多，每個人都有痛苦與困難。別人能夠渡過，為什麼我們不能渡過？其實，有時候我們以為失敗了，但這個結果真的是不好嗎？如塞翁失馬，焉之非福的故事一樣，生活中有許多高潮及低潮，我們很難下判斷它是禍或福，因為它只是生命之流當中的一點，因此，我們也不必太早下判斷而感到悲觀。

我們要看清當下的因緣，保持我們的正見，培養善緣，把事情轉到正確的方向去。如果我們頹喪，心情低落，反而會激發我們的惡緣，那麼，事情可能真的不順利了。所以，把持正確的因緣果報觀，用平常心去看待事情，或許它還有轉機。如果我們用頹喪惡劣的心情去面對事情，結果可能真的越來越糟。

3.3.6. 有困難可能成就得更快

人生的過程起起伏伏，這是無常之流中的現象。人生的旅程中有時候比較順暢，有時比較不美好，但它們都只是人生的一點。我們不需要每次都挑容易走的路，也不一定要期待怎麼樣的因緣條件，在任何環境下，我們隨順因緣，掌握緣起因果的正見，順著無常之流，努力製造善緣，創造我們的未來。

一直順順利利，選容易走的路，也不見得是最好的。釋迦牟尼佛亦沒有挑最容易走的路，他選擇比較難走的路，叫難行道，也就是在五濁惡世中，修菩薩行，度化頑固剛強的眾生。彌勒菩薩則選擇比較簡易的修行方法，但他修行成佛的時間比較長，釋迦牟尼佛選擇難行道，結果他成就得比較快。這說明我們不一定要選擇容易走的路，如果難的路呈現在我們眼前，我們就勇敢的面對它，突破它，這樣可能反而進步得更快。

3.3.7. 不要埋怨業障

有些佛教徒遇到挫折時常常埋怨自己業障重。雖然佛教談到業障，但是我們必須明白，過去所做的一切會影響現在，但這並不表示這些業不可改變，我們不要敗倒在業障上。我們要知道這個業障是我們自己製造的。以煩惱心埋怨業障的時候，只有給自己製造更多的障礙。業力是可以改變的，佛教並不是定命論。如果我們遇到失敗就埋怨業障，而不檢討自己為何會失敗，這不是正確的學佛態度，我們都還沒解脫，我們每個人都有業障，不要比誰的業障重，誰的業障輕。重要的是，我們要把握現在，加緊努力，製造善緣，改造業障，作為一位有正見的佛弟子。

3.3.8. 古人的啟示

有時候心情低落，意志不容易提升。我們可以看一些佛書，一些名人傳記，高僧傳來勉勵自己，看看古來大德是經過怎樣辛苦的修行才成就的。他們之所以會成功，不是因為他們是特別的人，而是他們的刻苦耐勞，堅定的意志，他們的成就得來不易，都是經過艱苦努力才得到的。我們可以藉他們面對苦難的勇氣來提醒自己。我們也可以看一些世間的名人傳記，看看愛迪生，牛

頓是怎麼成就的？從名人的傳記當中，我們可以看到許多名人都是在困苦的環境中達到他們的成就。這些都能給我們鼓舞。我們不是世界上最可憐的人。

3.3.9. 正面思考

當我們遇到挫折或失敗的時候，我們的想法通常比較頹喪、負面，覺得自己是個沒有用的人。我們要把視野放寬一點。我們今天能夠坐在這裡，是沒有用的人嗎？如果我們是沒用的人，我們還能坐在這裡讀大學？看看世界各地還有許多困苦的人，吃不飽的小孩，他們連讀書的機會都沒有，我們有現在的福報，還覺得自己沒有用嗎？比上不足，比下有餘。去看看比我們不幸的人，我們就會珍惜我們的生命。

同時，我們認為自己沒有用是因為考試失敗了，但是，我們在其他方面還很有用呀。比如說，我們很會辦活動，考試雖然考不好，但是辦達摩班很成功，很多人很感謝我們，我們還是很有用。所以，往正方面去想一想，我們就不會那麼難過了。

3.3.10. 修持禪定

禪定的修學訓練我們把注意力專注在呼吸上，任何的念頭升起，我們要警覺把它放下。這樣的訓練加強我們的心力。當負面的念頭升起的時候，我們告訴自己，不要繼續想下去。我們要知道這些負面的想法會給我們帶來很多腦筋的負擔，不應該再想下去，我們要提起心力把它切斷。但是，我們的心力往往太弱。

因此，我們要多修學禪定，培養我們的正念與正知，正念就是要我們把心安住在所緣境上，正知即是知道散亂心生起的覺察能力，當我們有正念與正

知，平時若有一點壓力或負面的思想，我們就能覺察到。這時候，我們可以靜坐一下，專注於呼吸，把負面的念頭、情緒切斷，將心安住在所緣境上，讓心安定下來。平時多修習禪定，就能加強這種調整我們心念的能力。無謂的思考浪費我們的精神與體力，我們要趕快讓它停止。這種能力的培養要靠禪定的修習。這包括靜坐或經行，我們可以把注意力放在腳步上，把其他思緒暫時切斷。

能夠減少無謂的負面思考，我們的腦筋自然能夠放鬆，身心也能夠愉快。當我們覺得頭腦漲漲，思考遲鈍，肌肉繃緊，身心緊張的時候，這就是壓力的現象。這時候，我們要學習放鬆，靜坐一下，提醒自己無常緣起的道理，不要把失敗與挫折當成很嚴重。我們也可以看一些勵志的書，佛教格言，或者參加達磨班，聽聽佛法，找善知識談談，藉



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

此鼓舞自己，鬆弛身心，這些都是紓解壓力的一些方法。

4. 總結

4.1. 正見無常緣起

最徹底的，我們還是要了解無常緣起的道理。一切是變動的，因緣和合的。同時，我們要記得三世因果的觀念，以這些正見去面對我們所遇到的問題，製造正向的因緣，這樣，我們才有改變未來的可能，使我們更成功。

4.2. 活用四聖諦八正道

此外，依正見來激發我們的意志，使我們向上，向善，這就是正思惟。我們要正確觀照什麼叫做壓力？什麼叫失敗？什麼叫挫折？把壓力轉成力量，提升我們的意志，並進一步把它發動成為行為，我們要正視問題，不再胡思亂想，而真正精進努力一番，在身口意行為中把我們的意志表現出來，這就是正行，也就是八正道的正語，正業與正命，當我們把煩惱排除，專注在應該做的事情上，這是正念、正定。所以，八正道不只是用來背的，我們要把八正道用在生活上。

除了活用八正道，我們還要活用四聖諦，遇到挫折，失敗的時候，我們要了解這的確是苦，苦的原因在那裡？若我們能把這苦的原因滅除，我們將會比較輕鬆，那麼，我們就要想辦法把這根本原因除去。所以，四聖諦是解決問題的一個好方法。無論我們遇到什麼問題，心裡不舒服的時候，就去找那造成我們難受的是甚麼？我們反問自己，作正當的思惟，用佛法的正見，思考我們苦的根本原因在那裡？如果我們能把這根本原因拔除，我們會不會比較輕鬆呢？面對困難的時候，若能用四聖諦法一苦，集，滅，道——作觀察，慢慢的我們就會有一點體會，也將得到一點的解脫，而我們對佛法的信念也會隨之增強。

因此，不要一遇到問題就覺得很煩。我們要尋找出煩的原因在那裡，然後依照佛所教的方法去解決。當我們懂得活用四聖諦八正道來處理事情，我們的生活會變得很有趣，多姿多彩，而對自我身心的真相也將越來越明白。

4.3. 最大的失敗

談了這麼多的如何面對失敗與挫折，我們談的都是事業，學業，婚姻等問題，其實，一個最根本的失敗我們似乎都忘記了！那就是我們還不能斷除煩惱，突破自我，我們還在生死大海中打滾！佛已成道了，我們還在輪迴！這個失敗我們卻好像遺忘了！我們要警惕自己，我們的心還充滿貪，嗔，痴三毒，這三大毒蛇還沒解決，我們怎麼還不斷往外追求呢？在修行的過程中，貪，嗔，痴煩惱，一直在活躍著，不能降伏，這才是真正的失敗與挫折！但是我們好像不太在乎！因此，以後遇到失敗與挫折的時候，我們應該想一想，我還有一個更大的問題未解決呢！眼前的挫折其實是小事，真正的大問題是——甚麼時候才能使我的身心清淨，甚麼時候才能解脫成佛？這一大問題我還不斷的在挫敗當中，為甚麼我不為這失敗感到難過，反而為這些小事情而覺得頹喪呢？想到這裡，我們就應該提起精神，任何的挫折，坦然的面對它，突破它吧！這些事與突破自我，解脫生死輪迴比起來，還是簡單得多了！

The Four Immeasurable States

One of the great misunderstandings that can arise as Buddhism, or 'the Dhamma', takes root in the west, is to believe that this tradition is completely cerebral and rationalistic. Many westerners of earlier generations have been drawn to the Dhamma on the basis of this misunderstanding. To some extent, it comes down to the difficulty of rendering the all-important Pali and Sanskrit term *citta* into western languages, English above all.

The problem of rationalism

In a sense, the development of *citta* is what the Dhamma is all about, and it is usually rendered in English as 'mind'. In our western tradition 'mind' has always (since the Greeks) enjoyed a high value, which it gains by being contrasted with inferior values, above all body and emotions. Mind is rational and 'masculine'; body and emotions are different from mind, inferior, and essentially 'feminine'.

So let's clear up this confusion right away: *citta means heart-and-mind!* The Dhamma concerns the cultivation of heart-and-mind. Once we've got that straight, it should become instantly clear that the development of *citta* – right up to full awakening – involves emotional development, not just the cultivation of cerebral insights.

