UNIBUDS

Annual Magazine 2007





The word 'grasp' came from the Pali term *upādāna*, which meant 'clinging', 'attachment', or 'grasping'. In simple terms, 'grasp' means to hold onto something firmly, as if to seize by clasping with the fingers or arms, and not wanting to let go.

In the *Paticcasamuppāda*, the 'Twelve Links of Dependent Origination', craving (*tanhā*) comes before clinging (*upādāna*). This is because 'craving' is wanting something that one does not have, or wanting more of what one already has. On the other hand, 'clinging' is when one has something and does not want to let go. We may cling to that which is material, intellectual, mental, sensual, or even spiritual. Examples of things that we may cling to include: possessions, ideas/ beliefs/ values, identity/ ego, feelings and memory, senses and sensual pleasures, people and relationship(s), and spiritual materialism.

Just like how we travel, or 'hop' from one place to another, our mind hops from one thought to another. Along the way, we would find something pleasant that we like, and something unpleasant that we would not like. We may smile when we see, smell, taste, hear or touch something that we like, or is pleasant to us, and would like to feel it all over again. However, we may frown or move away quickly when it is something that we may not like or feel negative towards. Throughout our journey of life, our mind would hop from one thought to another and grasp onto something that we like or dislike, just like a grasshopper that jumps quickly when there is disturbance in its surroundings which it does not like, but stays calm on a spot when it is in its comfort zone.

This Annual Magazine aims to discover and explore how the Buddhist concept of clinging creates mental and physical suffering (*dukkha*) to us due to our ignorance. We are ignorant to the true nature of things, such as its impermanence (*anicca*), and the fact that it is not ours, nor is it for us to control (*anattā*).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT...

This section is a great opportunity to thank the helping hands that had made the publication of this Magazine possible. Without their contribution, dedication, effort, patience, and hard work, this Magazine would not have been what it is – a beautiful piece. As the Editor, I would like to express my deepest sincere appreciation to everyone involved. May the good merits that we have done be shared by all. Sadhu.

(Note: Where appropriate, names are listed in alphabetical order).

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EDITOR'S MESSAGE



This Magazine aims to discover and explore a Buddhist point of view on attachment and letting go. As the Editor, I hope that by the end of the last section of this Magazine, you would be able to have a clearer understanding of the theme and may it be applicable to you in your journey of life and in your Dhamma practice.

For the past few months, I have discovered through my own experiences, friends' experiences, and books that I've been reading lately that there are many people in the world who are looking for happiness, and do have clinging to something that they consider very dear to them, or thoughts. Most of us, if not all, have something that we cling to. We feel emotionally attached to it. Sometimes, we cannot control it; like our untrained wandering minds, it would wander from one thought to another, sometimes triggered by memory, by smell or by sound, which then affects our next thought, and so on. We need to let go, people say. Do meditation, others say. How can we really let go and be happy? Why do we have to let go in order for happiness to come? Well, one will only know that clinging is painful if they have experienced it or are experiencing it right now. We all know, theoretically, that by letting go of the clinging, we'll be happier. And we all know that it is not easy to let go of that clinging, maybe because we're so used to clinging on to it although it puts us in pain. Well, letting go cannot be forced; we can't force or keep telling ourselves to let go. Personally, letting go first comes with awareness of the suffering, of the pain and the cause of it, and acceptance of the fact that it is making us feel the pain; not by pushing it away or ignoring it. Then, the readiness to want to end the pain and letting it go is the key to unlock the clinging? the key to relieve the suffering?

The theme "Grasphopper" will be further explored throughout this Magazine. Some of the Dhamma talk transcriptions and articles will include the understanding of the three poisons (i.e. greed, anger, delusion) and how the three Dhamma seals and the teachings of the Buddha could help us in the practice of letting go. There had been countless ideas to make reading this Magazine more fun and

interactive for you, as a tool, not a mere book filled with words and images, to understand Dhamma. Flipping through the pages of this magazine, you would see little snippets – stories of Grassy, the grasshopper, who would accompany you and share with you his stories, and his journey of life.

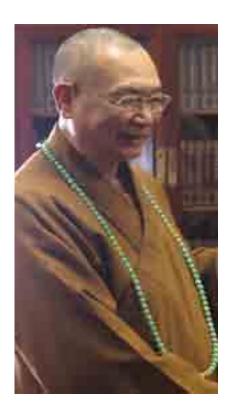
The Editorial Team has transcribed some of the UNIBUDS' weekly Dhamma talks that were given by Venerables and lay Buddhists during the 27th EXCO term. Where the talk was given in Chinese, we have provided the English translation. Please note that the respective speakers have approved the transcriptions and translations. Throughout this Magazine, we have adopted Pali terms for standardisation purposes, but wherever possible, Sanskrit terms have also been included in the Glossary section for readers who are more familiar with the latter.

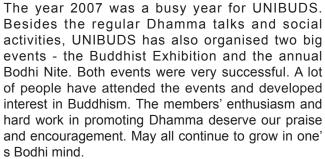
A collection of pictures of activities throughout the 27th EXCO term can be found in the Photo section. This section clearly shows that friendship and the Dhamma in UNIBUDS have been flourishing beautifully and have remained strong from year to year. 'Thank you' to everyone who had generously provided me with the photos and of course, the two people who spent lots of hours creating nice pages and putting up with my demands. Praise should be given to Summer Ding who had done a great job in putting all the contents together in a nice layout and creating the final product that is this Magazine. Towards the end of the pages is the Sponsorship section where kind sponsors have donated for the publication of this Magazine, all done in the faith of sharing the Dhamma and promoting peace and harmony. I would like to extend a big 'thank you' to the Sponsorship Team for working hard and doing a great job in seeking sponsors. 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 apologise 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 the process of editing this magazine, I have realised that I too, have been grasping onto many material things, ideas, and people, especially the EXCOs and everyone involved in the production of this magazine. Please accept my apologies. Last but not least, I hope that "Grasphopper" would help you to gain more insight and motivation towards practising the Dhamma. Hoping you will find the inspiration to live happier each day with more wisdom, peace and clarity. Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu.

Yours truly, Vickey WC Chen Editor







Despite the heavy study load, how can we make the wise choice between the attraction of leisure enjoyment and participating/helping in Buddhist activities? How can we maintain a mind that is calm and at ease when we attain success and receive a lot of praise? Are we able to notice the fluctuations of thoughts and emotions in our mind? As a continuation from the theme of Bodhi Nite 2007 – "The Invisible Grasp" – UNIBUDS has chosen "Grasphopper" as the theme of this year's Annual Magazine. It is hoped that this will provide an incentive for all of us to reflect on the endless desires and attachment in our mind. From this, we can learn to recognise and eliminate them, and lead a life that is more at ease.

The Buddha said that attachment is the cause of suffering. However, how alert are we to the attachment in our mind? We grasp onto things around us. Just like a monkey who holds onto the branch of a tree: before it drops its left hand, the right hand grasps onto another branch immediately. It hops/swings from one tree to another, never at rest. We continuously create the cause of suffering, but on the other hand, we pray for ease and happiness. How contradictory are we?



GRASPHOPPER

by Venerable Tsang Hui



Attachment does not mean to attach to things that are favourable only. Sometimes, we cannot let go of things or incidents that we dislike too. We grasp tightly onto any things/incidents that concern us, beit praise, criticism, reputation, status, our things, our body, our friends, etc. Attachment is like a string that ties us down, and makes us lose our freedom. When changes happen to the things that we are attached to, even if it is very minor, this string will pull us tighter. Our mind will be disturbed and we lose our peacefulness.

What is the factor or strength that links our mind and external phenomena together? It is our consciousness of 'self'. We regard ourselves as a real entity. Hence, we develop attachment toourselves. We love ourselves and our belongings dearly. We regard ourselves as the centre of everything (selfcentredness). In addition, we are ignorant about the truth of the worldly phenomena. Hence, we attach to everything we encounter. In fact, everything in the world is impermanent. It is ever-changing. Moreover, all phenomena arise due to a combination of causes and conditions. They do not have a fixed identity (no permanent nature). They are changing every moment. At which point do we attach ourselves to? Our body and mind are also ever-changing. They are the combination of physical and mental factors. Our body and thoughts are always in the process of changing. For convenience's sake, Buddhism names this phenomenon that is impermanent, and arises due to the combination of causes and conditions, as 'selfless'. In other words, a 'self' that is permanent cannot be found. Since it is 'selfless', then what is the truth behind the 'sense of self-centredness'? What is the truth of things that we are attaching to? It is only our illusion. If we can understand the teachings of impermanence and selflessness, we will be able to see the truth of all phenomena clearer. In this way, our attachment will be less, our mind will also not hop around and grasp on whatever we see.

Some people worry and ask: does 'selflessness' mean a void and nothingness? We have to

understand that when Buddhism talks about 'selflessness', it does not mean that there is a 'self' originally and we are now taking away the 'self' and making it into nothing. 'Selflessness' in Buddhism highlights that one's existence is conditional and ever-changing. It does not have a fixed-nature.

Therefore, it is called 'selfless' or 'non-self'. It does not mean nothingness. In fact, selflessness brings boundless constructiveness and flexibility. Since all existences are impermanent and rely on the support of many causes and conditions, we can always provide a variety of causes and conditions to pave our way for a better future.

Many people also believe that only the 'self' or 'l' can bring us motivation and energy. In reality, energy that is bounded by 'self' or 'l' is limited, whereas energy that radiates from the aspiration of 'selflessness' is boundless. It can bring us unlimited motivation. The Buddhas and Bodhisattas have penetrated the truth of 'selflessness', thus, the energy they radiate is boundless. We attach to what we have like a magnet, which finally leads to more stress and burden onto ourselves. A person who is selfless, breaks through self-centredness, and radiates his/her energy and aspiration to immeasurable sentient beings without end or boundary. It also makes the person free and at ease.

Reducing our self-centredness is the first step in developing our wisdom of 'selflessness'. We should always listen to the Dhamma, learn to put ourselves in other's position, be considerate and share the feelings of others. This is a good method that can help us to reduce our self-centredness. When our self-centredness is reduced, our greed and attachment will also reduce. In addition, we will not only think from our own perspective, but be more understanding to others. We will also be able to view/consider things/issues from a wider perspective. We will und erstand that everything arises due to the support of many causes and conditions, hence, a sense of appreciation, gratitude and compassion will also develop.

It is hoped that everyone can clearly see the problems created by grasping and attachment. May everyone understand the teachings of impermanence and selflessness, and its constructiveness, and lead a life that is more joyful and at ease. In addition, may all develop the mind of gratitude, compassion and the great Bodhi mind. May all members of UNIBUDS play one's role in whatever conditions one is in, uphold the simplicity and objectives of UNIBUDS, and share the wisdom and peacefulness of the Buddha with friends on campus. May the brightness of the righteous Dhamma pervade and prolong on the campus. This is also a way for us to repay with gratitude to the Triple Gems.



導師的話 騰躍不已的染著

藏^下慧導師



2007年是慧命社忙碌的一年。在這一年裡,除了 例常的達磨班及團康活動外,慧命社還舉辦了兩 次大活動一佛教展覽會及常年的菩提之夜。兩項 活動都非常成功,吸引了許多人到來觀賞,並對 佛教產生興趣。同學們的發心與辛勞是值得讚嘆 的!願大家的菩提心持續不斷的增長。

在忙碌的課業之餘,如何在欲樂休閒與佛教活動之間做智慧的取捨?如何在獲得成功,受到歡喜讚賞之際,澹然自如?我們能否覺察到自己心裡的起伏?續2007年菩提之夜的主題一『無形的束縛』,慧命社選擇了『騰躍不已的染著』為今年年刊的論題,希望藉此發掘吾等內心無止息的貪染與執著,學習認清它,破除它,進而生活得更自在灑脫。

佛說,貪染造成苦的聚集。然而,我們對自己內心的染著又警覺了多少呢?我們對周遭的事物處處貪染。如猿猴一樣,手抓住樹枝,一手未放,另一手馬上又抓住新的一根樹枝,從這棵樹跳到另一棵樹,騰躍不已,從來沒有空閒過。我們不斷製造苦果的因,另一方面卻又祈求自在與快樂,這是何等的矛盾啊!

染著並不一定指貪戀於可愛的事,有時候,一 些讓我們不歡喜的事,我們也念念不捨。凡是 與我們有關的事一稱讚我的,批評我的,我的 名譽,我的地位,我的東西,我的身體,我的朋 友。。。,我們都抓得緊緊的。染著像一根繩子 把我們捆著,不得自在。只要我們所染著的事物 稍微有些風吹草動,這根繩子就往我們身體更緊 的勒住,使我們心情起伏,不能平靜。

是甚麼力量把我們的心與外在的事物牽繫在一起呢?是我們的自我意識。我們把自己當作實在的,進而產生自我愛,對我及我所有疼惜不已。我們以自我為中心,再加上不能了解外在萬物的真相,因此,處處染著。其實,世間的一切是無常的,無時無刻在變遷中;同時,它有賴許多因緣條件促成,並沒有固定的自性。它每一刻都在變,哪一點是我們可以執著的呢?我們的身心亦是如此。它是物質與精神的和合。我們的身體與

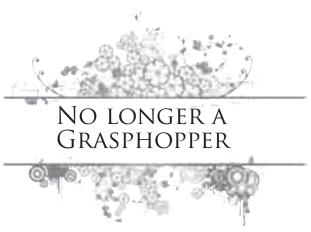


思想無時不在變化當中。佛教把這變動性,條件性的現象,方便稱為「無我」,也就是沒有一個實在不變的我。既然是「無我」,自我意識的真相是甚麼?我們染著的又是甚麼呢?其實,只是我們的錯覺而已。能明白無常無我的道理,我們就能把自我與事物的真相看得比較清楚,貪染即會減少,心也不會那麼騰躍不已,到處攀緣執著。

有些人擔心,「無我」是不是空空洞洞,什麼都沒有了?我們要了解,佛教所說的「無我」,並不是指把「我」拿掉。變成沒有我;從有一個「我」,變成空洞的沒有「我」。無我是指他是條件性的,變動性的,沒有固定的自性,所以方便說是「無我」。但是,「無我」有無限的可塑性。我們可以隨時提供不同的因緣條件,隨順無常的道理,來改變一切,創造一切。我們常常以為「我」才能給我們帶來力量,事實上,侷限於「我」的力量是有限的;「無我」的方量是有限的,它帶給我們無限的動力。佛菩薩透視的人量是有限的,它帶給我們無限的動力。佛菩薩透視的人。一段我們越來越氣一樣把我們的力量是無限的,使我們越來越流重;「無我」讓我們把力量往外散發,無量無邊,使我們越來越輕安自在。

減少以自我為中心是啟發「無我」智慧的起步。 我們應多聽聞佛法,學習站在別人的立場考量問題,體諒別人的感受,這是一個減少自我中心的 很好修學方法。當我們的自我中心減輕,不但貪 染心能減少,我們也不會只看到自己,而更能體 諒別人,從廣度來看待問題。我們更能了解一切 有賴因緣和合,眾緣的促成——感恩之心,慈悲 心,菩提心也油然增長。

願慧命社的同學都能透視染著的弊端,明白無常無我的道理及其積極性,生活得更喜悅自在。同時,培養感恩慈悲之心,發廣大的菩提心,把持慧命社淳樸的宗旨,在各種因緣中扮演自己的角色,與更多同學分享佛法的智慧與祥和,使正法之光在校園裡源遠流長,回報三寶之恩。



by Venerable Chao Khun Samai



Source: Shanty Joeng

Before we could come to the ultimate truth, to let go of everything so that we could no longer be a grasphopper, there are many kinds of training that we have to go through. First of all, faith and confidence in the Triple Gems have to be well established, plus a firm belief in the law of *kamma*: if we do good, we receive good; if we do bad, we receive bad.

At this level, generosity has to be practised regularly in order to bring happiness to ourselves and to all other living beings. Every time kindness is being done, there is a feeling of peace and comfort all around. The giver would experience a joyful feeling, and the receiver would feel the same. Our attachment to things gets weaker as our mind would feel more contented and satisfied. A very generous person would not dare to harm or to hurt any living beings. Neither bad speech nor dishonesty would be expected from such a very kind person.

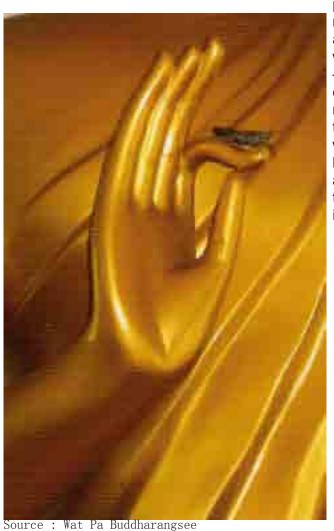
Once we can let go of the material things for so many hundreds and thousands of times, letting go of the bad physical and verbal actions would happen naturally. Now is the time for good meditation! As we are aware, it is not possible to let go of the bad thoughts without training our mind. Our knowing mind without training would cling to anything our six senses could experience. When our six senses are wide open, our deluded knowing mind would hop from one thing to another, bringing more liking and disliking to the storage of our great ignorance. Unseen and unknown by anyone except ourselves. Our greed and hatred would get stronger and stronger.

Through good meditation, once our knowing mind is still and well concentrated, no longer hopping, it would free itself from all kinds of hindrances. Because of stillness, joy might appear and happiness might arise. If we just observe and are fully aware of it, this good feeling would be subtler and eventually turn itself into equanimity. This is the main training for not hopping around. The external

worldly ways fall flat, not as delightful and exciting as they might have previously been.

