

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY SINGAPORE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Dharma Talk



On 2 November 2018, Venerable Chun Hui gave a Dharma talk on the Precepts – Understanding why we uphold precepts and how to go about doing it.

Exam Supper Session



In one of the NUSBS Exam Supper sessions, on 8 November 2018, Venerable You Wei shared valuable study tips and how Dharma is relevant in one's learning journey with the attendees.

SINGAPORE BUDDHIST FEDERATION

Punggol Waterway Park Walk



On 18 November 2018, SBF held a morning walk and outing at Punggol Waterway Park with about 40 members of the SBF Dharma Class Students Society.

SBF Youth Camp



SBF Youth held a one-day camp on 18 November 2018, Camp "Miniciti-

ta" that included many fun and engaging activities on top of Dharma teaching and meditation sessions.

Eight Precepts Retreat



SBF will be organising an Eight Precepts Retreat led by Venerable Seck Kwang Phing on 1 January 2019. For details and registration, please visit SBF Facebook page.

KHENPO SODARGYE RINPOCHE

Online Live Dharma Teaching



On 16 December 2018, Khenpo Sodargye Rinpoche gave a live Dharma teaching (in Chinese with simultaneous translation in English) titled "Two Truths in the Middle Way", followed by an oral transmission of *Shantarakshita's The Adornment of the Middle Way* on his official Facebook Page.

MANGALA VIHARA BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Theravada Buddhism



Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple (MVBT) will be conducting a course on Theravada Buddhism Studies (in Chinese), every Friday from 7pm to 9.30pm from January 2019. The course is free and there is no examination. For more information, please visit <http://mv.org.sg>.

NANYANG POLYTECHNIC BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Outreach Campaign



Nanyang Polytechnic Buddhist Society (NYPPBS) aims to teach and share the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, as well as foster a bond and friendships amongst students from various faculties, regardless of race and religion. Being a tertiary Buddhist Youth Club in the polytechnic, the club also hopes to play a role to spreading the message of healthy living, which include the Five Precepts. The Five Precepts is not just for observing, but for practising and empowering other to practise too. NYPPBS, in collaboration with SANA (Yellow Ribbon) and Health Promotion Board (HPB), has organised an outreach event at the NYP Foyer Entrance on 4 January 2019, with the objective to create an awareness of a drug-free and smoke-free campus for youths.

BUDDHIST YOUTH NETWORK



Project DAYWA

Project DAYWA (Dhamma Assembly for Young Working Adults) is crowdsourcing ideas to create a sanctuary for young working adults to develop themselves in the Eight-Fold Path. DAYWA will be running a crowdsourcing workshop on the 12 January 2019 to better meet the needs of working adults such as balancing practice with career progression and creating a platform to meet like-minded practitioners. For details and registration, please visit BYN Facebook Page.

FAITHFULLY ASEAN

AN INAUGURAL REGIONAL INTERFAITH EXCHANGE

Faithfully ASEAN is a unique ground-up initiative which brings interfaith practitioners and activists from the ASEAN nations to exchange worthy community-led initiatives, experiences and challenges relating to intercultural and interfaith engagement, cohesion and resilience. Given the challenges to regional social stability, security and harmony, it is imperative that communities constantly and creatively seek ways to bring people together onto common grounds for the common good through common senses. Presented by Temasek Foundation Connects (TFC), and co-presented by S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) and WISE SG, the Faithfully ASEAN 2018 Programme adopted a practical and constructive approach – emphasising on natural and basic commonalities that exists within diversity, to help enhance existing

ties and transactions between people of the regional neighbourhood. It has the support of Singapore's Ministry of Culture, Community & Youth (MCCY), and is in line with ASEAN's spirit for the promotion of regional peace.

Launch of Faithfully ASEAN

President Halimah Yacob launched Faithfully ASEAN on 3 December 2018 and opened the Common Senses for Common Spacea (CSCS) Interfaith Dialogue at the National Library Building, and officially unveiled the Faithfully ASEAN logo at the Launch Ceremony, with more than 40 interfaith practitioners and activists from around the region gathered for the inaugural exchange programme. In her address, she said, "Constructive dialogue is fundamental to forging mutual understanding, respect and trust. These are the building blocks of any cohesive society, as well as a united ASEAN." She announced at the same time that Singapore will be hosting its first international conference on social cohesion and interfaith harmony in 2019.

Madam President also urged delegates taking part in the Programme to work together and help those in need, highlighting that "there are forces which tear at the fabric of our societies" and "we need to guard against their divisive narratives, which seed prejudice within our societies". She added, "It is through diversity that we generate ideas and practices which are more resilient to external changes. Through finding common ground, we can deepen mutual trust and understanding so that we can navigate through an increasingly complex world together."



President Halimah Yacob with the presenters, partners and supporters of the Forum

Photo Credit: MCI Photo by Chwee, Halimah Yacob, "Faithfully ASEAN Forum Album". Facebook, 3 December 2018, 9.45p.m.

In her Facebook post after the launch, Madam President shared, "Happy to join ASEAN delegates at the 'Faithfully ASEAN', a forum which aims to share best practices in promoting inter-faith understanding. I hope delegates had a constructive dialogue in forging mutual understanding, respect and trust. I look forward to hosting our first international conference on social cohesion and interfaith harmony next year where we can share our experiences and develop ideas with a wider audience."

The 2018 Inaugural Exchange Programme

This inaugural 4-day exchange programme that is supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) also saw attendees from Singapore's faith institutions and the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle. The exchange programme included a lecture by and a dialogue with Dr. Noor Huda Ismail, visiting fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, and dialogues on food and pilgrimages. The participants also visited

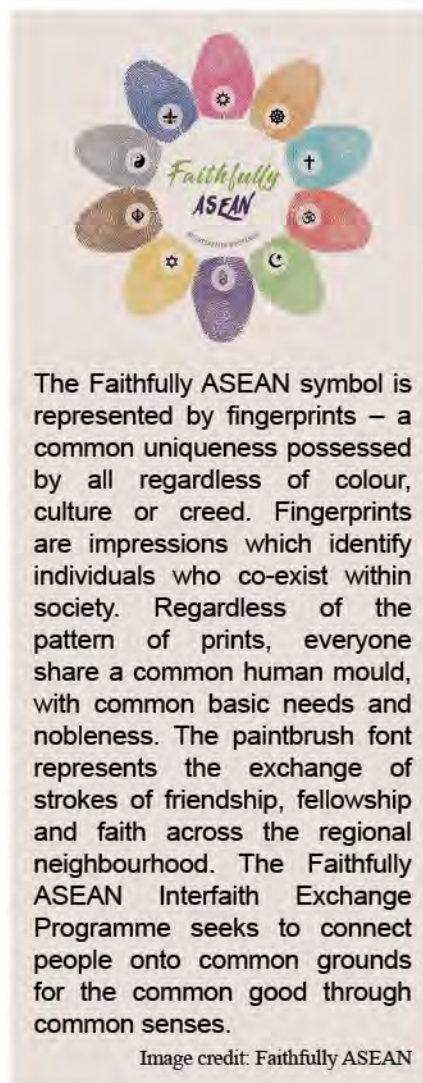
the Mahakaruna Buddhist Society, the Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS)'s Harmony Centre, as well as the Church of St Mary of the Angels.