The Dhamma speaks of four transcendent emotions that together represent the emotional tones of the fully awakened mind. In Pali and Sanskrit they're called the *brahma viharas*, which translates as the divine abidings, or the abodes of the gods. This is a poetic way of saying that if you're awakened, these emotional states constitute your home base: you never leave them. Sometimes they're called the four immeasurable minds, though for reason given, that's confusing. More often they're called the four immeasurable states, and sometimes simply 'the four immeasurables'.

The brahma viharas

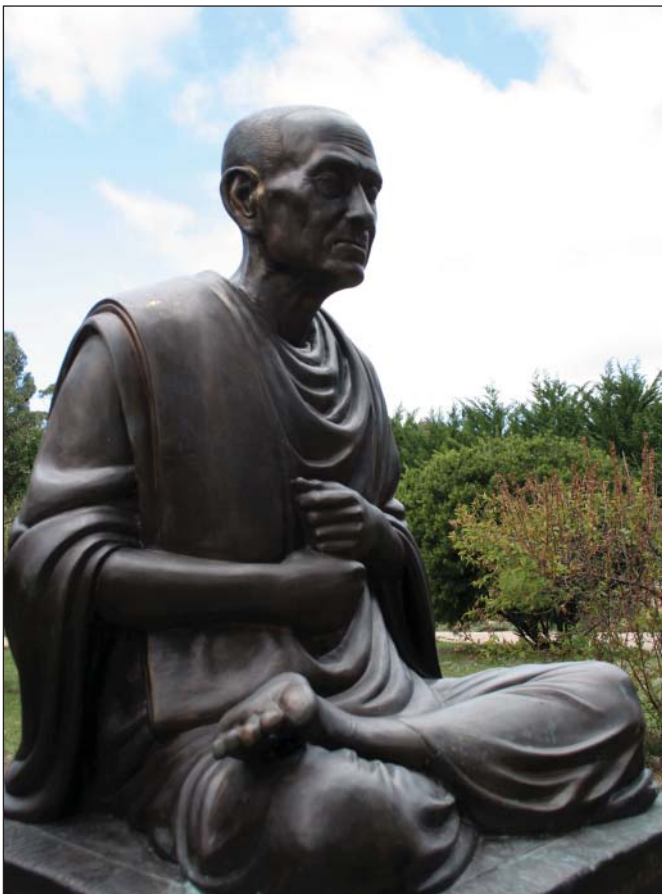
These four immeasurables are:

- *Metta*: the heartfelt aspiration for the happiness of all beings, including oneself – 'loving kindness' for short. It is the antidote to hatred, anger and fear.

- *Karuna* (compassion): the heartfelt aspiration that beings be free from suffering, which is the antidote to cruelty.
- *Mudita* (sympathetic joy): joy at the joy of others, the ability to celebrate their attainments, virtues and good fortune. It is the antidote to envy and discontent.
- *Upekkha* (equanimity): defined by Peter Harvey as *an even-minded serenity towards beings, which balances concern for others with a realisation that suffering is an inevitable part of being alive*. It is the antidote to partiality and attachment. More generally, equanimity is the sure continuation of connection with others, and sustained emotional positivity and balance in the face of both joyful and painful experiences.

These fully matured divine abodes represent the emotional tones of the enlightened mind. Each moment of our experience is accompanied by an emotional tone, whether we're aware of it or not. For the awakened being, each moment is experienced in one or a combination of loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, or equanimity.

Obviously they are states of deep happiness,



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

and they beckon to us for that reason. More importantly, *they are all states of connection, with ourselves and other beings*. So how do we get there? After all, the Dhamma is all about 'getting there', mapping the route!

Meditative approaches to the brahma viharas

We can approach them either directly or indirectly. Either tranquillity (*samatha*) meditation to develop peaceful, concentrated states, or insight (*vipassana*) meditation practice, will lead us closer to them indirectly, and the combination of the two will probably get us there faster.

Then there are the direct meditation practices, of which the most central is *metta bhavana*, the systematic cultivation of loving kindness in meditation. People often don't realise, though, that the tradition also prescribes *karuna bhavana*, *mudita bhavana* and *upekkha bhavana*, though they're considered much more advanced than the metta practice! (You'll find the appropriate instructions in Kamalashila's meditation manual, *Meditation: the Buddhist way of tranquillity and insight*.)

The Buddha in fact took the pre-existing teaching of the brahma viharas and adapted it for his own use. So just where do the brahma viharas fit into the Dhamma? In the most general terms, they stand for right/perfect/complete emotion and intention, the second fold of the Noble Eightfold Path. That's how important they are!

Brahma viharas and skilful service

Note here how the path ties emotion and intention together. In modern western philosophical parlance, we're dealing with 'moral emotions' – emotions that are morally significant because they *motivate us* – get our juices going so that we get up and do something morally significant. Our good intentions are worthless if they don't have motivational power, if it isn't important for us to follow them through. If our good intentions are to persevere in the face of resistance – the only time it really matters – then we need to have strong feelings about them. When well developed, the divine abidings are strong feelings that both fuel and direct our morally significant actions.

Modern moral philosophy also identifies two alternative sources of moral action – our character and our duty. Clearly, a sense of duty hardly measures up in motivational terms. For instance, we men are supposed to be under a duty to defend our country if need be – a need often contentiously defined by the government of the day. But given this country's geopolitical situation today, many of us would, in most circumstances, find this duty singularly un compelling.

If, on the other hand, a sense of justice were part of my character, I would feel the strong urge to ward off injustice, and my failure to do so when I had the opportunity would be a major personal defeat, a self-betrayal. I don't want to put you off by using this Victorian phrase, but the divine abodes are actually *character-building*. In the end, they are *character-perfecting*, and lead us straight into acting skilfully and effectively in the world.

Insight and emotion

When locating the divine abodes as meditation practices, the tradition normally places them on the samatha side of the great samatha-vipassana divide. So the successful practice of metta bhavana will eventually take you into *jhana* – ecstatic states of mental absorption. The tradition goes further, to say that meditative cultivation of the first three abodes leads into the first three jhanas, while equanimity leads into the fourth jhana. This is partly why the abodes are called 'the immeasurable states' or simply 'the immeasurables': they align with the edgeless experience of jhana, which makes the heart-mind itself immeasurable.

But we shouldn't pigeonhole the practice of the brahma viharas in this way too hastily. As Kamalashila points out, most samatha practices can be approached with a view to gleaning insight as well, and the brahma viharas are a prominent example of this. When, for instance, we have attained a powerful experience of metta, any distinction within it between self and other disappears: we wish for happiness for all, quite unreservedly, with equality and inclusiveness. *To experience the world in this way is an experience of not-self, of insight.* And likewise with the other three abodes.

In other words, we experience the not-selfhood of self and others, and thereby directly realise one of the three key characteristics of conditioned existence, *anatta* (not-self) as such. When we come to compassion underpinned by this insight, our compassion is not directed at the supposed fixed personalities of the people concerned, but towards their real nature, their not-selfhood. Among other things, this means our compassion is pure of sentimentality or attachment. And in this way we see their potential for development far more clearly, and can take action far more wisely. To get to this point is to get a whiff of *mahakaruna*, Great Compassion, the boundless compassion of the awakened heart-mind.

From time to time we hear of hardline vipassana practitioners for whom the practice of the brahma viharas is a self-indulgent diversion from what they see as the main – indeed only – game, which is pure moment-to-moment awareness. What this can lead to is *alienated*

awareness, a wonderful precision in simultaneous noting of elements of experience leading precisely nowhere. They forget the all-important emotional tone that always accompanies meditative experience, the responsibility we all must shoulder for it, and they deprive themselves of a valuable opportunity to cultivate insight. Any balanced approach to meditation must have a place for the divine abodes.

The insight that accompanies the cultivation of the divine abodes can in particular lead us into mind states in which we undermine a number of tendencies of the defiled mind. An emotionally integrated experience of not-self cuts through a lot of what the Buddha called 'conceivings' (*mannita*), or perceptions distorted by the self-other dichotomy. So long as *mannita* governs our perceptions of our experience, we take the next step of *papanca* – the compulsion to endlessly elaborate our lives and proliferate our personal concerns in the vain attempt to shore up and live out our life scripts as isolated, possessive individuals. When we're stuck in this script – dutifully sticking with the samsaric program! – we naturally crave stability, certitude and permanence.

In this way we remain in the grip of the *vipallasas* – which I've heard delightfully translated as the 'topsy-turvies'. The *vipallasas* refer to the systematic inversion of our perceptions, such that we see the impermanent as permanent, the insubstantial (*anatta* again) as substantial, actual experiences of suffering (such as desire) appear as delightful, and the ugly appears to be beautiful. In other words, the *vipallasas* – the topsy-turvies – negate and obscure the three characteristics of conditioned existence that go to the core of the Buddha's teaching and of insight practice: suffering, impermanence and not-self (*dukkha*, *anicca* and *anatta*).¹

Pitfalls in the practice of the brahma viharas²

As we've seen, each divine abode is an antidote to a specific defiled mind state: metta neutralises hatred, karuna cruelty, mudita envy, upekkha neutralises both callousness/indifference and partiality. In meditative terms, these particular defiled mind states are usually called 'the far enemy', or in our everyday idiom, 'the problem' to be overcome.

But in the practice of the brahma viharas, the tradition also warns us against the near enemies. The near enemy of metta is sentimental attachment; karuna has two near enemies – pity, and horrified anxiety; mudita has the near enemy of comparing; and for upekkha it is indifference or apathy. Each near enemy represents a

¹ See Ajahn Brahmavamso, *Talks – December 1995*, pp.19-21.

² Cf Kamalashila, *Meditation* (Glasgow: Windhorse Publications, 1992) pp.192-205

spiritual problem – it can masquerade as the real thing, it often feels good (or at least comes with an emotional pay-off of some sort), and if we cultivate the near enemy by mistake, it will block our development.

Even worse, some spiritual teachers propagate the confusion, for instance by suggesting that indifference to the sufferings of the world, or meeting them with political passivity and ‘neutrality’ shows good spiritual breeding, something called ‘detachment’.