Now, with a very peaceful and concentrated mind, it is not so difficult to comprehend why this knowing mind has to grasp. It all comes from not understanding the ultimate truths of life, the suffering and the cause of suffering. Conventionally, we believe that birth is happy, not really knowing that from birth great suffering would follow: old age, sickness and death. When our knowing mind does some more investigation, we come to realise that all phenomena, physical or spiritual has been ruled under the same cosmic law: impermanence, suffering and non-self. No matter how firmly you have grasped, they would all slip away from your hand! Whoever dares to claim possession over it would suffer forever!

With great delusion, we seem to attach to the four elements that make up our body. "So beautiful! So handsome!" some might say. Once they are old and sick, they become four poisonous snakes biting us everyday! No matter how well we look after them, they are always causing troubles, especially to those who cling to them. The other four aggregates feeling, perception, mental activities and consciousness - are also deceptive. They rise up and pass away without acknowledging the ownership of anyone. At this very wonderful stage, our very peaceful and wellbalanced mind would no longer grasp onto anything. No attachment to anything including the very pure knowing mind itself. The job is done and the grasphopper has a rest!





President's Message



Before you start your wonderful reading journey, I would like you to participate being mindful of your breathing for 5 seconds.

Breath in, breath out...

Thank you.

For what has been done, it is the past and is unchangeable. What we arming and rewarding journey for can do is learn from the experience. For what has yet to come, it is the future and is unpredictable. What we can do is leave it for a moment. For what you have is NOW; it is the present that you should treasure. When it passes, you will never gain it back. Do not grasp onto the the teaching they have learnt in past, do not grasp onto the future, free the grasping of this moment and truly EXPERIENCE the gift (present) that you have now, which would give birth to enlightenment.

First of all, a special thanks to to Buddha's teaching. Being in Annual Magazine Editor, Vickey UNIBUDS, we constantly find Chen, for successfully leading her Dhamma and friendship. It is team in completing the 27th Annual Magazine and the team members who have worked day and night in finishing this memorable edition.

The 27th UNIBUDS has built the causes and conditions for members and friends to experience this terrific journey of developing our mind, experiencing the world through our heart, and opening ourselves to the world. I truly am thankful for the opportunity that I had to lead and serve the team and members over the year. Certainly, it is through conditions and everyone' s selfless giving that make up the wonderful place - UNIBUDS. I am grateful for all who have come by.

Committee members, members and friends. Genuinely, I wish that everyone who has dropped by has gained something in their own way in terms of Dhamma teaching, not only just in absorbing teachings from talks, but also in putting all action, making the teachings a real-life experience. The most unforgettable and valuable part is the journey that we have gone through that has exposed us

all these conditions that have come together which helped us to grow in our journey. This journey with UNIBUDS cannot be accomplished without the endless support and guidance from our beloved Patrons, Venerable Tsang Hui and Venerable Chao Khun Maha Samai. Moreover, special credit has to be given to 27th UNIBUDS Committee members for going through the tough times, the happy times and heart-felt times with understanding and loving-kindness. Not forgetting to express our gratitude to all Dhamma teachers for giving us the valuable Dhamma talks. In addition, special thanks to UNIBUDS's senior members who This year has been a heart- continuously support and love



Source: Vickey Chen

UNIBUDS. Further, I would like to extend my greatest appreciation and enormous thank you to members and friends who have supported UNIBUDS in various ways through their beautiful heart, mental and physical giving.

Undoubtedly, the sun will rise and set, seasons will change, people will come into your life and they will leave one day. The most important thing is not to grasp on whether the moment can stay longer or the moment should be shortened. What really matters is to appreciate and experience being in this present moment.

With that, I wish everyone will continue with their own Dhamma learning and enriching journey and may Buddha's teaching guide us through the days to come. I rejoice with you.

Before you end this page and move on with your journey, I would like you to participate in 5 seconds of sending metta (loving-kindness) to yourself, family, friends and the world.

Thank you.

With Loving-kindness, Su Sian TEH

Grassy the Grasshopper

Grassy lived in the grasslands, in a green grass hut and ate, well, grass. He was vegetarian after all.

From when Grassy was a baby hopper, he was taught the art of hopping. He was the first grasshopper to enter the Grasshopper's Book of Records before he even sprouted wings. He made a perfect jump at the Olymphops by jumping ten times his length. He was also a brilliant sprinter-hopper, hopping at incredible speeds. His delicate feet barely touched the ground, before it's in the air again. He soon became known as the Grasshopper Who Can't Sit Still.

Grassy considers himself as a real lover of nature. He'll sit on the best-looking leaf and sunbathe. But then it would get hot, so he'd hop onto a branch in the shade. Then it'll get too windy, too cold, too warm, too boring, or it's dinnertime. Then he'll hop away, thinking the next stop is where happiness will be.

But that stop is never his last...





Romance

In order to discuss this topic, we need to discuss about the definition of "romance" first. The dictionary defines romance as "a novel or other prose narrative depicting heroic or marvellous deeds, pageantry, romantic exploits, etc., usually in a historical or imaginary setting".

Why does romance appeal to society? One suggests that our society is focused on this one true love that can make us happy; it is a belief that one person can make you happy. In all genres of romantic movies there is the feeling that this is an important event that once the two lovers have found each other, everything else would be perfect. "My one love, my only love and I will love you forever." Unfortunately, the divorce rate in this country is one in three, so that is not quite the reality.

So does it mean that we should just forget about any kind of romance? For example, if you have the right genes, and I do too, then we'll just create children. Is that what really happens? Is that what you want? So, what is the "reality"?

Reality

Buddhism often talks about reality – the way things are. Sometimes you do find fundamentalists in Buddhism. They believe that life is suffering, romance shouldn't be happening because it's not reality – it's imaginary. To be more objective, we should firstly work out what romance is and what love is. How it fits in and when it's not working out for us.

Often what happens in a relationship when we just met someone who's attractive to us is that we project an image of the ideal partner on him or her. All of a sudden it seems like everything is perfect. We like to hear his/her coughing, to see how she or he does their hair, etc. It's all very cute at the beginning; well, let's say for up to the first three months. Then afterwards, their seemingly cute habits now irritate us. This happens because we tend to project what we want to see in our ideal partner at the beginning of a relationship.

We as normal human beings, unless you decide to become celibate, experience attraction and have a sense of wanting to connect with another individual human being. Generally, we like to be in a relationship, and it becomes a bit of a driving force in life seeing relationship as a gateway to happiness. The reality is that it can bring us some happiness, but it is unfortunately impermanent. The connection we have is impermanent. That is the reality.

When you look at the impermanence of things, in particular a relationship, you will create a loving relationship and live in appreciation. When a couple kindles together they actually don't have a lot of time together. Maybe they get together for 50 years in a lifetime, but they have to take away time spent working, maybe involving jobs overseas, sleeping, visiting family in far away places, etc. In the end, the time they spend together is really small, perhaps only a couple of years in a lifetime. If we start to look at the fact of impermaneOnce, maybe those loving connections become more important. Also, we don' t know when we are going to die. If, for example, someone has an argument with his father and his father was killed before he had a chance to say sorry, it would be a sad thing to happen. Therefore creating a loving relationship, if we have one, is really important because we don't have a lot of time.

Love vs Attachment

Another aspect that is important to look at is the difference between love and attachment. Love is about wishing the other person to be happy, whereas attachment is wishing for yourself to be happy. We often confuse our attachment for love, but in fact it's not love. What we actually desire is to have the person in our life, or the situation for our own benefit. Therefore we are being self-centred and grasping. That is attachment.

However, as a human being, before you reach enlightenment, you will always experience attachment to some extent. What makes you or the other person start to fluster depends on how attached you or the other person becomes. A very strong attachment would strangle the relationship. For example, if you ring your partner ten times just to hear his/her voice, eventually you would annoy him/her. There is a wise level of attachment and a genuine recognition such as attachment between parents and children. You can't force non-attachment to parents, as it's only natural since they have brought you up. However, you'll have to work at your own pace too, recognising that things are impermanent if you want to deal with attachment. And when they leave, which they will, you will have to let them go.

There is a paradox in how attachment affects a relationship. If there is someone who is very attached in a relationship, you feel like leaving because it makes you feel really uncomfortable and feel like you don't have any space at all. The more the person is attached to you, the less you want to be around that person. The grasping actually destroys the thing, which you want the most. Romance can be an act of grasping when you try to mend a relationship that you know is not going to work out for you. If romance is an act of giving, however, you might find a different outcome.

It is not necessarily romance versus reality, but it is how you work with the romance if you have a romantic bone in your body. Connection is a mutual exchange of energy. Whatever the expression is or whatever the other person enjoys depend on your definition or your attitude or whatever your motivation is. Being solely romantic to someone you just met to get him/her into bed is tainted. However if it's a genuine regard for their feelings and they are reciprocating, maybe it's a source of compassion, a generosity of the heart.

Reality is defined as a real thing or fact. What distinguishes reality and fact is that the latter is more apparent. When we are at the early stage of a relationship, it is important to see if compatibility between two parties is there. Often, however, we do not see it. We are caught in our own projection. Let alone the other person, we do that with everything. It is called the 'if only' clause: "If only I have a motor car with shiny wheels, I'd be totally happy". But then after a week, when it has a scratch, it becomes a source of torture. Then a year after it would be like, "I loved this car, but now that's an outdated



model". This is how marketing works, it doesn't happen independently in the absence of ourselves, the consumers. We are pushing that projection constantly. Marketing works because human beings grasp and we project the idea that, "if only such a thing happens, then I'll be happy".

Aversion vs Attachment

"If only that person leaves my life, I'll be happy". Aversion and attachment have the same deal. What Buddhism is really teaching is to look at something squarely. However, it doesn't mean that you don't buy a nice car or own a good watch. It's never about the object, but it's about our attitude towards them. Attachment creates a binding towards something without an understanding of the reality of it. By forcing romance on someone because we want something becomes an act of grasping or attachment. If our romantic nature comes out and becomes a mutual giving on both sides, then there is no problem with that.

Detachment and non-attachment are not the same. Detachment means, "I don't care what happens to anybody, I will only look after myself". Non-attachment, on the other hand, means that we don't centre our happiness on things that are impermanent.

What's our motivation for being romantic or doing anything? If we keep coming back to it, to the state of mindfulness, we'd find ourselves easier to live with, and leading happier lives. The fundamental attitude of all beings is to have happiness. We just have to know what actual things we need to do in order to be happy. And it's only in the act of giving that actually makes us happier. It is through the act of grasping that we create our own dissatisfactions and unhappiness. So we have to work out how to give – do we give everything, or is that just a figure in our mind. If generosity is involved, is it a true generosity, or are we trying to be noticed? We have to cut through these layers. In the beginning, as we start to learn giving, we make lots of mistakes, but hopefully as we go along we make a few less, and as we make a few less mistakes, then we can go, "Ok that's a good decision, and that's not." There is a wonderful Zen saying, "When you come to a fork in the road, take it". You can't avoid taking an action completely. There is a ramification for every action.

All in all, we should keep coming back to ourselves, to check on what is our true motivation behind our action and to understand what the consequences of our actions would be. Hopefully if we have the right motivation, we would find happiness in our relationship.

Grassy in Love!

When Grassy met Hoppy, he thought he had finally met the hopper who he can share his life with, who would complete his life perfectly, and who would be his gateway to happiness.

Unfortunately for him, it was in the very nature of things that female grasshoppers aren't very romantic. All his hopes of sunbathing on a leaf together, watching the clouds roll by as the sun set upon the horizon, was quickly shattered by her demands for him to show off that perfect Olymphops jump...again...in front of her friends. He kept hoping she would change to become a more considerate hopper, while she kept hoping he would just be like the hopper he used to be for his sake, hers, and her friends. Their attachment seemed to have different time dimensions — his in the future, hers in the past.

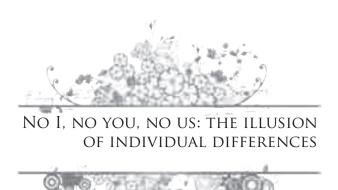
Things got worse. Grassy became more dreamy, while Hoppy became more pushy. This time, she wanted Grassy to do ten perfect back-flip hops — without a break! After the seventh, Grassy was exhausted. He kept thinking, what was the point of this? Even if he did ten hundred flips, Hoppy will still not be satisfied.

"Why'd you stop?" Hoppy asked.

"Recause I'm tired. I'm tired of fulfilling your expectations, and I'm tired of trying to change you." There was no anger in his voice. Rather, there was a sudden lightness in him.

"Then have a rest," Hoppy smiled. "Hey look, the day's going to rest too!"

They both sat on a leaf, which swayed softly in the breeze, watching the sun melt into the horizon. The moment was unplanned, but it was perfect and complete. For that moment, their world was still, and so were their minds.



by Prof. Winton Higgins

The famous American Buddhist philosopher, David Loy, recently translated the word 'Buddhism' as 'wake-up-ism'. Both literally and at a more profound level, he is quite correct. Most of us live our lives in a dream or hypnotic trance, living in a virtual reality quite different from actual reality. Our reactions are conditioned by this virtual reality, and every time we react in this way, we reproduce our own suffering and that of others. To avoid that suffering, we have to wake up. Fully.

Perhaps the central way in which we hypnotise ourselves (usually at the invitation of our culture and media) is the way we misidentify ourselves. The Buddha focused on how we falsely identify with our bodies, our immediate feelings, our perceptions, our emotions and our consciousness – the five heaps or aggregates (*kandha*) that constitute the human person in the Buddhist framework.

So long as we identify ourselves in this way, then we simply are not who we think we are, and all our choices go awry because of that. It can lead us to cut off emotionally and morally from others, and act heartlessly or even violently towards them. In particular, we fall for the delusion of separate selfhood: we believe that we are separate entities bounded by our own skins, and only 'l' matter.

Waking up from false identification

When the Buddha came to instruct his own son, Rahula, he drilled it into him: when you mindfully observe any physical sensation, any feeling, any perception, any emotion, any thought – any experience at all – tell yourself,, "This is not me, this is not mine, this is not myself. Train yourself in this, Rahula!" Eventually Rahula got it, and on that basis – of bringing his misidentification to an end – he awakened fully under the Buddha, his father's tutelage. The end of misidentification was Rahula's main 'Dhamma gate' (as the Zen tradition would say), just as it has been for countless thousands of others who have fully awakened.

Buddhism has a concept of evil, one personified by Mara, who incarnates primordial spiritual ignorance and stupidity. What he basically stands for is stuckness. We see elements of our experience as permanent – and so we are stuck, because nothing is in fact permanent. If we actually take the next step and identify (seek an enduring identity in) something fleeting, then we are even more stuck.

My particular Dhammic specialisation, insight (*vipassanā*) meditation, works through bringing to our attention the fact that absolutely everything in our experience is changing, and that way, we give up our belief in permanent things, cease to identify with them, and so unstick ourselves. We see that we are simply part of the flow, part of the swirling dance of the biosphere that produced us and will in time kill us and re-absorb our elements. To quote the Buddha again, "Nothing is worth clinging to!"

The central philosophical idea in Buddhism is cause and effect, or dependent arising (paticcasamuppāda). Our experience and we ourselves are simply points in a complex web of cause and effect, with each causal moment having simultaneous as well as knock-on effects. In insight meditation, the causal flow appears starkly for what it is — an impersonal process. There is nothing unique or personal to the concept of 'me' that I can in fact cling to, so in the end I simply let go of each element. The meditator stops clinging — it does not make any sense to do so any more. That insight does not come from philosophical conviction — it comes from direct experience constantly replicated. So ends the delusion of separate selfhood!

But if we stick to the belief in separate selfhood, then it is not just the five aggregates that we identify with. We identify with our university transcripts, our bank accounts, our shiny new cars, our family trees, our skin pigment and eye shape, our sex, our linguistic community, our country, and our flag – you name it! All those nice permanent things – you wish! And sometimes we are even prepared to kill in order to assert them.

In other words, this same stuckness of a belief in an enduring separate identity constitutes a matrix in which we proliferate any number of senses of separateness, superiority and hostility to those who do not share what we identify with. Quite a few of these culturally encouraged forms of identification lead to very bad behaviour indeed, such as the exclusion and subordination of women, racism, religious intolerance, ethnic conflict, and wars of conquest and nationalistic vainglory.

The Buddha emphasised how the deluded mind – the mind stuck in belief in separate selfhood – proliferates its delusion: a mechanism he called papañca. Once the idea of separate identity takes hold, there is nothing stopping it endlessly enhancing and reproducing itself, rather like a virus.

Separate identity and stupidity

In the Buddhist tradition, evil is personified in the mythical figure of Mara, who is often referred to in the Canon as 'the evil one', though his name literally translates as 'the killer'. He is not diabolically evil; rather, he is stupid and spiritually ignorant. In the Pali Canon, when he repeatedly tries to entice the Buddha or his fully awakened disciples, he comes across as a laughing stock; he simply is not in their league, and never makes it to first base.

But he represents our very human tendency to get stuck in our greed, hatred and delusion borne of belief in separate selfhood; and to then proliferate our stuckness. Separate identity leads straight into what the Tibetan Book of the Dead nicely describes as 'misleading, stupefying passions'.

While Buddhism may be the only spiritual tradition to pinpoint false identification as the root cause of suffering and wrongdoing, it is not the only one to see evil essentially as stuckness. As the great Dhamma teacher, Stephen Batchelor points out in his book Living with the Devil, it is the essence of the Christian conception of evil too.

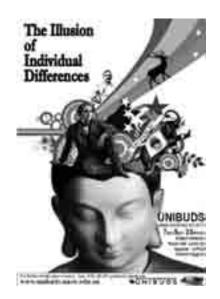
He cites that great classic, Dante's Inferno, a poetic description of the fiery 'circles' or layers of hell where the wicked are punished according to their sins. But right down on the bottom floor we come to the engine room of evil, as it were. Here the dramatic image is Satan, 'the king of the vast kingdom of all grief', stuck up to his chest – frozen and trapped – in the middle of a vast plain of ice, vainly flapping his six enormous batlike wings, unable to move¹. It is a striking image for what it means to be stuck in a separate identity of any kind, be it individual or collective!