Senior Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs, Dr. Maliki Osman called Faithfully ASEAN a "timely initiative and reminder that we need to step up our engagement... given the increasing menace of radicalism, extremism and exclusivism that has penetrated our region". Despite the

benefits of diversity, he said it has to be properly managed. Otherwise, it could turn ugly or bloody.

Connecting People onto Common Grounds

In the closing segment of the 4-day exchange programme, "Closing Dialogue and Reflections Faithfully ASEAN CSCS 'Sacred Rendezvous'", Dr. Maliki Osman hosted and moderated both the Dialogue and Reflections sessions. Anchored on the concept of one's spiritual journey, 'Sacred Rendezvous' presented a panel of senior religious leaders who shared their views on the travels to holy sites of the various religions discoursing on the destinations, motivations and desired impacts of this common practice across various religions. They also discussed how pilgrimages are more than "simply" sacred journeys made by believers or subscribers of the different faiths – it is a spiritual passage of the mind, heart and soul – the spiritual journey made visible in a physical trip. The speakers for the session were Sister Janet, Ustaz Dr. Hannan, Mr Gurmit Singh and Venerable Shi You Guang. And in his personal reflection, Venerable You Guang said, "Wisdom arises by quietening our mind with foundation of conduct. When your mind is not quiet and still, be sure that all thoughts are compassionate and kind. The awakening of our heart is not a solo proprietary of any faith, but is an enabler towards collective efforts, pushing frontiers of humanity."



Dr. Maliki Osman at the Closing Dialogue and Reflections sessions with delegates of the exchange programme

Photo Credit: Dr. Maliki Osman, "Faithfully ASEAN - An Interfaith Exchange". Facebook, 8 December 2018, 12p.m.

In Dr. Maliki's Facebook post on 8 December 2018, he shared his experience and how Faithfully ASEAN – An Interfaith Exchange was about connecting people onto common grounds for the common good through common senses, "It has been a fruitful week for faith leaders and activists within #ASEAN as Faithfully ASEAN – An Interfaith Exchange programme came to a close. For the past 5 days, local and

regional participants took part in tours to different places of worship in #Singapore, as well as dialogues where they had real and candid exchanges. I had the pleasure of moderating 2 of these dialogues and was glad to hear from the participants that the programme had been an enriching experience!"

Mr Ahmad Fahmi Adzha Mohd Nasarudin, Secretary-General of the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students, hopes that such conferences can get countries working together to resolve interfaith issues, and thinks that "Singapore can be a good role model to start doing such interfaith work on a mega scale. Malaysia has interfaith groups as well, but some may not be as mainstream yet. We hope people can accept each other and not just show tolerance, which is what I can see Singapore moving towards."

MEDICINE BUDDHA THE MUSICAL

REFLECTING REALITY - LIFE, HOPE, TRUST & BOUNDLESS COMPASSION

- PEMA RINCHEN -

The magnificent Medicine Buddha with the Lapis Lazuli blue radiant body is also known as the Master and King of Lapis Lazuli Light – Bhaisajyaguru Vaiduryaprabharaja, and is one of the eight Medicine Buddhas (including Sakyamuni Buddha), and all of the eight Medicine Buddhas are usually honoured though one Medicine Buddha – Bhaisajyaguru. In Bhaisajyaguru is where many Buddhists take refuge in times of pain, sickness and stress. This is especially so in today's volatile, uncertain, complex ambiguous (VUCA) world we live in,

where regular Medicine Buddha practice is known to help practitioners better manage stress, confusion, uncertainty and ailments that many suffer from.

Last year, a musical on the Medicine Buddha – *Medicine Buddha The Musical* was staged at Stadium Titiwangsa Kuala Lumpur on 16-18 November. This massive production by Asia Musical Production, Venerable Man Xiang (甲洞讲堂) Kuala Lumpur and Mr Ghee Peng Lam (Organising Committee Chairman) is not just another musical as it embodies the Twelve Great Vows of the Medicine Buddha. Aptly described by Mr Ghee, "In today's world, the society is turbid with confusion, terror, insecurity... and the human mind is afflicted by greed and ignorance. Thus, the Twelve Great Vows of the Medicine Buddha is like the soothing remedy, which can heal the body and mind of all beings, purifying the karma. I hope all will praise the Buddha with sincerity and without doubt – Namo Bhagavate Bhaisajyaguru (Namo Medicine Buddha)."



The Sutra of the Medicine Buddha is categorised into three broad areas – his past vows, his extensive merits and his virtues, and the musical focused on The Twelve Great Vows of the Medicine Buddha. On top of the well-paced script, the 360-degree stage, amazing set and together with the brilliantly choreographed stage directions brought to life the metaphor for the all-encompassing nature of life also, reflecting the Buddha's view on life and the "ten directions and the past, present and future phenomenon".



With the music composed by Imee Ooi, music arrangement by Yuan Leow Yunn and Jayson Ng and choreographed dance and movement by choreographers Kenzo De Tuan and Chan Soo Leng, the scenes transited seamlessly and magically with characters' emotions capturing the hearts of the audience.



There were many memorable scenes but three remarkable ones towards the end of the musical reflected the compassion, energy as well as the healing power of the Medicine Buddha. They are; the full cast singing The Twelve Great Vows, the twelve great yaksha generals being present in the assembly, followed by the appearance of the Sūryaprabha Bodhisattva and Candraprabha Bodhisattva.

These concluding scenes of a full choir singing after a triumphant win of good over evil to a scene with the twelve generals – General Kumbhira, General Vajra, General Mihira, General Andira, General Anila, General Sandira, General Indra, General Pajra, General Makura, General Kinnara, General Catura, and General Vikarala executing martial arts moves to the resounding drum beats, and final transition showing the soft and healing powers of the Medicine Buddha through the soft fluid dance of the two Bodhisattvas in the land of Pure Vaidurya showed the all-encompassing qualities of the Medicine Buddha.