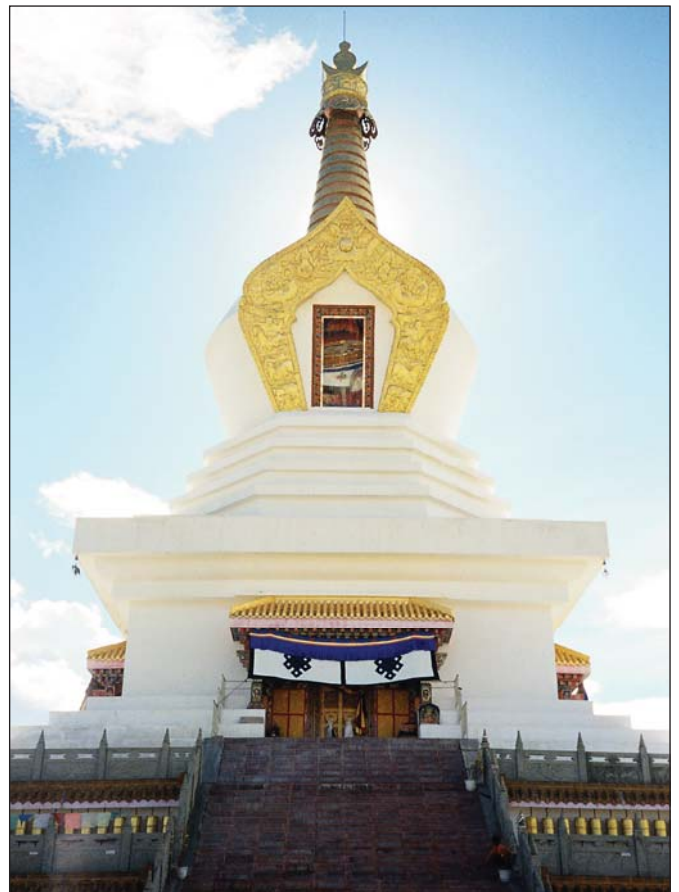
Yet the test for flushing out enemies near and far is quite clear. As I’ve said, the brahma viharas are above all *connecting emotions* – they connect us to all beings without exception. The enemies *disconnect* us from them, so bracing the delusion of separate selfhood.

A provocative conclusion

Some institutionalised traditions of Buddhism obstruct the development of the divine abodes. There are two tendencies at work here:

- The masculinist bias away from emotional connection and human relatedness. Compare the poems of the early monks with those of the early nuns – the *Theragata* and the *Therigata*. For monks the spiritual life is often about emotional disconnection or ‘detachment’ – the loneliness of the long-distance runner! It’s as if the Buddha had never pronounced the *Metta sutta*, or told Ananda that friendship was *the whole* of the spiritual life!
- A fundamentalist account of *kamma*, which restores its pre-Buddhist meaning of *fate*. The Buddha said that kamma (which he aligned with morally significant intention, the opposite of fate) was one of five modes of causation. But the fundamentalists make kamma the only one. This means, essentially, that when something bad happens to someone or a group, it’s because they did something wicked in previous lives. This stance excuses callousness and indifference: it obstructs compassion and perverts equanimity. It’s a handy tool for persuading the faithful to remain passive and apathetic in the face of tragedy and injustice, and to put up with whatever the temporal authorities dish out.

Once again, let me insist: the awakened mind is emotionally connected and responsive in practice. It expresses itself in a will to remedy whatever can be remedied in the alleviation of suffering. In other words, it abides in real solidarity with all of sentient life.



Source: Chien Hoong Gooi

It Comes from Within

The belief in supernatural powers was already deeply entrenched in human thoughts since the beginning of civilization. This belief arises from the human's fear of the unknown. At the beginning it was the belief in spirits and ghosts. All natural phenomena are thought to have had a spirit attached to each of them, and ghosts were the spiritual rebirth of human beings.

As time went by, some or all of these spirits gradually assumed godly status. These Gods in some cultures and beliefs were unified to become a 'godhead' who is assumed to be the originator and controller of everything. These included the human psyche or the way human beings behaved. Those who follow this 'godhead' idea believe that this God is responsible for everything and the suffering in life is the gift from this God. Human beings suffer in this life because of the will of this God and will be amply rewarded in the next life in a promised heaven. Human beings think that they are powerless against the might of the divinity and whenever suffering arises console themselves with the idea of a better afterlife.

The belief in Gods or 'godheads' also provided an opportunity for the employment of a host of intermediaries. Ordinary humans do not possess the ability to communicate with divinity, so shamans, mediums, prophets and priests fill this role. These intermediaries are still around up until the present day, and added to them are the theological experts who sieve through books and records to decide what rules other humans being have to stick to in order to retain the pleasure of divinity.

Such beliefs do not allow wisdom to arise in those who follow the practice. Blind faith is needed to substantiate the lack of wisdom. Very often these followers live a life of ignorance and delusion and tend to follow the whims and fancies of the intermediaries. This practice is still carried out even in the 21st century.

There are however many teachers and thinkers over the ages who do not subscribe to these forms of beliefs. These teachers are more inclined to teach their followers to look from other places where the suffering comes from. However, most of them do not have a complete understanding of the source of suffering, and therefore they do not provide a complete or comprehensive solution to end suffering.

The Buddha is the only teacher on record to be very

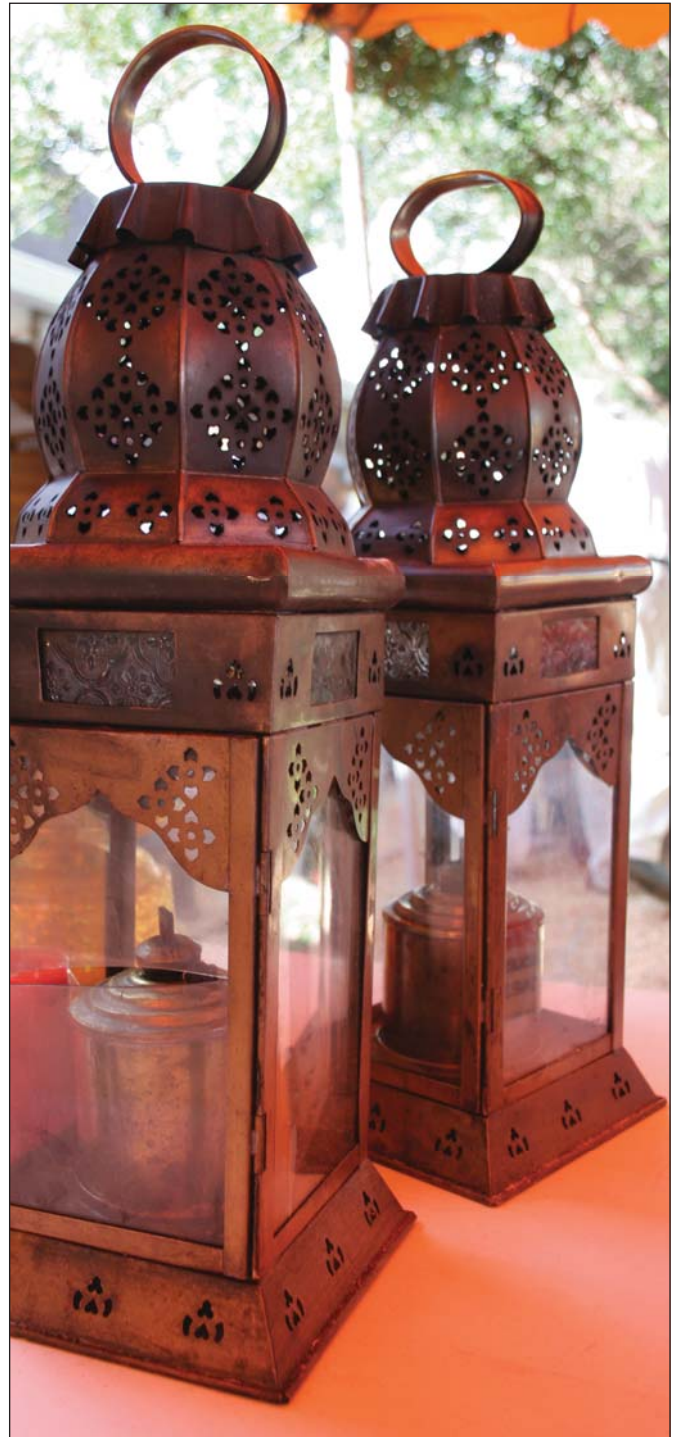
progressive in his teachings even by modern day standards. The Buddha's teachings are based on wisdom and the acquiring of wisdom. Belief is not required to follow his teachings. He realised that it is through the lack of wisdom that humans live in a state of ignorance and delusion. This wisdom can be obtained from three different levels, that is, through reading and listening, followed by reflection and finally perfected through continuous practice of what is learnt and reflected. Nothing in what the Buddha taught is assumed or presumed, and everything can be proven through the practical observation and investigation of all mental and physical phenomena.

The Buddha taught that everything starts within one's heart and mind. One is responsible for one's own emotions and the effects these emotions have on the person. He preached about suffering and its cause, its cessation and the way to cease suffering. This is the core of the Buddha's teaching and is referred to as the 'Four Noble Truth'.

The first of the Noble Truth explains the nature of suffering such as birth, ageing, sickness and death and the emotional states resulting from the arising of desire. This suffering is universal and no one can deny its existence. All beings suffer from this unsatisfactoriness regardless of time, place and race.

The second Noble Truth explains how these suffering states come to being. Deeds are carried out through the actions of our body and mind. When unwholesome deeds occur, the result will be suffering. We come into contact with objects of form, sound, smell, taste, tangible and thoughts through our six senses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. It is through the corresponding consciousness arising that we sense and perceive these objects. From this sensation and perception, mental formation arises leading to the process of thinking and attachment to the thoughts. This most often causes mental and physical acts resulting in suffering. This part of the Teachings can be found in the Discourse on the Origination in the Longer Sayings and in the Kindred Sayings.