Earlier I referred to clinging (*upādāna*). Another good translation today would be obsession. This is another central idea in the Dhamma, because clinging/obsession supports separate-identity formation. The Buddha emphasised in particular our clinging, not just to material things and elements

1. Stephen Batchelor, Living with the devil: a meditation on good and evil (New York: Riverhead Books, 2004), p.15

of experience, but also to views (ditthi). The more opinionated we are, the more we think we know who we are, and how different we are from others. In the end, it comes down to fanaticism, another common form of stupidity (and source of violence and suffering). Let's look at the stupidity angle in all this. Spiritual stupidity causes massive suffering in the world, and that is no laughing matter. Experts now estimate that around 200 million people were killed on the orders of public authorities during the 20th century, in wars, genocides and other atrocities – all in the service of us-against-them conflicts. To that figure, we can add the untold number of people raped, tortured, wounded and psychologically damaged in those conflicts.

But often it is precisely humour that pricks the balloon and exposes the stupidity involved for what it is. Think of Charlie Chaplin's work of wartime cinematic comic genius, The Great Dictator, which did so much to expose the ludicrousness of Hitler and Nazi racism in the eyes of tens of millions, in real time. Let's have a look at some examples of destructive identification and how truly ludicrous they are.



Narcissism, sexism and racism as forms of stupidity

First example: today's Western culture promotes the delusion of separate individual identity as a way of boosting consumerism, and it leads to a widespread and destructive personality disorder called narcissism. Each narcissist believes he or she is the centre of the universe, that everything that happens around them is about 'me', and so they really cannot acknowledge the existence of others, their needs and their suffering. In other words, they lack morality, since morality is all about responsibly being with others.

Just as Iudicrous is the history of sexism and racism, which in the Western tradition at least, have tended over the last two centuries to have pursued the same themes and develop as ugly siblings. But of course sexism is much older.

Men began oppressing women long before recorded history, presumably because men were slightly physically stronger and did not get pregnant, and that gave them a certain advantage in a time before cars, tractors, forklift trucks and other forms of mechanical strength that made the muscly strength differential irrelevant. But once philosophy was invented and everything had to be justified, men tried to think up reasons why it was right and proper for them to oppress women.

The most important early rationaliser of sexism was Aristotle, otherwise a great thinker. But in a stupid moment, he figured that men were the true humans and women were defective men and therefore defective humans. That all-important bit of human anatomy, the penis, was upside down and inside out in the case of women, he wrote. Note here the obsession and identification – upadana again – with the penis. It would be a recurring theme in the development of both sexism and racism, as we will see.

So Aristotle established the two main themes of sexist thought: there is only one real sex (male), and women are defective versions of it. As the American historian Walter Lacqueur has shown, this was the original, one-sex model of the gender order. In the 19th century, when Western men became obsessed with empirical science and above all biology, they performed all sorts of silly tricks to show how defective women were. For instance, they would collect women's skulls and men's skulls, and fill them with grapeshot to see if women's cranial volume was less than men's. And it was, by a few cubic centimetres. Case proven: women had smaller brains, and must therefore be defective and dumb.

Nineteenth-century biologists also figured that women were madder than men because they often behaved differently to men. They suffered from hysteria, nymphomania and (paradoxically) frigidity – especially if they undertook advanced education. So women needed to live under constant male supervision, be kept away from intellectual pursuits, and treated like children.

Other scientists (and women writers, of course) debunked this nonsense mercilessly. But the one who really upset the applecart – and Aristotle's whole one-sex model – was the founder of pychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud. He shamelessly pointed out the obvious: human beings come in two

sexes, he said, and they are both equally human, with the same essential human capacities. So Freud invented a two-sex model. Which, by the way, seems to have been the Buddha's as well: women enjoy all the spiritual capacity men have. Freud had many women friends and patients, but he did not find them any madder than his male ones.

But of course, sexism is about separate gendered identity and power, and so is not susceptible to reason. Unfortunately. And sexism continues to wreak suffering and injustice in every human society.

And what of sexism's ugly kid brother, racism? In the Western tradition, racism began in the late 18th-century with wholesale European colonialism. Again, a rationale had to be found for the way people from the continent of Europe should invade other countries and oppress their populations. The rationale chosen was that non-Europeans were like women – simple, childlike, good at doing simple tasks, but unable to run their own affairs, and especially in need of being civilised.

True to form, 19th-Century Biology trotted out the skulls and the grapeshot again, and made all this prejudicial nonsense into objective empirical science by comparing the cranial volumes of Europeans and non-Europeans. But there was an even more ludicrous twist: the obsession with penises came back. The biologists (now turned physical anthropologists) acknowledged that you needed a penis to be fully human, but that penis must not be too big.

Conclusion

So separate identity, be it individualistic, sexist, tribal or religious, is extremely destructive because it closes down the heart and the mind, and so quickly leads to violence – either open violence or banal, everyday oppression. It is a form of stupidity and stuckness that the Buddha understood so well. It is about clinging to symbols of difference – to flags, icons, religious imagery, opinions, and penises (of a certain size) – that become embedded in our culture and folk myths. At the bottom of the issue, this sort of identification is about failing to see the fleeting nature of everything we identify with and the self-defeating nature of clinging.

On an every day basis we need to intercept our own thoughts and feelings. Every time we find ourselves identifying with something that separates us from fellow citizens of the biosphere, we need to promptly remember, "This is not me, this is not mine, this is not myself. Nothing is worth clinging to!"

No Grass, No Grassy ...

The first time Grassy played hide-and-seek, he went missing for six hours. "How do you play hide-and-peek?" He had asked so innocently.

"It's hide-and-seek." Ratta Atta explained the game like an expert. Atta was a furry field rat with a soft pink nose that wrinkled when he laughed – which was often. He was Grassy's favourite playmate and always had something new to share with Grassy.

"First," Atta continued, "I'll close my eyes and count to ten, while you go and hide in the bushes. Then I'll come looking for you. If I find you, then you're IT!"

"Oh no!" Grassy cried. "I don't want to be IT! I want to be me!" Atta laughed. "Then you better hide yourself properly and make sure I don't find you!"

Grassy must've been very afraid of being IT, because for six hours, he was no where to be found. It wasn't a wonder. He was green. The grass was green. And he is the Grasshopper Who Can't Sit Still after all. Every time Atta was nearly upon him, he would hop lightly away from Atta's wrinkling nose.

"Grassy!" Atta cried in exasperation. "Where are you?"
"Here!" His reply seemed so close, yet he was no where to be seen. "Right here!"

"I can't see you!"
"I'm right in front of you! In the grass!"

"Grassy, I can't tell the difference between you and the grass! Get away from the grass so I can see you as you are."
"But I am as I am."

"No you're not. Separate from the grass, Grassy."
"I can't. If there's no grass, then there's no Grassy." He was obviously having a lot of fun.
Atta knew there was only one way to win this game.

"Grassy." Atta's voice turned stern, a threat brooding in his throat. "If you don't come out right now, then you're IT!"
"That's not fair! You said if you find me then I'm IT. Otherwise I can still be me."

"Well if you stay in the grass and I can't tell the difference between you and the grass, then aren't you already IT?"

"No! IT is not me, IT is not mine, and IT is not myself."

"Then what is you?"

Grassy smiled. "I am not Atta!"

[&]quot;Atta" in Pali literally means "self", but is sometimes translated as "soul" or "ego". Its opposite is "Anatta", which is translated as "non-self" or "not-self".



by Venerable Neng Rong

1. We are like a magnet

Today the topic we are going to talk about is 'The Magnetic Self'. Why do we say that we are like a magnet? If we look deeply into ourselves, isn't it true that we are attracted to a variety of things in our daily lives? We yearn for praise, beautiful music, palatable foods and the cozy sofa. We have attachments to everything that enters our lives, and we expect them to fulfil our desires. When an attachment is formed, we would cling onto it and would not let go.

So aren't we like a magnet that keeps attracting the material world to ourselves? When our basic needs are fulfilled, we still keep looking for more. There is the never-ending pursuit of money, status, power, and relationships. We can't release ourselves from these attachments, not even the ones that we dislike. For example, we cannot forget the criticism against us and keep reliving the frustration over it.

2. Why are we like a magnet? For what purpose? What is the result of it?

Why do we act like a magnet? Some people say it is for survival, for the family, better society and happier lives! But do we get true happiness from all these attachments? The pursuit of money, power and status only gives us temporary happiness. There is always a nagging sense of insecurity deep down in our heart. For example, when we find a new job we feel happy. But then we start to worry that we might clash with our colleagues, or what if a new boss takes over the company? The things we pursue do not give us lasting peace and security because they are conditional. When the conditions change, the momentary peace we have will be affected.

We are always in struggle with ourselves. We understand that everything is impermanent, changing, and conditional, but at the same time we are not heedful to the truth. We wished otherwise,

hoping that things are ever-lasting. We constantly live in this struggle.

There is a lot of tension in the pursuit of money, status etc. When we are working arduously to obtain status, we are troubled with jealousy, fear and other negative emotions. So when we think that we are pursuing happiness, in reality, we are attracting unhappiness. Even the momentary happiness gained is not true happiness.

Hence this magnet in us has brought us much pain and suffering. When someone dear to us has to separate from us due to changes in conditions, we suffer. But the pain does not come from the departure. Rather it comes from our unwillingness to relinquish our attachment. Furthermore, when we failed to get what we long for, we also feel disappointed.

3. Is it true that the stronger the magnetic power, the more strength and happiness it will bring?

Some people might think, "Maybe my magnet is not strong enough. If I could become a stronger magnet and attract everything I want, I would become happier!" But is that the truth? When we examine the world, greed only lead to more fights and wars. History taught us that even the mightiest kingdom has its time to ruin. No matter how much power or how vast the territory is, it does not bring true happiness. In fact, the stronger the magnet, the more suffering we have. We are confused. We work hard for happiness but in the end we all become worried and tensed. Why?

4. What is the problem? Where does our magnetism/magnetic power come from?

All sentient beings have a common goal – happiness – but because we lack wisdom, our approach in pursuing this goal is always imperfect and not necessarily correct. Some even adopt illegal practices that cause harm to oneself and others. From the Buddhist viewpoint of cause and effect, if we want to reap the fruits of happiness but we have planted the seeds of suffering, how is it possible for us to harvest happiness in the end? So why does this happen? This is due to our lack of understanding and wrong approach in pursuing happiness.

Why do we use the wrong methods to seek happiness? Why do we act like a magnet and attract both the good and the bad, which make us suffer? Where does this magnetism come from? Some people say it comes from greed. But where does greed come from? If we continue to analyse in

this way, we can see that in fact all comes from selfattachment.

5. Does magnetism come from 'self'? What is the basis of 'self'?

Buddhist analysis discovers that our mind and body are made up of five aggregates (khandha) - matter, sensation, perception, volition and consciousness. Matter is our body, and sensation is our mental feelings and physical sensations. When there is sensation, consciousness (of the sensation) arises and leads to concept – i.e. perception arises. The meaning of volition is mental-will action — the judging, decision-making process that ultimately lead to physical and verbal action. The function of consciousness is to know, to be aware of the phenomenon of matter, sensation perception and volition. In other words, our mind and body are the combination and interactions of these five aggregates. The body is the matter, and sensation, perception, volition and consciousness are the mental aspects. The five aggregates give us a false sense of 'self', and we become self-centred and attach to the 'self'. This sense of 'self' exists because we mistakenly think that it is real. We have strong affection for our 'self'. Buddhism calls this 'self-attachment'. Because we love ourselves, we start to expand our love to things and people belonging or related to us, and we expect to possess more and more. The desire for external material things is called 'attachment to phenomena'.

Under careful analysis, this sense of self has created several problems. The first problem is 'self-ignorance'. Self-ignorance means ignorance about the truth that this sense of self is created by five aggregates, and hence thinking that it is real. Because of this self-ignorance, the second problem arises - attachment to this view of a real 'self' - self-view, which is wrong view. With selfignorance and self-view, comes self-pride. Selfpride means to be proud of oneself, having the concept that one is always right and better than others. And there is self-love – having greed upon oneself and one's possessions. Self-ignorance, self-view, self-pride and self-love are called the Four Fundamental Afflictions/Defilements. Before we attain enlightenment, these Four Fundamental Afflictions restrictively control us from moment to moment, leading us to a lot of unease and suffering.

We have great attachment to our body. Even at the moments before dying we still wish to live a second longer. This type of wish is called 'craving/desire for continuous existence'. 'Self-attachment' and 'Desire for Continuous Existence' will keep us transmigrating in samsara. All this is created by the sense of self. We lack the understanding of self, which allows self-attachment and attachment to phenomena, as well

as afflictions such as self-ignorance, self-view, self-pride and self-love, to develop. All these afflictions have caused us transmigrating endlessly in the cycle of life and death - samsara.

6. Why is it called 'non-self'?

We have just talked about the strength of our magnetic attraction manifested from the lack of understanding of the truth of self. In order to be freed from this magnet, we must first realise the truth of self. The self is composed of five aggregates with the body constantly interacting with the mind. The self is not a single entity but is conditioned by various factors. The five aggregates are constantly changing. Take our body as an example: every cell in the body is constantly undergoing metabolic activity. We breathe every minute, and our heart never stops beating. There is no single moment where the matters stop changing. This is the same with sensation, perception, volition and consciousness: they are all conditional. Hence our body and mind are a phenomenon of dependent origination, changing from moment to moment. So where is our 'self'? Where is the 'self' that is firm and permanent?

The 'self' that we have taken for granted is actually made up of five aggregates that are ever-changing. Hence, from the Buddhism viewpoint, there is no substance in 'self'. But it does not mean 'self' is void or don't exist. Rather, it just points out that we cannot find a permanent reference point in 'self'. So we call this property 'non-self'. We don't understand 'non-self', but we attach to it as a 'self', thereby inflating self-ignorance, self-view, self-pride and self-love, and cultivating unwholesome mental, body and speech actions that bring forth suffering.

Furthermore, 'self' implies that it has full ability to control and decide for itself. If we look deeply into ourselves, how independent are we? Can we really survive without any external help? Can we really control our thoughts and emotions? The answer is 'no'. We need a lot of external support to survive; our thoughts and emotions are ever-changing. This 'self' of ours is ever-changing, and we do not have full control over ourselves. Hence, there is no permanent, independent, self-mastery 'self'. The 'self' we meant is actually 'non-self'.

7. Without 'self' would be no strength?

Some people may ask, 'we also strive for our 'self', so when we realise 'non-self' and let go of 'self', would we become powerless and unmotivated?'

When we realise the truth of 'self', we would see that we are actually dependent on various

conditions to survive, and we are only part of thesociety. We would become more considerate of others and also would approach things in an objective manner. On the other hand, if we always think of ourselves as special and the best, we would be very subjective and protective of ourselves and our views. It is difficult for us to listen to others objectively, and hence easily spark frictions in relationship. When we are less attached to 'self', we would be less self-defensive, we would be able to communicate with others in a better way and our relationships would be harmonious.

When we let go of 'self', our views would not be conditioned and 'blocked' by 'l', but become more open. We can consider and think from different angles, and can approach matters in a more objective way. We would become more integrated rather than fragmented. We would be less jealous of others' success, and live a life that is more free and at ease. If we are attached to our 'self', our capability would be conditioned and limited to the 'self'. However, if we can let go of our attachment to 'self', our power/strength will become boundless. We are not bounded by our 'self', but would be able to strive for the benefits of all sentient beings. Hence realising 'non-self' would not reduce our motivation, rather, our capabilities would become greater.

8. The practice from 'self' to 'non-self'

The Buddha tried to explain 'non-self' using various methods, so that people would understand and not attach to 'self'. So how can we realise the truth of 'non-self' and let go of our attachments?

First we have to listen to more Dhamma talks, and cultivate our wisdom through listeing, contemplating and practising the teachings of the Buddha. Listening to the noble truths of impermanence, non-self and dependent origination regularly would strengthen our comprehension of *dhamma*. Contemplating means thinking. After listening to the dhamma, we should think and apply dhammas in our daily lives to guide our actions. This would further strengthen our understanding of *dhamma*.

Finally we need to practise meditation to cultivate right mindfulness and right concentration to help us witness the truth. With the focus of mind, we could transform the dhammas we heard or learnt into experiential form of dhammas, the true dhammas. These are the steps to gain realisation, through listening, contemplating and practising.

Reducing attachment to ourselves can facilitate the realisation of 'non-self'. 'To always put ourselves in others' shoes' is a good way to start practising reducing self-attachment. If we always try to put

ourselves in others' position and be considerate about others, our self-centredness would become lesser. We have to understand that all sentient beings long for happiness, but most people, including ourselves, are ignorant and would sometimes react in a way that irritates others. So we should learn to forgive others, reduce our selfattachment and self-pride. If we can regularly observe and review our actions according to dhammas, reduce our self-centredness and develop loving kindness and compassion for all sentient beings, our actions would one day approximate the *bodhisattas*', whose love is selfless and unconditioned for all sentient beings. The path of the bodhisatta can only be perfected through realising the truth of 'non-self'.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, our magnetism to things comes from the attachment to 'self'. The Buddha had tried to expound through various means highlighting that 'self' is impermanent and conditional, and called this phenomenon 'non-self'. It is hoped that everyone can break through self-attachment. We should understand that although the 'self' does give us some power, the power from 'non-self' is boundless. We should try to always put ourselves in others' shoes and be considerate of others. We should always listen, analyse and contemplate, and practise the dharma. When we can let go of attachment to 'self', our lives would be free and at ease.



