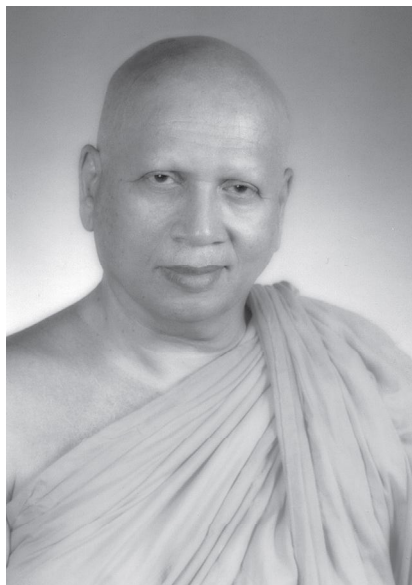


the Path of Joy



Bhante Says 'DEVELOPING THE MIND'

Although the Buddha's teachings are comprised in numerous volumes, the main purpose of these teachings is to help people to guard and develop their minds. As the 1st stanza of the *Dhammapada* says –

*Mind precedes all mental states
Mind is their chief; they are all mind-
wrought
If with an impure mind a person speaks
or acts
suffering follows him
like the wheel that follows the foot of an
ox.*

*Mind precedes all mental states
Mind is their chief; they are all mind-
wrought
If with a pure mind a person speaks or
acts
happiness follows him
like his never-departing shadow*

It's clear therefore that if we don't guard our mind, our actions can go wrong and we tend to make a lot of mistakes.

In another stanza of the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha shows us what an unguarded mind is like.

Just as rain breaks through an

*ill-thatched house
so passion penetrates an undeveloped
mind*

*Just as rain does not break through a
well-thatched house
so passion never penetrates a well-devel-
oped mind.*

We all know what a house without a roof is like. It does not protect the inhabitants from the cold, heat and rain.

However, even if a house has a roof, but the roof is not well constructed, we'll still have a lot of problems.

I have experienced this myself. When the Buddhist Library building was first constructed, the roof and windows were not properly done. As a result, there were many leaks. One of the visiting Dharma teachers from England even slipped and fell. Luckily, he did not suffer any serious injuries.

And so with an unguarded mind, whatever thought comes, we tend to act upon that thought. In that sense, we're controlled by our uninvited thoughts and we have no freedom of action.

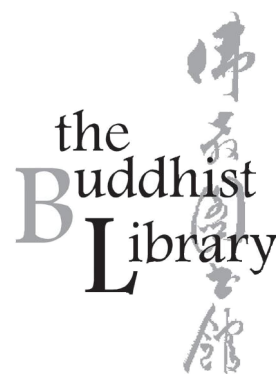
But if we're able to free our minds from negative attitudes like anger, greed and jealousy, we'll be able to exercise freedom of action.

The *Dhammapada* says it well –

*Wonderful, indeed, it is to subdue the
mind
so difficult to subdue, ever swift
seizing whatever it desires
A tamed mind brings happiness.*

*Let the discerning man guard the mind
so difficult to detect and extremely subtle
seizing whatever it desires
A guarded mind brings happiness.*

The point to remember is that even if we're not fully enlightened like the Buddha but we engage in the practice of training our mind diligently and sincerely, we'll be able to be mindful of



our thoughts as they arise, at least to some extent. To that extent, we'll be able to arrest negative thoughts as they arise and prevent ourselves from acting upon them.

So it's not surprising that in another stanza of the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha emphasises the amount of harm that an unguarded harm can do.

*Whatever harm an enemy may do to an
enemy
or a hater to a hater
an ill-directed mind inflicts on oneself
a greater harm*

Usually, people say that they have no enemies. But there are some people who do have a lot of enemies. In life, we can have many kinds of enemies, some even life-threatening. In a way, we can also say that life-threatening diseases are also our enemies. Yet, the Buddha says that such external enemies are not so dangerous. They're in fact less dangerous than our own unguarded minds.

Therefore, if we don't improve the quality of our mind by constantly checking our negative thoughts, such a mind can be our greatest enemy.

Conversely, the Buddha stresses the value of a guarded mind.

*Neither mother, father, nor any other
relative
can do one greater good than
one's own well-directed mind.*

Generally, we say that our best friends in life are our parents although it's very seldom that we see parents and their children talking to each other as friends.

Usually, parents do things for their children's sake without any ulterior motive. We can have many friends. They have sweet tongues and say things that we like to hear. But we do have to be careful of their motives.

Parents, on the other hand, often scold or admonish us. But they do so for our good. They teach us what is right or beneficial and prevent us from getting into danger. They may even go to the extent of putting their own lives in danger to help their offspring.

But still our parents can help us only to a limited extent. Our minds play the most important part.

Yet, some children don't take the advice of their parents to heart. They think that they have the freedom to do whatever they like. Actually, this 'independent business' is a very silly thing.

In this world, nothing is independent. Plants and trees are not independent. They depend on the soil, the rain and the sun for survival and growth.

Even we, as human beings, in many ways, are interdependent. If we're truly independent, we should be able to be born without parents. But even in this age of test tube babies and cloning, parents are required for reproduction.

In other ways, we are also dependent on others. We depend on farmers, cooks and bakers for our food. Of course, we pay for what we eat but just by paying money will not bring food to our table.

And so it's clear that if we guard our minds well, they'll become our greatest friends. Even better than our dear parents.

Guarding our minds means that we should be able to see negative thoughts as and when they arise – and thereby prevent them from causing mischief. At the same time, we should try to increase our positive thoughts by developing loving kindness, compassion and wisdom.

We don't have to believe what the Buddha said just because he said them. We should and can see these things for ourselves from our own experience. As the Buddha said in the famous *Kalama Sutta* –

Do not believe in anything (simply) because you have heard it.

Do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations.

Do not believe in anything because it is spoken and rumoured by many.

Do not believe in anything (simply) because it is found written in your religious books.

Do not believe in anything merely on the authority of your teachers and elders.

But after observation and analysis when you find that anything agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all then accept it and live up to it.

For instance, we may have created problems and caused pain for many years by our negative words and actions. We may even have damaged friendship with others.

Moreover, by not developing our minds, we render ourselves unable to act skillfully when decisive action is required. Take food, for example. Guarding the mind from attachment for food can be very difficult.

But some people do this for the wrong reason. In the newspapers, I read that one lady starved herself to death because she wanted to look beautiful. That is determination for the wrong purpose.

Nevertheless, it's extremely difficult to overcome the temptation of food. Even if a doctor tells us not to take certain kinds of food, we will still take them if they're put on the table in front of us. Or we make excuses, such as we will eat them today and abstain from them for the whole of next week.

But if we're able to develop our minds, we can say that under any circumstances, we can refrain from taking harmful actions. We can say –

'I have promised myself not to be involved in harmful actions so I won't perform them'.

In this way, we won't be influenced by others to do wrong things. In almost many cases of alcohol or drug addiction, one cause is the bad influence of others. Another is our own weak minds.

Another important thing is that if we face a difficult situation like a life threatening disease, having a guarded mind gives us the mental strength to

face the problem and carry on with our lives.

But if our minds are weak, when we experience pain, we get angry. Unfortunately, anger does not cure the disease or reduce the pain. It only increases suffering. Pain, ill health and anger make us suffer.

On the other hand, if we don't get angry, we can deal with the situation better.

I must stress that all these things can be achieved without attaining full enlightenment. Don't think that we have to wait until we are enlightened to reduce suffering for ourselves. If we have to wait like that, Buddhism is not meaningful to us. Buddhism is useful precisely because it has the potential to help us reduce suffering even while we're still facing daily problems like ill health, broken relationships and loss of loved ones.