The mainstream Buddhist meditation called Insight Meditation is the practice adopted by many Buddhists to bring awareness to the arising and falling away of all phenomena through developing mindfulness of the body, feelings, mental states and mental objects. This teaching is based on the Discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness which can be found in the Digha Nikaya and the Majjhima Nikaya of the Pali Canon. These have been widely translated to English and other languages by various Buddhist scholars and are used as bases for meditation instructions by respectable and respected Buddhist teachers.



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

Those that are interested in gaining further knowledge may study the discourses, but for those that are really serious and wish to benefit from the teachings should practice this form of meditation under the guidance of a good teacher. This is a good way to find out personally that it all comes from within and has nothing to do with spirits, ghosts, Gods or God, and that the intermediaries such as shamans prophets, priests and theological scholars have no place in our practice to eliminate our sufferings.

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS



Illustration: Siang Yee Chuah

Fallen Log

The tree grows and climbs so tall. It must take a long time And many conditions to nurture it To be the way it is.	
One day, a storm comes and blows it over. It falls. Decades gone in one moment. It lays there for a long time.	But even the highest tree in the forest Will fall one day.
Like the tree, we climb high. But when storms attack, We fall And think this is the end.	Even the highest tree Depends on the soil below and the sun above.
We think it is a disaster, It is unnatural, It is unfair, And we give up.	Yet, even the highest tree Gives shade and shelter to all creatures Regardless of who they are.
	Even the highest tree Fertilises the land, So nearby trees can grow even taller.
	Even the highest tree, Can become a fallen log.
	Even a fallen log, Teaches us humility, Equanimity, And loving kindness.
	Because even the highest tree Cannot make a forest alone.

Writer's Explanation

Equanimity is not an isolated theory, but one that is interconnected to all aspects of Buddhism. 'Fallen Log' describes how we react positively when we climb up (success) and negatively when we fall down (failure). A tree is used as an analogy to illustrate the harmony that exists in the forest, which stems from the understanding of impermanence (*anicca*), dependent origination (*paticca samuppada*) and non-self (*anatta*). From such understanding, we can be equanimous even when faced with success or failure because we do not personalise our successes or failures. We realise we are not alone, not elevated nor degraded. We are equal and universal.

Equanimity and the Laws of Cricket

John is a big cricket fan. He loves to explain the rules to people at parties, some of whom he has met previously, some of whom he hasn't (and is not likely to meet again). He normally does this over a couple of warm beers. Most of the time, his audience falls asleep before he has even finished the part about hitting the ball and running between wickets, but he never tires of his favourite past-time, because he knows what others do not – namely that cricket is not like any other sport. It is not just a game, but is actually an extremely clever way of encoding the laws of life itself in the form of a popular sport, so that they may be safely passed down to the next generation. For this reason, John knows that the people who first fall asleep during his long-winded explanations of the “leg before wicket” law will also be those who complain the loudest when things just aren't going their way – for example, when the morning bus is 10 minutes late, or when the boss fires them for not paying enough attention at work. He knows that they will also be the same people who, when things do go their way, will jump up and down the highest, sing the loudest, and make fun of those who are less fortunate than them. To John, cricket teaches the all-important lesson of equanimity in the face of the “eight winds” of gain and loss, praise and blame, fame and shame, and pleasure and pain, and he knows that this is the key to success, happiness and a long life.

So, now it's your turn to sit in that bar chair and listen to John's ramblings. After reading the first paragraph, you should be listening really carefully right now, eh? Haha... we'll see! Let us analyse a standard delivery in a cricket match. In cricket, everything can be divided into deliveries, which just means a single occasion when the ball is bowled. Sometimes the batsman wins, sometimes the bowler wins – it doesn't matter for now. Either way, that's the delivery and then everybody has a rest – not a tea break – that comes later – just a short break before the next delivery is bowled. So, the bowler runs in and bowls the ball. It bounces on the pitch, and rises towards the batsman, who is defending his wicket. Fielders are standing all around, waiting to catch the ball if it's hit into the air. If you are the batsman, your aim is to hit the ball as far as possible without getting caught, and to accumulate runs by running laps of the pitch. While you are running, if the fielders throw the ball at the wicket and hit it, then you are run out – you can't bat anymore (until next time). These are the basics. There are some other, more advanced rules, of course. Some of them are quite fun (like how to score four and six runs without even running!), but that's enough for now. It's time to add some meaning to all this nonsense.

This is John's interpretation of the story so far. It always attracts a great deal of laughter from his friends, so feel free to have a laugh. He won't mind. The wicket is your life, the bowler represents any kind of challenge that you face, and the pitch represents uncertainty. It is imperative that the ball bounces on the pitch – without that, there would be no uncertainty involved – but it must, and therefore there is uncertainty. Each delivery represents the present moment, and the bat represents the mind. The batsman must use his bat to deal skilfully with every challenge faced, and to do so, he must remain focused on the present moment. If he is not focused on the present moment, the ball may hit the wicket, or he may be caught out. Therefore, no matter what has happened in previous deliveries, he must always focus on the present delivery. In cricket, this kind of thinking represents accepted wisdom, and it is passed down from older players to younger players in much the same way that these kinds of things are passed down in other, less important, parts of life. When a batsman is out, he takes the lessons learned during his innings (lifespan) into the dressing room with him (cricket's version of the bardo realm) and will reflect upon his dismissal. Perhaps he will adjust his technique? Maybe he will practise his concentration. In this way, the batsman is reincarnated in the next game with all of the lessons learned during the previous game, and he will perform accordingly. This process will continue until the batsman learns to bat in the present moment, and never gets out!

Now, there are a few more things about this game that must be mentioned. Firstly, cricket is a very long game. When a batsman is batting, he will likely have to concentrate for a long period of time (this is not the case for the newer, shorter versions of cricket, but these are not really important, and are merely sports). In real cricket (Test Cricket), a batsman will often need to concentrate for six hours or more, sometimes requiring a break to eat or sleep. During this entire time, he must remain focused on each delivery, or else he is certain to get out, which brings us to the second point. Cricket is a team game. There are eleven players in each team, with two members batting at any one time. This means that that batsman's aim is not simply to protect his own wicket, since the team's purpose is more important. Whatever a batsman is doing, he is doing it for the team. The aim of the team is to achieve the greatest score possible, by building partnerships two at a time. To achieve this, each batsman must work with his partner, compensating for each other's strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, a player should never be distracted by his own score (although others may praise or criticise him for this) because to do so would be to lose sight of the present moment, and sacrifice the best interests of the team.

Of course, cricket is also a very tribal game. It is always one team playing another, and this cannot be avoided in even the most broad-minded interpretation. However, if one imagines the opposition as simply representing

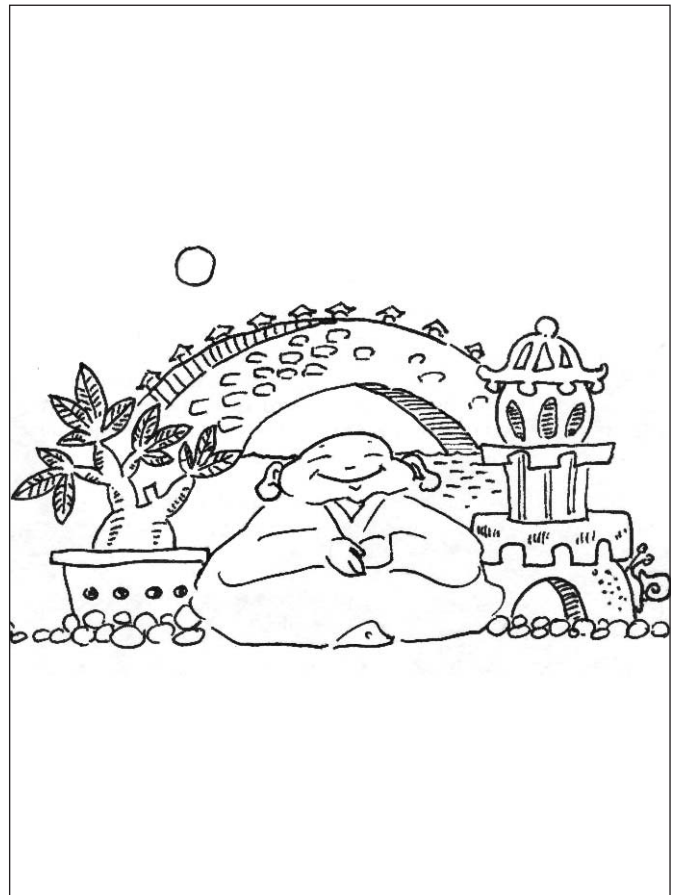


Illustration: Wai Loon Teng

the challenges faced in life, and not as the enemy, then the same lessons can be learned without any hatred or disrespect towards the opposition. Cricket has a long history of sportsmanship to compensate for its inherently tribal nature, and you will still find gestures of goodwill in cricket that no longer exist in other sports. That is why, even though his friends will always laugh at him, and tell him that he's boring, John will continue to explain the laws of cricket to anyone who is willing to listen (or at least, pretend to listen!)

Praiseblameitis

Claire was having an affair with the mirror.

It was a love-hate relationship. Sometimes, she can stare in the mirror for hours, admiring her impeccable features. Other times, all she can see is the zit on the corner of her mouth. In those times, she can't even stand a glimpse of herself.

Many people are like Claire, but she is one of the lucky ones because she went to see the doctor early. She was diagnosed with Praiseblameitis, a serious symptom of Attachmentitis and the Type A Personality Syndrome (TAPS). Praiseblameitis causes sudden mood swings as the senses comes in contact with the external environment. When Claire sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches, or thinks something good, then she would immediately feel happy. On the other hand, if it's something bad, then she would automatically feel sad.

This in itself is not a problem. But if Claire is not mindful, this reaction can develop into Attachmentitis. Like an addiction, she would then use her whole life trying to keep the good and rid the bad. Just like drug addicts using drugs to temporarily soothe their addictions, Attachmentitis sufferers often turn to more sources of attachments to cure their Attachmentitis. This, however, not only does not cure Attachmentitis, but makes it even harder for recovery. Attachmentitis is only countered by its opposite: Non-Attachmentdol.