It is truly a musical production that reflects reality and the spiritual remedy that we need and can rely on today in these turbulent and uncertain times.

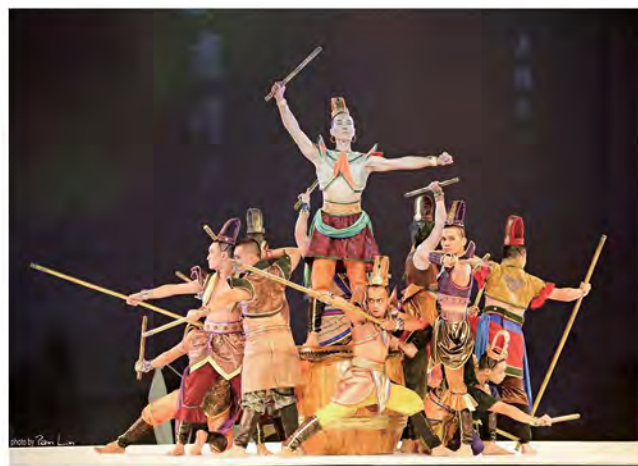


Photo credits: 甲洞讲堂 and Pam Lim

THE 17TH GRAND PRAYER PUJA FOR WORLD PEACE

Offering of 10,000 Statues of Manjushri Bodhisattva to the Sangha



Last year, 31 October to 6 November 2018, the Sangha comprising more than 8,000 Rinpoches, Khenpos, monks and nuns, as well as 100,000 laity came together to pray for world peace at Nangchen, Qinghai, China.

Legacy by Late Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche

The Grand Prayer Puja for World Peace was initiated by the late Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche in Year 2001. It has since been successfully held annually at Nangchen, Qinghai, China (except for Year 2008). Each year, the Grand Prayer Puja for World Peace attracts Sangha members as well as laity from all over to gather together praying for World Peace and Well-Being.

The Gift of Dharma Excels All Gifts

In the *Dhammapada*, Verse 354: The gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts; the taste of the Dhamma excels all tastes; delight in the Dhamma excels all delights. The eradication of Craving (i.e., attainment of arahatship) overcomes all ills (*samsara dukkha*).

At the end of the discourse, Sakka said to the Buddha, "Venerable Sir, if the gift of the Dhamma excels all gifts why are we not invited to share the merit whenever gifts of the Dhamma are made? Venerable Sir! I pray that, from now on, we may be given a share in the merit of good deeds". Then the Buddha asked all the bhikkhus to assemble and exhorted them to share the merit of all their good deeds with all beings. Since then, it has become a custom to invite all beings from the thirty-one realms (bhumis) to come and share merit whenever a good deed is done.

Continuing the Grand Prayer Puja by Palchen Rinpoche



Palchen Rinpoche (extreme right) leading in one of the puja ceremonies and prayers sessions

Palchen (Ba Jin) Rinpoche¹ from Gongya Monastery continues to lead in The Grand Prayer Puja for World Peace that was first initiated by the late Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche. Organiser of the Grand Prayer Puja for the 17th Grand Prayer for World Peace, Palchen Rinpoche made the aspiration to make 10,000 statues of the Manjushri Bodhisattva (17cm in height) as an offering all the attending Sangha members.

The Offering of the Manjushri Bodhisattva Statues



During this 2018 Grand Puja, similar to the previous years, offerings of meals to Sangha members were made by Buddhists from all over, and during this 17th Grand Puja installation, there was collective offering of the Manjushri Bodhisattva statues to more than 8,000 Sangha members.

Generating of Limitless Merits, Good Health, Longevity and Dharma Connection



The Manjushri Bodhisattva



Manjushri Bodhisattva or Mañjuśrī is depicted as a male bodhisattva wielding a flaming sword in his right hand, representing the realisation of transcendent wisdom which cuts down ignorance and duality. Scholars have identified him as the oldest and most significant bodhisattva in the Chinese Buddhism (Mahayana) literature.

Manjushri Bodhisattva is first referred to in the early Mahayana sutras such as the *Prajnaparamita Sutra* and through this association, very early in the tradition he came to symbolise the embodiment of *prajñā* (transcendent wisdom). In addition, the *Lotus Sutra* assigns him a Pure Land called *Vimala*, and according to the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, it is located in the East.

He is one of the Four Great Bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism, the other three being Ksitigarbha, Avalokiteśvara and Samantabhadra. In China, he is often seen paired with Samantabhadra in shrines and temples. Then, in Tibetan Buddhism, Manjushri Bodhisattva is sometimes depicted in a trinity, together with Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi.



Dedication of prayers and transference of merits to family and friends were also made through the lamp offerings and pujas – obstacle-clearing puja and puja for the deceased, on top of the Dharma teachings given to the lay attendees. Making offerings to the Sangha is praised in the sutras as a way to generate limitless merits: The act of offering a sip of water to a Sangha member will enable one to receive more merits

than all the water in the oceans. Thus, making an offering to the Sangha members, gathered for such an auspicious event, will help one to generate limitless merits and create good connections with the Dharma.

Combining Pure Aspirations and Collective Efforts

Mentioned earlier, for 2018 Grand Puja, Palchen Rinpoche made the aspiration to make 10,000 statues of the Manjushri Bodhisattva and to offer them to all the attending Sangha members. Rationale and belief being, Manjushri is the embodiment of the transcendent wisdom of all the Buddhas. He emanates as a Bodhisattva but actually is a return of an ancient Buddha. Manjushri represents *Prajnaparamita*, Perfection of Wisdom and through practice and recollection through Manjushri Bodhisattva, one will attain all kinds of worldly and transcendent wisdom. The merits accumulated from making the statues of Manjushri Bodhisattva are vast and tremendous – eradicating the negative karma created from the many lifetimes and planting the meritorious seed towards obtaining the fruit of enlightenment.

Furthermore, with Manjushri Bodhisattva as an object of reverence and offerings, whenever Sangha members do their practice, the merit will continuously increase thus the donors to make the Statues of Manjushri Bodhisattva can skilfully accumulate vast merits. With Palchen Rinpoche's pure aspiration and the collective efforts of the disciples, benefactors and many others, Mani Prayer Wheels, Statues of Medicine Buddha, Four-armed Chenrezig, White Tara, Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava, Buddha Shakyamuni, Yellow Ritual Robes, Red Sangha Robes and Dharma texts have successfully been offered to the Sangha members during the previous Grand Prayer Pujas.