What we need to do is to strengthen our minds and add a little bit more wisdom, instead of becoming more emotional and reactive.

Bhante B Dhammaratana
Religious Advisor
Buddhist Library

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'The God Delusion' through Buddhist Eyes

In this issue's *Bhante Says*, our Bhante B Dhammaratana discusses the mind. How important is it in spiritual development? How can the mind help us to improve our lives? How can it let us down? And how can we guard and develop it spiritually?

At the outset, Bhante stresses that the main focus of spiritual development in Buddhism is guarding and developing the mind. Indeed, we can even say that Buddhism's pre-occupation with mind training pertains to the very identity of Buddhism itself. People have debated the status of Buddhism for ages. Is it a religion? A way of life? A philosophy? Or what?

Recently, I read a challenging, often provocative, book entitled *The God Delusion* by Professor Richard Dawkins of Oxford University. Dawkins explains why he's an atheist ('a deeply religious non-believer') and what he finds objectionable about religion, including mainstream or moderate religion. He quotes extensively from religious and scientific sources to make a strong case.

As a Buddhist, I was keen to see what Dawkins has to say about Buddhism. Does he have the same objections to it as he does to the other religions?

As it turns out, Dawkins, at the very beginning of the book, excludes Buddhism (and Confucianism) from its scope. Why? Because 'there is something to be said for treating these not as religions at all but as ethical systems or philosophies of life.'

In calling Buddhism an ethical system, Dawkins is undoubtedly right. The Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddhist road map to enlightenment, is, for sure, an ethical practice.

But it's also much more than that. Besides ethics, the other aspects of the Path comprise concentration and wisdom. These have to do with training the mind. And it's mainly the wisdom teachings of the Buddha that make Buddhism uniquely different. But Dawkins seems to have ignored them.

In the *Kaccayanagota Sutra*, for example, the Buddha said -

"This world, Kaccayana, is generally inclined towards two (views): existence and non-existence.

To him who perceives with right wisdom, the uprising of the world as it has come to be, the notion of non-existence in the world does not occur.

Kaccayana, to him who perceives with right wisdom, the ceasing of the world as it has come to be, the notion of the existence in the world does not occur....

'Everything exists' - this, Kaccayana, is one extreme. 'Everything does not exist' - this, Kaccayana is the second extreme.

Kaccayana, without approaching either extreme, the Tathagatha teaches you a doctrine by the middle."

This middle doctrine that the Buddha taught is the principle of dependent origination, the general statement of which is -

*When this is, that is
This arising, that arises
When this is not, that is not
This ceasing, that ceases*

Professor Asanga Tilakaratne in his book *'Nirvana and Ineffability'* outlines the implications of this doctrine very clearly -

"Thus the explanation of reality presented by Buddhism through the doctrine of dependent origination does not involve theistic absolutism or substantialism based on the belief in an unchanging soul. The explanation involves only a set of mutually conditioned phenomena serving as both causes and effects which in themselves are a part of the experienced reality. This may well be called the Buddhist 'naturalist' explanation of reality since it does not go beyond the limits of our experience."

In this respect, Buddhism is more akin to science than to religion. No creator God. No soul. No divine-inspired miracles. All phenomena rise and fall dependent on causes and conditions, nothing more, nothing less.

Professor Asanga again - *"The Buddha has very explicitly said that 'there is no God (issara) and (hence) the world is without a protector.' In addition to this,*

we have to say that the entire movement of Buddhism is a denial of the idea of God. The rejection of the Vedic authority, creationism and the concept of grace and the advocacy of the self-reliance in the path to liberation - all amount to a rejection of God."

One of Dawkins' main objections to religion is the so-called 'knowledge gap'.

'Creationists eagerly seek a gap in present-day knowledge or understanding. If an apparent gap is found, it is assumed that God, by default, must fill it... one of the truly bad effects of religion is that it teaches us that it is a virtue to be satisfied with not understanding.'

This certainly can't be said of Buddhism.

Dawkins, in his book, further asserts - *"It is an essential part of the scientific enterprise to admit ignorance, even to exult in ignorance as a challenge to future conquests. As my friend Matt Ridley has written, 'Most scientists are bored by what they have already discovered. It is ignorance that drives them on.'"*

2,550 years ago, ignorance also drove Prince Siddhartha Gotama to find the solution to the problem of universal suffering, which he did when he became the Buddha. From the moment he learned that old age, sickness and death affected everyone, even a prince, Prince Siddhartha Gotama could not rest until he found the answer he sought.

Dawkins stresses the fact that religions rely on their holy texts to make their case, ignoring the evidence.

'Fundamentalists know they are right because they have read the truth in a holy book and they know, in advance, that nothing will budge them from their belief. The truth of the holy book is an axiom, not the end product of a process of reasoning. The book is true, and if the evidence seems to contradict it, it is the evidence that must be thrown out, not the book.'

In contrast, the Buddha said in the *Kalama Sutra* -

'Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumour; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has

been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher.'

Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are bad; these things are blameable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them....

Kalamas, when you yourselves know: 'These things are good; these things are not blameable; these things are praised by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to benefit and happiness,' enter on and abide in them.'

The Buddhist approach is well stated by Professor Y Karunadasa in his article on *The Significance of Vesak* (POJ Issue 21 October to December 2006) -

'As Buddhism is the religion of enlightenment, it's through wisdom and insight and not through blind faith and devotion that this final goal can be realized. In Buddhism, the accent is on self-understanding, self-verification, and self-realisation. This explains why Buddhism gives its followers full freedom to inquire, investigate or examine...

There is a general belief among some people that a critical attitude and a spirit of inquiry are not consistent with the spiritual life. What's necessary is faith and devotion. But the Buddhist position is otherwise. From the Buddhist perspective, a critical attitude and a spirit of inquiry, rather than being detrimental, is very much salutary to the practice of a spiritual life.'

Professor Asanga elaborates further -

'This statement to the Kalamas is valuable as a proclamation of freedom of thinking with regard to religious matters. Nevertheless, this is a general statement addressed to a group of people who are not necessarily Buddhists...Therefore what is more important... is to see whether the Buddha allowed a similar freedom to his immediate followers to inquire into himself and his teachings.

In the Vimamsaka Sutta, the Buddha allowed such a freedom. He requests that his followers make investigations into the nature of the Buddha himself... The discourse further remarks that one should investigate the Buddha to see whether or not his behaviour is good or bad and that this investigation has to be done nor for

a short time but for a long period of time With the same spirit, the inquiry has to be extended to the teaching of the Buddha too.'

All this does not, of course, make Buddhism scientific.

Life after death, for example, cannot be proved scientifically. According to Buddhism, on the other hand, sentient beings, including humans and animals, will, when they die, be reborn in any of 6 realms of existence that include the human, animal, ghostly and heavenly realms.

To an atheist like Dawkins, believing in life after death is but wishful thinking -

'Many religions, for example teach the objectively implausible but subjectively appealing doctrine that our personalities survive our bodily death. The idea of immortality itself survives and spreads because it caters to wishful thinking. And wishful thinking counts, because human psychology has a near-universal tendency to let belief be coloured by desire.'

And so, although he'd previously excluded Buddhism from the scope of his book, Dawkins could not resist taking a potshot at Buddhism -

'I know of no evidence that atheists have any general tendency towards unhappy, angst-ridden despondence. Some atheists are happy. Others are miserable. Similarly, some Christians, Jews, Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists are miserable, while others are happy'.