There are many stages of the Non-Attachmentdol Treatment. Initially, the sufferer must understand that they are sick. This is why Claire is so lucky, compared to the many millions of ignorant sufferers. In the second stage, the sufferer begins to realise that their Attachmentitis is caused by their attachment, by identifying what it is that they are attached to. At the essence is an attachment to self – self-image, self-worth, self-love, self-hate. At its extremes, the sufferer would start to believe that everything that happens to them and others is a reflection of their ego. If good, then they would praise incessantly; if bad, they would blame mercilessly. After many years of such conditioning, they develop the fearsome Praiseblameitis.

At this stage of the Treatment, some Attachmentitis and Praiseblameitis patients may become quite disheartened. Therefore, the third stage of the Treatment provides hope for them by showing them the possibility of the complete cure of these vicious diseases: Nibbanadol. It is said that taking a Nibbanadol will cure these diseases forever with no side-effects, unlike Panadol. Nibbanadol is quite difficult

to find, and as yet, it is not an over-the-counter medicine. However, the Path to find Nibbanadol has been discovered, and requires eight steps of practice continuously. As such, it has been called the Noble Eightfold Path.

Claire has received Non-Attachment Treatment for some time now and has already started her inner journey on the Noble Eightfold Path to find Nibbanadol. From time to time, she still makes judgments based on her expectations of herself and others: “Oh, I shouldn’t feel like that” or “He’s a terrible person, full of jealousy and anger.” But her doctor would remind her that there is no need to judge, suppress or take sides; just need to notice and see how our mood changes because of this. He tells her that existence depends and originates from many causes and conditions, and therefore there is no such thing as better, lesser, or equal – things are the way they are.

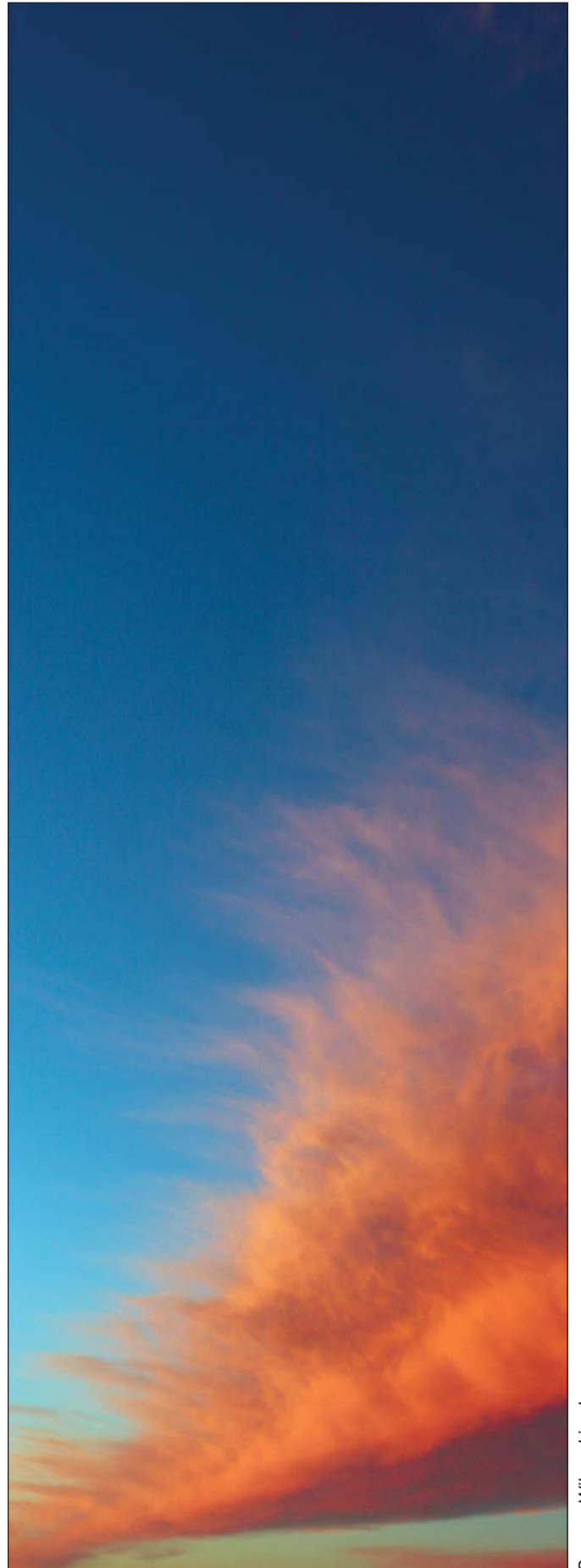
After listening to her doctor, she can then forgive, let go, and free herself from the control feelings once had on her. She can see that pain is just pain, pleasure simply pleasure. They are just feelings and she does not need to judge them as good or bad, nor attach to keeping or ridding them, because she knows that they are impermanent and will not stay. She has no control over these feelings coming or going, and therefore, realises they do not belong to her. She watches them with a smile, without being perturbed when they visit.

Many months later, Claire looks at herself in the mirror for the first time in a while. Crevices and wrinkles had surfaced on her skin, and her hair had grown much longer. The zit was gone without a trace. It might come back, or it might not. She smiles at the mirror, and a stranger smiles back. Her love-hate relationship is turning into one of unconditional love and equanimous acceptance.

***Upekkhako sadà sato na loke mannati samam
na vīsē nā nicēyyo, tassa no santī ussādā.***

**Equanimous — always — mindful,
he doesn’t conceive himself as equal,
superior, inferior, in the world.
No swellings of pride are his.**

Source: Dasamo Purābhedaṣuttaniddeso
Purabheda Sutta (Before the Break-up of the
Body)
Translated from Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

An Old Friend Called Pain

It is the end of November, and it is finally time for some traveling after a year of studies. Where am I going this time? I am going for a meditation retreat – one of my resolutions for the New Year (been having this on my list for many years now). Finally, I am on my way there – a seven-day retreat in East Malaysia. I have had to take a plane, and then a two and a half hour bus ride to reach the meditation centre.

At the retreat, we all have only two meals a day – breakfast and lunch. No dinner. I have heard a lot about this, but have never really tried it before, at least not seriously. It turned out to be quite bearable although I did feel hungry sometimes. However, if I did not think about it too much, or let it bother me too much, sometimes I did not feel it at all. Nevertheless, I did take some Milo or hot water in the evenings, just in case. Not that I was worried about feeling hungry, just that my tummy made loud rumbling sounds which could have disturbed other meditators!

The hardest thing for me on this retreat was the no talking (noble silence) part, especially since I was there by myself and had to share a room with a stranger. Although we were free to walk around the centre, I actually felt caged inside.

The second and third days were my worst days. I had heard of people experiencing pain during their meditation. But I had never known pain to be like this. Such a constant, blunt and probing ache on my upper back, as soon as I sat down on the meditation cushion (but no pain when I lay down to sleep). It seemed strange to me at first as I was expecting some peaceful meditation without any ‘interference’ and just enjoying the calm and peace of mind. I was frustrated when I felt the pain developing, because then I would think to myself, “Oh no! It’s here again!” “Go away!” Without realising it at first, I was turning the physical pain into a form of mental agony with my own inner dialogue. But after some time, I learnt that if I managed to make friends with the pain, it would not affect me too much. So, I started to welcome it and think of it as an old friend who comes to visit and meditate with me. Learning to deal with pain has been an ongoing process ever since.

Initially, I did not know what to blame or why the pain was always there, ‘wanting’ to be my friend, and I did not know how I could talk about it. Finally, when I worked up the courage to talk to someone, tears just started to flow down my cheeks. Tears brimmed in my eyes, and I had no idea why. Later, I walked myself back to the meditation



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

hall and sat in front of the Buddha statue – looking at his image, recollecting on the Dhamma and the loving-kindness of the Lord Buddha. Then, I chanted the Metta Sutta softly and calmed myself down eventually. I started to feel better, and told myself that it was just another feeling that I was experiencing in that moment – a feeling that just happened to be unpleasant and not to my liking.

I did learn at the time – to realise – that throughout my life, I had been putting a lot of stress on myself, and at the same time having such high expectations of the people around me. I also know in my heart that it is often hard for me to be calm, always worrying and thinking about a lot of things constantly – I have a mind like a monkey! Incessantly swinging from one branch to the next, with hardly a moment's pause in between, similarly my thoughts never stop fluctuating.

I took some time to reflect upon myself, and analyse myself; perhaps do some productive meditation as well. It is amazing how it suddenly hit me that I had always taken people around me for granted, how I always wanted things to be done my way, and how I always get frustrated and upset when things do not go the way I intended it to be. Fussy, they called it. It was not easy for me to accept this reality at first. But I understand now that it is not easy to realise in our everyday activities when we like something, and when we do not like another thing. It is even harder to realise when we might have hurt others or caused harm to ourselves unintentionally, sometimes just by being fussy. I am learning to take things easy, and be contented with whatever that I have and whatever that happened/happens to me, for contentment is the greatest happiness that one can feel.

After the meditation retreat, my mind is still swinging around and pain still agitates me. I am only human after all. But at least now I am more aware of the potential of the mind to be untouched by it all, through listening to the Dhamma talks in the retreat and directly experiencing it myself. Separating the physical pain from one's mental suffering – that shall be my motto of equanimity.

