

#### **BHANTE SAYS**

# The Seven Vows Sutra

I would like to discuss a sutra from the Samyutta Nikaya called the Seven Vows Sutra.

We always talk about vows. Vows are a kind of promise.

People who believe in deities make a promise to the deity. They expect to gain something, like a salary increment or a promotion or to overcome some problems. This is the traditional meaning of the word 'vow'.

But there are other kinds of vows as well.

For instance, in the Mahayana tradition, a bodhisattva makes a promise to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. They vow to save sentient beings from suffering. But bodhisattvas do not make this promise to others. They make the promise to themselves.

The 7 vows in the sutra were made by King Sakka. He was the king of the devas or deities. Buddhists believe that he was the most powerful of the deities. During the lifetime of the Buddha, from time to time, King Sakka would meet the Buddha and listen to discourses.

King Sakka made these vows in his past life when he was an ordinary human being. As a result, he performed many meritorious deeds and was reborn as the king of the devas.

I'm not saying that you should believe there was a King Sakka or that he became king of the devas because he made these vows.

Nevertheless, I believe that there's something beneficial to be gained by undertaking the practice of these 7 Vows.

In my view. they're not only very important, they're also relevant

to the daily lives of people, in particular, family people. In fact, they're as relevant in modern times as they were during the time of the Buddha.

It's a useful practice to repeat these vows daily. This not only serves to remind us to keep these vows but the daily recitation will give us extra energy to keep our vows and help us to be more mindful.

When the Buddha taught this sutra, he was living in Savathi. He listed out the 7 Vows one by one and explained them to the assembled monks.

# 1st Vow - 'As long as I live, may I support my parents.'

There are different levels of supporting parents. King Sakka practised the highest level. He never made his parents unhappy and paid full attention to them. You could say that he was a very filial son.

## **CORRIGENDUM** -

In the *Bhante Says* article of **POJ Issue 25 (January – March 2008)** 

the monk who asked the Buddha questions on the beginning of the world, the end of the world and what happens to the Tathagata after death was given as Kaludayi when it should have been Malunkyaputta.

We apologise to Bhante B Dhammaratana for the printing mistake. Of course, we sometimes do have problems with our parents. Parents too can be very difficult people. It's at such moments that we have to practise more love, wisdom and mindfulness.

We ought to realise that when people reach a certain age, their memory is not as good as before. For example, they may have taken their lunch. But, after a while, they forget and ask for lunch again. It's not that they're hungry but psychologically they feel a need to have lunch, even at midnight.

So when we take the trouble to understand the psychology of the elderly, we can understand that they don't do these things just for the sake of giving us trouble.

I remember one very old monk. Every 20 minutes or so, he would call out to his assistant and ask – 'Did I go to the toilet today?'

**2**<sup>nd</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live, may I respect my family elders'.

When people grow old, they become more sensitive. They expect others

The Path of Joy

# **Editorial Board**

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Secretary Leila to respect or acknowledge their contribution for the things they've done in the past.

But the young tend to forget the past.

The point is that we don't have to spend money or exert too much effort to show respect to old people. I'm not asking you to be a hypocrite. We can and should show genuine respect for the elderly. By showing respect to them, we can make them happy.

**3**<sup>rd</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live, may I speak gently.'

This is quite a difficult vow to keep, even for a monk like me.

Sometimes, people irritate us, say, by passing sarcastic remarks. When this happens, we forget about being gentle.

The problem is that once we've uttered unkind words, we can't take them back even though we may feel very sorry. So it's very important to keep this vow.

Sometimes, we may want to pass sarcastic remarks, but if we're mindful, we can stop ourselves in our tracks.

**4**<sup>th</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live may I not speak divisively.'

Our words sometimes can be very dangerous.

Advertently or inadvertently, we may create misunderstanding and suspicion among people.

So we need to put in extra effort to be mindful and only use words that

help people to live in harmony.

In a multi-racial and multi-religious society like Singapore, this vow is especially important. That's why the Government has passed laws that prohibit publications that will create ethnic and religious tension and conflict.