This parting of ways is only to be expected. The Buddha taught from his own experience and insight. He did not use the microscope or the stethoscope. And even though Buddhism is said to be 'empirical', it's empirical in the sense that its teachings (such as the Four Noble Truths of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering) can be verified by personal experience, not experiments.

This, of course, is not sufficient for science. Science requires a theory to be observed and tested and the results replicated under strict laboratory conditions before it can be accepted as a scientific fact.

Why then am I a Buddhist? Because I

accept the Buddha's explanation that actions have consequences, good, bad or indifferent. And that if I act with good, bad or indifferent intention, the consequences will follow accordingly, whether immediately or in the distant future. I accept this because of my own observations and reflections of my own life and those of people I know.

And so, I've found that the basic teachings of the Buddha on loving kindness, compassion and equanimity have a direct relevance to my life. In addition, the Buddha's teachings on dependent origination and emptiness enable me to view this conflict-ridden world with a degree of equanimity and a relatively positive outlook.

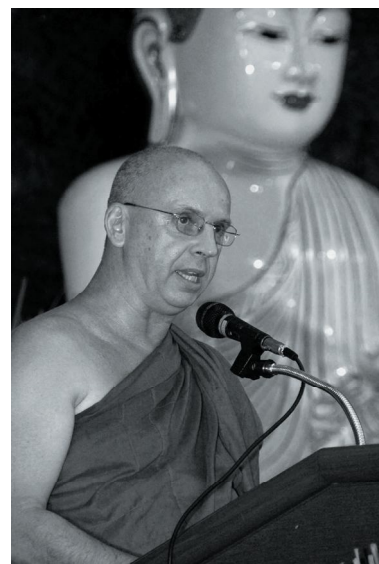
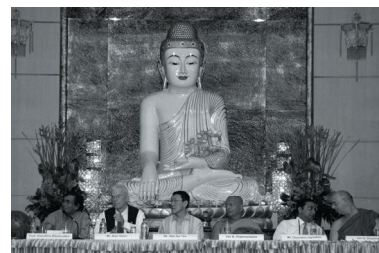
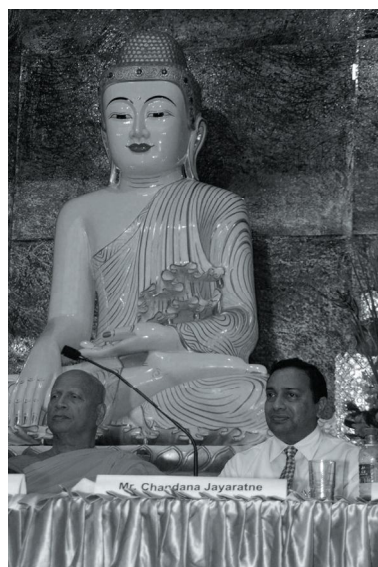
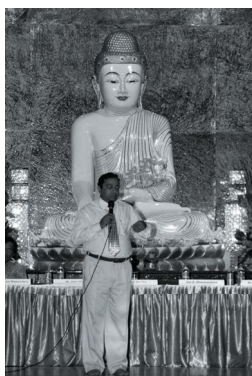
In short, the Buddha's teachings have made a qualitative difference to my life and I'm content to accept them as my guide. They include rebirth (a small part of the teachings not pivotal to the core message of Buddhism in any case).

Whether or not there's life after death, my life has been, and continues to be, benefited and enriched by the Buddha's teachings. I do not accept rebirth because of 'wishful thinking' or fear of falling into nothingness upon death. Neither am I fixated on the idea of eternal existence. What I do know is that if I can take care of today by being mindful of my thoughts, speech and actions (as our Bhante Dhammaratana advises) tomorrow will take care of itself.

What then if some day, science were to prove (improbable as it may seem) that there's no life after death? So be it. His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has said that Buddhism being a religion of enlightenment and reality, as Buddhists, we ought to accept any finding of science that has been proved conclusively, and jettison any Buddhist teaching that runs contrary to scientifically proven facts. To do otherwise would be to go against the Buddha's teachings on non-attachment. Furthermore, like a raft that has been used to cross a river, even the Dharma, according to the Buddha, has to be abandoned once it's achieved its purpose.

I would certainly recommend Dawkins' book to readers.

'Bridging Science & Spirituality' on 7th & 8th April 2007 at the Buddhist Library & Taipei Buddhist Centre



Monk Chat is an innovative scheme that was introduced at a couple of Thai temples in Chiangmai which house monastic universities and schools a few years ago. The intention was two-fold. To provide an opportunity for novices and monks studying or interested in the English language to improve their skills and also for tourists to learn about Buddhism and Thai culture first hand and for free. Monk chat has grown in popularity to the extent that it's mentioned in tourist guide books.

But there are fears. Monks or novices may inadvertently be passing on wrong or inaccurate information either because they're not well-informed themselves or they're not able to speak English well enough. And they themselves, particularly teenaged novices, may in the process be imbibing attitudes that are not quite compatible with their monastic vows.

Here, 2 students from the school where I teach speak about their Monk Chat experiences.

Editor



PIEMPONGSAL LEESOPHA

I'm a high school student in Samakkeewittayatan school in Chedi Luang Temple in Chiang Mai city.

I've been a Monk Chat member for 2 years. I've talked with many tourists. We talk about anything they would like to know. All of them have different questions, but most of the questions are about Buddhism, a monk's life, and Thai culture.

Some really want to know about Buddhism, and sometimes, it's very hard for me to answer them. Especially when they ask about the 'ultimate goal' of Buddhism.

Generally, they ask me questions like 'How long have you been a monk?'. I answer that I've been a monk for 6 months, but (before that) I was a novice for 7 years.

They also ask 'Why did you become a monk?' I tell them that I want to (help) preserve Buddhism. And, moreover, I wanted to study the Buddha's teaching so that I can use it in my life.

I would also like to dedicate the merit I make from praying and meditation to my parents, especially my mother since she can't become a monk. Furthermore, our ancestors always taught (us) that ordination in Buddhism is the 'supreme charity' (meritorious act) in life. Since we only have one life, we believe this is the best way to reciprocate the kindness of our parents..

Another question they ask is 'What do you think is the most important of the Buddha's teaching?' I usually reply that the most important thing for me to learn in Buddhism is that by continually reviewing my actions, I can develop awareness in my life. I can do this by asking myself these questions - Who are you now? What are you doing here?

In this way, I can look out for my faults and correct them so as to improve myself.

Moreover, Buddhism teaches people to have wisdom in listening. Because, according to the Buddha, it's possible to have faith and wisdom by listening. The perfect man is also the perfect listener. Nobody, the Buddha taught, is unaffected by wisdom. Wisdom makes man clever, and allows him to have right view and be reasonable.



PETPICHAI SANSONG

Have you ever chatted with Buddhist monks? There are many things about them that you may not know about them or you may even misunderstand. For example, when I was young, my uncle told me that monks just stay in the monastery and receive food and donations from the lay people because they're lazy. At that time I really believed him but when I grew up and went to school, I learned the truth and

now I don't believe him.

My name is Petpichai Sansong. I was born in a poor family in Nan Province in the north of Thailand. I did not have any money to continue my school education after I finished Grade 8 (secondary 3). So I decided to ordain as a Buddhist novice at Wat Chedi Luang in Chiangmai city. I studied in the school located in the Wat (Samakkhee Witayatan School). We study the same subjects as normal students do but we have special classes in the evening for studying the life history of the Lord Buddha, his teachings (Dhamma) and the Pali Language.

At the beginning, my English was really poor. I couldn't speak to the tourists whom I met in the monastery or outside. But not so long later, the Buddhist University next to our school established Monk Chat Club.