Balance

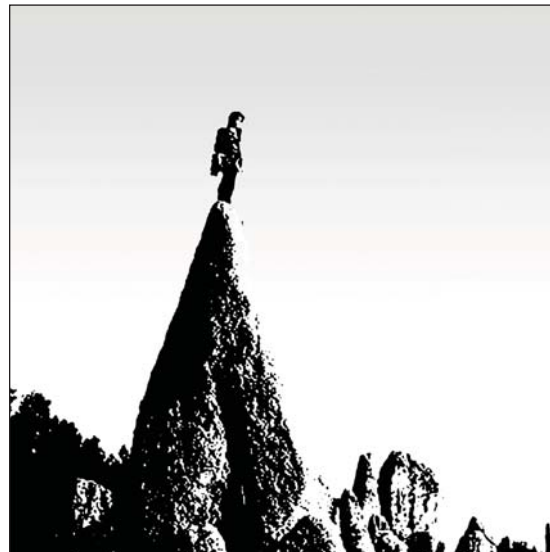
Composer: Alex Pui
Lyrics: Tina Ng
Musicians: Alex Pui
Hai Lin Lee
Retaw Boyce
Performance: Agus Santoso
Danielle Durland
Shie Haur Tan

What if life doesn't go your way?
What if your effort doesn't pay?
What if the traffic's such a pain?
What if storms should come with rain?
Will you maintain an unshakeable balance?

Let us not discriminate (or hate!)
Let us not accumulate (greed!)
Let us walk the middle path
With an open heart and laugh.
Is this the path to an unshakable balance?

Chorus
Can we see things for what they are?
Perceptions cannot change who we are.
Our feelings will not control us
If we're mindful of where it roams
In equanimity.

When the mind likes, it pulls;
When it doesn't it gives a push.
When the mind does not have greed,
Then it feels so calm and freed.
This must be the path to an unshakable balance.
Repeat Chorus x3



Source: UNIBUDS

Inspiration for the Finale song, "Balance"

'Balance' was inspired by all those times when I thought equanimity was essential in my everyday life. From traffic jams to general unsatisfactoriness, we may tremble without equanimity. We may not be aware of the anger or aversion that arises when we face unpleasant situations, or the unhealthy attachment that forms from feelings of like and dislike. We may not know of the grasping nature of the mind, as it swings from one extreme to another, pulling this way and that like a tug-of-war. We may not see our defilements of greed, hatred and delusion when we are caught up in it. So the insight awareness to this grasping and the practice of the Middle Path as taught by the Buddha allows contentment, unconditioned joy, and equanimity. Once aware, we can fortify ourselves so we will not be perturbed by the sensory pleasantness and unpleasantness that blinds us, so that our Balance will be an Unshakeable one.

Tina Ng



GALLERY OF MEMORIES



Above:
O-week stall in the first semester of 2006.

Left and bottom:
O-picnic photos at Coogee Beach after O-week.

The dhamma sublime;





Top and beside:
Easter Workshop which was held at J.E.F.
apart from UNSW campus

Bottom Right:
Graduation ceremonies

Bottom left: Potluck at Centennial Park

<= This photo: Vesak celebration in
Squarehouse Lodge.



UNSW
*So wonderfully
profound;*

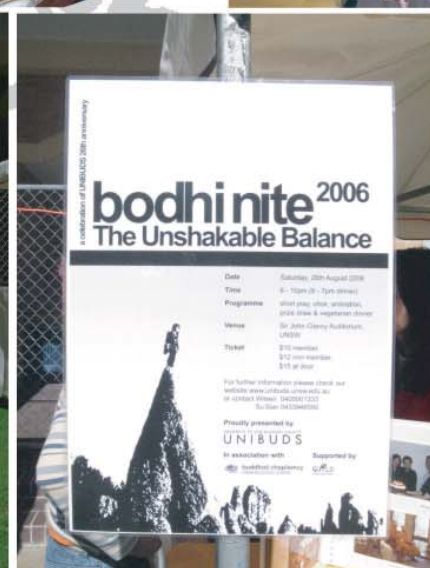


Top half:
Activities during Winter Retreat, which
was held at Sunnataram Monastery,
Bundanoon.

Below:
UNIBUDS stall during Foundation Week
at the second semester of the year.



Yet simple enough to
overlook



Above:
Gathering at a
friend's place which
serves 'roti canai'.

'Right' beside:
BodhiNite poster at
our stall!



Above: BodhiNite preparation in various departments.

Left: We were also frequently setting our stall in Hwa Tsang Monastery, which we received a lot of support.



Bodhi Nite

2006



*Now that I have caught
a glimpse of it;*

*May I cherish, and share it
with you all.*



Friendly Messages



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

Top (left to right): Wilsen Lau, Yu Ang Tan, Henry Makgawinata, Tina Ng, Su Sian Teh, Boon Hua Tan, Shie Haur Tan.

Bottom (left to right): Adeline Sugianto, Vickey Chen, Arifiana Koeshendro, Erlin Singgih.

Shie Haur Tan – External Vice President

To me, year 2006 in UNIBUDS is a year with loads of work and heaps of fun. From O-Picnic to Bodhi Nite, I believe all EXCOs and members have enjoyed all the activities that UNIBUDS organised. Thanks for helping and supporting us EXCOs in all activities. You are the true heroes behind the scene. I hope that in this coming year, UNIBUDS will continue to serve as a place for Dhamma learning and friendship building. Together we can continue to make UNIBUDS a better place =)

Yu Ang Tan – Internal Vice President

Our lives are uncertain. Most of the time (if not all the time), uncertainty creeps in every corner of our lives. Despite our best efforts to protect it, we cannot deny change, be it for the better or worse. Even when things turn for the better, it presents a cause of worry: that it will end anytime soon. Sounds like we're in a rather depressing condition, eh? This is not what most people would like to read. Most of us would admit that we are seeking for comfort, for happiness. So what is comfort? What is happiness? Now this is the million-dollar question, which I would like you to consider. Know what you want, before you seek for it. I seeked for that something in UNIBUDS, and I have found it. Hope you will, too.

Henry Makgawinata – Honorary Secretary

Another moment had passed again. It was indeed a good memory to go through the journey with UNIBUDS and other Executive Committees and learn Dhamma at the same time. As part of the Dhamma teaching, the theme equanimity has embedded in my head until now especially during Bodhi Nite 2006. It helped me very-very much in my life progress as well. As for the new Executive Committees, the new journey and new path have opened widely for you to roam. I wish nothing but the very best in your roaming progress.

For this opportunity too, I would like to thank everyone who had helped contributing and supporting UNIBUDS until this moment and the next moment of course. I might need to quote the phrase which was quite famous (at least in my head) from Bodhi Nite 2005 as part of the song lyric to express what I meant, "Cause without you, there wouldn't be me." Without you all, there would not be UNIBUDS.

Thank you once again and see you all around.
Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu..

Erlin Singgih – Honorary Treasurer

What a journey..

Another year has passed us by.. another term has been accomplished. Thank you so much UNIBUDS and everyone who has supported and been with us along our way. My journey with you has indeed been the most remarkable times I have during my University year. This place we called home has given me such a beautiful footprints in my heart, to me this journey is priceless, and I will always treasure them so dearly...I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute and be part of such a wonderful team over the years. My heart and best wishes goes to all of you. May we all continue to progress and grow in the guidance of the Dhamma. May the Triple gems be close to our heart and guide us always. sadhu..sadhu..sadhu..

With metta, ErlinS

Vickey Chen – Activities Director

The year 2006 was definitely a very memorable year for me – well, it did leave a big imprint in my life – full of lessons (which sometimes makes me feel happy and sometimes sad), friends (who provide lots of fun, laughter, and a shoulder to lean onto), wonderful experiences and memories. What more can I ask for? Well, perhaps to see UNIBUDS continue to flourish and make people happy.

It had been a great year, and although this would be my last term in the EXCO, I hope to still be part of it, and I hope that you will, too. Let us continue to learn the Dhamma and may we all find the serenity and wisdom to navigate ourselves through our journey of life.

Adeline Sugianto – English Dhamma Talk Coordinator

Another year has passed to embrace another chapter of life. There was a lot to learn as I flip over the pages. At times I felt overjoyed and got carried away. There was also time when I felt lost in the world of prejudice and perceptions. Knowing to live in the present, I kept dwelling in the past, a good past which I hoped it would have not come to an end. Sometimes we do really need to give ourself a bit of time and realise that when the mind likes, it pulls; when the mind dislikes it pushes away; only when the mind is calm and free will we have the unshakeable balance (Bodhi Nite 2006). In such state, one can be courageous yet selfless, leaders yet carers, confident yet considerate even in some of the most challenging environments (Queen Elizabeth II).

Boon Hua Tan – Chinese Dhamma Talk Coordinator

Time really flies and without me knowing, it's been a year already! And it means that it is almost time for me to pass on my responsibility as CDT co-ordinator to the next person. The journey as an Exco has been a really priceless learning curve for me. When I first took this job, I didn't think that there were so many responsibilities that I have to carry. At that time, I was a little weighted-down by all the work that I had to do. But the more I did, the more I realize and learn that everything that I do as an UNIBUDS Exco is for the benefit of many other people. And that is when I started to see the job as not just a responsibility, but as something that I really love to do. But at the same time, I realize that I've benefited from all those work as well. To all of my fellow ExcOs, thank you for your support all the while and I really appreciate the fun time I had with you. And for the members, thank you for your support and for giving me a chance to serve you. May the Dhamma be your guide always. Sadhu.

Su Sian Teh – Meditation Session Coordinator

Dear "YOU",

I'm here writing, to tell you a story...

A girl came to Australia 1 and half year ago by her own, searching and discovering her new life in a new country.

It came across that, she being fortunate has the opportunity to be a tiny audience in Bodhi Nite 2005. As she will never expect in foreign country like Australia, could have an active and marvelous Buddhist group. Unfortunately, she didn't take her steps to discover more, but in her deep heart she knew, there remain a seed of UNIBUDS.

Only until beginning of 2006, started with O-week, she met a lot of kind and generous friends in the stall, and following with O-picnic, and Potluck. With the departure of Desy to continue with her prosperous life, it gives the girl an invaluable chance to join the back bones of UNIBUDS (EXCO). The girl has learn a lot from being meditation coordinator and as part of the community, the girl even experience ife more than she will never expect!