¹ For You Information Issue 358 (February 2019) will be featuring an interview with Palchen Rinpoche. Photo Credits: Organisers of the 17th Grand Prayer Puja for World Peace

TEA WORDS

THE DIFFERENT FLAVOURS OF TEACHING

- MASTER SHENG YEN -



**Venerable Master Sheng Yen,
The Founder of
Dharma Drum Mountain**

Since childhood, Master had a weak constitution and was prone to illness. After becoming a monk in the Wolf Hills in China, he went through years of having to perform deliverance rituals day and night for a living, then served in the military, before finally being re-ordained. Through these hardships and thereafter, whether on solitary retreat, studying in Japan, in America spreading the Dharma, or founding Dharma Drum Mountain, he has always been able to find a way forward when there seemed no way out. In those difficult times, his compassionate vows strengthened, and with his perseverance, his wisdom started to shine. To him, life is a process of realising the Buddha Dharma.

To raise the status of Buddhism and the quality of monasticism in Taiwan, Master Sheng Yen went to study in Japan at the age of forty. After obtaining a doctorate, he began to propagate Dharma (in both Linji and Caodong lineages) in both the United States and Taiwan, and travelled around the world to teach Chan practice – bringing the world of Chan to people in both the East and the West. In order to spread the Dharma through language and concepts accessible to modern people, even with his tight schedule, he continued to write, and has published over one hundred books. An erudite scholar, he also established the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies and Dharma Drum University to cultivate first-class researchers. In addition, he also engaged in public dialogues with leading figures in the fields of technology, art, and culture, and has even collaborated with other denominations and religions. His expansive mind and international outlook have earned him recognition from people in various fields both at home and abroad. Under his guidance, Dharma Drum Mountain has ‘established its bases in Taiwan, and its roots in Chinese Buddhism while steadily progressing toward greater internationalisation and diversification’.

Some people like strong tea, some like weak tea, and some prefer water. Strong tea stimulates and excites; weak tea quenches thirst, and water replenishes the body’s fluids. Strong tea is like the scorching summer sun and loud thunder at the same time; weak tea is like the autumn moon; water is neither sun, nor moon, nor rain but it has extreme clarity and brightness. Some people drink strong tea to combat sleepiness or tiredness, most people prefer weak tea, and those who drink only water are few.

Drinking tea in the meditation hall can be a ritual, but it is most important to listen to the master’s words. In fact, a talk like this is called “tea words”. These words are like different strengths of tea, as the methods we teach vary according to a student’s level of experience. Some methods are poisonously strong, some are lighter, and some have no particular meaning.

Strong tea is called “bitter tea”. Those who have just begun to practise are not ready to drink this tea. After they have gained some benefit from practice but are still not clear how to settle their mind, they should drink bitter tea. Like being baked in a hot sun or startled by thunder, this bitter tea gives them no chance to get lazy. They wouldn’t dare fall asleep or indulge in scattered mind. This bitter tea will arouse them to “angry determination” to practise hard. This is why masters of the Lin Ji sect used to beat and shout. Such methods are bitter tea to be given only to people who are already practising hard. If a master beat or shout at students who are not diligent, they may think it is very strange or even get scared away.

To beginners who thirst for practice but are not ready for bitter tea, I will give weak tea. To them, I will speak words of comfort and encouragement to make them feel happy to practice. The other type is those who have drunk bitter tea but are in danger of losing their resolve to practise. To these, I will give weak tea as an expedient means. It’s like telling someone just setting out on a journey, “There’s a place over the horizon that is really idyllic, with trees, birds, and a beautiful landscape. If you just keep on going you will definitely get there.”

One of the sutras tells about a man who yells at his ox, saying, “You are stupid and useless! Why can’t you go faster with such a light load? Don’t

you see all the other oxen in front of us speeding along?" Whereupon the ox stopped dead in its tracks and refused to move, thinking, "Since I am useless, why should I move?" So the man, very upset, asked the other men in front, "How do you get your ox to go so fast?" They replied that they deceive their animals, saying sweet words to them, like, "You are so good and energetic. Without you, I would be nowhere. Awhile back, you climbed that hill like it was nothing. Now that the road is flat, you should really be able to speed along." So, the oxen are very happy to go fast. Like humans, animals need comforting and encouragement.

Water is tasteless and it should be given only to those who have practiced extremely well but have not yet entered the door of Chan, that is to say, have not had some realisation. They have already drunk bitter and weak tea and are attached to the flavour, meaning they tend to think too much and cannot stop their minds. They also cannot put their method down and may be attached to a goal of getting enlightened. They are burdened by their experience and intellect. To them I will give a flavourless method. For example, Master Zhaozhou of the Tang dynasty used phrases that seemed to have no meaning, such as: "The 10,000 dharmas return to one; where does the one return to?" Or, "When I was in Qingzhou, I made a robe weighing seven pounds." Or, "What did Bodhidharma bring from the West?" Or, "In the garden there are cypress trees."

These are examples of "water words" that can induce a practitioner to give up all attachments, throw everything away, and reach the highest goal of enlightenment. But there are also people who can suddenly put down all

their attachments with bitter tea. It works by giving them a shock. One can even attain this by drinking weak tea, but in that case, it can only be a very gradual enlightenment.

Who here has had the taste of water, where there is no sun, no moon and no rain, neither night nor day? Yes, but was it crystal clear? When it is crystal-clear it has brightness in which all things all exist, but there is no discriminating mind, no taste. So subjectively, in this state, the person does not exist. If a person in this state is out in the burning sun, he wouldn't consider that he is in the sun, but everything is still very clear.

With bitter or weak tea, the mind is still there, but crystal-clear water is like the state of no-mind. Bitter and weak tea can help you towards no-mind, but eventually one needs to drink clear water.

***"The Dharma is so good,
yet so few people know about it and
so many people mis-understand it."***

-Venerable Master Sheng Yen

It was based on this simple belief that Venerable Master Sheng Yen founded Dharma Drum Mountain. Calling himself "an itinerant monk pressing ahead through the wind and snow", and named as one of the fifty most influential people in Taiwan during the past 400 years, Venerable Master Sheng Yen is an exemplary noble Master who has demonstrated how 'deprivations, miseries, tests, and turning points' can be reciprocated with selflessness, noble love and respect for life – acceptance, compassion, perseverance and ever-positive attitude when facing life challenges.



Spoken during tea break; the Special Chan Class, July 13, 1980.

Excerpt from *Tea Words*, Volume 1. This is an archived addition of Master Sheng Yen's early teaching in the West that contains 50 selected articles published in two volumes.

THE PARADOX OF BECOMING

- THANISSARO BHIKKHU -



Introduction

We live in the same world, but in different worlds. The differences come partly from our living in different places. If you live to the east of a mountain, and I to the west, my world will have a mountain blocking its sunrises, and yours its sunsets. But – depending on what we want out of the world – our worlds can also differ even when we stand in the same place. A painter, a skier, and a miner looking at a mountain from the same side will see different mountains.