The purpose of this club is to help students studying the English language to improve their spoken English. When we talk with tourists, we exchange information with them about each other's culture. We inform them about Buddhism, the Buddha, Buddhist monks' duties and anything else that they want to discuss.

Since there's this great opportunity to improve my English, I try to go to Monk Chat as much as possible. People from various parts of the world - USA, Europe, Asia, even South America - come and visit us at Monk Chat.

Lynsay from the USA asked me - What is the difference between 'sin' in Christianity and 'kamma' in Buddhism?

I explained it to her in this way. 'Kamma' in Buddhism is a Pali word that means 'action'. It's a neutral word that includes both positive and negative actions. Much depends on the intention of the person performing the action. If we do an act with a negative intention, then the consequence will be a negative one for us. If we do an act with a positive intention, then it's a good action for us.

The word 'sin', on the other hand, refers only to bad actions.

Moreover, a sin in Christianity is an act that goes against God's commandment or law. In Buddhism, we do not have a creator God.

...continued on page 8

The Dharma of Star Wars

by Matthew Bortolin
Published by Wisdom Publications
(2005)

Reviewed by Kim

Penning this review didn't come easy as I've procrastinated for a very long time and have since forgotten the entire story. Not that the book wasn't interesting... It was in fact very spellbinding. But well... Things got out of hand.

I jumped at the chance to do the review initially because the title of the book captivated me when I first saw it a very long time ago (say... I think it was more than 3 years ago... OooOh..)

Well, back to the topic. What I couldn't figure out was 'Just where is the Dharma in Star Wars?'

First and foremost, I must declare that I am not fanatical about *Star Wars*. I liked the movies and that's about it.

After I got my hands on the book and began reading it, I realized that - 'Hey! It's not so much that the storyteller of *Star Wars* is Buddhist. The author saw Dharma in the story!'

Well, it fascinates me because I'm struggling to be mindful of my daily practice but there the author is, seeing Dharma in *Star Wars*.

What I liked especially about the book was that the author discussed not just why Dharma exists in *Star Wars* but also how he related it back to the Buddha's teachings and to our current environment. That made it more applicable and easier to follow since it was closer to heart. Not an easy task considering that the topics discussed include the 4 Noble Truths, the 5 Aggregates, Karma and the Noble Eightfold Path.

The examples used and the in-depth yet easy to follow style of writing made reading this book simply a pleasure.

When I was watching the *Star Wars* movies, I must confess that I was listening to the conversations flying around without giving them much thought. That's probably why it's good to read this book as I receive a 're-fresher' course on *Star Wars*. The book quoted a lot of the conversations.

Consider this statement by Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn to Obi-Wan -

"Don't center on your anxieties, Obi-Wan, keep your concentration here and now where it belongs."

What a wonderful Buddhist teaching on being in the present, on mindfulness.

There was a scene described by the author where Luke went into a dark cave beneath a huge, black tree and engaged in a fight with Darth Vader.

'From the misty gloom of the cave's interior Darth Vader seems to appear. Luke ignites his light saber, and after a brief exchange of blows he defeats the Dark Lord of the Sith, separating his masked head from his body. Yet despite this apparent victory Yoda later calls Luke's experience in the cave a failure.'

Luke fails because he is unable to recognise that the supposed source of his suffering - Darth Vader - is in fact himself. The dark side is all the suffering in life. It is frustration, hatred, anger, and all the negative feelings and thoughts that come from within us. This was the lesson that Yoda was teaching Luke.

To discuss interdependence, the author Matthew quoted Obi-Wan -

'You and the Naboo form a symbiont circle. What happens to one of you will affect the other. You must understand this.'

Matthew went on to elaborate on how nothing is independent or dependent but is interdependent, just as the tree needs rain and rain needs the tree. Nothing is totally independent and does not need to rely on others. This relates to the Buddhist concept of dependent origination and non-self.

Reading this chapter brings about in me a feeling of *déjà vu*. It reminds me of the teachings of a monk who emphasises a lot on love, compassion and the interdependent nature of all things - Thich Nhat Hanh (TNH). Flipping to the back, I read Matthew's acknowledgement of thanks to this very compassionate monk.

I recall a book by TNH where he mentioned that interdependence means a part of him exists in his books, in the smile of a child. This incident definitely endorses his stand as I feel his teachings in Matthew's writing style poignantly.

In Buddhism it is said: *"if there is perception, there is deception."*

Our mind has become burdened with preconceptions, losing its child-like nature that sees everything with freshness and awareness. Matthew highlighted this in the conversation between Yoda and Luke:

'Master, moving stones around is one thing. This is totally different.'

'No! No different! Only different in your mind. You must unlearn what you have learned.'

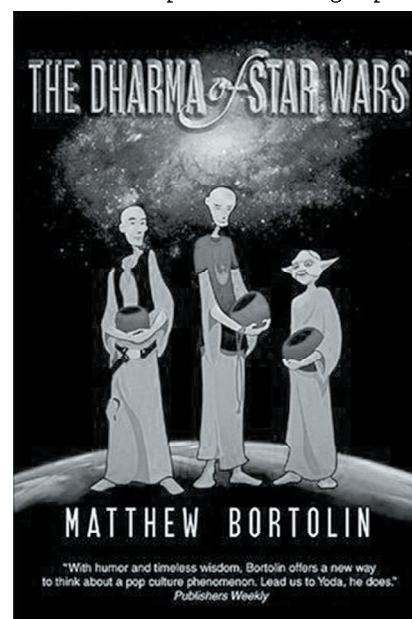
Our mind become fixated on conceptions and develop discrimination. To regain our child-like nature, we have to unlearn everything we have learned, to get rid of our concepts and discriminating nature.

Matthew used *Star Wars* not just to show where Dharma exists but also to highlight where it doesn't, as the conversation between Padme and Anakin illustrates.

'Are you allowed to love? I thought that was forbidden for a Jedi.'

'Attachment is forbidden.... Compassion, which I would define as unconditional love, is central to a Jedi's life. So you might say that we are encouraged to love.'

According to the book, it is not wise to forbid attachment because we are pushing away that desire, or suppressing it and that will become suffering. Attachment to that desire also leads to desire. Instead, mindfully watch that desire and accept it but do not grasp.



I like Matthew's counter argument to Anakin's comment. Compassion is unconditional love. However, it is not the same as romantic love, which is attached, dependent on and directed to a specific individual. The remainder of Anakin's speech is word play to support his stand that he is 'encouraged' to pursue Padme.

This concept does seem to be something most of us get mixed up with.

In discussing Right Effort, Matthew brought up the Buddha's teaching to Sona, the monk who was a musician before he was ordained. Sona's approach to meditation was interfering with his progress as he was trying too hard.

"Tell me, Sona," said the Buddha, "when the strings of your lute were too taut, was your lute tuneful and easily playable?"

"Certainly not, Oh Lord," Sona said. "And when the strings of your lute were too loose, was your lute tuneful and easily

playable?"

"And when the strings of your lute were too loose, was your lute tuneful and easily playable?"

"Certainly not, Oh Lord," the musician repeated.

"But when, Sona, the strings of your lute were neither too taut nor too loose, but adjusted to an even pitch, did your lute then have a wonderful sound and was it easily playable?"

"Certainly, Oh Lord."

"Similarly, Sona, if energy is applied too strongly, it will lead to restlessness, and if energy is too lax it will lead to lassitude. Therefore, Sona, keep your energy in balance and balance the spiritual faculties and in this way focus your attention."

"The deep commitment of a Jedi is necessary, but our intensity should be tempered with ease. If it is not, the too taut string of our effort may snap'.