She will always APPRECIATE, being GRATEFUL and have GRATITUDE to whomever she met and whatever things that came to her for this 1 year and also the year to come.

Story, to be continued...

With Loving-Kindness,

Su Sian Teh

Tina Ng – SACCA Editor

Like a pendulum, I've been swinging back and forth continuously all throughout this year. Sometimes I swing into frantic mode, other times I swing into lazy mode. Sometimes I swing from hyperactivity into pure boredom; from wanting to despising; from having to losing; from losing to gaining; from one extreme to another. But like the gravity that slows down the swinging pendulum, UNIBUDS has become my anchor. I sincerely thank you all for the opportunity you have given me to serve, learn and laugh with you all, and I hope you enjoyed this journey as much as I did! I wish you my very best wishes as we continue to walk this Middle Path together. May your life be filled with joy and calmness, may the Buddha's wisdom and compassion take you through all of life's trials, and may your mind be level with equanimity.

Arifiana Koeshendro – Annual Magazine Editor

The ongoing different events of life that we encounter everyday can be an emotional roller coaster ride. Some brings us joy, happiness, contentment while others brings us disappointment, anger, hatred and indifference. To have a steady yet level mindground unshakable by those

up and down emotions is indeed difficult. One needs to practice tirelessly, have strong determination and patience to cultivate an equanimous mind. Serving as a 26th Exco has given me the opportunity to explore and understand the concept of equanimity more through Bodhi Nite and the production of this magazine. Thank you to our patrons for the endless guidance and care. Thank you to my fellow Excos and UNIBUDS members for beautiful friendship and experiences shared. Thank you UNIBUDS for providing us with the conditions to learn, serve and grow in the Dhamma.

The reds will bloom forever....



Source: Wilsen Lius Lau

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LIM	Ching Liang
NG	John Joon Hu
ONG	Yen Lee
ONG	Desmond Kok Hui
SAW	Quee Kin
SEE	Graeme
TENG	Wai Loon
WEERASINHA	Tracy Tilaka
WONG	Kah Loon

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GAY	Sue
HO	Milani
HUANG	Emily
JEFFCOTT	Anna
JOENG	Shanty
JULIATY	Desy
KU	Wan Yim
KUSNADI	Jimmy
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LIANG	Disu
LIEW	Kong Yih
LOH	Denissa
LY	Van
MURNIADI	Erwin
NG	Roy Thuan Cheong
NG	Marie Fen Fen
ONG	Evelyn
SUSANTO	Sanly
TASLIM	Humardani
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TEH	Puay Yeong
TEH	Jeslyn Yin Phing
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YEP	Kah Heng
	Betaria

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BEK	Emily Jane
BROWN	Cadence Jane
CHAU	Rocky
CHEN	Brandon
CHEN	Ju-Yi, Lily
CHEN	Vickey Wei Chee
CHEN	Bernard Wen Wei
CHENG	Jenny
CHENG	Timothy
CHEONG	Joon Wayn
CHEONG	James King Hang
CHEW	Hwee Hoon
CHITTASY	Ariya
CHOW	Shin Kit
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CRAIG	Julian
CRESP	Alanna
DASHIELL	Branden
DE SILVA	Madura
DE SILVA	Vishan
DE SILVA	WM Hashan
DEGERLI	Ozlem
DING	Luwan
D'ISANTO	Paola
DO	Thanh
EDWARDS	Stephen Leon
FAN	Jiaxin
FONG	Kingsley
FOO	Gilbert Hock Beng
GAN	Chieh Howe
GAO	Xianyong
GENG	Erpeng
GOH	King Seng
GOH	Liu Yih
GONG	Julia Yi Ting
GUO	Julia
HE	Teresa
HO	Anh
HO	Kevin
HONG	Jayky
HUANG	Edward Po Chun
JANG	Lauren Eun Jung
JIANG	Miwa
JIANG	Wen Yuan
JO	Ivy
JUNUS	Emy
KENNEDY	Tressa
KHAW	Richard Min Cheh
KLESMER	Ian
KOESHENDRO	Arifiana, Vivi
KUO	Peggy Pei Wen

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Glossary

For the convenience of readers, a list of explanation for the terms used in the magazine has been included. These explanations are taken from three different sources namely *Buddhist Dictionary* (Nyanatiloka), *Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism* (Sutra Translation Committee of the US and Canada) and *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous). Care has been taken to select the simplest and best possible explanation of the terms and the editor apologises for any inaccuracy of term explanations rendered here. Wherever possible, the English, Pali and Sanskrit version of the terms are provided so that readers could cross-reference between the languages they are familiar with.

Note on Abbreviations:

eng – English

pl – Pali

skt – Sanskrit

ch – Chinese

tib – Tibetan

Anatta (*pl*) Egolessness. Neither within the bodily and mental phenomena of existence, nor outside of them, can be found anything that in the ultimate sense could be regarded as a self-existing real Ego-entity, soul or any other abiding substance. *Non-self* (*eng*).

Anicca (*pl*) 'Impermanence', one of the three essential characteristics of existence, along with Anicca and Dukkha. *Anitya* (*skt*).

Bhavana (*pl*) mental development; meditation. The two divisions of *bhavana* are the development of tranquility (*samatha*), corresponding to concentration of the mind, and the development of insight (*vipassana*), corresponding to wisdom.

Bodhisatta (*pl*) Literally, 'Enlightenment-being'. Those who aspire to Supreme Enlightenment and Buddhahood for themselves and all beings; also for anyone who has developed the Bodhi Mind – the aspiration to save oneself and others. In the Pali Canon, it is used specifically to designate Siddhattha Gotama in the time before he achieved full Enlightenment. *Bodhisattva* (*skt*).

Brahma-vihara (*pl*) The 4 'sublime' or 'divine abodes', also called the 4 boundless states (*appamanna*), are: lovingkindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), altruistic (or sympathetic) joy (*mudita*), equanimity (*upekkha*). See *Four Immeasurable Minds* (*eng*).

Citta (*pl*) Mind or consciousness or state of consciousness.

Dependent Origination (*eng*) The chain of conditioned arising; causal genesis. The process, beginning in ignorance, by which one keeps making life after life of suffering for oneself. Also a fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the interdependence of things. It teaches that all beings and phenomena exist or occur only because of their relationship with other beings or phenomena. *Paticca samuppada* (*pl*) *Pratitya samutpada* (*skt*).

Dhamma (*pl*) This word has several meanings: (a) The teachings of the Buddhas (generally capitalised in English); (b) Law, doctrine; (c) Things, events, phenomena. *Dharma* (*skt*).

Digha Nikaya (*pl*) Section of the Pali canon containing the long discourses of the Buddha.

Dukkha (*pl/skt*) Suffering; unsatisfactoriness. One of the three basic characteristics of existence and the first Noble Truth. The term *dukkha* is not limited to painful experience, but refers to the unsatisfactory nature and the general insecurity of all conditioned phenomena, which, on account of their impermanence, are all liable to suffering; and this includes also pleasurable experience.

Eight Negations Theory of Middle Path (*eng*) The Eight Negations of Nagarjuna, founder of the Madhyamika or Middle School. The four pairs are 'neither birth nor death, neither end nor permanence, neither identity nor difference, neither coming nor going'.

Equanimity (*eng*) See *Upekkha*.

Five Aggregates (*eng*) These are the five aspects in which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence: matter, consciousness, perception, feeling and reaction. Aggregates: *Khandha* (*pl*) *Skandhas* (*skt*).

Four Immeasurable Minds (*eng*). See *Brahma-vihara*.

Four Noble Truths (*eng*) The briefest synthesis of the entire teachings of Buddhism, which explains the cause of suffering and the means of deliverance therefrom. This was the first doctrine taught by the Buddha after his Enlightenment. They are: the truth of *Suffering*, of the *Origin* of suffering, of the *Extinction* of suffering, and of the eightfold *Path* leading to the extinction of suffering. *Ariya sacca* (*pl*).

Heart Sutra (*eng*) Famous Mahayana text that is much more readily known by its English title as '*Heart Sutra*' than by its formal Sanskrit name, '*Prajnaparamita-hrdaya Sutra*'. It is essentially a one page condensation of Mahayana philosophy, especially emphasizing the doctrine of emptiness.

Hiri-ottappa (*pl*) 'Moral shame and moral dread', are associated with all karmically wholesome consciousness.

Jhana (*pl*) Mental absorption. A state of strong concentration focused on a single object.

Kamma (*pl*) Action performed by oneself that will have an effect on one's future. Correctly speaking denotes the wholesome or unwholesome volition and their concomitant mental factors, causing rebirth and shaping the destiny of beings. *Karma* (*skt*).

Karuna (*skt/pl*) Compassion for all sentient beings. It is also one of the 4 sublime abodes. See *Brahma-vihara*.

Loving-kindness (*eng*) See *Metta*.

Maitreya (*skt*) Literally means friendly and benevolent. He will be the next Buddha in our world. He is now preaching in Tusita Heaven. He is usually represented as the fat laughing Buddha.

Majjhima Nikaya (*pl*) Section of the Pali canon containing the middle length discourses of the Buddha.

Metta (*pl*) Loving-kindness; selfless love and good will. One of the qualities of a pure mind. It is also one of the 4 sublime abodes. *Maitri* (*skt*) See *Brahma-vihara*.

Middle Path (Noble Eightfold Path) (*eng*) The path leading to liberation from suffering. It is divided into three stages or trainings: (1) *Sila*, which includes right speech, right actions and right livelihood, (2) *Samadhi*, which includes right effort, right awareness and right concentration, (3) *Panna*, which includes right thought, right understanding. *Ariya atthangika magga* (*pl*).

Middle Treatise (*eng*) Madhyamika sastra, attributed to the bodhisattvas Nagarjuna as creator, and Nilacaksus as compiler; translated by Kumarajiva. It is the principal work of the Madhyamika, or Middle School, attributed to Nagarjuna. Versions only exist in Chinese and Tibetan.

Mudita (*pl*) Altruistic (or sympathetic) joy. It is also one of the 4 sublime abodes. See *Brahma-vihara*.