Our worlds are also different in the sense that each person can move from one world to another – sometimes very quickly – over time. If you're a painter, a skier, and a miner, you will see the same mountain in different ways, depending on what you want from it at any given moment – beauty, adventure, or wealth. Even if you stay focused on nothing but have the desire to paint, the beauty you want from the mountain will change with time – sometimes over years, sometimes from one moment to the next. Your identity as a painter will continue to evolve. Each and every desire, in fact, has its own separate world; and within those worlds, we take on different identities.

The Buddha had a word for this experience of an identity inhabiting a world defined around a specific desire. He called it “*bhava*”, which is related to the verb “*bhavati*”, to “be,” or to “become”. He was especially interested in “*bhava*” as process – how it comes about, and how it can be ended. So, “becoming” is probably a better English rendering for the term than “being” or “existence,” especially as it follows on doing, rather than existing as a prior metaphysical absolute or ground. In other words, it's not the source from which we come; it's something produced by the activity of our minds.

The Buddha's analysis of becoming as a process throws a great deal of light on how imaginary, fictional, or dream worlds are created, but that was not his main concern. He was more interested in seeing how the process of becoming relates to the way that suffering and stress are brought about and how they can be brought to an end. One of his first discoveries in analysing the relationship between becoming and suffering was that the processes of becoming operate on different scales in space and time. The process by which the mind creates a psychological sense of location for itself in the states of becoming within this lifetime is the same process by which it establishes a location for itself in another world after death. The question of whether death was followed by rebirth was hotly debated in the Buddha's time, so in teaching the fact of rebirth, he was not simply parroting the assumptions of his culture. The experience of his Awakening is what gave him proof that becoming has both psychological and cosmological dimensions – within the moment and stretching over lifetimes – with a parallel pattern in each. You can learn how the mind finds a place for rebirth by watching how it moves from one becoming to another here and now.

The Paradox of Becoming

“The topic of becoming, although it features one major paradox, contains other paradoxes as well. Not the least of these is the fact that, although becoming is one of the most important concepts in the Buddha's teachings, there is no full-scale treatment of it in the English language. This book is an attempt to fill that lack.

The importance of becoming is evident from the role it plays in The Four Noble Truths, particularly in the second: Suffering and stress are caused by any form of craving that leads to becoming. Thus, the end of suffering must involve the end of becoming. The central paradox of becoming is also evident in the second noble truth, where one of the three forms of craving leading to becoming is craving for non-becoming – the ending of what has come to be. This poses a practical challenge for any attempt to put an end to becoming. Many writers have tried to resolve this paradox by defining non-becoming in such a way that the desire for Unbinding (*nibbana*) would not fall into that category. However, the Buddha himself taught a strategic resolution to this paradox, in which the Four Noble Truths – the path to the end of suffering – involves creating a type of becoming where the mind is so steady and alert that it can simply allow what has come into being to pass away of its own accord, thus avoiding the twin dangers of craving for becoming or for non-becoming.”

- Excerpt from Preface
by Thanissaro Bhikku,
The Paradox of Becoming

The Buddha's Awakening also taught him that the craving and clinging leading to stress are identical to the craving and clinging that lead to becoming. So becoming is inevitably stressful. This explains why the typical human way of avoiding suffering – which is to replace one state of becoming with another – can never fully succeed. If, to escape the sufferings of being a painter, you decide to become a miner instead, you simply exchange one set of sufferings for another. Regardless of what identity you take on, or however you experience the mountain of the world, it's going to entail some degree of stress.

Thus, to put an end to suffering, it's necessary to put an end to becoming. And to do that, it's necessary to understand the process that gives rise to becoming, so that the problem can be attacked at the root. This is why the Buddha focused on becoming as process. And he found that the process has three components, which he likened to the act of planting a seed in a field. The field stands for the range of possibilities offered by past and present *kamma*. The seed stands for consciousness, together with other *kammic* factors that nourish it. The water moistening the seed represents the present mental act of craving and clinging, which fixes on a specific spot in the range of possibilities offered by the field, allowing becoming to develop from the potentials offered by the seed.

This is where the Buddha ran into the central paradox of becoming, because the craving and clinging that provide the moisture do not have to delight in the field or the resultant becoming in order to bear fruit. If the mind fastens on a particular set of possibilities with the aim of changing or obliterating them, that acts as moisture for a state of becoming as well. Thus, the desire to put an end to becoming, produces a new state of becoming.

Because any desire that produces becoming also produces suffering,

*Look at this world:
Beings, afflicted with thick ignorance,
are unreleased
From passion for what has come to be.
All levels of becoming,
Anywhere,
in any way,
are inconstant, stressful, subject to change.
Seeing this – as it has come to be –
with right discernment,
One abandons craving for becoming,
without delighting in non-becoming.
From the total ending of craving
comes dispassion and cessation without remainder:
Unbinding.
For the monk unbound,
through lack of clinging or sustenance,
There is no renewed becoming.
He has conquered Mara,
won the battle,
gone beyond all becomings –
Such.*

- Ud 3:10

the Buddha was faced with a strategic challenge: how to put an end to suffering when the desire to put an end to suffering would lead to renewed suffering. His solution to this problem involved a paradoxical strategy, creating a state of becoming in the mind from which he could watch the potentials of *kamma* as they come into being, but without fueling the desire to do anything with regard to those potentials at all. In the terms of the field analogy, this solution would deprive the seed of moisture. Eventually, when all other states of becoming had been allowed to pass away, the state of becoming that had acted as the strategic vantage point would have to be deprived of moisture as well. Because the moisture of craving and clinging would have seeped into the seed even of this strategic becoming, this would eventually mean the destruction of the seed, as that moisture and any conditioned aspects of consciousness the seed might contain were allowed to pass away. But any unconditioned aspects of consciousness – if they existed – wouldn't be touched at all.

This is precisely what the Buddha attempted, and he found that the strategy worked. Becoming could be allowed to end through creating a specific state of becoming – the condition of mental absorption known as *jhana* – watered by specific types of craving and clinging. This type of becoming, together with its appropriate causes, is what constitutes the path he later taught. Once the path had done its work, he found, it could be abandoned through a process of perceptual deconstruction, and the quest for the end of suffering would be complete. Freed from both suffering and becoming, the mind would be totally released from the limitations of any identity or location – a freedom that beggars the imagination, but captures it as well.