磁性的我

上能^下融法師



今天我們要談的題目是: 磁性的我。 為什麽說 我們像塊磁鐵?如果我們仔細反觀自己,在生活 我們是不是常常被許多事物吸引,心裡有很 多欲求? 我們期盼聽到讚美的話, 美妙的音樂, 我們渴望吃到美味的菜餚,享受舒適的沙發。 我 們對周遭的環境有種種喜愛,希望一切事物都能 迎合我們的需求。 當我們遇到合意的事物,我們 即緊捉不捨。

我們是不是像磁鐵一樣拼命吸收外界的事物來滿 足我們的欲望呢? 當我們攝取自己基本起居之需 要後,我們還不斷響往更好的。我們對外界的許 多事物一金錢, 地, 權利, 名譽, 地位, 眷屬等 無止境的追求。不只如此, 我們對一些不歡喜的 例如,别人對我們的批評, 事情也牢握不放。 我們總是耿耿於懷。

2. 為甚麼我如磁鐵? 為了甚麼? 結果如何?

為什麼我們會像磁鐵一般拼命吸收外面的一切? 有些人說這是為了生存、為了家庭、為了社會的 進步、為了得到更美好、更快樂的生活! 但是我 們拼命吸收之後就真的快樂了嗎?金錢,地位等 的追求, 往往只能給我們暫時性的快樂。我們心 底裡還是有一種不安的感覺。舉個例子, 找到了一份新的工作,我們應該是開心的!但我 們又擔心如果與同事格格不入, 工作環境不理 想,或者那一天換了老板,怎麼辦呢?我們所追 求的事物不能給我們長久的安全感, 它是條件性 的。當因緣條件改變時,我們所擁有的片刻安寧 也受到波及。

我們很矛盾。我們心裡明白一切是變動的,條件 性的, 但同時,却又不願接受這個事實,希望它 能夠永恒。我們常常在這樣的矛盾中掙扎。

在追求權利, 名譽, 眷屬等外界事物的過程中, 我們常常給自己帶來許多壓力。當我們拼命努力 追求權力地位的當兒,往往亦被嫉妒,恐懼及 其他令我們不安的情緒所困擾。因此, 在追求我 們認為能帶給我們快樂的事物的同時, 也附帶了 許多的不快樂, 而我們所得到片刻快樂也不是真 正的快樂。

我們這塊磁鐵給我們帶來許多的痛苦與煩惱。 當我們心愛的眷屬因為因緣的變遷而必須與我 們分離時,我們心裡非常不捨,悲傷與難過。 這痛苦並不來自與愛人的分離, 而是來自於 我們的執著, 放不下。 再者, 當我們得不到 所追求的事物時, 我們也感到頹喪懊惱。

3. 磁力越強就越有力量,越快樂?

有些人會想: "這可能是因為我的磁力不够。 如果加强磁力把所有我要的東西都吸過來,或 許我就快樂了!"然而,事實真如此嗎?放眼 觀看這世界,不斷的追求,無止境的貪欲,往 往只會帶來更多的鬥爭與戰亂。我們翻開歷 史, 就知道再强盛的王國也有衰敗的一天。無 論多大的權勢, 多遼闊的領土, 都不能帶給我 們真正的快樂。其實增强磁力只會帶給我們更 多的煩惱。

我們很矛盾。我們不斷吸收,追求, 到快樂。但這追求反而帶給我們許多的煩惱與 不安。這是為什麼呢?

4. 問題出在那里? 我的磁性從那里來?

所有眾生都有共同的目標一希望得到快樂, 但是,因為我們的智慧不足,使我們在追求的 過程中不得正確與圓滿, 有些人甚至採取不合 法的手段以達到目標, 這不只給自己帶來煩 惱,也給他人帶來痛苦。從佛教之因果角度來 看,我們希望得到快樂的果,但所種的因却往 往不與我們所期待的果相應, 快樂怎麼可能來 臨呢? 為什麼會是這樣呢? 這意味着我們之理 解與追求的方法出了問題。

為什麼我們會採用錯誤的方法去追取快樂呢? 為什麼我們會像磁鐵一樣, 好壞一并吸收, 而使自己沉重難受呢? 這磁性來自何處? 有些 人說它來自人類的貪染。那麼我們的貪染又從 何來呢? 如果我們繼續分析下去,我們可以覺 察到這一切其實來自於我們的'自我'。

5. 磁性從'我'來?'我'的本質又是甚 麼?

佛教分析我們的身心為五蘊之和合。五蘊包括 識。'色'是指我們的 了色,受,想,行, 肉體, '受'則指我們的感受。有了感受之後 會起認識作用,構成概念,也就是五蘊中的 '想'。而'行'的定義是'造作',主要是

'思'心所的作用,即指意志的活動一經心思的審慮,決斷,而發動身語的行為。'識'則是了别的作用。換言之,我們身心是這五方面結合運作而成。也就是說,我們的身心是物質(色色藥作而成。也就是說,我們的身心是體優。這五方面結合體。我們產生一個'我'的错覺,被不可以自我感力。這自我感之產生是因為我們把'我'。這自我感之產生是因為我們把'我'當實在的。我們對這個'我'有強烈疼惜與保護的心。這份熱愛自己的心理佛家稱之為'當護的心。這份熱愛自己,繼而也愛情與我們養別。因為我們愛情自己,繼而也愛情與我們有關的一切,對於外界的一切,我們希望越佔越多,期盼它們都能成為我們所有。這對外界事物的需求與佔有欲即被稱為'境界愛'。

我們對於自己身體無限的疼惜與執著,到臨终前依然渴望能活下去。這種希望繼續生存的欲望叫做'後有愛'。'自體愛'與'後有愛'使我們不斷輪迴生死。這些都就是因為我們的'自我',進而引申自體愛,境界愛,以及我痴,我見,我慢,我愛等無明煩惱,使我們不斷在生死中輪轉。

剛才我們談到這塊磁鐵的磁性(染著)來自於我們無法看清'自我'的真相而產生。所以要擺脱這磁性而活得自在,我們首先了解'自我'的真面目。這個'我'是由五蘊,也就是物質與精神共同運作而成的。它不是一個單獨的個體,而是由很多因素組合而成的。每一個時刻這五蘊都在變化中。就拿我們的肉體(色)來說,我們的一份鐘都在新陳代謝。我們每一分鐘都在呼吸,心臟也不停的運作,没有一刻這'色'是由許多因緣條件組合而成。如此看來,我們的身心是由種種條件的和合,同時隨着時間不斷在變遷中。那麼,甚麼是'我'?那一刻才是實在、固定不變的'我'呢?

我們所謂的'我',其實是五蘊和合體,無時無刻都在變化當中。所以,從佛教的角度來說, '我'並没有實在性的。但請大家不要誤會,佛教並不說'我'是空虚,不存在的,而是指我們無法在這個'我'當中找到任何一個固定點。因此,方便稱這種現象為'無我'。但是,我們不明白'無我',而對'我'強烈染著,因此造成我痴,我見,我慢,我愛的膨脹,發動不清淨的身,口,意行為,給我們帶來許多不必要的苦果。

再來, '我'意味着'主宰力'與'支配力'。反觀自己,我們的自主能力有多強?我們真的能不依靠外界的任何條件來生存嗎?再往內觀照,我們有多少的自主能力?我們能完全控制自己的思想與情緒嗎?答案是我們做不到。我們需要許多外界的條件來支持我們的生存,我們的思想與情緒不斷在改變,'我'也随著時間一直在變化,我們不能完全主宰與控制自己。所以,世界上没有一個常住,獨存,完全自主的'我'。我們所謂的'我'其實是'無我'的。

7. 沒有'我'是否就沒有力量了?

有些人會問,我們都為了'我'而努力,當我們體悟'無我',把'自我'放下之後,會不會因此失去動力呢?

當我們透視'自我'的真相,明白我們的生存實際上是有賴許多因緣條件的支助,我們其會中的人會不如自己想像的那麼偉大,我們只是社會中的一份子,我們將更容易體諒别人,更能站對人,更能對別人,更能對大人的立場來考慮問題,也更能客觀地最大,我們的自我見解就會很强,很自然的一個人的意見,有我們的自我是解於不過,一個人的意見,一個人的意見,一個人的意思,一個人的意思,一個人的意思,一個人的意思,一個人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的意思,一個人人的一個人人的一個人。

當我們把'我'放下,我們的視野不再被'我'的意識所佔據而變得更廣闊。我們不再被'自我'的角度出發,而能從各種不同的角度客觀的考量問題。我們會更注重整體,不單是我們自己。我們也比較不會計較别人的东型是否比我們好,對別人的嫉妒心與憎恨心也會相對的減少,我們會活得更自在。若我們事事以'我'為出發點,我們的推動力只局限在'我'的範圍內。當我們瞭解了'無我',以大眾的利益為出發點,沒有私我的意識,我們的力量將是無限的。因此,了解'無我'不但

不會使我們使去動力, 反之, 我們的力量會更大。

8. 從'我'到'無我'的修習

佛陀透過不同方式來說明'我'的真相,希望眾生能因此明白,而不要對'我'太過執著。那麼,我們應該如何修學才能提升自己對'無我'的認知,從染著與執著於'我'的現狀解脫出來,把'我'放下,透視'無我'的真理呢?

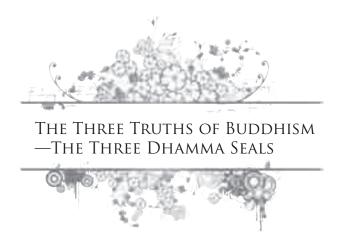
首先,我們要多聽聞佛法,透過聞,思,修來培養及啟發智慧。 '聞'就是指聽經聞法,多聞熏習無常、無我、緣起的道理,加强我 們對佛法的認識與了解。'思'指思考。在聽聞佛法之後,在日常生 活中實踐及思考佛法,反觀我們的言行舉止,更深一層的體會佛法。 然後,修習禪定,將心静下來,觀照佛法。這樣,漸漸的把我們之前 所聽聞的佛法轉化為真實智慧。這就是聞,思,修,證的過程。唯 有智慧才能讓我們透視'我'的真相。

減少對自我的染著是幫助我們趨入無我智慧的起步。自通之法則是減少以自我為中心的一個很好修行方法。在修學佛法的過程中,如果我們能多站在他人的立場考量問題,體諒他人的感受,我們的自我中心意識就不會那麼強。我們要了解所有眾生都與我們一樣響往快樂,只是某些人或許當下被某種程度的無明所覆蓋而發動不善的行為,觸惱我們,但我們其實都是同一條船上的煩惱眾生,我們有時候也會因為煩惱而傷害或觸怒别人。因此,我們應學會體諒他人,減輕我慢與我執。常常如此反觀與學習,減少自我的膨脹及貪瞋癡等不善之念,破除自我的染著,並進一步關懷他人,培養無私的慈悲心,最後,我們可以像菩薩一樣把'我'完全放下,無條件的慈悲所有眾生一無緣大慈,同體大悲。唯有減少對自我的染著,我們才能提升自己,得到真正的自在。菩薩道的修學,也唯有徹底體悟'無我',才能達成圓滿。

9. 結語

總結的說,我們這塊磁鐵的磁性來自於我們的自我中心意識。佛陀透過種種方法來說明'我'是無常的,條件性的,並將這種現象稱為'無我'希望大家能破除對自我的執著。我們要了解不只是'我'才能給我們力量,'無我'所發揮的力量更是無限的。我們可以學習多站在他人的立場考量問題,透過自通之法與聽聞、思維及修習佛法來啟發'無我'的智慧。'我'能放下,我們的生活也將更解脫自在。





by Venerable Neng Rong

1. What is meant by the Truth? What is the Dhamma Seal?

The topic of this talk is the three Truths of Buddhism— The Three Dhamma Seals. In order to understand this topic, we need to first understand what is meant by the Truths, and the Dhamma Seals. A Truth is the truth of all phenomena--the law of the universe, which can be applied to all situations, regardless of the time and place. Therefore, the truth that can be applied in Australia will also need to be applicable in the United States of America. Take the traffic rules as an example, the Law states that drivers need to keep to the left lane in Australia, which is not the case in China, where drivers need to keep to the right. In this case, the law of driving on the left is not a Truth as it is limited geographically. Similarly, a reality that is only present within a period of time and subsequently vanishes is not the truth either as it is restricted by time.

Therefore, the Truth is the truth of all phenomena, applicable to the past, present, and future. It is the universal principle that underlies all reality here on Earth, and beyond. We can examine any situation and will find that it complies with this principle, regardless of the time and place. This is what we meant by the Truth.

So what kind of principle has held true from the beginningless of time up to today-- from before when we were born, and even before the birth of the Buddha it has been the binding law of our universe and will continue to be so in the future?

Buddhism also named these principles the Dhamma Seals. A seal is an official mark on a document, showing that it is legal, or has been officially approved. They can be used as a measure to determine the validity of the teachings we heard. These three universal characteristics/principles were realised by the Buddha. The Buddha realised that all form of existence--physical and mental, are marked by three characteristics. They can be applied in any situations, any time, and anywhere. Hence, what the

Buddha taught was no other than these three universal characteristics. Any teachings that goes against these three characteristics/principles cannot be consider the Buddha's teachings. In other words, all Buddhist teachings should comply with these three principles. Therefore, these three characteristics are also named the Three Dhamma Seals. So what are the Three Dhamma Seals?

2. The Three Dhamma Seals

2.1. Impermanence

All phenomena are impermanent. On contemplation, could we single out a single event/ phenomenon in our daily life that is not subject to change? Just a single example that defies this principle will establish that this principle—Impermanence, is not a Truth. An universal principle holds true in all space and time.

As mentioned above, all phenomena, physical or mental, are ever changing. Just looking at the world we live in, we can observe that trees grow, and flowers wither. They do not happen overnight. It is the process of imperceptible, but continuous change that gives rise to the marked differences we observe over a period of time. Also, the weather changes gradually as we move from Autumn to Winter. And even what appears to be strong and resilient buildings sprawled throughout the city do not escape the fate of impermanence. During a conversation I had earlier with a few students about the lift in Squarehouse, they complained to me that the lift is not very reliable as the building (Squarehouse) is already very old. That reminded me that Squarehouse was a rather new and important building back when I was an university student. When has it become so old, such that its lift could be rated as one of the worst in the entire campus? This demonstrated that a building, no matter how strong or resilient it is at the moment, will not be the same after 20, or 30 years of wear and tear. We may be upset when something that we own, which appeared to be strong and sturdy, becomes faulty, but this is just another example of impermanence, the imperceptible but continuous change at work. Taking a look at our world from a scientific (biological, chemical, or even physical) point of view, we will realise that everything that we see and touch is changing every moment.

Some archaeologists discovered underwater cities. Isn't that amazing! One can't help but wonder how long ago was it when this city sank onto the ocean floor. This is just another of the many examples mentioned above about the Law of Impermanence. While our external world is subject to change, so are our body and mind. We may think that our body and mind are strong and resilient. They are in fact quite fragile. For example, we fall sick when

we are caught in a cold. Why is that? How can that happen if our body is as resilient as we imagine it to be? The answer again lies in the Law of Impermanence. Our body, as strong as it appears to be, is subject to constant change. Our body and mind change with every breath. They are not the same with every inspiration, and expiration. Our thoughts changes with time too! It is the change and maturity of our thoughts that allows us to grow and move on from being a child, to being a teenager, and finally being an adult. Therefore, our physical world is impermanent, so are our body and mind.

Why does the Buddha encourage us to live in the present? This is because most of us spend much of our time either thinking about our past, or worrying about our future. We may worry about failing our exams when they are weeks away, such that we waste those precious hours worrying rather than preparing for them. What a waste of time! Time is impermanent; it is irretrievable once it is gone. We must therefore learn to live in the present! And we must know that worrying about our exam results without actual preparation is pointless. Therefore, we should turn our worry into motivation to drive us forward. Thinking about failure excessively could accelerate its occurance, and we could explain this observation with the Law of Cause and Effect. Because we waste precious time worrying incessantly about failing our exams, we are unable to create the right conditions for success to materialise. It is thus natural that failure should take its place instead. Therefore, it is not due to bad luck that we fail in this case, but it is due to the Law of Cause and Effect.

Why do we say that observing the breath is a good way to practice Buddhism? This is because observing the breath can allow us to calm our mind; and on top of that, mindful observation through this state of being could also allow us to realise the Law of Impermanence--our body is different with every in breath and out breath. How much can we control as moments after moment pass us by? The Buddha had once taught that observing the breath is a good practice to cultivate concentration, as well as to develop wisdom. It is indeed a safe and convenient way to practice Buddhism, as the breath is with us every moment.

As the saying goes "Impermanence with every thought". Are we able to be serene enough to observe the impermanent nature of every thought—every thought changes from moment to moment. Buddhist practice is something that we could incorporate into our daily life. As we close our eyes and observe our breath, watching the rise of every thought; each thought is different from the other, each breath is different from the other, our body and mind changes with time, and moments of our life turn into history as each moment pass us by. So what am I, what is the entity that we call "self"? All phenomena are important

Impermanence is the law of our universe. We simply cannot find a single incident that proves otherwise. Some may say that "love is permanent". Is that so? Love, in the romantic sense of the word is very prone to change! Others may think that parental love is permanent. Certainly, a mother will always love her children. However, the intensity of this emotion may increase or decrease with time, and may also change due to certain incidences, e.g. arguments or misunderstandings. Also, the love may be expressed in different ways, or change according to different situations. When we meet someone whom we get along initially, does it guarantee that we will be great friends forever? It is impossible! We still need to try to understand and communicate with each other. It is with increased understanding that our friendship/ relationship grows and becomes stronger. It is also with impermanence that friendships and relationships could grow and mature. A good example will be that some couples seem to be more loving towards one another with time. This is because they have a better understanding of each other's habits and personalities, thus allowing them to be more tacit and comfortable in each other's company.