Noble Eightfold Path (*eng*) The path leading to liberation from suffering. It is divided into three stages or trainings: (1) *Sila*, which includes right speech, right actions and right livelihood, (2) *Samadhi*, which includes right effort, right awareness and right concentration, (3) *Panna*, which includes right thought, right understanding. *Ariya atthangika magga* (*pl*)

Ottappa (*pl*) Moral dread. See *Hiri-ottappa*.

Pali (*pl*) The canonical language of Ceylonese Buddhists, believed to be very similar to the colloquial language spoken by Sakyamuni Buddha, in which the canonical texts of the Theravada are composed.

Panna (*pl*) Wisdom; insight. The third of the three trainings by which the Noble Eightfold Path is practised. There are three kinds of wisdom: received (heard) wisdom, intellectual wisdom and experiential wisdom. *Prajna* (*skt*).

Papanca (*pl*) In doctrinal usage, it signifies the expansion, differentiation, diffuseness or manifoldness of the world; and it may also refer to the phenomenal world in general, and to the mental attitude of worldliness. *Prapanca* (*skt*).

Paticca samuppada (*pl*) The chain of conditioned arising; causal genesis. The process, beginning in ignorance, by which one keeps making life after life of suffering for oneself. Also a fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the interdependence of things. It teaches that all beings and phenomena exist or occur only because of their relationship with other beings or phenomena. *Pratitya samutpada* (*skt*) *Dependent Origination* (*eng*).

Sakyamuni Buddha Historical founder of Buddhism, Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha Sakyamuni, who was born circa 581-501 B.C. as the first son of King Suddhodana, whose capital city of Kapilavastu was located in what is now Nepal. Nowadays, the term 'a Buddha' denotes anyone who has realized enlightenment, while 'the Buddha' refers to the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni. 'Buddhas,' naturally refers to all enlightened beings.

Samadhi (*pl/skt*) Concentration; fixing of the mind on a single object; control over the mind. The second of the three trainings by which the Noble Eightfold Path is practised. When cultivated as an end in itself, it leads to the attainment of the states of mental absorption, but not to total liberation of the mind.

Samatha (*pl*) Calm; tranquility. *Samatha-bhavana*, the development of tranquility; synonymous with *samadhi*.

Sangha (*pl/skt*) Literally, 'congregation'. The monastic order founded by the Buddha, the members of which are called Bhikkhus (males) or Bhikkhunis (females). Sangha is the third of the Three Jewels (Triple Gem) of Buddhism, i.e. the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Sikkha (*pl*) The training, which the Buddha's disciple has to undergo, is 3-fold: training in higher morality (*adhisala-sikkha*), in higher mentality (*adhicittasikkha*), and in higher wisdom (*adhipanna-sikkha*).

Sila (*pl*) Morality; abstaining from physical and vocal actions that cause harm to oneself and others. It is the foundation of the whole Buddhist practice and is the first of the three trainings by which the Noble Eightfold Path is practised. Buddhist morality does not consist in the mere not-committing of evil actions, but is in each instance the clearly conscious and intentional restraint from the bad actions in question and corresponds to the simultaneously arising volition. For a lay person, *sila* is practised in daily life by following the Five Precepts. *Shila* (*skt*).

Sutta (*pl*) Discourse of the Buddha or one of his leading disciples. In the early stages of Buddhist history, suttas were memorised, and only in later times were they written down. *Sutra* (*skt*).

Theragatha (*skt*) It consists of a collection of verses (gatha) attributed to some 250 senior (thera) monks, of early Buddhism, renowned for their spiritual attainments and virtue. It forms part of the *Khuddaka-Nikaya*, which is part of the Sutta-Pitaka of the Buddhist Pali canon.

Therigatha (*skt*) A collection of verses attributed to 'senior' (theri) nuns of the same period. It forms part of the *Khuddaka-Nikaya*, which is part of the Sutta-Pitaka in the Tipitaka.

Triple Gem (*eng*) (1) The Buddha, the supremely enlightened being. (2) The Dhamma, the teaching imparted by the Buddha. (3) The Sangha, the congregation of monks and nuns, or of genuine Dhamma followers.

Upekkha (*pl*) Equanimity. It is also one of the 4 sublime abodes and one of the factors of enlightenment. See *Brahma-vihara*.

Vipassana (*pl*) introspection; insight which purifies the mind. Specifically insight into the impermanent, suffering and egoless nature of the mental-physical structure. Vipassana-bhavana, the systematic development of insight through meditation technique of observing one's own bodily and mental processes. *Vipasyana* (*skt*).

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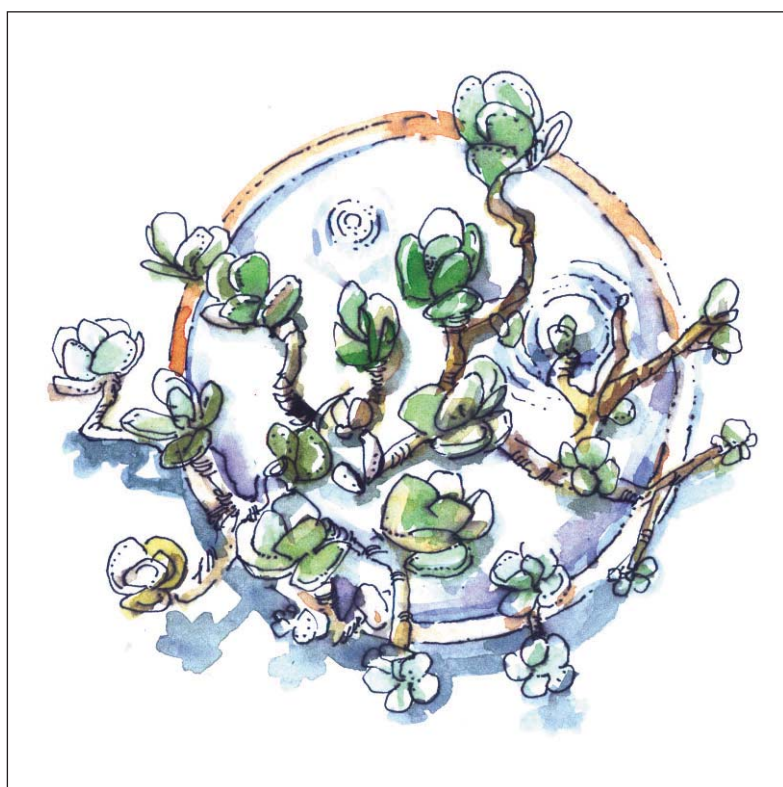


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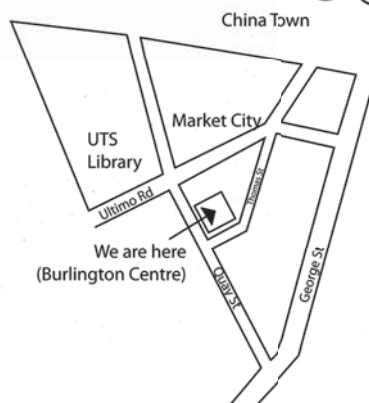
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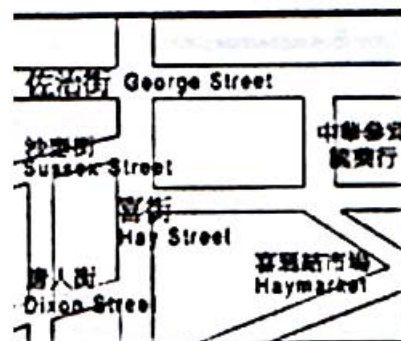
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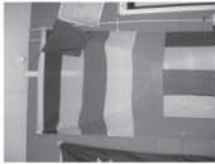
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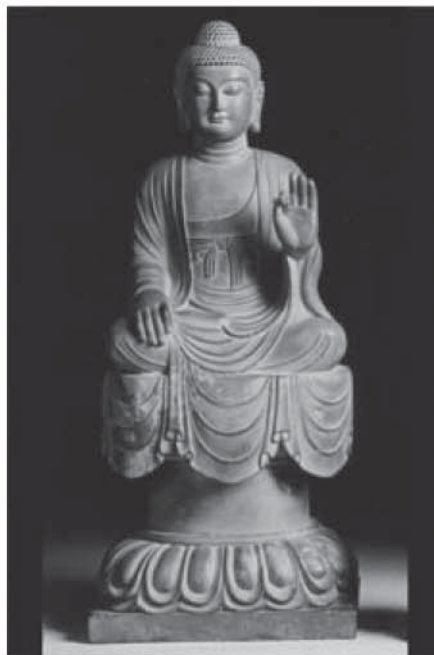


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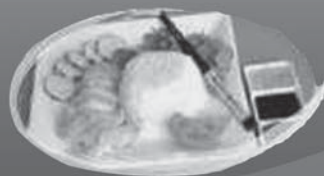
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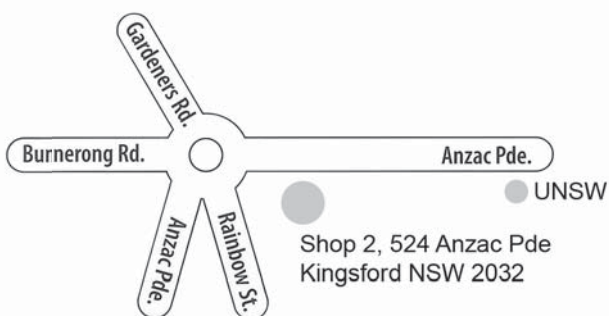
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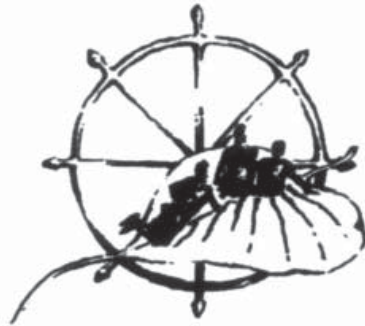
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