The book, *The Paradox of Becoming* is an attempt to analyse the Buddha's teachings on becoming, and in particular to probe the paradox of becoming and the Buddha's paradoxical strategy in response to it.

THE SUPREME HEALER

THE SUTRA OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA – THE 12 GREAT VOWS

The Medicine Buddha, Bhaisajyaguru¹ is also known as the Great Medicine King Buddha, the Buddha of Twelve Great Vows. He is the Buddha of the Pure Land of Lapis Lazuli - Light in the East, and is considered as a Buddha of Healing, Salvation and Preventer Disasters. Thus, the veneration and practice of The Medicine Buddha has become increasingly popular, across different traditions. Be it in the Chinese, Japanese or Tibetan tradition, there is one common characteristic that remains similar – the healing attribute – reflected in *Sutra of the Medicine Buddha*. There are two popular Chinese translations of this sutra: one by Xuanzang and the other by Yijing, both translated in the Tang dynasty, and the version translated by Yijing includes not only the vows of the Medicine Buddha but also the vows of the Seven Past Buddhas². Additionally, the Taisho Tripitaka and Qianlong Tripitaka each has three translations of the sutra (and each has a different title):

Taisho Tripitaka (大正新脩大藏经) Qianlong Tripitaka (乾隆大藏经)
1. By Dharmagupta (in 615 CE): <i>Sutra of the Vows of the Medicine Buddha</i> 药师如来本愿经 Taisho: Vol. 14, No. 449; Qianlong: No. 167
2. By Xuanzang (in 650 CE): <i>Sutra of the Vows of the Medicine Buddha of Lapis Lazuli Crystal Radiance</i> 药师琉璃光如来本愿功德经 (Taisho: Vol. 14, No. 450; Qianlong: No. 167)
3. By Yijing (in 707 CE): <i>Sutra of the Vows of the Medicine Buddha of Lapis Lazuli Crystal Radiance and Seven Past Buddhas</i> 药师琉璃光七佛本愿功德经 (Taisho: Vol. 14, No. 451; Qianlong: No. 168)

THE PURE LAND OR PARADISE OF MEDICINE BUDDHA



Medicine Buddha, the Supreme Healer (or Sangye Menla in Tibetan) is all-encompassing – able to benefit the practitioners as well as empower one to

help others, in overcoming the inner sickness of attachment, hatred, and ignorance. This is because the Medicine Buddha Mantra³ and meditating on the Medicine Buddha are held to be extremely powerful ways for healing of physical illnesses and purification of negative karma. During his Bodhisattva cultivations, before becoming the Medicine Buddha, he made twelve great vows, wishing to relieve sentient beings from suffering, and let them have sufficient capacities to enter the way of liberation. Those who follow his vows in the practice of Buddhahood can be reborn in his Lapis Lazuli Pure Land, which is as adorned as Sukhavati, the Western Pure Land of Amitabha Buddha.

THE TWELVE GREAT VOWS OF THE MEDICINE BUDDHA

The twelve vows by Bhaisajyaguru, while he was a Bodhisattva, before becoming a Buddha is testament to his boundless compassion for all sentient beings. It is said that remembering his name and his vows brings healing; reading the twelve vows complements the healing experience; and reciting *The Sutra of the Medicine Buddha* helps enhance the healing power, as he had selflessly vowed:

The First Great Vow: I vow that in a future life, when I have attained Supreme, Perfect Enlightenment, brilliant rays will shine forth from my body, illuminating infinite and countless realms. And it will be adorned My body will be adorned with the thirty-two majestic features and the eighty physical attributes of the Buddha, and I will enable all sentient beings to be just like me.

The Second Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, my body will be as bright and clear as Vaidurya – flawlessly pure, vastly radiant, majestic with merits and virtues, abiding at ease, and adorned with blazing rays brighter than the sun and the moon. Beings dwelling in darkness will be illuminated and will succeed in all their endeavours.

The Third Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I will, by means of limitless, boundless wisdom and skilful means, enable all sentient beings to obtain an inexhaustible supply of material necessities, so they are without the slightest want.

The Fourth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall lead those sentient beings who practise deviant paths to reside in the Way of Bodhi, and those who travel on the vehicles of the Hearer or Pratyekabuddha to abide in the Great Vehicle.

The Fifth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall enable innumerable sentient beings who cultivate the Buddha Dharma to uphold the three precepts and mend their ways. Should there be any violation, upon hearing my name, they will regain their purity and not fall into the evil destinies.

The Sixth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings whose bodies are inferior and whose faculties are imperfect, who are ugly, dull, blind, deaf, mute, deformed, paralysed, hunchbacked, or afflicted with skin disease, insanity, or various other sicknesses and sufferings, upon hearing my name they shall

all become endowed with upright features, keen intelligence, and perfect faculties, and they shall be free of sickness and suffering.

The Seventh Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall help all sentient beings who are oppressed by illnesses and those without any aid, without a place to turn, without a doctor, without medicine, without relatives, without family, who are poverty-stricken and filled with suffering to be cured of their pain upon having my name. So, they are peaceful and happy in body and mind. They will have family and relatives, and acquire an abundance of property and wealth, and even realise the unsurpassed and perfect Bodhi.

The Eighth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are women who develop a deep loathing for their female body and wish to renounce it because they are oppressed and disturbed by the myriad sufferings of being female, upon hearing my name, they will be able to turn from women into men who are replete with male features and ultimately realise the unsurpassed and perfect Bodhi.

The Ninth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall liberate all sentient beings from the demonic webs of entrapment and the bondage of external sects. If they have fallen into the dense forests of evil views, I shall lead them to have proper views and to gradually cultivate the practices of Bodhisattvas so they will quickly realise the unsurpassed and perfect Bodhi.

The Tenth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall help sentient beings who fall into the hands of the law and are bound, interrogated, whipped, fettered, imprisoned, sentenced to execution, or subjected to endless disasters, hardships, abuse, and humiliation so that they are torn by grief and distress and suffering in body and mind, to obtain, upon hearing my name, liberation from all worry and suffering by means of my blessings, virtue, and awesome spiritual power.

The Eleventh Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, I shall cause all sentient beings who are so plagued by hunger and thirst that they create all kinds of bad karma in their quest for food, upon hearing my name and single-mindedly accepting and maintaining it, to be filled with delicious food and drink and afterwards, by means of the flavour of Dharma, be able to settle in ultimate peace and happiness.

The Twelfth Great Vow: I vow that in a future life when I attain Bodhi, if there are sentient beings who are poor and without clothes so that day and night they are troubled by mosquitoes and flies, and by cold and heat, upon hearing my name and single-mindedly accepting and maintaining it, they shall obtain all kinds of fine and wonderful garments that accord with their tastes, as well as a variety of precious adornments, flower garlands, fragrant balms, and the enjoyments of music and various kinds of talents, so that all their hearts' delights will be fulfilled.