Impermanence describes that everything in our universe is subjected to change. It tells us that there is hope in everything, as nothing is certain. So do not feel like it is the end of the world when we are faced with obstacles. Impermanence suggests that this situation could be changed. "Change" is neutral. It could mean changing for the better or worse. Therefore, the possibility of change brings hope to any situations. Taking a closer look through the principle of cause and effect, we could turn a bad situation around as long as we provide the right conditions for a positive outcome. The Law of Impermanence tells us the truth of all phenomena, and it also reminds us to be positive and motivated at all times. Therefore, do not be apathetic and indifferent just because we are taught in Buddhism that everything is impermanent. We need to understand the real purpose of teaching us this principle; it is to remind us that things are changing with every moment and time waits for no one. Therefore, it is impertinent that we make the most of every moment, to understand the Law of Impermanence, to develop our wisdom, and to achieve total liberation and freedom.

If we could gain complete understanding of the Law of Impermanence, we will be able to understand all phenomena in our world. As various causes and conditions come together at a particular time and place, they will manifest as what appears to be a stable state, to make up what we perceive as an object/phenomenon etc. This object/phenomenon will then disintegrate and finally disappear over time. The disappearance does not happen overnight. The object/phenomenon undergoes constant change--as existing causes and conditions change, and with the injection of new causes and conditions into the system. In the event of a significant change, the various causes and conditions will give rise to a different outcome. The old object/phenomenon seemed to have disappeared, as a new outcome takes its place. Therefore, the Buddha describes this process as 'transformation cessation'. That the disappearance of an object/phenomenon is due to the emergence of a new outcome in place of the old through the process of change.

Our lives follow the same principle. Buddhism believes that the Law of Cause and Effect works throughout our lives - from the past, to the present, and to the future. Sometimes we may find it difficult to attain our goals even when we have worked very hard. However, there are others who seem to have things go their way without trying very hard. One reason could be that we lack wisdom, such that we are unskilful, resulting in us spending a long time accomplishing the task. Another reason could be due to the merits that we have accumulated in our previous life, thus affecting the ease of achieving success in this lifetime.

We could now see that our past efforts affect us in this life time. If we immerse ourselves in self-pity, just because it is difficult to accomplish anything despite our efforts, and becomes weak and unwilling to put in anymore effort, we can be sure that our life will only get worse. However, if we could understand that our current situation is due to our lack of effort in the previous life, we will work even harder now to make up for our past. There might not be much improvement initially; however positive change will occur over time. In addition, we need to understand what we are trying to change. If the past affects our present, what area do we need to work on (i.e. what conditions are we trying to create) in order to create a better future? We need to expand our understanding of the Law of Impermanence to include the past, present and future lives. In this way, our perspectives could be broadened. We ought to have a positive outlook on life, as it is ever-changing, and is full of hope!

2.2 Non-Self

The Law of Impermanence explains that everything is constantly changing. So why is everything changing every moment? This is because everything is made up of causes and conditions, therefore they are subjected to changes. Everything that is subjected to causes and conditions are also without "Self". The concept of Self suggests self-mastery-- the ability to havetotal control on one's own self and others. At the

same time, it implies total independence-not having the need to rely on anybody or any conditions. If we are totally independent, we should have absolute control over ourselves. Looking back, we were learning about observing our breaths, it seemed easy in theory, but in practice can we really control ourselves not to think of anything else, and concentrating only on our breaths? We cannot even control our own thoughts! Therefore, we do not have the ability to control ourselves totally, nor are we independent. In addition to that, we are also constantly changing. Therefore, we are Non-Self.

Buddha contemplated on the notion of "Self" and realised that it is not really there. Why is that? This is because we are a result of many conditions coming together; they are constantly changing, and we do not have control over them. Because our body is one of the many phenomena in this universe, it is subject to change. Even the Buddha's body went through the process of becoming old and weak, and finally, entered into Parinibbana. Our body is impermanent; it will eventually become weak and disintegrate. Therefore the Self is not independent; it is not unchanging. We, however, do not understand this, and thus, we are very much attached to our sense of "Self".

Buddha taught that everything in our universe do not have a "Self", which means that all phenomena—our external environment, as well as our body and mind, are due to the combination of causes and conditions, are not independent, and do not have a fixed identity at anytime. As the Sutta goes "Impermanence brings suffering, suffering implies Non-Self". Impermanence always seems to create an uncomfortable feeling in us; it causes a lot of suffering and unsatisfaction. As we have mentioned above, everything in this world is impermanent and subject to change. However, due to our ignorance, we fail to understand this truth and we therefore tend to cling and grasp onto things as we go through life, resulting in our suffering and unsatisfaction. Realising the truth of Impermanence is the key to our liberation from the cycle of endless birth and death (Samsara cycle). Non-Self could also be applied to nonliving things, such as a pen. A pen exists because of many causes and conditions coming together to form this temporary steady state. However, as it does not have feelings like us humans, it does not experience any suffering. Hence, the phrase "Impermanence is suffering, Suffering implies Non-Self." is directed to us, the sentient beings who have feelings.

2.3 Nibbana

Achieving Nibbana is to be rid of all problems and troubles. In our last session we have talked about the root of all problems—the sense of Self. Our attachment to "Self" results in the development of self-love, self-pride, self-view and self-ignorance, and these give rise to greed, hatred and delusion. The sense of "Self" is the root of all problems. Only when we have understood the true meaning of Non-Self, to realise the truth of all phenomena, will we be able to achieve the ultimate peaceful state of Nibbana. Nibbana is a state which is free of suffering, beyond time and space, and of total liberation. Some Suttas define Nibbana as follows: "Nibbana is the cessation of greed, hatred, and delusions". Achieving Nibbana refers to the state of being without suffering, attachment to Self, greed, hatred and delusions; being totally calm, peaceful and free.

Some may think that the cessation of Self, greed, hatred and delusions implies the absence of motivations in our lives. In reality, our power becomes unlimited and infinite when we have attained the state of Nibbana! However, this state is beyond our imagination at the moment. The state of Nibbana describes the truth of all phenomena. All phenomena in our universe is impermanent and ever-changing, they are made up of causes and conditions. They are at ease with themselves. It is us who created the sense of "Self", and our attachment to "Self" resulted in a flood of problems. Some may also believe that we must eliminate or remove something from ourselves in order to enter the state of Nibbana. In reality, we will attain the state of Nibbana when we have finally understood the Law of Impermanence and Non-Self, and realized the truth of all phenomena. There is nothing to be lost or gain, everything is always as such.

3. Conclusion

In addition to the Law of Impermanence, Non-Self, and Nibbana, the Sutta sometimes include "Suffering" as the fourth Dhamma Seal. All phenomena in our world are subject to change, our feelings are also subject to change, attachment to anyone of them will result in suffering. Therefore, the Law of Suffering can also be explained by the Law of Impermanence. For this reason, the Three Dhamma Seals of Impermanence, Non-Self and Nibbana are sufficient. The Law of Suffering is directed to those of us who are more attached to our emotions, as it highlights the aspect of emotional suffering.

Although we tend to speak of the Three Dhamma

Seals as separate entities, they are, however, inseparable; they are inter-connected. How are they linked? The answer lies in the Law of Non-Self. Impermanence arises because all phenomena are not independent on their own; they are made up of causes and conditions, and as a result, are everchanging; they do not have a fixed state, they do not have a "Self". Therefore, the Law of Non-Self gives rise to impermanence. The ability to understand fully and realize the Law of Non-Self--that nothing is absolute and unchanging, allows us to achieve Nibbana. In this state of being, there is no arising and falling, nor birth and death. As in the absence of Self, there is no arising and falling, nor birth and death. Therefore, the concept of causes and conditions and Non-Self flows through the Three Dhamma Seals.

The Three Dhamma Seals are very important in the Buddha's teaching. It is hoped that all of us can understand them, and using them as a guide to determine the right teachings of the Buddha, to establish right faith/confidence and right understanding, culvate and develop our wisdom, and to achieve a life of real peace and ease.





佛教的三個真理一三法印



1. 何謂真理?何謂法印?

我們今天要談的是佛教的三個真理一三法印。什麼叫做真理? 什麼叫做法印? 真理是不變的道理。換句話說,這個道理用在任何場合,任何地方,任何時間都應該是正確的。而不是在澳洲可行,到了美國就不行。譬如:開車要靠左,這在澳洲是正確,但到中國就行不通了。這樣的道理就不能叫作真理。因為它受到空間的限制。同時,真理應該是在任何時候,無論現在或過去,甚至到未來都是正確的。有些事情在過去是正確,可是對現代的社會来說是不對的,這也不算真理。因為它受到時間的局限。

所謂真理就是它本来就是如此。整個宇宙的 現象就是如此,不管過去到現在的任何時 候,任何地方,只要随手拈一件事物来測 試,都能符合這個道理。它本来就是如此, 必然是如此,放之四海也都還是如此。而不 是只能用於某一個時代,某一個時間,某一 個空間而已。這個道理應該是在任何時候, 任何情况下都能適用的,才叫真理。

那麼,什麼樣的原則是從過去到現在,甚至 從我們還没出生,佛陀還没出生之前,已經 是宇宙現象所依循的法則,現在是如此,以 後還是如此的呢?

這樣的真理也稱為法印。法印就是印證事物'印章'。 三法印是佛教中很重要的教義。我們可以用它来判斷所聽聞到的教理是否究竟正確,就像印證一樣。這三個法印是佛陀所覺悟的三個真理。無論在那個時候,那一個空間,世間的一切現象都不離此三個時候,那一個空間,世間的一切現象都不離此三法印。 所以,佛所說之法不離此三個真理,若有人所說的法不符合這三個真理,就可以做佛法。這三個真理是用来印證佛法的三個道理,又叫三法印。這三個道理是什麼呢?

2. 三法印

1) 諸行無常

所有現象都是無常變化的。我們能不能在日常生活中找出一件事情是常恆不變的?只要我們能够找出一件東西是不遵守無常法則的,我們就可以推翻這個無常的道理,它就不能叫做真理。真理應該能够放之四海還是如此的。

'行'是指一切生滅變化的現象。所有的 現象,都不曾有一瞬間的停止,無常生滅 變化,這就是諸行無常。現象,包括物質與 精神,常常是變化的。外在的一切,我們可 以看到它們變化無常。樹木長大了, 草枯萎 了,這些現象都不是突然發生的,都是在一 點一滴的無常變遷中產生的。從秋天進入冬 天, 這也是變化, 天氣不斷在變化中。此 外,看來很堅固的建築物也無時在變化。今 天我與幾位同學談到SQUAREHOUSE 的電梯 時。他們說因為這座建築物已很舊了, 所以 它的電梯很爛。我想以前我念大學的時候, 這棟建築物是大學裡蠻新及重要的一座建築 物,什麼時候它已經變成那麼老舊,而且它 的電梯是全校最爛的一座呢? 這說明不管建 築物多堅固,20年,30年之後,它是會變 的。我們常常覺得一些東西很堅固,不應該 壞,它壞的時候我們很難過。事實上,變壞 不是一下子發生的事。一切不斷的在變。如 果一切是常的, 東西就不會變壞了! 所以, 從物理, 化学, 生物等各各角度去看, 世間 的種種現象, 無時無刻在變化中。

一些考古學家發現海底城市!這城市是多久以前沉到海底去的呢?這些事跡都說明無常。一切都是無常,外在的事物是無常,我們這個身心更是無常!我們以為我們的身心很堅固,很壯。事實上它很脆弱。風一吹就感冒了!為什麼會感冒?因為是無常!與問强壯的身體不能堅持很久,它一直在變。我們的身心,我們的呼吸,每一個吸進與身體,我們的思想一直在變。没有變化我們也不可能長大!所以事物是無常,我們的身心也是無常的。

為什麼佛陀叫我們要活在當下?因為我們常常不是留戀過去,就是響往未来,再不然就是擔心未来。考試未到就一直擔心,如果考

不及格怎麼辦?這樣就把應該用功温習功课的那刻時間給浪費了。時間無常,一過去就們要活在當下,我們要活在當下,我們要知道光擔心考試結果會怎麼樣是没有好處的。我們要把這擔心轉為推動力。如果我們一直擔心自己會失敗而不能好好用功,那不自力,那不是我們一直擔憂會不及格,浪費了現在的時間,不能用它來培養正確的因緣以創造人功,那失敗自然要来臨啊!這是隨順因果法則的,而不是我們的運氣不好。

為什麼說觀呼吸是一個很好的修行方法?因 為它不但能够幫助調伏我們的心,使我們的 心安定。心安定專注後再進一步觀照的話, 可以幫助我們體悟無常的道理。 呼吸就在 我們的身心上,每一個吸進與呼出都是不 一樣的。我們的生命一分一秒的過去,但我 們掌握了多少?所以佛陀說,觀呼吸可以修 定,也可以啟發智慧。這是一條穩當又方便 的修行道路,我們不需帶什麼修行工具,呼 吸時時刻刻與我們在一起。

所謂'念念無常',我們要警覺到'念念'這兩個字。我們的心是否平静到能覺察到每一念都是無常,每一念都在變化呢?修行就在我們日常生活中。當我們閉起眼睛觀呼吸,觀我們的念頭生起,每一念都不一樣的,每一個呼吸都不一樣的,念念無常,我們的身心不斷在變化當中,生命就這樣一念一念的過去,到底'我'是什麼呢?這叫做諸行無常。宇宙的種種現象都告訴我們無常。無常是宇宙的其一法則,我們找不到一件事情是常的。

惟有無常它才可能越来越堅固。有些人越老 越親,因為兩者之間對彼此的習慣已經非常 熟悉,互動起來非常有默契與自然。

雖然無常代表一切都在變化當中,但它也告 訴我們一切充滿著希望,一切都有改變的可 能。當我們遇到挫折的時候,不要覺得是世 界末日。無常表示可以改變。'變化'本身 是中立的,它不一定指負面的變壞,它亦可 能變得更好。所以,可以改變就表示還有希 望。進一步的從佛教的因果法則来看,因為 是無常變化, 所以事情的發生雖然不是很理 想,但是我們還有創造未来的可能。只要我 們提供正面的緣, 我們就能够創造美好的未 来。無常告訴我們世間的真相,也提醒我們 人生積極的一面。因此,不要以為佛教說一 切是無常,反正一切最後會變的,就甚麼都 不要理, 那是消極的。我們應該明白佛陀開 示無常的真義,是要我們了解一切在不斷的 變遷中,時間不會等我們,我們要掌握每一 個時刻,透視無常的真理,提升我們的智 慧, 進而得到真正的解脱和自在。

'諸行無常'說明世間的種種現象。能够正確地了解它的時候,我們就會知道每件事情都在成住壞空的過程中。種種因緣和合促成一件事情,它會呈現一段相似穩定的時刻,然後漸漸衰敗,最後消失。這個消失並不是不見的。它是在不斷地變化當中,隨慢的就起變化。變化大一點的話,就形成了另一種情况。舊的那個好像消失了,新的一種情况產生。所以,佛教說這叫變滅,而不是斷滅。 它並不是不見了,事實上,它是在變化當中而產生的一個新的情况。

我們的生命也一樣。佛教說三世因果。從過去,現在,到未来。 我們會發現有些時候,我們辦事情事倍功半,而有些人做起事來事半功倍。 一個原因可能是因為我很多問去不對,所因是為我很多時間去做一件事情。另外一個原因是,我們多人不對,因是學我們的時候成就之容易度。從這一點我們的時候成就之容易度。從這一點我們因為今生所做的一切都很難成就后,但又能弱不努力的話,但又能明白之的業障,但又能对了,然而明若哀嘆自己的業障,但又能对不够有關,有其便有法則自己過去努力不够有關,今生要加緊努力而積極用功。開始的時候或許不

會有很大的改變,但慢慢的變化就會產生。三世因果觀念亦說明了無常的變化。 我們要了解我們要改變的是什麼?過去影響我們現在,那麼,現在我們要加强什麼 樣的因緣以創造更好的未来?我們要把諸 行無常的觀念擴展到過去,現在,以及未 来。這樣,我們的視野就會非常寬廣。我 們要掌握人生積極的一面,它是無常變化 的,它具有無限的希望。

2) 諸法無我

佛陀正觀'我'而體悟到它不是真實存在 的。為什麼呢?我們是由很多的因素組 成,它們不斷在變遷中,我們没有辦法完 全掌控它們。這個肉體是一個宇宙的現 象,即使是佛陀,他的身體也會衰老,因 此佛陀最后進入無餘依涅槃。身體是無常 的,最終必然敗壞。所以我們這個'我' 不是獨立的,不是常恆不變的。但是我們 不了解,而常常執著於'我'。佛陀說諸 法無我,就是說明世間的所有現象,無論 是外在的事物,或是我們的身心,都是種 種因緣組合而成的,不是獨立存在的。 但我們眾生總是執着於自己, 以為自己 有主宰的能力。經典里有一句話說'無常 故苦,苦故無我'。因為無常給我們不舒 適的感覺。無常會造成苦。這個苦就說明 種種現象是無我的一它是條件性的。換句 話說,它没有獨存性,没有主宰性,所以 它會產生變化;但我們又不了解變化的原 因,不明白無我的道理,處處染著,因此 才會感覺到苦。透視這個真理是超越生死 輪迴的關鍵。在這里'無常故苦,苦故無 我'主要對我們有情眾生而言。當然,

無我也可用以說明無情的東西。比如一支筆,它是無我的。這也正確。因為它沒有獨存性,是種種條件組合而成的,是無常變化的。但是,它不會像眾生一樣有感受與執著,沒有所謂的苦或不苦。所以, '無常故苦,苦故無我'是依有情眾生而說。