EDITORIAL

(*The God Delusion* through Buddhist Eyes continued..)

Religionists may disagree with or even intensely dislike what Dawkins says but in a globalised world where ideas travel at the speed of the internet, debate and argument are the only acceptable ways to win the hearts and minds of people. The only way forward is to agree where we can. And to agree to disagree where we can't.

And if and when, Dawkins' arguments and ideas are rebutted by a religionist – with equal or greater eloquence, scholarship and forcefulness – I would similarly welcome and read his or her book.

Going back to the open debate about the status of Buddhism, the late Dr Peter Della Santina once said in an interview that the best way to describe Buddhism is that it's a 'great psychology' – with one important caveat, as Dr Santina himself pointed out. The Buddha's work begins when the clinical psychologist's ends.

In the light of the Buddha's discovery that the root cause of suffering (greed, hatred and delusion) resides in the mind and that its cessation (the elimination of those defilements) also

lies in the mind, my vote goes to Dr Santina's opinion as being nearest the mark.

Thus the root cause of inter-religious, inter-ethnic and international conflict ultimately lies in people's attachment to their ideas and beliefs, even if those ideas and beliefs are true. And as long as people are attached to their views, conflict will continue regardless of whether God exists or not, whether religious texts are true or false, and whether the terrorist acts committed nowadays almost on a daily basis are religiously or politically motivated.

As Professor Y Karundasa wrote in another article published in POJ (Issue 22 – April to June 2007) –

'From the Buddhist perspective, dogmatic attachment to views and ideologies, even if they are right, is much more dangerous than inordinate attachment to material things. For, it is this warped attitude of mind that leads to spiritual dogmatism and religious fundamentalism'. (emphasis added).

As always, I wish you all pleasant reading.

Chwee Beng
Editor

a bit overly enthusiastic and push ourselves a bit too hard then find that we lack the energy to sustain long-term practice. This might end up causing discouragement. Or we might have been too critical of ourselves for not being able to meet the high standards that we set for our practice.

Perhaps we should take a leaf from Matthew's book -

"When we fail for whatever reason, our judgmental mind criticizes us and we punish ourselves. However, we seem to have forgotten that we can reap wisdom and understanding from our failure, which we can learn from failure and grow."

This book has a section that I love

– 'Zen contemplations for the would-be Jedi' – which contains short quotes and verses. I would like to like to end with –

'Like the twin towers of Tatooine, wisdom and compassion give light and life to the world of darkness'.
JOY

ARTICLE

(*Monk Chat continued..*)

Fiona from Canada asked me whether Thai Buddhist monks are allowed to get married. I said – 'No. We're forbidden even to touch women. But if and when monks disrobe, there's no problem. They can associate with women in the usual way.'

Rin from Holland asked me – 'What's the main teaching of the Buddha?'

I told her that the Buddha taught a many teachings. But if we want to describe his teachings in one simple and short sentence, we could say that he taught us to 'do good, avoid evil and develop (our) own mind'.

Anyway, I just explained things to the tourists in the best way I could.

After I had participated in Monk Chat for some time, my English began to improve greatly.

I'm very delighted to have been born in the Land of Buddhism. In my opinion, Buddhism is more than just a religion. It has made a tremendous difference in my life and the lives of my fellow novices.
JOY

ACTIVITY: **MEANWHILE, back in the school...**



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How Karma Works

The Twelve Links of Dependent Arising
by Geshe Sonam Rinchen
Translated and edited by Ruth Sonam
Reviewed by Kok Keong

‘On one occasion King Utrayana sent King Bimbisara a very precious and special jewel. It had the power to give a feeling of well-being and to remove poison when touched. Since the jewel was priceless, this proved quite an embarrassment to King Bimbisara, who felt obliged to send a gift of equal value. His ministers tried to estimate the value of the jewel, but when they calculated it in gold coins, it turned out to be ten million gold coins. How could they reciprocate with a gift worth ten million gold coins? They could not think of a solution...

Seeing this, one of his ministers suggested to the king that he should consult the Buddha.’

Eventually, King Bimbisara wrote to King Utrayana, telling him to make grand preparations to receive ‘a gift that transcended all other gifts’.

That priceless gift, as you might have guessed, was a painting depicting the principle of twelve-linked Dependent Arising, the essence of Buddhism.

The story continues –

‘Through the arrival of this gift past positive imprints were awakened in the king and his court. The king took the painting to his private quarters. That evening he looked carefully at the twelve images around the edge and read the verses. Throughout the night he thought very deeply about this whole twelve-part process in forward and reverse sequence, and in the course of this intensive meditation he reached the stage of a stream enterer, that is, he had direct perception of the truth’.

For someone new to the teaching of Dependent Arising like me, I must say nothing inspires me more than the above story, which was narrated by the author in Chapter 13. No doubt, this story reinforces one message – the Dharma is invaluable and immeasurable.

Although karma is a term many Buddhists are familiar with, the understanding behind this word and the impact it has on the way Buddhists live seem to vary. Some people constantly remind themselves not to commit bad

actions for fear of incurring retribution or bad rebirths, while others are very much preoccupied with doing as many good deeds as possible believing that they will then be assured of some good returns or a favourable rebirth.

To a certain extent, these 2 ways of apprehending and practising karma may seem sufficient. But at a deeper level, a deeper understanding of how karma works through understanding Dependent Arising is nevertheless crucial if we hope to attain what the Buddha wants us to attain – liberation from *samsara* (cycle of existence).

Since the Buddha’s final nirvana, many Buddhist masters and teachers have, for the benefit of all, tried to make this teaching more accessible. This book is a good example.

The author quotes the teachings of the great master Nagarjuna to explain the 12 links, the reason being that the master’s way of presenting the subject-matter is extremely terse and concise.

From the 26th chapter of great Nagarjuna’s *Treatise on the Middle Way*, ignorance being the 1st link is explained as follows:

*Obscured by ignorance, existence recurs
From performing any of the three kinds
Of formative actions through which
One goes on to another rebirth*

In general, ignorance refers to the failure to understand reality. In this context, ignorance is the state of not understanding that phenomena lack intrinsic existence. As long as we continue to have a strong feeling of “I” that we cling to, our misconception of this self remains, hence ignorance.

According to the author, the innate sense of “I” and “others” that follows from this ignorance results in attachment of what is considered as happiness and pleasant to this self and aversion towards anything that is seen as other and hostile. The subsequent formative action that follows – physically, mentally or verbally – will stem from the intention to prevent others from taking away what we perceive as pleasant or happiness, and to protect ourselves from what we perceive as harm. This action, meritorious, demeritorious or unfluctuating, will keep us within the cycle of existence.

The moment a formative action ceases, it leaves an imprint on consciousness, which forms the 3rd link. At this moment, this consciousness is termed causal consciousness. As the author explains, we all have a vast store of imprints from numerous positive and negative actions we have performed. What sort of rebirth we take is dependent upon what sort of imprint ripens at the moment of death.

Nagarjuna explains it in the next stanza:

*Conditioned by formative action,
Consciousness enters rebirth.
When consciousness has entered,
Name and form come into being.*

To answer how consciousness continues on to next rebirth, the author continues –

‘It does so when the death process is complete and the moment of death occurs. This is simultaneous with the beginning of the intermediate state. In the case of a human rebirth, the being of the intermediate state ceases to exist at the moment when consciousness enters the fertilised ovum in the womb of the mother. The end of intermediate existence and the beginning of human existence are simultaneous. The final moment of death process is like a deep sleep; the intermediate state is like dreaming and conception like waking. The fourth link, name and form, describes the moment of conception. “Name” refers to the four aggregates of feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness, while “form” refers to the physical embryo. The entity of the being has come into existence, after which development takes place’

Unlike causal consciousness that comes from an imprint implanted from formative action, this consciousness that is simultaneous with the 4th link, name and form, at the time of conception in the womb, is referred to as resultant consciousness.