1. *Paradise of Bhaisajyaguru*, Dry Fresco (751.8cm x 1511.3cm) Yuan Dynasty (circa 1319), Location: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
Photo Credit: Image was donated to Wikimedia Commons by as part of a project by the Metropolitan Museum of Art

2. There are in total eight Medicine Buddhas, including Shakyamuni and more information will be shared in *For You Information* Issue 358 (February).

3. It is said that when one is stricken with illness, one is to recite the long Medicine Buddha mantra 108 times over a glass of water. The water is then believed to be blessed by the power of the mantra and the blessing of the Medicine Buddha – and this practice is then repeated each day until the illness is cured.

CHRONICLES OF BUDDHISM IN SINGAPORE

History of Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre

- DR. JEFFREY PO -

Located at No 38 Lorong 22 Geylang, Singapore, Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre has come a long way. In 1979, Venerable Saljay Rinpoche, His Eminence Beru Khyentse Rinpoche and His Holiness the 14th Kunzang Shamar Rinpoche were invited by the late Venerable Da Xiong to propagate Dharma knowledge in Singapore. It was then that Shamar Rinpoche requested Mr David Chee Kim Swee and some devotees to organise a Buddhist Centre to be named "Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre" (KKBC). A detached house at No. 17 Jalan Lateh was subsequently rented for the centre's administration.

First Management Committee



Detached house at No. 17 Jalan Lateh, Photo Credit: KKBC

In 1980 His Holiness, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje visited Singapore. To offer blessings for the successful Dharma propagation of the Centre and assured Mr David Chee that he would send a qualified teacher as an advisor to the Centre. On 17 March, KKBC was duly registered by the Singapore Registrar of Societies and on 11 March 1982 the first management committee of KKBC was formed to oversee the running of this centre and Venerable Shangpa Rinpoche accepted the offer to become the religious advisor to KKBC.

With the ever-expanding activities the need for a larger centre, the need for the large centre become crucial and Venerable Shangpa Rinpoche initiated the search for new premises in 1990. A bungalow with freehold land located at No. 38 Lorong 22 Geylang was shortlisted for the purchase. A fund-raising campaign ensued. Then, in 1991 with the concerted effort of Venerable Shangpa Rinpoche, Mr and Mrs Loh Seck Fah, as well as members and devotees, the new property was purchased on 29 December 1992, the centre

moved to its new location. In 1993, the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore authorised the change of use of the premise to that as a Buddhist Institution. With the completion of refurbishment works KKBC celebrated its opening on 14 November 1993. After undergoing several expansions programme it was found that the then current premise needed a new building to cater for its many activities.

Appointment of Abbot

In 1998, Shangpa Rinpoche was appointed the abbot of KKBC according to traditional Tibetan Buddhist procedures. In this position, Shangpa Rinpoche took on a more active role in the Centre's development, taking on the responsibilities associated with guiding members on their spiritual path; safeguarding the continued progress of the Centre in realising its goals and objectives, particularly the establishment of the Buddhist Institute. At present, Shangpa Rinpoche is the Chief Abbot of various Buddhist Institutions in Nepal, namely, Jangchub Choeling Monastery, Vikrama Shila Buddhist Institute, Karma Ngedon Palbar Ling Retreat Centre in Pokhara, Tharpa Choeling Nunnery in Mustang, Drubgyud Choeling Monastery in Lumbini and Kagyu Institute of Buddhist Studies in Kirtipur. He is also the honourable advisor of Dharmodaya Society, a member of the World Fellowship of Buddhists in Nepal, and Chairman of the Shangpa Foundation. Shangpa Rinpoche is also the spiritual advisor of Karma Shedrup Choeling in Denmark.



Venerable Shangpa Rinpoche was born on 12 September 1960, near the border of Tibet and Nepal. At the age of two, he was recognised by His Holiness the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa as the reincarnation of the Great Yogi Shangpa Rinpoche, and thus received the intensive education of a Tulku under the guidance of the late Dupsing Rinpoche and other teachers in Pokhara, Nepal. At the age of sixteen, Shangpa Rinpoche joined the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Varanasi, India, where he mastered key subjects including Buddhist philosophy, literature, poetry, history and the Sanskrit language. Following which, he also received extensive empowerments, transmissions and essential teachings from great masters of different lineages. In 1982, Shangpa Rinpoche arrived in Singapore to help establish the Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre. Shangpa Rinpoche became a Singapore Permanent Resident in 1996. He was later appointed the Abbot of KKBC in 1998.

Fund Raising

In 2012, His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje visited KKBC from 25-31 May to lend support to the fundraising activities for the KKBC new building project. In the same year, the URA gave written permission for KKBC to construct a new building. During this reconstruction period from 2014, KKBC relocated itself to temporarily to No. 31 Lor 24A Geylang. On 20 August 2014, KKBC awarded the contract for the construction of the new building. A ground-breaking ceremony was held under the auspices of His Holiness, the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

Grand Opening



Photo Credit: KKBC and Thule G. Jug

The construction was duly completed by 2017 and KKBC was granted a Temporary Occupation License (TOP) by URA on 15 April. KKBC moved to its new building on 31 May 2017. The new Karma Kagyu Buddhist Centre was officially opened on 8 October 2017 by His Holiness the Gyalwa Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje, and this grand opening was complemented with a 7-day programme that included Dharma teaching, blessing ceremonies, consecration of Buddha images, Tsog offerings, Kagyud Monlam and various initiations.

Five Core Activities of KKBC

Over the years, KKBC has developed five core activities that provides support for the devotees and continues to do so, and they are:

- Dharma Teachings, transmissions and retreats
- Pilgrimages to Buddhist holy sites
- Group Practices
- Events
- Charity

References:

Karma Kagyu Buddhist Centre – The Journey, <http://www.karma-kagyud.org.sg>
The Karmapa – <https://kagyuooffice.org>



Photo Credit: The Karmapa

Joint-Statement of His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje and His Holiness Trinley Thaye Dorje

In October 2018, His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje and His Holiness Trinley Thaye Dorje met over a few days at a rural location in France with the purpose of getting to know each other personally. They also discussed how they might work together to preserve and strengthen the Karma Kagyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. After their discussions, His Holiness Trinley Thaye Dorje and His Holiness Ogyen Trinley Dorje issued the following joint statement on 11 October 2018:

"We are both very pleased to have had this opportunity to meet and get to know each other in a peaceful and relaxed environment. We both had this wish for many years, and we are gratified that this wish has now been fulfilled. The purpose of our meeting was primarily to spend time together so that we could establish a personal relationship. We were able to talk together freely and to learn about each other for the first time. We were thus able to begin what we expect will develop into a strong connection.