3) 涅槃寂静

涅槃的意思是吹滅煩惱之火,就是把煩惱 吹滅了。上次我們談到煩惱的根源。因為 '我'而引生我爱,我慢,我見,我癡。 接下来就是貪, 瞋, 癡種種煩惱的生起。 '我'是煩惱的根源。能够透視無我的真 理,正確地覺悟到諸法之實相,就能達成涅 槃寂靜。涅槃的境界是無苦的境界, 是超越 時間與空間,無有束缚的境界。經典曾將涅 槃的定義說明如下:「所有的貪欲滅盡、瞋 恚滅盡、愚癡滅盡,此即稱為涅槃。」所謂 涅槃寂靜, 即是達到無苦安穩的理想境地一 没有自我的染著、没有貪、没有瞋、没有 癡, 安穩, 自在的境界。有些人認為, 没有 我,沒有貪,瞋,癡,不是没有動力了嗎? 當我們達到這個境界時,海闊天空,力量其 實更大,是無有限量的!但是,這不是我們 現在的程度所能想像的境界。涅槃寂静說明 一切現象的本質就是如此。一切本来就是無 常變化,本来就是因緣和合的。它本来就是 如此,平靜安祥。是我們捏造了一個我,處 處染著,才掀起一大堆的浪濤。也有些人以 為,要進入涅槃必須斷除一些東西,事實 上,能够證悟無我與無常的道理,透視宇宙 及身心的真相, 即進入涅槃, 並沒有斷除甚 麼,或得到甚麼,一切本來如此。

4) 總結一從無我中貫串三法印

除了諸行無常,諸法無我,涅槃寂靜之外,經典有時說有第四個法印一諸受皆苦。所有的覺受之本質是苦的。一切是變動性的,所有的感受也會起變化,如果我們染著它,就會產生苦。所以, '諸受是苦'亦可以用'諸行無常'来解釋。因此, 真正来說三法印是足够了。'諸受皆苦'是針對對感受比較染著的人而特别把'受'强調出來。

雖然我們說有三法印,但此三法印事實上是不能隔離的,它們是有相關性的。這個三法印要怎樣連接起来呢? '諸法無我'是重要的部分,它能够把這個三法印貫串在一起。

首先為什麼會諸行無常?因為它不是獨 立存在的個體,它没有主宰的能力,它 是因緣條件組成的,所以它是無常變化 的。生滅無常代表它是無我的, 因為它是 條件性的,所以它能够變。能夠覺悟無我 的真理,透視一切是緣起性空,就是涅槃 寂静。涅槃寂静的境界是不生不滅。因為 没有我的話,我們不能够說什麼在生, 麼在滅。這就是涅槃寂静的境界。從這里 我們可以看得到,生滅無常和不生不滅並 没有冲突。因為,生滅無常代表空無我, 而空無我又代表不生不滅。因此,不生不 滅即是生滅無常的。這樣,緣起法的本性 --無我,就貫徹了三法印。三法印是 佛教很重要的教義,希望大家掌握此 印,以這三法印來判斷所聽聞到的法是否 符合佛說,建立正信與正見,進而啟發真 實智慧,達成真正自在的生活。

Oposites Attract...

"I love you Hoppy with all my heart." Grassy got down on bended knee, and serenaded to the grass wall. "And to prove it to you, I'm sharing with you on your birthday the most precious treasure I have."

"It's too corny," Atta cut in. "Hoppy's just gonna think you're putting on an act."

"Well what do you want?" Grassy was getting frustrated. He had been proposing to that grass wall for about an hour now and he still can't get it right. Hoppy would be here any minute now. He loved Hoppy dearly, isn't that enough?

"I've got it!" Atta chirped. "You should sing to her!" "Sing?"

"Oh Hoppy birthday to you, Hoppy birthday to you, I wanna propose to you too, Oh Hoppy birthday to you!"

Grassy rolled his eyes.

"Here she comes!" Atta exclaimed. "Good luck Grassy. Let me know how it goes. You'll be fine. Just remember — sing!" With that, Atta scurried out of the grass hut, meeting Hoppy very briefly.

"He left in a hurry," Hoppy commented.
"Yea, he couldn't stay." Grassy replied. "What have you got there?"

"Well," Hoppy smiled sweetly, "Today is a special day and I want to show how much

I love you Grassy. I want to share with you the most precious treasure I have." With that, she pulled out a small piece of metal.

"Hey, I have the same thing!" Grassy pulled out his piece of metal. Hoppy's metal immediately flew out of her hands and glued onto Grassy's piece.

"Hey! Give me back my magnet!" Hoppy took hold of her magnet but it wouldn't budge away from Grassy's magnet.
"Stop pulling," Grassy exclaimed. "You're taking mine too!"

"Well you're taking mine!"

"It's not my fault yours is sticking to mine!"

"No yours is sticking to mine!"

"No yours!" "Yours!"

"What's going on?" Atta cried. He stood at the door, hands on hips.

"Grassy's taking my magnet!" "No, Hoppy's taking my magnet!"

"Grassy, weren't you going to give that magnet to Hoppy?" Atta asked. "No," Grassy explained slowly. "I was going to share it with her. But she just wants it all!" "Well I'm not going to share mine either!" Hoppy retorted.

"Grassy. Hoppy, is this love?" Atta reasoned. "You're both got so caught up in your own magnet and selfishness, you've forgotten the reason why you brought these magnets here in the first place. If you look beyond your individual magnet, you will see that what's causing the problem is not the other person's magnet, nor your own magnet. What's causing the problem is the invisible attachment that exists between the magnets.

"So how do we separate the magnets?" Hoppy asked. "If we keep holding onto our own magnet and pulling, it doesn't seem to resolve anything.

"You first need to let go of your own magnet and focus on the magnetic attachment in between. You need to use a neutral force to cut through the attachment." Atta explained.

"How about this?" Grassy held up a blade of grass. "Perfect!" Atta slipped the grass neatly in between the magnets. The magnetic attachment lost contact and the magnets fell away gently and naturally.

"This piece of grass is similar to our meditation practice and objective understanding." Atta explained. "Once we understand our self-attachment, we can let go naturally, without force.





by Puay Yeong Teh

Have you ever felt like you have lost control of your self? Or worse yet, felt like you were losing control but totally and utterly helpless to stop it from happening, and could only watch as it all slowly unravel before you? I have frequently felt this way even since I was a little girl. Bursting into tears when an older cousin snatched a toy out of my hands. Slapping my younger sister when she infuriated me so much, all I could see was red. Emptying my bladder right where I was standing in ballet class after the teacher convinced me to 'hold it in' for five more minutes.

Ironically, even though events like these during my young childhood were surely nothing to be proud of, and were indeed what seemed at the time like absolute tragedies, I had probably never been more in the 'present moment' than I was during those times. I think back now and with the clarity of hindsight, I realise that as a child, even when something 'bad' was happening or had just happened, I had the natural capacity to ride it through and then forget about it almost straight away afterwards.

Some may mark it down to the short attention span of a child. I would, however, argue that it is probably due to a child's lack of a sense of 'self'. At the age of four, I probably did not know that peeing in class was a huge boo-boo, that I would thereafter be remembered by my teacher as the pee-pee girl, and that I had given my fellow four-year-old classmates cause to laugh at me ha-ha. For all I knew at the time, it was just a relief to finally let it go (be it in class or not). I barely knew my own name and the other four-year-olds did not know they were supposed to be laughing at me anyway.

So what is it about 'adulthood' that makes life so much more complicated? I think it was from the age of six that I started to form an identity of who 'I' was and who 'I' wanted to be. In my subconscious, I had started putting together a list (which I imagine will continue to change fluidly until the day I die) of must-dos, must-nots and must-haves. I must do my homework everyday. I must not pick my nose in public. I must have clean clothes to wear to school. Rules were soon superimposed by desires. I want to play. I do not want to eat broccoli. I want to have a puppy.

I think it is when people get so swept away in these wants and do-not-wants that they start to lose sight of themselves. In high school, I wanted to be popular more than I wanted to be smart. In university, I cared more about having a boyfriend than having friends. In the workplace, I wanted nothing more than the next promotion and the pay rise that came with it. Then it was about having a flashy car, a comfortable house, a couple of children and a perfect husband to complete a beautiful picture.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with wanting all those things. If anything, it is quite 'normal' in today's modern society in fact. But it is when I get so immersed in the pursuit of this beautiful picture that I start to feel like I am losing control of my self. Why? Because I know (in my head) that I am chasing after things that will sooner rather than later be taken from me. Because sometimes I catch myself thinking, "If it is all so impermanent anyway, why should I bother working so hard for it all?" And often, I encounter things, people, events that I wish I could avoid. And even more often, I am pining after the things, people, events that I wish I could have. In other words, I am more dissatisfied now that I am a young, independent adult with a loving family and a stable job than I was peeing in my pants in ballet class at the age of four.

But do I 'ride it through and then forget about it almost straight away afterwards'? Nope. At the first sign of pain, I am reaching for my painkillers to ease the agony. At the first sign of boredom, I am reaching for the phone to call my best friend. At the first sign of silence, my hand is reaching for my mp3 player to drown out the monotony. Anything but dwell on it, whatever 'it' may be.

Often during these times, I will remind myself to 'engage the Dhamma'. We all know of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path – wonderful gems of teachings from the Buddha. But knowing is one thing, engaging is another. Intellectually, we understand that there is suffering, cause for

suffering, cessation of suffering and the path leading to cessation of suffering. But in daily life, how do we apply that?

Recently, I had a bad toothache. It was suffering, no question about that. I tried to understand the cause of the toothache (cavities, gum damage, wisdom teeth coming out wrong?) but it did not help to ease the suffering. So I tried to recognise the cause of the suffering instead, and make peace with not so much the physical pain, but more the mental pain. Since superficial words did not help, I closed my eyes and opened my mind. I treated the pain like an old friend, showing it a sense of familiarity and not having any particular wish for it to leave. Once I truly managed to accept it, there was no more mental pain. Even though the physical unpleasant throbbing did not stop, I was no longer suffering.

Vaya dhamma sankhara Appamadena sampadetha

(Transient are all component things Work out your own deliverance with diligence)

These were the Buddha's last words before he passed into *mahāparinibbāna*. How fortunate are we that he left us with the wonderful, engaging Dhamma. Let us all practise the Eightfold Path heedfully and progress in the journey to *nibbana*. May we share the merits of this diligence with all sentient beings.

Kostya was a farm boy. His parents were kind, very hardworking people and they got by OK. There were many kids in the family and his parents didn't have much time for each one of them individually.

The family visited the local place of worship regularly, and there the local spiritual head gave regular talks. He tried to provide guidance and encouragement to the people to lead more wholesome lives. Kostya was very fond of going to this place as he found it was filled with goodness and purity. While the teachings were specific each week, essentially they were encouraging the listeners to become more kind, simple, wise, loving and patient people.

"I want to lead a truly good life, be a fulfilled person," Kostya often thought to himself, "Even, if it's going to be hard I want to put these useful teachings into practice."

A LESSON ON LIFE by Alex Voevoda

As Kostya was growing up, he found that one of the regular teachings that struck him was that one should have love for their parents. Kostya thought this is a wonderful teaching, but when he looked within himself he couldn't find a warm, vibrant affection for his parents that the wise spiritual leader encouraged people to have. They'd always been kind to him in words and deeds, so he was happy to live with them and help them around the farm. But he couldn't find this feeling within himself.

After some time this began to bother him. "Why isn't this feeling there?" Kostya kept asking himself, "I want to be a good person, live a good life. I want to love my parents, but this feeling is not there." As time went on Kostya became more and more confused and frustrated. Now, every time this teaching was given at the sermon, somewhere within himself, he felt ashamed and sad. He wanted to think of himself as a "good person" but for him not having these feelings made him less than that.

Time went by and this unpleasant nagging feeling began to oppress him less. Slowly and silently the feeling found its way to the depths of his mind, like the way a rock sinks when dropped from the surface into the deep, unknown, hidden ocean floor. Soon, he had forgotten about it.

Kostya had a close friend Varya. Both boys were kind, loyal and always ready for an adventure. They always had fun playing and exploring together. However, as Kostya became older, almost a man, he noticed that although his friend often said he missed him, he never really felt he missed Varya. In fact, often he felt like he could leave his good friend and family behind and it wouldn't really affect him.

"Isn't a person supposed to miss their family and friends?" Once again he began to question, "Where is this feeling of 'missing' others that my friends feel, but I don't?"

After a while, just like the previous time these feelings began strong and unpleasant, but eventually, quietly disappeared below the surface.

To his surprise and misfortune, Kostya noticed that sometimes thoughts and feelings, and even dreams, kept arising within his mind, which were hard for him to accept. They were against what deep down within himself he felt was right. Often he thought, "What's wrong with me? There are horrible things coming to my mind!" At these times he felt guilty and confused. Although unaware of it, he was sure that he was the only one with such difficulties. Everybody else seemed so normal; surely they hadn't such forces in their minds.

The longer he lived the more striking the dissimilarity became between his understanding of what it is to be a human being from inside and what he saw to be a human being was on the outside. His confusion and pain began to accompany him more and more.

One time while walking home, he met a kind, wise woman. Noticing him, she said: "Young one, I can see you have a good, simple, heart, but there is something troubling you. Tell me what is troubling you and I will try to help you."

So Kostya did his best to explain to her what he was going through. Although he was often embarrassed when describing his experiences, something about the spirit of the woman put him at ease, he felt an overwhelming acceptance and kindness coming from her. However, he couldn't help but be surprised that she didn't laugh at him or think him to be strange as he went into the details.

After the woman had listened to him, she looked into his eyes once more to see if he had told all that was there the tell. Satisfied that the boy had finished, the woman nodded warmly and understandingly. Then she put her finger over her lips and pointed at the sun setting across the fields.

They quietly and peacefully watched the slow sunset. Kostya's mind settled and he felt quite optimistic about resolving these difficulties, eagerly waiting for the advice that woman would give him.

Finally, she turned and said to him, "My young friend, you have a good heart – people will like you. Why don't you go to another village where you are unknown and see whether you are the only one with these difficulties? Open up to others honestly, and ask them whether they have had similar experiences. Ask about their thoughts, feelings and dreams. Let us meet here in three months." She gave him a warm smile and left.

Encouraged, Kostya went forth and talked to the young and the old. He approached friendly people honestly opening up to them about his quest and his experiences. "Please tell me, is it common for you to have things come up within you which you don't want?" He would ask. To his surprise every single person who was ready to really open up to him told him that they, too, had had at least some of the experiences he spoke of. Also, he found that different people could relate to different experiences. But they were all in their own way struggling within themselves.

As he talked to the people, Kostya began to feel more at ease. The judgmental forces of his mind loosened their invisible grasp. He felt normal again and more at peace with himself.

Three months later, he met the woman again. This time she advised him: "You have learnt that life is complex and full of illusions. You suffered because you believed that you were the only one with this difficulty. My young friend, you will benefit from learning that life will not come as you think it should or as you wish it would. It will come just as it will come, no other way. Being open to and accepting of all that comes to you in this life is a challenge for all of us."

She got up, looked at Kostya warmly and began to walk away. Sadly, she knew he would learn this lesson again and again in his life, before he really understood - just as she had. However, he was a little wiser now.

真谛

Whisper of the Truth

郑淑心 by Su Sian Teh

或许有人希望人生像遥控器,脑子能随心所欲,要什么,一按就轻易到手,要去哪儿,一按就到目的地,追逐那无阻欲望成真的快乐感。

Whisper of the truth
What if life is like a remote control?
What if things can be done at everyone's pleasure?
One press on the remote control brings you everything,
Another press on it brings you everywhere.
Catching the unprecedented happiness of dreams come true.

或许人生也像参与赛跑竞赛, 一上跑场,总得跑第一, 没人愿做失败者, 不断追逐着, 似乎能永恒胜利的满足感。

Perhaps, life is like racing.

fiveryone aims to be the fastest.

foser is not an option.

findless chasing,

Seemingly, it perpetuates the sense of victory.

人生可以追逐的快乐有很多种, 身外物也许会带给我们快乐, 但往往得到的, 似乎会有变质的一天, 胜利或许会带给我们快乐, 但体会到满足, 似乎只是能保持在那一瞬间,

Numerous happiness for us to pursue in life, Perhaps, possessions may bring us happiness.
But, what we get
Is always impermanent,
Or, victory may bring us happiness,
But, the taste of satisfaction
Is only lasting for a second.

当中有多少我们能永远保留?又有多少我们能永远拥有?

Within which, how much can we keep forever? Within which, how much can we possess forever?

但真正体会了真谛, 却能让我们, 得到那心灵旅程, 那永久的快乐与满足感。

But, once we realise the whisper of the truth, It will render us the life journey, The long-lasting happiness and satisfaction.



by Puay Yeong Teh

Vera closed her eyes, and felt the familiar hot tears swimming beneath her eyelids. The "movie reel" was once again playing in her mind, the images in vivid colour, the sound of laughter and voices so dear, enough to make the tears spill over and roll down her cheeks to quiver on her chin. She reached for a piece of tissue paper, and her hand glanced softly on a piece of something cold and hard. She picked it up and ran her fingers lightly over the familiar etchings.

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Oh, the joys that this piece of plastic had given her! As Vera began counting off her fingers the number of new lipsticks she had bought in the last two weeks, her tears now all dried up, another thought occurred to her. The latest Prada bag that she had ordered from Paris should have come in by now, she should give the shop a call in the morning to find out when she could go pick it up. Oh, while she is going to be in the mall, she ought to check if the cute Manolo shoes are still in the window display. Maybe she could get a discount. "Belinda is going to turn absolutely green with envy when she sees me!" Vera clapped her hands in glee.

That dreadful feeling was beginning to wrap its cold fingers around her heart again. Vera's face dropped, and the credit card fell back onto her dressing table with a disgruntled clatter. "Hmmph! They could have given me a new card. So what if I have a measly few thousand dollars owing?" Okay, so maybe it was more like a few tens of thousand dollars, but she was going to pay some of it back as soon as she got her next paycheck! The nerve of those people. She should sign up for a new credit card with their rival, take her business elsewhere. That will show them who's boss around here.