What follows after the name and form is the 5th link called the six sources, which refers to the various sense faculties – eye, nose, ear, tongue, touch and mind. These 6 sense faculties gradually develop with the growth of the foetus.

The 6th link, contact, is the consequence of coming together of the sense faculty, sense object and consciousness. It also refers to the ability to

distinguish whether objects, such as smells, sounds, or tastes, are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

The response to contact forms the 7th link called feeling, which can be agreeable feelings or sensations, disagreeable feelings or sensations, or neutral feelings.

Craving, being the 8th link, is conditioned by feeling. The craving is for pleasurable feelings to continue, painful feelings to end, and for neutral feelings to sustain. The relationship between feeling and craving can never be clearer than the following stanza by master Nagarjuna-

*Conditioned by feeling there is craving
And the craving is for feeling
Whenever there is this craving
Grasping of four kinds arises.*

As mentioned by the author, as craving becomes stronger, grasping follows, which represents the 9th link. Many people may think that the object of grasping is something physical. However, this is not necessary so. Grasping of the 4 kinds, as stated in the last line of the above stanza, refers to grasping at object of senses; grasping at philosophical views; grasping at different forms of ethical discipline and modes of conduct as supreme; and grasping at the self.

Craving and grasping are disturbing emotions that will activate the vast store of imprints left on consciousness from past formative actions, hence setting it ready for the next existence. Existence, the 10th link, also marks the complete readiness for next rebirth. At the moment of our death, disturbing emotions have the potential to trigger negative imprints, thus leading to bad rebirths. As revealed by the author, dying with a peaceful frame of mind with feelings of faith and kindness is important, as this will trigger imprints that can lead to a good rebirth.

Birth forms the 11th link. As many people understand it, birth occurs when a baby leaves the womb of the mother. However, when the resultant consciousness of a living being is present in the mother's womb at the time of conception (the occurrence of 4th link), birth has already taken place.

To many of us, ageing may refer to a later phase of our life when our body

and mind become feeble and hair begins to turn grey or white. But in the context here, ageing starts the moment after conception. As the foetus begins to develop into a baby, a child and finally an adult, the ageing process has already come into play. This process happens every moment as we breathe and it brings us closer to one inevitability - death. Hence ageing and death forms the final link, the 12th link. If the 4 aggregates in the 4th link (name and form) is part of the conception of a new living being, then ageing is the ripening of these aggregates and death is the process of letting go of these aggregates.

Indeed, some people may view the workings of karma, especially the ripening of negative ones, as fate. They wish it would never happen to them. In more extreme cases, some would even wallow in self-pity and despair, blaming karma for causing them misery. Feeling dejected, many fail to see that karma is also an opportunity for them to start turning things around for the better, and to insure a better rebirth at the very least

Understanding the workings of cyclic existence, developing aversion to the suffering that it entails and meditating on the 12 links of Dependent Arising are what it takes to pull ourselves out of this cyclic trend of suffering. In other words, if Dharma is akin to a raft that can ferry us across to the other shore of liberation, the knowledge of this itself is not sufficient to bring us to liberation unless we take the first step to hop onto this raft and start paddling (practising) faithfully and tirelessly.

Until we achieve direct perception into the workings of Dependent Arising, we will still be bound by the prison of cyclic existence.

And even if breaking out of the cycle of existence is not achievable in this lifetime, the right effort that had been put in can at least bring about a more favourable rebirth for such spiritual practice to continue. Ultimately, as long as we have the will, right effort and right understanding, the goal is there for all to reach.

According to the author, among the 6 realms of existence, birth as a human being is the best state for spiritual practice with the potential for the highest chance of achieving final

liberation from cyclic existence. The following stanza by the great master, Shantideva (in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*) best explains the importance of making hay while the sun shines in this fortunate human existence -

*Take advantage of this human boat;
Free yourself from sorrow's mighty stream!
This vessel will be later hard to find.
The time that have now, you fool, is not for sleep!*

Unless we have full control over our lives on earth, putting off something important to a later date can be a very foolish thing to do. When life and death is just one breath away, who can predict when would be the last?

I would certainly recommend this book written by the author with such authority and clarity to anyone who's interested in improving his or her understanding and practice of the Dharma. After all, wasn't it the Buddha himself who reportedly said - *'He who sees Dependent Arising sees the Dharma'*?
JOY

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ACTIVITY: MOTHERS' DAY LUNCH



Date: 6th May 2007

Venue: Grandcourt Vegetarian Restaurant



(接自第14页)

卡腊玛人啊，当你们自己道：
这些事物是善好的，这些事物是可嘉的，
这些事物是智者称许的；
若做弱习这些事物，将带来利益及快乐
那你们就该承袭这些事物并安立其中」

卡如那达萨教授在他的文章“卫塞的意义”適切地谈到佛教对此的态度：

「因为佛教是让人觉悟的宗教，所以要落实这个最终目标，是要通过智慧与见识，而不是通过盲目的信仰与祈祷。在佛教中，重点是自我了解、自我确认以及自我认识。这就可以解释为什么佛教给予佛教徒完全的自由去询问、调查或检查…

有些人的一般信念是：假如有一个批判的态度以及一个追根究底的精神，都会与修行生活有矛盾。只需要的应该是信仰和祈祷。可是佛教的立场是不同的。从佛教的观点，一个批判的态度以及一个追根究底的精神，不但不会有害，而且还对修行生活非常有益。」

阿桑迦教授进一步详细地说：

「这段对卡腊玛人说的话是宝贵的，因为它是对有关宗教问题该有自由思考的声明。然而，这是个对一群不一定是佛教徒的人所说的话…所以更重要的…是要看到佛陀有没有允许他的信徒有同样的自由去询问他以及他的教诲。

在求解经中，佛陀允许这种自由。他要求他的信徒调查佛陀自己的本性…要调查佛陀看看到底他的行为是好是坏，而且这调查不是短暂而是一段漫长的时间。以同样的精神，佛陀的教诲也该被调查。」

这当然不能把佛教科学化。

例如轮回就不能用科学证明。根据佛学，有情众生包括人和畜生，死后都会轮回六道中任何一道，包括人道、畜生道、饿鬼道和天道。

对于象道金斯这样的无神论者，相信有轮回是痴心妄想：

「许多宗教，教导客观上是难以置信但主观上却吸引人的教义，例如我们的灵性在我们躯体灭亡后依然存在。永生的概念能够持续并广泛传播是因为它迎合人们的痴心妄想。而痴心妄想是重要的，因为人们的心理存在着一个几乎普遍的趋向，她允许欲望影响信念。」

结果，虽然先前他说佛教不在他的书的讨论范围内，道金斯仍然禁不住要给佛教一点抨击：

「我不知道有任何证据能证明无神论者都有不快乐、焦虑和沮丧的趋向。有些无神论者是快乐的。其他是悲哀的。同样的，有些基督教徒、犹太教徒、回教徒、兴道教徒和佛教徒是悲哀的，而其他是快乐的。」

这里的分歧是意料中的。佛陀以他本身的经验和见识教导其他人。他没有用显微镜或听诊器。即使佛学可被形容为“经验主义”，它是如此因为他的教诲（有如四真谛的苦谛、集谛、灭谛和道谛）可以用本身的经验，而不是试验来确认。