**5**<sup>th</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live, may I practise generosity'

This means being open-handed, delighting in practising charity, giving and sharing.

There are many charitable organisations in Singapore. Some people are very keen to join them. This shows that they have good thoughts.

In this way, we can help reduce pain and suffering in people. There's no need for us to wait until we attain enlightenment to help people rid themselves of pain and suffering.

But it's also important to remember that we also have to practise generosity not only towards others but towards ourselves.

**6**<sup>th</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live, may I speak the truth'

People may want to speak the truth but circumstances may hinder them from doing so. So we need to develop strong determination to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

Many people have the wrong idea. They think that if they practise truthfulness all the time, they will lose out in this world. They can't achieve worldly progress. For example, if they're engaged

in business and they tell the truth, they may not be able to attract customers.

This may be true in the short term. But in the long run, as the saying goes, 'truth will out'. What happens then? You lose the respect and support of your customers and friends but most important of all, you lose your own self-respect.

Many of you may be able to recall the Enron case in the USA. Whom do people respect more? The people involved in the scam or Sherron Watkins who, as vice-president of the company exposed what she called 'an elaborate accounting hoax'?

Therefore, it's absolutely essential to remember that if something is dishonest or harmful, we should not indulge in it.

**7**<sup>th</sup> **Vow** – 'As long as I live, may I be free from anger. If anger should arise in me, may I dispel it quickly'.

This is another very difficult vow but it's a very practical thing.

Anger is very dominant in our lives. Sometimes, we make mistakes and lose very good friends because of anger. So we need to pay very special attention towards anger, again and again.

When anger reaches certain levels, it can become very dangerous. All the virtues that we have performed in our lives may be lost because of anger.

If we find this vow too difficult as it stands, we can modify it in this way –

'If anger arises, may I be able to make an effort to get rid of it as early as possible.'

Getting angry is not a crime Sometimes, people say - 'Oh, you're a Buddhist, how can you get angry?'.

This perception poses a big problem, especially for monks.

As a Buddhist monk, I'm not allowed to show anger. So what should I do? Be a hypocrite and hide my anger? Surely not. In that way, I would make a double mistake - being angry and acting hypocritically.

What we ought to do if we are real followers of the Buddha is to be honest with ourselves. How do we do that? By acknowledging - 'I am angry. I must get rid of it as soon as possible'. So there's no hypocrisy.

If everyone can put these vows into practice, there will be no need to wait for rebirth in heaven as King Sakka. Because heaven will then be right here, right now. There will be no violence, no conflicts, no wars and no terrorism.

So whether King Sakka actually existed or not and whether he practised these vows as a human being and then managed to be reborn in heaven as King Sakka is not all that important.

To conclude, let me quote the Buddha's words in the Dhammapada –

Overcome the angry by non-anger

Overcome the wicked by goodness

Overcome the miser by generosity

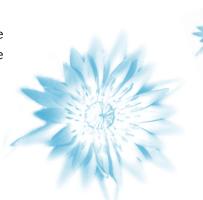
Overcome the liar by truth.

Speak the truth
Yield not to anger
When asked, give even if
you only have a little

By these means can one reach the presence of the gods.

Bhante B Dhammaratana Religious Advisor Buddhist Library

"If everyone can
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# Editorial

# Making the **Dharma count**

In this issue, our Bhante B Dhammaratana talks about how to integrate Dharma practice into our daily lives, no matter how busy, successful or important we may be.

He explains the 7 promises which the Buddha recommended to his followers in the Seven Vows Sutra.

In Bhante's words -

'It's a useful practice to repeat these vows daily. This not only serves to remind us to keep them but the daily recitation will give us extra energy to maintain our practice and be more mindful.'

This issue - the importance of integrating Dharma practice into our daily lives - was brought home to me most graphically by a story I read in the Bangkok Post on 9 August 2007.

In many ways, Prachawan Ketavan was a typical middle-class urban Thai.

Well-educated, intelligent, creative and successful, she led a busy professional life. And, like many of her compatriots, she was content to consign her religion to the backburner - occasional trips to the temple to 'tum boon' (make merit).