The tears were back. "There must be something wrong with everybody!" Vera wailed. Why have all her applications for a new credit card been rejected by every single credit card company that she had written to? Vera casted her eyes around, and out of habit, began a mental inventory count of the items lying strewn on every possible surface in her room. Clothes, bags, shoes, cosmetics, jewellery, CDs, magazines... the list went on and on. The latest Apple laptop churned softly on her desk, the iPod lay listlessly on the floor beside her handbag, and the iPhone still glistened with its new glossy sheen.

Vera had all that a girl's heart could desire. So why did she feel like the gaping hole in her soul was only growing bigger? In fact, the more things she bought to satisfy her heart's wishes, the more dissatisfied she felt. Maybe there was something wrong with her hormones. Vera made a mental note to call her doctor to arrange for a full medical check-up first thing in the morning. She ought to feel better after the doctor finds out what is wrong and prescribes her with some pills.

But what if the problem was not physical? Vera felt her intestines constrict, and a sense of gloom and doom descended on her. Maybe she needed to consult a psychiatrist. What if her disease was not curable? Will she have to go into a mental institution? What will all her friends think? "Belinda will be the first to sweep in and get her greedy hands on all my stuff!" "Well, she will have to cross over my dead body before I will allow that to happen!"

Just as Vera was about to start making a mental list of Belinda's bad traits, her doorbell rang. It must be Matthew. He was late, as usual. He had better thought of a good excuse this time. Vera opened the door with a scowl forming on her face, which is instantly replaced by a radiant smile as her eyes lit up at the sight of a gift-wrapped box nestled in Matthew's hand. Oh, he is the number one best boyfriend in the world!

Without even saying hello, Vera snatched the gift and like an excited child on a Christmas morning, began ripping the gift paper apart. It was the newest Canon digital camera that she had been heavily dropping hints about! Vera let out a shriek of delight so shrill that Matthew had to cover his ears with his hands. As she was jumping up and down with joy, clutching her latest new plaything, she bumped her elbow on the banister and before she could say "cheese", the hi-tech piece of equipment was sailing through the air.

"Crash!"

For a moment, the silence vibrated only with the leftover decibels from the sound of the camera smashing into pieces.

"Look at what you made me do!" Vera screeched. Matthew could only stare at her blankly and sputter in disbelief as his mouth opened and closed like a goldfish. Vera burst into a fresh bout of tears, and stormed out the door. As she was running down the street, it occurred to her that she did not have anything on her – no money, mobile phone or even her house keys.

Twenty minutes later, she was sitting on a park bench, dwelling on her bad luck and looking up hopefully every so often to see if Matthew had found her yet. An old lady came and sat down beside Vera on the bench. She was watching a little girl carefully, who was obviously just learning how to roller-blade. Before Vera could help herself, she was soon pouring out the whole story about the camera, Matthew and her profound dissatisfaction with life in general to the kind-looking grandmotherly figure.

"I just don't get it. I have everything I ever wanted. But I never seem to stay satisfied for long. Why can't I just be happy?" Vera looked wistfully at the people who were walking past her in the park, some chatting and laughing with each other, some in their own world with earphones plugged into their brains, all of them looked happier than she felt. Or so Vera thought. The old lady did not say a word, but acknowledged Vera with a smile that made her weathered eyes crinkle at the edges.

A few moments later, the little girl on the roller blades let out a cry. "Grandma, I can't do it! I'm scared!" She was still hanging on to the same railing that she had been holding since she got there. In a voice filled with love, the old lady called back kindly, "Sweetheart, all you have to do is just let go!"

Hearing this, Vera let out a small whimper. As her chin started to shiver, a lone tear rolled down her cheek. She gave the appearance of someone who had just heard that her dog had died. Before long, she was letting out gut-wrenching, body-heaving, snot-dangling sobs. Albeit a little shocked, it was all the old lady could do to try and calm her down by patting her comfortingly on the shoulder and making soothing noises. The little girl, drawn by the mournful cries, had unthinkingly roller-bladed over to the bench without much further ado and was now standing in front of Vera, looking a little lost.

"That's the hardest part... letting go."

Vera looked up. Matthew was kneeling down beside her, his soft eyes speaking volumes in love and kindness. He was right. It was the hardest thing she had ever had to do. She had been fighting it for so long, the feeling of emptiness in her core that she could not seem to shake off. By buying more and more things that she really did not need. Trying to stem off the waves of depression as they threatened to sweep her into the ocean of misery, again and again. She was so tired of struggling against it, pretending everything was alright, and acting for all the world to see what a fine life she led. But all the time swinging between emotional highs and lows.

Perhaps it was time for her to 'let go' of the masquerade. Stop trying to fill the void with things of no substance. And she could finally come out from behind the mask and just be... Vera. She did not have to be "the Vera who had all the coolest gadgets" or "the Vera who had all the latest imported handbags" just to fit in with her friends. So what if she was "the Vera who suffered from depression" or "the Vera who had to seek professional help"? She was only human, after all.

"Let's go home now."

Matthew held out his hand, and Vera took it gratefully.





I have been pondering over an interesting topic recently with a group of friends while lavishly dining in good food restaurants. It is the enchanting word spelt L-O-V-E.

Love has been a topic for humanity, asking within us from generations to generations, "What is it really about?" No matter how it is expressed, whether through TV shows, poets, music or religion, interpretations of love are conveyed in different forms. The context of love ranges from family relationships down to cravings for delicious food, material and intangible forms of desire.

This follows me in asking, "How to attain the right kind of love that is pure and non-grasping; bringing in the right wisdom (view and intention), the right ethical conduct (speech, action and livelihood) and right mental development (effort, mindfulness and concentration)"?

By following the concepts of Buddhism, I realised that attaining the right kind of love is like being on the path of enlightenment that entails understanding, support, acceptance, happiness and much, much more than my delights when eating ice-creams, desserts or pancakes.

The Buddhist teaching spreads love from the concept of the Four Immeasurable (four sublime states), namely, *mettā* (loving-kindness), *karunā* (compassion), *muditā* (altruistic joy) and *upekkhā* (equanimity). These are boundless life energy that textures the bright colours of our lives.

Metta is receiving happiness and sharing unconditional loving-kindness. This could be as simple as a wide smile, a light joke, a positive comment or a cheeky tease and enjoying the other people's companionship without complaints.

Showing Great Compassion is to have the right understanding in support. It is like letting one's self be a supporting pillar for others when hardship occurs, being part of an earthly stone that interconnects and braces together as a better whole.

Acknowledging Altruistic Joy means to rejoice in the other's well being. This is like a glowing candle in the darkness; it slowly lightens up the surrounding dim candles by softly touching the glowing joyous flame onto each life with content. The more joy that is outwardly shared, the greater limitless joy shall shine within us.

Equanimity blends in by combining and multiplying ways of cultivating love. The sole nature of a true heart shall bear fruits that continuously flourish. It perfumes sweet-scenting fragrance from the essence of loving kindness, great compassion and altruistic joy.

Dependent Arising could foil the ripening of my fruits. It could be *upādāna* (clinging) that entangled the sharp vines to pull down my growing trees. It could be *avijjā* (ignorance) that invited the big black hungry birds to eat away my working efforts. It could be *sankhāra* (volitional formation) that brought misleading understanding of unexpected weather patterns and wash off my beautiful plains of harvest.

Buddhism explains each of these connotations as part of *samsāra*, the nature of continuous movement that exerts my own mental state further down into the wheel of universal suffering.

I have a great example to share with everyone on how we can overcome these obstacles. A big apple was hand picked from an orchard. When it was taken down, it was very green, smooth and firm. A few days later, the apple had become soft and not so firm, like a piece of slightly mouldy bread. Who knows what had happened in between the dimensional spatial time from the moment the apple was picked to the time it became rotten. What is certain is our disappointment and expectation that the apple would stay juicy and delicious from the previous day. If we knew that the apple would rot so soon, then we would have eaten the apple sooner.

What has happened in the past is in the past and the future has not yet come. So what shall we do with the rotten apple? Some people may have thrown away the rotten apple, but for me, the slightly rotten apple is perfect to use in its current form as a three-course Buddhist menu.

Using the apple, the starting entrée served would be Sila (moral discipline), putting the sweet and sour apple pieces together with mixed herbs to make a light broth soup so to open my heart in the right direction. The main course would be Samadhi (concentration or meditation), requiring the long process of deep-frying the apple slices into crispy golden nuggets wrapped in basil rice to strengthen and fill my heart with happiness. As a finale, the dessert would be Pañña (wisdom) the savoury apple pudding served with proportionate amount of smooth milk-cream to nurture my kammic self with others.

In other times, my three set guidelines could be substituted as three simple meals in a day like Big Breakfast Sila, Special Lunch Samadhi and Light Dinner Pañña to suit and sustain my daily needs. All these help me to grow, to develop and to bloom into a better person. The person who successfully develops these qualities $(s\bar{\imath}la, sam\bar{a}dhi, pañña)$ is said to be one who is cleansed internally after bathing in the waters of love and compassion for one's fellow beings. When the Buddha's disciple, Ananda, suggested that half of the Buddha's teachings consisted of the practise of loving kindness, the Buddha said it was not half, but, the whole of his teachings." (1)

We have a choice on what we want to do with the rotten apple at hand, so there is a choice too on whether to accept our current condition(s) in life or to complain about them. It is much easier to cling to the latter action but this will not create positive *kamma*, either for myself, or for the people around me.

Reference:

(1) Quote: Love in Buddhism - http://www.abuddhistlibrary.com/Buddhism/B%20-%20Theravada/Metta/Love%20in%20Buddhism/IV/quangduc%20-%20love%20in%20Buddhism.htm



WHAT THE "INVISIBLE GRASP" MEANS TO ME



by Ming De Teh

The Invisible Grasp... It is absolutely interesting to know that it is this "Grasp" that holds us in such suffering and throws us back into the endless cycle of life and death. What is "Grasp"? I cannot speak accurately from Buddhist texts or for anyone else, but personally, I can feel it strongly when I crave for something, a new computer, a new bag, a pair of shoes, a partner... I feel it even more strongly when I am craving for something, but am not able to obtain that thing. I can feel myself getting upset, getting irritated, getting angry, getting frustrated, all these emotions, thoughts and feelings come from nowhere that I could foresee. What is this? Where did they come from? I tried meditating, calming my mind and with the clarity of mind, I saw it. I craved for something — a material possession, an idea, or a thought — and I just would not let go. But what exactly am I holding onto? And what is it that reaches out to hold onto it? I contemplated once more.

I am holding onto... an item... that is made up of... atoms, molecules, energy. I am holding onto... an idea... a thought, a congregation of emotions, feelings, neurotransmitters that formulate who I am and what I think. They are all but "conditions". Conditions that arise and wither, come and go. All the things that I crave for are just a collection of conditions, not anything that is absolute. Conditions can come together to make something appear, but they can also dissipate and make something disappear. So what am I clinging on to? A myriad of mirages...

What about that thing that reaches out to grasp? What is it?

What exactly is it indeed... I am physically sitting in a chair, yet my thoughts are on that new computer. What can travel through time and space so quickly? AH~! It is my "mind". My mind is not here with me, it is hovering over that new computer. It is clinging onto that thing. When it cannot get whatever it desires, it gets unsettled and emotions start arising: sadness, irritation, frustration, greed, anger, and jealousy. So poisonous is this "grasp", yet it is everywhere.

To be free of this "grasping" is my aim, yet it is easier said than done. Meditation, mindfulness, everything about Buddhism I have learnt shall be used to teach myself to slowly let go and release myself from this "grasp".

I hope this little personal story has reached out to people who may share the same thoughts as me and that my little experience can help.

"May all beings be well and happy, free from suffering and enmity. Whatever merits we have done, may these be shared by all. Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!"



OPEN HANDS

BN Theme: The Invisible Grasp Buddhist Concept:

Clinging

Lyrics: Tina Ng

Composer: Sujata Allan

Musicians: Sujata Allan, Alex Pui, Elfie Baker Performers: Su Sian Teh, Pojdanai Sukijjakhamin

We build lives and empires, Hold onto dreams and treasures, Willing the world to be ours, Hoping for forever.

But the sun will set and the moon will rise, Sandcastles will be taken by the tide. People will leave, our world will change, But the world keeps turning on.

Fnjoy each moment as it comes,
So you can smile when you look back one day.
Give your love to those around,
So you can smile when they leave one day.
Cherish your life and make it full,
So you can smile when you leave one day.

See the way your mind clings to things, Don't be blinded by the Invisible Grasp. See the freedom in letting go, And the beauty of the here and now.

We suffer when we cling to "me and mine", Thinking impermanence will last. But we can only receive with open hands, So loosen that Unvisible Grasp.

LEAN ON ME (things will change)

Composed by: Nishan Disanayake & Alex Voevoda

Sick and tired of this life Tired of living in this abyss,

Struggling my way through this life 'wanna find a way , to lead me out of this strife

Man, what's wrong with me, Drowning in this sea, someone hear my plea I wanna be free

Watching on the uni walkway, People truly having a "good day"? Are they ever really happy? Can they show me the right way,? The right way, Outta this night, to the light way

As I spend my quiet nights trying to unwind Such confusion in this life, I try to cry My friends 've contemplated suicide, even tried Man they took the pills, lucky to survive No one knows my inner struggle, They only see my outer double Not knowin' it's hard to carry on when no one loves you Picture me in this misery Don't feel alive, wish I 'be revived Hoping hard for better days, hoping to hold on Hoping life won't break me, I carry on.

Livin' in ma head I feel lonely, Look around and I got me only, Its a lackin' in ma heart, and its crakin' me apart n' really need a brother that can hold me

Cant handle all these feelings, Feelin' sad, feelin' bad, And its makin' me mad, Feel life's got no meaning

(yeah i) Got a few friends and we talk a lot, But we only ever talk about the things we 'got Cars, music, mobile phones, But as we talk I'm still feeling all alone, And every now and then I don't feel strong, And i wish i could have some one I could lean on, [Chorus]
Lean on me ,
When you feel down,
Believe me I know
Your feelings will turn around
Don't, worry your mind,
With time you will find
A brighter tomorrow

I know sometimes life gets tough,
The road gets rough,
Till you've had enough
Well I've been on that side, of the road before
When I've felt like iii cant go more low
But now I see, there's a better way to be,
you can get, a way to be free,

'coz when I watched myself, I saw I couldn't control
All these thoughts, and feelings, on their own they roll
So-I accept ma mind and make peace with this,
And it helped my find the way outta my abyss,
'coz tho sadness comes I didn't ask for it,
I didn't ask that the sadness would last a bit
Anger, happiness, greed and jealousy

It comes and it goes Whether like it or I don't Accept the way it is, let it be.

If your ever drowning in self pity Look at all the people suffering, Hungry children living-in, Misery, helpless-in, Endless poverty, Think of all of these, change how you see, then you'll feel luck-y bout how you be Then if I wanna GC*? You can lean, on, me

*(have) a Genuine Conversation [Chorus]

If your lost among the strangers, feeling all alone,

Give your love for all the people, and the world becomes your home
Want relief from your tomb? try to care for another,
Try to share with your sisters and your brothers

And when you're caught up in your day and its nothing but pain Look at the way of this life, coz its nothing but change,

And hey,

The sun comes after the rain,

Lean on me brother if your ever feeling crazed,
Things will change.
And feelings never stay the same
Id be lying if I told ya I was happy every day
But slowly
We can find our way
To peace

Ill lean on ya brother if Im ever feeling crazed,
Things will change.
And feelings never stay the same
Id be lying if i told ya i was happy every day
But slowly
We can find our way
To peace

People lean on each other if you're ever feeling crazed,
Things will change.
And feelings never stay the same
We'd be lying if we told ya we're all happy every day
But slowly we can all find our way
To more peace

Grassy Says Goodbye ...

When Grassy neared the end of his life, he looked for the best place to pass away.

He tried resting on his grass bed, but after a while, it became uncomfortable for him as he sank into the flattened grass.

He tried lying on the best-looking leaf, but it became too windy.

He tried sitting on the flat ground, but it became too hot.

He tried floating on the riverbeds, but it became too cold.

Exacerbated, he went to see the Buddha. He hopped lightly onto the Buddha's palm and cried out,

"Lord Buddha, I have spent my whole life looking for happiness. When I think I have found it, it quickly dissipates into a source of suffering. I have jumped from one sense pleasure to the next, following my desires without end. Round and round I continue on this cycle, grasping onto the fleeting happiness that had passed or onto the illusory future that has not yet arrived.

Lord Buddha, I am tired. I am tired of this endless grasping and ignorant insistence on permanency for what is actually impermanent and conditional."

He closed his eyes. As he let go of the invisible grasps of his mind, he felt a sense of lightness like a rock being lifted from his heart and a storm cloud cleared from his mind. A soft smile curled on his face.

His world was complete - there was nothing more that he needed or wanted, there was nowhere else that he wanted to be, and there was no other time that he would rather be than right there and then doing what he was doing.

He opened his eyes with realisation. He had found what he had been searching for: happiness lies in contentment, suffering lies in grasping, while liberation lies in letting go.

He closed his eyes one last time, a smile softly spread across his face, and in his heart. He had found the perfect resting place on the Buddha's palm with the Buddha Dhamma. Even when the rain came, the wind or the sun, his body was still, as was his mind.

This time his stop...was his last.



Cook of the Year

















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FOUR BUDDHIST EXHIBITION SESSIONS

Come and join our guided tour and explore the essence of the Exhibition!