这在科学上当然是不够的。科学需要一个理论能够被观察并测试，而结果必须能够在严格的试验室条件下被复制，之后才能够被接受为一项科学事实。

我为什么是位佛教徒呢？因为我接受佛陀对事事有业报的解释。如果我的行动存有善、恶或漠不关心的念头，无论是即刻或是要过一段时间，适当的果报将会随着而来。我接受它因为我能够从观察和反映我自己以及我认识的人的生活中确认到。

所以，我觉得佛陀所教导的善心、慈悲和平静对我的生活直接贴切。另外，佛陀教导的缘起法和空，让我在看这个冲突层出不穷的世界时，能够带有某程度的平静和相对乐观的态度。

简短来说，佛陀的教诲对我的生活有着性质上的影响，而我也满意能接受它给我的指导方向。这些包括轮回（佛陀教诲的一小部分，但无论如何不会影响佛学的核心教义）。

无论到底有没有轮回，我的生活已经，并会继续因佛陀的教诲受益和成为更丰富。我不是因为“痴心妄想”或害怕死后无所去从而接受轮回。我也不会固恋着无常的概念。我知道只要我今天留意我的思想、言语和行为，明天该发生的事会自然发生。

假如有一天，科学能证明轮回是不存在的？就这样吧。达赖喇嘛曾说佛教是一个觉悟和现实的宗教，身为佛教徒，我们应该接受科学确实证明的发现，并抛弃任何与科学证明的事实有矛盾的佛陀教诲。要不然，就会跟佛陀教导的放下背道而驰。另外，有如一艘筏，当你用它过到河的另一边（即使是佛法，根据佛陀），一旦它达到目的，就要把它放下。

我向各位读者推荐道金斯的这本书。

宗教狂也许会不同意或强烈讨厌道金斯所说的话，然而，在一个全球化的世界，意见的传播已达到互联网的速度，只有通过讨论和辩论才能说服人和赢得人们的心。接下来，只有能够同意的地方就同意，不能同意的地方，就至少同意双方不能够同意。

有朝一日，假如道金斯的论点和意见被一位宗教狂驳斥，而且以同样或更好的辩才、学问和说服力，我会同样的欢迎并阅读他的著作。

回到关于佛教身分的公开讨论，已故彼得·德拉·桑提那博士曾在一个访谈中说形容佛教的最好方式是把它称为“伟大的心理学”，但有一个保留。佛陀的工作在临床心理学家停止候才开始。

从佛陀的发现，造成苦的原因（贪、嗔和痴）是在我们的心中，而苦的终止（消灭那些心垢）也在我们心中，我觉得桑提那博士的形容是最贴近的。

所以造成宗教之间、种族之间以及国际间的纠纷的原因最终是人们执著于他们的意见与信念，即使这些意见与信念是真实的。而且，只要人们执著于他们的看法，纠纷就会持续，无论上帝存不存在，无论圣经是真是假，还有无论当今频频发生的恐怖活动是基于宗教或政治动机。

卡如那达萨教授在另外一篇文章中说：

「从佛教的观点，武断的执著某些看法和主义，即使它们是正确的，会比过度执著于物质物品还要危险。因为，就是这种心的歪曲态度而造成宗教精神上的武断和宗教的基本主义。」

和以往一样，我祝各位阅读愉快。

(Chonyi 译)

编辑说

佛教徒如何看《神的迷惑》

在这一期的「法师说」，我们的达摩拉达那法师谈到修心。它在修行发展中是多么重要？心如何帮助我们改良生活？它如何让我们失望？和我们在修行中该如何守护和启发它？

一开始，法师就强调在佛教修行发展中的主要焦点是守护及启发我们的心。的确，我们甚至可以说佛教对于修心的专注是佛教的全然特性。自古以来，人们一直对佛教的规划辩论。是宗教？是处事之道？是哲学？还是什么？

最近，我阅读了一本令人深思而又常会煽动情绪的书，叫《神的迷惑》，由牛津大学的理查·道金斯教授著作。道金斯解释他为何是个无神论者（“一个对宗教极度无信仰的人”）以及他对宗教（包括那些主流或温和的宗教）的异议。为加强自己的论点，他广泛地摘引宗教和科学文献。

身为一位佛教徒，我很想知道到底道金斯对佛教有什么意见。他对佛教会有如他对其它宗教存有同样的异议吗？

结果，道金斯在书的开始就声明他不会把佛教（以及儒家思想）列入他这本书的讨论范围内。为什么呢？因为“可以说不能把它们当成宗教，而是一种道德体制或是人生哲学。”

道金斯把佛教称为一种道德体制是无疑的正确。八正道，佛教徒证悟的法门，肯定是种实践道德的方式。

然而，它也不止如此。除了道德，八正道也包括集中力和智慧。这些与修心有关。还有，佛陀的智慧教导使佛教与众不同。可惜道金斯好象忽略了它们。

在迦旃延经中，佛陀说：

「世间有二种依，若有、若无，为取所触；取所触故，或依有，或依无。

若无此取者，心境烦著、使，不取、不住，不计我，苦生而生，苦灭而灭；于彼不疑、不惑，不由于他而自知，是名正见，是名如来所施設正见。所以者何？

世间集，如如实正知见，若世间无者不有；世间灭，如如实正知见，若世间有者无有。

是名离于二边，说于中道，所谓此有故彼有，此起故彼起，谓缘无明行，乃至纯大苦聚集。无明灭故行灭，乃至纯大苦聚灭。」

佛陀教导的中道是基于缘起法，正所谓：

「此有故彼有，此起故彼起；此无故彼无，此灭故彼灭」

阿桑迦·提拉卡拉纳教授在他的著作“涅槃与神圣”清楚地显出这学说的涵意：

「佛教通过缘起法对于现实的解说不牵涉到有神论的绝对主义或实体主义，它们都基于一个永恒不变的灵魂。解说只包括一组扮演因和果角色的互相调整的现象；因和果本身就是现实的体验的一部份。既然它不超越我们本身体验的限度，这也许可称为佛教对现实的‘自然主义’解说。」

在这方面，佛教在科学和宗教之间会比较接近科学。没有创世上帝。没有灵魂、没有神明所赐的奇迹。所有现象的起伏都取决于种种缘故和情况，不多不少。阿桑迦教授也说：

「佛陀很清楚的说过，神不存在，世间是没有一个保护者的，。另外，我们可以说整个佛教的倾向是不认同有神的概念。排斥《吠陀》论、神造论、神的恩典以及提倡倚靠自己上解脱之道，这些都等于排斥神的存在。」

道金斯对宗教的一个主要异议是所谓的“知识空缺”。

「神造论者会急切寻找当今知识或理解中的空缺。如果找到一个明显的空缺，就会假定神，在无人抗辩下，须填补它…一个宗教带来的真正不良后果，是它教导我们这是一个可通过不理解而实现的美德。」

佛教可不是如此。

道金斯在书中进一步地断言：

「科学事业中必要的部分是能承认不知，甚至为挑战日后的征服，可在不知中狂喜。就如我的朋友马特·里德利写过：‘大多数科学家都对他们已经发现的东西感到厌倦。唯有不知才能驱动他们继续努力。’」

两千五百五十年前，悉达多乔达摩太子也因为不知而迫使他去寻找天下苍生受苦的问题的解决方法，在他成为佛陀后找到了。在他得知老、病、死涉及每个人，包括一位太子那一刻，悉达多乔达摩太子在还没找到答案前可说是不眠不休的。