But suddenly, all that changed when she made one trip to Tibet.

Prachawan went to Tibet because she wanted 'to pursue her passion

for the colours and geometric patterns used in Tibetan furniture, arts and crafts, and the country's natural beauty.' In short, it was a mundane business trip.

But it revolutionised her life.

She left her full-time job and now works free-lance. Less money, more time. Time for her family and herself. Time to attend meditation retreats and volunteer for Dharma activities.

Seeing a picture of the Potala Palace on a beer bottle, Prachawan felt 'sad' and 'uncomfortable'.

'I think we should ask if what we are doing is morally responsible. I no longer feel comfortable working on products that consumers have no need for. I don't like the idea of creating needs in people.'

What was it about Tibet or the Tibetan people that changed her mind so drastically?

'Buddhism is so ingrained in their daily lives. You see mantra flags flying alongside national flags. People in the streets recite prayers, count beads and in their conversations, there are aspects of their faith.'

'I was galvanized by such sights. Pilgrims are everywhere. They prostrate themselves more than ten thousand times in front of the holy places. I feel they are liberated and inwardly free. The dirtier they

appear, the purer their minds seem to be.'

It's no surprise, of course, that Tibetans on the whole take their religious duties more seriously than others. As Sogyal Rinpoche once remarked – 'Dharma is like the very air we breathe'.

But there's another, less prominent, aspect of Tibetan Buddhism that's even more remarkable, as I recently read in a book called 'The Joy of Living' written by Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche.

At 42, Yongey Rinpoche is seen as a rising star among the new generation of Tibetan spiritual teachers. A generation born outside Tibet, as comfortable with computers and the internet as they are teaching the Dharma in English.

Yongey Rinpooche was all of 13 years old when he began his first 3 year meditation retreat. At the end of that retreat, so impressed was his teacher with his progress that he instructed Rinpoche to lead the next 3 year meditation retreat, beginning the very next day.

This would have been remarkable enough if not for the fact that, at that time, Rinpoche suffered from a panic disorder that caused him a nervous breakdown. In his book, Rinpoche described that first year of meditation as the worst year in his life.

As Eric Swanson explains in this book's *Introduction* –

'When he first told me about the

depth of anxiety that characterized his childhood, I found it hard to believe that this warm, charming and charismatic young man had spent much of his childhood in a persistent state of fear. It's a testament not only to his extraordinary strength of character but also to the efficacy of the Tibetan Buddhist practices he presents in this, his first book, that he was able, without recourse to conventional pharmaceutical and therapeutic aid, to master and overcome this affliction.'

Then, in 2002, Yongey Rinpoche was chosen by His Holiness, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama to participate in a pioneering research project conducted by world-renowned neuroscientists to study what happens in the human brain during meditation.

Eric Swanson again -

'The tests employed state-ofthe-art fMRI technology that, unlike standard MRI technology which provides only a kind of still photograph of brain/body activity, captures a moment-by-moment pictorial record of changing levels of activity in different areas of the brain...

The results of both the fMRI and EEG studies of these eight trained meditators were impressive on two levels. While practising compassion and loving-kindness meditation, the brain area known to be activated in maternal love and empathy was more prominently activated among long-term Buddhist practitioners than among a group of control subjects who had been given meditation instructions one week prior to the scans and asked to practise daily. Yongey Rinpoche's capacity to generate such an altruistic and positive state was truly amazing, since even people who don't suffer panic attacks frequently experience feelings of claustrophobia when lying in the narrow space of an fMRI scanner....

More remarkably, the measurements of the long-term practitioners' EEG activity during meditation were apparently so far off the scale of normal EEG readings that - as I understand it - the lab technicians thought at first that the machinery might have been malfunctioning. hastily double-checking After their equipment, though, the technicians were forced to eliminate the possibility of mechanical malfunction and confront the reality that the electrical activity associated with attention and phenomenal awareness transcended anything they've ever witnessed.'

In short, Buddhism is collaborating with modern science to further scientific knowledge of the brain and brain functions.