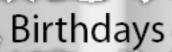




Annual General Meeting





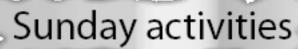




Graduations



















Vesak Day Celebration









Winter Retreat





Summer Retreat







English Dhamma Talk Chinese Dhamma Talk









Meditation Workshops

















MESSAGES FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE...





EVP: TINA NG

For Unibuds, 2007 has been a year of accomplishments, notably the Buddhist Exhibition and Bodhi Nite, as well as our regular activities. For me, 2007 has been a year of challenge and growth, where I was learnt understanding, endurance, patience, trust, humility, forgiveness, gratitude and love. And I learnt these from my fellow Committee members, as we struggled together the whole year with a 'nothing is impossible' attitude. 2007 has also been a year full of moments; those types where you know won't happen the same again, and touches your life so much that you will never be the same again. 2007 left a smile in my heart, and I hope it has touched yours too.

IVP: YU ANG TAN

To prepare for this message, I attempted to copy-and-paste what I've said in last year's Annual Magazine, so I looked through it. (Let's admit it guys, the thought of copying messages from the past has crossed our minds at least once). Much to my surprise (and disappointment), I can't copy that message, as it expresses the thoughts of a rather different person! Isn't that just my message a year ago? How different can the message be? I don't know – but it's different enough for me to type a new one. Let's start from Buddhism. If there is one thing that I' ve learned, it would be the realisation that I have hardly learned enough. Thank you. Moving along: UNIBUDS. Being in this family gave me warmth: something which I may have forgotten a while ago. Being in here taught me to be kind towards others. Being here gave me courage, strength and resolution. To be different. Thank you. Lastly, my friends, UNIBUDS or not. Ah, the good times, the bad times. A pleasure journeying with you. Thank you for everything. But wait, journey isn't ending. Not yet.:)

HON. SECRETARY: MING DE'S MESSAGE

Dear friends in the Dhamma, how is everyone? I would like to invite everyone to take in a deep breath, calm your mind a bit and just relax.

Sadhu to everyone for contributing to Buddhism and UNIBUDS, because without everyone's support, Buddhism would not be able to carry on for so long, and UNIBUDS would not be as it is today. My journey through UNIBUDS has been amazing in the past year. I have joined as a member, took part in activities, helped out in activities, made a lot of new and close friends, served the community and most importantly, learnt about Buddhism.

Ever since I have joined the EXCO, I have not regretted. The journey has only been more eventful, exciting and more enriching. I have learnt so much about Buddhism, about practicing Buddhism in so many creative and meaningful ways. Bodhi Nite is one such example. Being a part of making this happen is so meaningful, to be able to propagate the Dhamma and to reach out to new friends. Being on the EXCO team, there has been some difficult times, juggling work and UNIBUDS. I have learnt about being flexible, being grateful to others and finding the true meaning of friendship in daily life and in Dhamma. I am grateful for this opportunity to be on the EXCO team, to be given a chance to serve Buddhism and the community, to step out there and make new friends, like you! None of these would have been possible if people did not nominate me to be the Honorary Secretary, to be a part of the EXCO. So, I would like to thank, from the bottom of my heart, each and everyone of you who have helped Buddhism, UNIBUDS, and me. May all be well and happy~! Sadhu! Sadhu!

HON. TREASURER : ADELINE S.

Hello everyone! It's my 4th year in Australia as well as in UNIBUDS, and I personally feel that being in UNIBUDS has widely opened my opportunity to learn the Dhamma as well as to meet such warm and loving personalities who are all putting their efforts in spreading the Dhamma and creating such a comfortable and positive atmosphere around. Honestly UNIBUDS has been another home for me for these past four years. However, it is often not easy to accept that all the good things will also eventually come to an end. Knowing that the good feeling will have to go one day let's try to make each moment of our lives count. I hope you will enjoy the Annual Magazine:) Thank you very much for all your continuous support towards UNIBUDS; and thank you for sharing this Dhamma journey with me.

GEN. SECRETARY : ZHANG YI (KATE)

Another year has passed us by...The moments of triumph, of heartache, of achievement, or disappointment; they helped build who we are today. And they too make our lives worth living! I am very glad to have shared some of these moments with you readers during the 27th EXCO term. During this eventful year, I have pushed boundaries, worked with amazing people who inspired me to always strive for the better, and learnt to care and share. I hope every one of you too have benefited from UNIBUDS one way or another, be it the learning of Dhamma, the practice of meditation, or the pure enjoyment of genuine friendships. Thank you very very much for your continuous support, for UNIBUDS will not be still here without you! Know that UNIBUDS will always be a place for you to rest your mind, rejuvenate your spirit and share a laugh or two! May you be well and happy!

ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR: WILSEN LAU

It has always been wonderful and memorable experience to walk along with UNIBUDS to make complete journey each year. It has been more than 4 years since I have joined UNIBUDS and it made me thought back the time when I first stepped into UNIBUDS. What was it that made me feel connected with UNIBUDS? I am sure we all have our own reasons for it so strongly that we keep on walking with UNIBUDS. Let us continue sharing what we have learnt and experienced in UNIBUDS with others. Hopefully those individuals find the 'something' in UNIBUDS that we had found previously. May all be well and happy always.

Yours in Dhamma, Wilsen Lau

EDT COORDINATOR: POJDANAI SUKIJJAKHAMIN

One year can mean different things to different people. One year of a thief means more greed and a sense of poverty. One year of a liar means more deception and a sense of mistrust for others. One year of a typical human being means a combination of greed, hatred, delusion with (maybe) a sprinkle of happiness. One year with Dhamma slowly eradicates the above and brings about a sense of peace and contentment. It also brings you closer towards the realisation of the truth. One year in Unibuds brings Dhamma...and more. What is more? Fun, Friendship, and most importantly, Food! Haha. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate you all for being a part of Unibuds. One year as an EXCO taught me many things and for that, I'll be forever grateful. Metta y'all!



CDT COORDINATOR: MANDY PANG

Dear Dhamma Friends,

How are you doing?

Wow! Time indeed pass really quickly. Another year has come to an end which means a new year; new challenges will begin to unfold. Thank you all for being with us in this one year of fruitful and AMAZING journey. I hope you've enjoyed your time being in this journey with us. I am really GRATEFUL to be given this opportunity to be part of this team as well as to contribute to UNIBUDS. May we all continue to grow and progress in the guidance of Dhamma. May the triple gems always be with you. Sadhu! Sadhu!

Metta

MEDITATION COORD - ALEX V.

Hello reader, I'd like to tell you how this term in the UNIBUDS Executive Committee was for me. For me, it was a very valuable experience in a lot of ways. Being in the committee was definitely out of my comfort square. Most importantly, I spent time with a bunch of good-hearted people - people who taught me ways to improve myself and also inspire me by their example. I learnt new skills and made new friends. Thank you for your warmth my fellow EXCOs and supportive members.

SACCA EDITOR: JUIAN CRAIG

"Our mind jumps when something attracts its attention. Sometimes it's real, but most of the time, it's just our own mind's muddy reflection in the waters of samsara staring back at us (with big beady eyes!!) UNIBUDS is a great place for little grasp-hoppers to investigate their minds, and work out what tricks it can play! It is like a big training pool, full of other friendly grasp-hoppers all learning together, where no-one really need be afraid. This is what makes UNIBUDS such a great place! So ... when you are at uni (or elsewhere), make sure you take the time to enjoy and help out in UNIBUDS, while also investigating your mind (while there is little chance of you getting eaten!). May UNIBUDS remain such a place for all grasp-hoppers in the future! Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu!"

Jules ^\o.o/^ (grasphopper)

ANNUAL MAGAZINE EDITOR: VICKEY CHEN

It had been a great opportunity to be part of this committee; it had been a wonderful journey and something I will remember for a long time to come. Hopefully, we'll all be able to progress in our journey of life and may the Dhamma give us guidance.



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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 have been adopted from two different sources namely Buddhist Dictionary (Nyanatiloka) and Seeker's Glossary of Buddhism (Sutra Translation Committee of the US and Canada). 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 that they are familiar with.

Note on Abbreviations:

eng – English

pl – Pali

skt - Sanskrit

ch - Chinese

tib - Tibetan

Abhidhamma (pl) One of the three baskets in the Tipitaka. It is largely a commentary on the sermons or suttas, and subjects them to analysis. Abhidharma (skt)

Alaya (skt) Human beings have six sense organs – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. They each represent a consciousness of their own, but in addition there is the seventh and eighth consciousness. While the first six consciousnesses may momentarily stop functioning during a coma, for example, we would continue to have body heat, blood circulation and digestive system still at work. These functions are controlled by the seventh consciousness – the Manas consciousness. It serves primarily to sustain and renew life by acting as the sower of seeds on the eighth consciousness - the Alaya consciousness. This eighth consciousness acts like a storage house that contains all our kammic traces and underlies all experiences of individual life.

Anatta (pl) See Non-self (eng) Anatman (skt)

Anicca (pl) Impermanence.

Arahat (pl) Holy one; liberated being; one who has destroyed all his mental impurities. Arhat (skt)

Bhanaka (pl) A person who mastered the skill to memorise long passages and have the ability to recite these passages from memory.

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.

Bodhicitta (skt) The spirit of Enlightenment, the aspiration to achieve it; the mind set on Enlightenment. It involves two parallel aspects: the determination to achieve Buddhahood and the aspiration to rescue all beings. Bodhi Mind (eng)

Bodhi (pl) Being awakened from the slumber or stupor (inflicted upon the mind) by the defilements and comprehends the Four Noble Truths. Enlightenment (eng)

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)

Buddha (pl/skt) A Supremely Enlightened One, Awakened One. The term Buddha generally refers to the historical Buddha Sakyamuni who lived in India more than 2500 years ago and founded Buddhism. 'Buddhas' naturally refers to all Enlightened Beings.

Buddha-nature (eng) According to the view of one of the Mahayana schools, Buddha-nature is the true, immutable and eternal nature of all beings. Since all beings possess Buddha-nature, it is possible for them to attain Enlightenment and become a Buddha, regardless of the level of existence they occupy. Tathagata-Garbha (skt)

Dalai Lama (tib) The word 'Dalai' means 'great ocean' in Mongolian, and was a title granted to the third Grand Lama of the Gelugpa School in 1587 by Gusri Khan, a Mongol prince. There have been 14 Dalai Lamas; the current 14th Dalai Lama is "HH the XIVth", Gyalwa Tenzin Gyatso.

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)

Deva (pl/skt) A divinity or god; a heavenly being. Devas, including Hindu gods, are believed to inhabit the heavens above the human realm, but are still unenlightened, bound to Samsara and subject to birth and death.

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)

Dhammapada (pl/skt) The most famous scripture in the Pali Canon, this sutta exists in two versions; i.e. the Theravada and the Mahayana. The many translations of the Dhammapada has given it worldwide popularity, representing for Buddhism what the Tao Te Ching is for Taoism.

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.

Emptiness (eng) The concept that entities have no fixed or independent nature. This idea is closely linked to that of dependent origination. Sunnata (pl) Sunyata (skt)

Enlightenment (eng) Being awakened from the slumber or stupor (inflicted upon the mind) by the defilements and comprehends the Four Noble Truths. Bodhi (pl)

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)

Five Precepts (eng) The five moral rules, which are binding on all Buddhist laymen, are: (1) Abstaining from killing any living being, (2) from stealing, (3) from unlawful sexual intercourse, (4) from lying, (5) from the use of intoxicants. Panca sila (pl)

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)

Four Stages of Liberation (eng) These are the four stages of Enlightenment in the Theravada tradition, namely the stages of (1) stream-enterer, sotapanna (pl), srotapanna (skt) (2) once-returner, sakadagami (pl) (3) non-returner, anagami (pl), anagamin (skt) (4) the holy one, arahat (pl), arhat (skt).

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)

Kuan Yin (ch) The Bodhisatta of Compassion. Also known as the 'Goddess of Mercy' in China and 'she who hears the cries of the world'. Kuan Yin is one of the Three Pure Land Sages and is generally represented in the feminine form especially in East Asia. Avalokitesvara (pl/skt) Chenrezi (tib)

Loving-kindness (eng) Loving-kindness; selfless love and good will. One of the qualities of a pure mind. Metta (pl) Maitri (skt)

Mahayana (pl/skt) The Great Vehicle tradition. Mahayana is one of the main traditions of Buddhism, and expounds on the Bodhisatta practice as the means towards Enlightenment of both oneself and others.

Mantra (skt) Incantation. Literally, 'uniting and holding', i.e. uniting all Dhammas and holding all meanings. A mantra is a formula said to protect one who recites it and to benefit him by virtue of its mystic power. Mantras are recited in Sanskrit and sometimes have no literal meaning. They are especially valued in esoteric Buddhism.

Metta (pl) See Loving-kindness (eng) Maitri (skt)

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)

Mudra (skt) Literally, 'seal, sign'. Ritual gestures of the hands used in symbolic magic, especially in the esoteric schools. They are used in conjunction with mantras as aids to meditation. Buddha images are found in a variety of mudra positions.

Nibbana (pl) Freedom from suffering; the highest and ultimate goal of all Buddhist aspirations, i.e. the absolute extinction of the life affirming will manifested as greed, hatred and delusion, and convulsively clinging to existence. Nirvana (skt)

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)

Non-self (eng) 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. Anatta (pl) Anatman (skt)

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)

Parami (pl) Perfections. The stages of spiritual perfection followed by the Bodhisatta in his progress to Buddhahood. In the Theravada ten qualities are given: (1) Perfection in Giving, (2) Morality, (3) Renunciation, (4) Wisdom, (5) Energy, (6) Patience or Forbearance, (7) Truthfulness, (8) Resolution, (9) Loving-kindness, (10) Equinimity. In the Mahayana scriptures, a partly differing list of six is given: (1) Liberality, (2) Morality, (3) Patience, (4) Energy, (5) Meditation, (6) Wisdom. Paramita (skt)

Parinibbana (pl) Translated as 'perfect quietude'. This term originally had the same meaning as Nibbana (Nirvana) and referred to the stage in which all illusion had been eliminated. It is commonly used to indicate the passing away of the physical body of a Buddha. Parinirvana (skt)

Paticca samuppada (pl) See Dependent Origination (eng) Pratitya samutpada (skt)

Ratana Sutta (pl) The Buddha's Discourse of the Jewels.

Relics (eng) The cremated remains of Enlightened Beings.

Sacca (pl) Literally, 'truth'.

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.

Samsara (pl/skt) Cycle of rebirth; conditioned world; world of suffering. Also more precisely refers to the unbroken chain of the fivefold aggregate-combinations, which constantly change from moment to moment continuously, one upon the other through inconceivable periods of time.

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.

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 consists 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)

Sravaka (skt) Literally, 'hearer'. One who has heard the Buddha's teaching. In Mahayana Buddhism, sravaka generally refers to a person in the Theravada school. Sravaka is also translated as 'disciple'.

Stupa (skt) A Buddhist monument, generally of a dome-shaped form, originally erected over sacred relics of the Buddha and at places consecrated as the scenes of his acts. In East Asia, the stupa developed into the tower-like pagoda, in which are enshrined various objects sacred to Buddhism.

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)

Tathagata-Garbha (skt) See Buddha-nature (eng)

Theravada (pl) Literally, 'teaching of the elders'. The teachings of the Buddha, in the form in which they have been preserved in the countries of south Asia (Burma, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia). Generally recognised as the oldest form of the teachings. Sometimes called Southern Buddhism or Pali Buddhism.

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.

Tipitaka (pl) Literally, 'three baskets'. The three parts of the Tipitaka are the Vinaya Pitaka (Code of Ethics), Suttanta Pitaka (Discourses of the Buddha) and Abhidhamma Pitaka (Buddhist Philosophy). Tripitaka (skt)

Triple Gem (eng) The Three Jewels or Three Gems, which by all Buddhists are revered as the most venerable things, are the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Holy Sangha. Tiratana (p1)

Vajrayana (skt) Tibetan Buddhism. Also called Tantric Buddhism and Lamaism. Found principally in Tibet, also now Mongolia, India and parts of China. It is hierarchical and presided over by the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.

Vinaya (pl/skt) The body of ethical rules and disciplines for Buddhist monks and laypersons prescribed by the Buddha.



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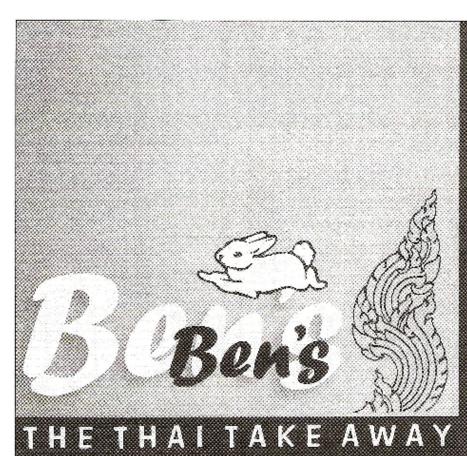


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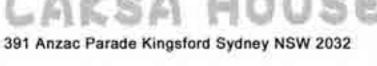
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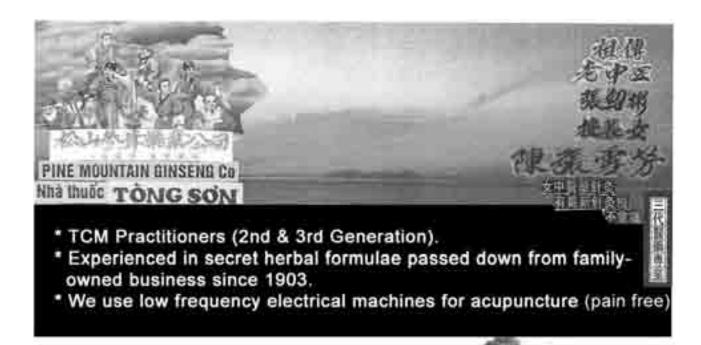
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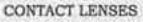
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