道金斯强调宗教都不理会证据而只依赖它们的圣经支持它们的论点。

「宗教基本主义者知道他们是正确的，因为他们在一本圣书里读过真理，而且他们先前已知道没有东西能动摇他们的信念。圣书里的真理是个公理，不是通过推论过程的最终产物。圣书是真实的，如果有证据否定它，该被排斥的是那证据，而不是那本圣书。」

相反的，佛陀在卡腊玛经中说：

「勿凭据数闻而得的概念
或自家所沿袭的传统
勿凭据言之凿凿的谣传
或经典内的记载
勿凭据自己的推断
或流传已久的俗语
勿凭据似是而非的推论
或对事物思考后而起的成见
勿凭据看似有才能的人
或以为‘这出家人是我的师父’
而信服他

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在另一方面，父母亲却常常骂或告诫我们。然而他们这样做也是为我们好。他们教我们分辨是非，是对我们有益和避免我们行差踏错。他们甚至冒着自己的生命危险来保护他们的子女们。

然而我们父母的援助，也只能到某种的限度，我们的心念还是最为重要。

可是有些子女们却不把父母的忠告放在心上。他们认为他们有自由权去做他们喜欢做的事情。其实这种“自由权”是很愚昧的。

在这世界上没有任何事情是独立生存的。树木和花草也并不独立生存。它们需要泥土、雨水和阳光来生存和成长。

甚至于我们人类也是在很多方面是互助惠的。如果我们真的是能独立生存的话，那我们不用父母就可以自己生到这个世界来了。就算是在这个试管婴儿和克隆时代，还是要依靠父母来传宗接代的。那也就是说，我们是必须依赖其他的人。我们的饮食需要依靠农夫、厨师和面包师傅。当然我们所吃的食物都需要付钱，然而只是付钱而已是不能把食物送到我们的餐桌上的。

所以很明显的，如果我们能调伏我们的心，它将是我们的最好的朋友，好过我们亲爱的父母亲。

我们把心调伏，就可以觉察到负面的念头生起的那刹那——因而防止做出不当的行为。同时我们也应该培养我们的爱心，慈悲心和智慧来增强我们的正思维。

我们并不需要因为是佛陀说的而完全地相信。我们应该也可以从我们的经验里看得出任何状况，如佛陀在卡腊玛经里说道：

“不要相信任何事情（随便）
只因为你听到
不要相信传统
只因为它是代代相传

不要相信任何事情
只因为人人都说和流言

不要相信任何事情（随便）
只因为它是写在你的宗教书里

不要相信任何事情
只因为你的老师或者是长老的权威

仔细观察和分析后
当你了解任何事情是合乎情理
利益一切
接受和奉行”

比如说我们可能因为过去曾经因为我们的负面的言语和行为制造出很多的问题而使我们痛苦多年，我们甚至破坏了他人的感情。

还有，不后发我们的心，将使我们无法巧妙地去做出应有的解决事情的能耐。拿食物来说吧，要使心对食物不执著，可以说是很难做得到的事。

然而却有人运用在错误的理由里。我在报上读到有关于一位妇女因为想使自己好看而把自己活活地饿死。这样的意志是错误的。

然而，要克服对食物的贪婪是非常不容易的事，即使是医生告诉我们不要吃某种食物，但当食物摆到我们的面前时，我们还是把它吃了。或者我们找个借口，我今天只吃一点吧，下个星期的整个星期就不吃了。

但是，如果我们能后发我们的心，那么在任何情况之下，我们都能够避免做有伤害的事情。我们可以对自己说：“我对自己承诺不参与任何有伤害行动，因此我决心不去做。”

因此，我们就不会被他人影响而行差踏错。在大多数的嗜酒或吸毒的行为，其中一个因素就是受他人的影响。另一个原因是我的脆弱的心。

另外一件重要的事情，是当我们面对一个困境，如致命的疾病的时候，调伏的心将使我们具有坚强的意志去面对困难和活下去。

但是如果我们的心不够坚强，当受到苦痛时，就会发脾气。不幸的是，怒气并不能医好我们的疾病或者减少我们的痛苦，它只会增加我们的苦受。痛苦、疼痛、健康欠佳和怒气也使我们痛苦。

另一方面，假如我们不生气，可能可以更有效地处理事情。

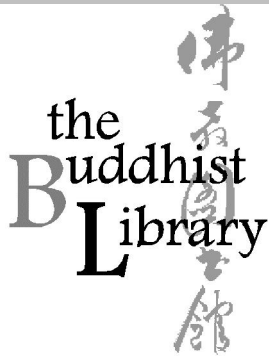
我要强调这些事情是不必等到证悟才可以达到的。不要想要等到证悟了才能为自己减少痛苦。如果我们需要如此等待的话，那么佛教就对我们没有意义了。佛教的难得可贵之处是因为它有能力帮助我们减轻痛苦，即使当我们还在面对有如健康欠佳、感情破裂和失去亲人的日常问题。

我们需要做的是加强我们的心智和加上多一点的智慧，而不是更情绪化和敏感。

达摩拉达那法师
佛教图书馆宗教顾问

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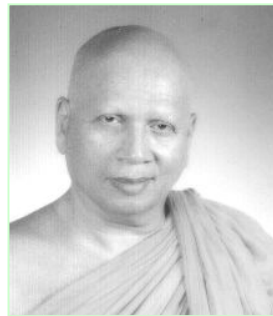
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极乐之程



法师说



修心

虽然有关于佛陀教的经典无数，但是主要的教义是教导我们如何去启发我们的心。如法句经的第一段偈说的：

“盖屋不密
天雨则漏
意不惟性
淫泆为穿
盖屋善密
雨则不漏
摄意惟行
淫泆不生”

我们都晓得一间没有屋顶的房子情况。它不能保护居者避免受到寒冷炎热和风雨的侵蚀。可是一间房子虽然有了屋顶却没有修好，同样也带来了许多的不便。

我本身就有如此的体验。当初佛教图书馆重修时，屋顶和窗口没有装修好，结果到处漏水。有一位英国的作客佛学老师就因此摔倒了。幸好他没有严重受伤。

所以不被关照的心，会随着境物的出现起心动念。意思就是说我们的心被不受欢迎的念头所控制而失去了自主的行动。

但是如果我们能从负面的心态，如愤怒、贪婪和妒忌解脱出来，我们就可以随心所欲。

法句经说得好：
“轻躁难持
唯欲是从
制意为善
自调则宁
意微难见
随欲而行”

慧常自护
能守即安”

千万要记得重要的一点是虽然我们并不能如佛陀那样地证悟，可是要是我们精进地观照我们的心，至少在某种程度上能自觉得到负面念头生起而防止它起舞。

所以我们并不惊讶佛陀在法句经另一偈里强调不经观照的心所能制造出的伤害：

“心缘造处
注来无端
念多邪僻
自为招恶”

通常人们都说他们没有敌人。不过有些人却有很多敌人。在我们的生命里，我们可能有很多种敌人，有些甚至威胁到我们的生命。我们可以说，致命的疾病也是我们的敌人。可是，佛陀说这些外在的敌人并不那么的危险，它们比不上没有被调服的心来得可怕。

因此，如果我们不时时刻刻阻止负面的念头生起来，提升心智的话，那么那种心态就会成为我们最大的敌人。

相对来说，佛陀强调一颗调服的心殊胜。

“父母或者任何的亲人
都无法比一颗调伏的心
更有益处”

一般上我们都说父母是我们最好的朋友，不过却很少看到父母亲 and 孩子们如朋友似地谈天。

通常父母亲为孩子们做事是没什么企图的。我们可以有很多的朋友，他们甜言蜜语说一些我们喜欢听的话。不过我们要小心他们的动机。

(第15页续)