While we were together we also talked about ways that we could work to heal the divisions that have unfortunately developed within our precious Karma Kagyu lineage in recent years. We view it as our duty and responsibility to do whatever we can to bring the lineage together.

This undertaking is critically important for the future of the Karma Kagyu lineage as well as for the future of Tibetan Buddhism and the benefit of all sentient beings. We therefore ask everyone within the Karma Kagyu community to join us in our efforts to strengthen and preserve our lineage. We view it as our collective responsibility to restore harmony to our tradition which is a lineage of wisdom and compassion."

INSPIRATION FROM ENLIGHTENED NUNS

THE TEACHINGS OF THE POEMS

- Susan Elbaum Jootla -

The Danger of World Desire

A large number of poems by the nuns emphasise the danger of worldly desire. The bhikkhuni named Sumedha shaved off her hair herself in order to force her parents to cancel her proposed marriage and permit her to enter the Sangha. But before she left home, Sumedha convinced her whole family and its retinue of the validity of the Buddha's message. To her fiancé, King Anikaratta, she explained the futility of sense desires and the insatiability of the senses:

**Even if the rain-god rained all seven kinds
Of gems, until earth and heaven were full,
Still senses would crave and men die unsatiated (p.176)**

No matter how large a quantity of worldly goods we may have, if the mind has not gained insight, craving will recur. If ignorance has not been uprooted, desire will seek more and different objects, always hoping for lasting satisfaction. Durable happiness is impossible in the mundane sphere because all sense objects change and decay every moment, just as the mind itself does. This perpetual state of underlying dissatisfaction — craving looking for gratification — is one of the many forms of present suffering. In addition, desire itself generates the kammic energy which propels life towards rebirth in order for it to continue its efforts at finding fulfillment. If desire is present in the mind at the moment of death, rebirth has to ensue.

After speaking the above verse, Sumedha gave a lengthy discourse to the whole assembly in her palace on the great value of a human birth in the infinity of samsara. Life in this world is precious because it provides a very rare opportunity for learning the way to put an end to rebirth and suffering, for putting into practice the teachings of the Buddha. Sumedha also spoke on the danger inherent in sensual joy and sense desire and she uttered verses about the Noble Eightfold Path as well. She enthusiastically exhorted her audience:

**When the undying (Nibbana) exists,
what do you want with sensual pleasures which are burning fevers?
For all delights in sensual pleasures are on fire, aglow, seething.**

(v. 504)

When craving momentarily gains its aim, the mind's enjoyment of the sense object brings it to a feverish state of excitement and activity. Sumedha urges her family to look beyond such unsettling, binding pleasures and to heed the words of the Awakened One which show the way beyond all desire to utter peace. She exhorts them to keep in mind their long-term benefit and not get caught up in the fragile momentary happiness that comes with the

occasional satisfaction of sense desire. She reminds them in words we too should recall: "Desires of sense burn those who do not let go" (p. 176). Clinging to pleasure always brings pain. Such agitated emotions, although perhaps pleasant in a gross way, are gone in a moment. They arise and cease due to conditions we cannot completely control. We always tend to want the pleasant to last, in spite of the fact that its nature is to change, vanish, and give way to the unpleasant. Sumedha's poem expounding this wisdom is the last one in the original *Therigatha* and it summarises what the Buddha taught about the dangers of craving.

The bhikkhuni named Subha also dwells at length on the dangers of mundane wishes, using some terrifying metaphors to show the tremendous dangers that are inherent in attachment to the world. In the following poem taken from the *Samyutta Nikaya*, a meditator can discover much by reflecting on Subha's intense imagery:

**May I not meet (again) with
sensual pleasures,
in which no refuge is found.**

**Sensual pleasures are
enemies, murderers,
like a mass of fire, pain-(ful).**

**Greed is an obstacle, full of
fear, full of annoyance,
full of thorns, and it is very
disagreeable.**

**It is a great cause of
stupefaction...**

**Sensual pleasures are
maddening,
deceiving, agitating the mind;
a net spread out by Mara for
the defilement of creatures.**

**Sensual pleasures have
endless perils,
they have much pain, they are
great poisons,
they give little enjoyment, they
cause conflict,
drying up the virtuous.**

(vv. 351f., 357f.)

These lines show us the perils and suffering we must face when we allow ourselves to become entangled in mundane desires. Only personal comprehension of these dangers motivates a meditator to become truly mindful, aware of his physical and mental activities with ever-present detachment. Otherwise his “mindfulness” may be forced, suppressing reactions without helping to untie mental knots. Studying the suffering we have to encounter if we are carried away by our desires, naturally loosens their hold on the mind. We will realise along with Subha that worldly lusts are enemies and that they herald all the misery of successive births.

One of our tasks in seeking liberation is to train our minds to see desire as it arises at the sense doors. We must also see desire as it persists and as it passes away. Having done this over and over again, we will understand that all desire or attachment is bound to result in unhappiness. In this way, we will gradually train our minds to let go of all craving and aversions towards sense objects.

To try to practise this mindfulness without any specific training is likely to fail because the “worldling”, the average person, perceives no suffering in craving. A “worldling” can only see the expected happiness. He invariably thinks, “If only this would happen just right, all would be well.” But as we purify our bodily and vocal activities through morality, still our minds through concentration, and take up insight meditation under a good teacher, we will come to see more and more clearly how all desire is suffering and brings still more suffering in the future.

We will then also realise how often when attaining a desired object turns out to be an anti-climax which leaves — not the anticipated happiness — but only emptiness. Then, and only with a calm mind, we can clearly perceive the tension, distress, and uneasiness caused by the continual dissatisfaction, which in turn is due to craving impelling the mind to various sense objects.

Thus, the mind is always running — now towards what it foolishly regards as a “desirable” thing, now away from what it considers “undesirable”. In Vipassana meditation, the one-pointed mind is trained to experience directly the transitory nature of body and of mind itself, and also of external sense objects. With this direct knowledge or experiential insight, the “happiness” which is so avidly sought by the “worldling” is seen as really just another form of suffering, and the perpetual tension caused by the ignorance and craving latent in any unliberated mind becomes evident. As sensual pleasure is understood to be the seething fire described by our bhikkhunis, the will mind naturally let go of all these different manifestations of craving. Such a mind has thoroughly learned the lesson that the nuns gleaned from their Master and passed on to us: suffering is inherent in desires.