Surprising? Well, not really. After all, it was none other than Albert Einstein who said –

'If there is any religion that would cope with modern scientific needs, it would be Buddhism.'

In his book – 'The Universe in a Single Atom – The Convergence of Science and Spirituality' - His Holiness, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, drew attention to the many ways in which Buddhism and science seem to be compatible with each other such as their mutual emphasis on empiricism and the similarity between quantum theory and the doctrine of emptiness.

His Holiness also took the stand, unique among religious leaders, that if any teaching of the Dharma - the mandala, the 4 continents and Mount Meru as the centre of the universe being a good example - is proved to be scientifically untenable, we, as followers of the Buddha, must jettison that belief, rather than insist on its truth. Otherwise, we would not be true followers of the Buddha.

That having been said, we must nevertheless not forget the limitations of science. In his book, His Holiness mentioned 2 of these.

That although science has created many wonders, it's by nature unable to tell us whether the use of any of the products of scientific technology is right or wrong. This lies in the realm of ethics.

And that we must not succumb to the temptation to view science from a 'metaphysical standpoint', forgetting that its proper role is only that of a methodology.

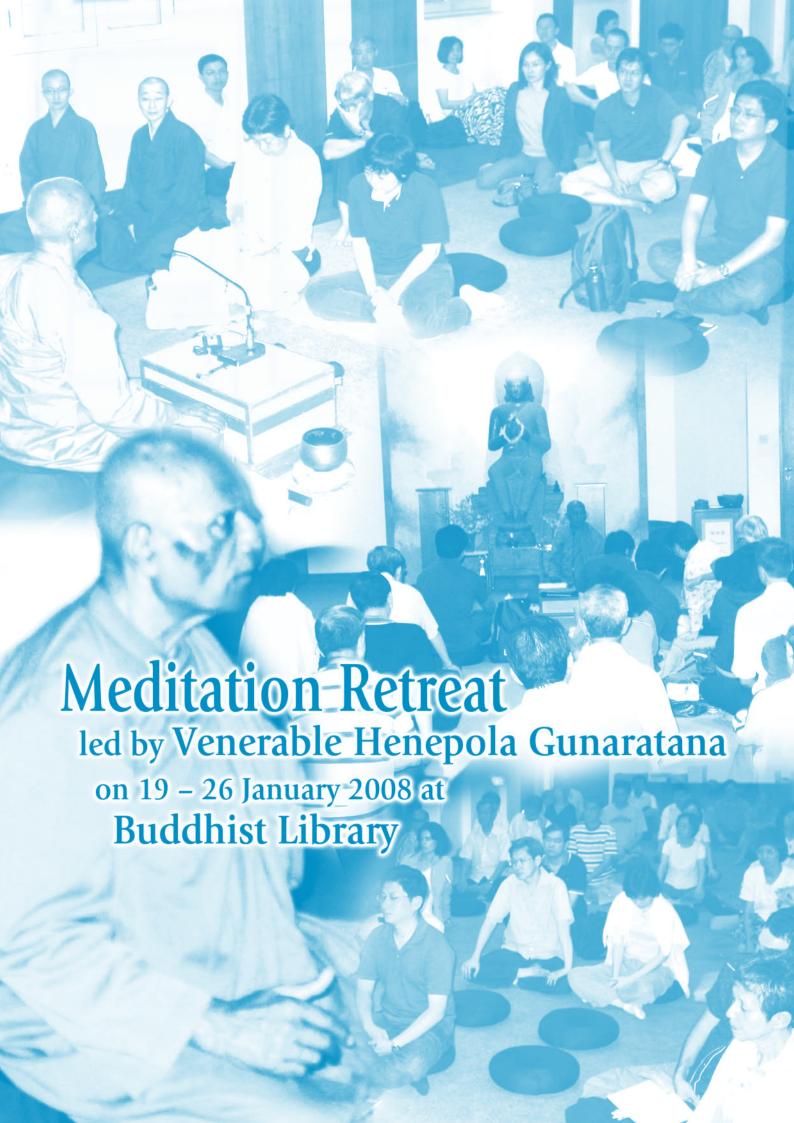
These differences notwithstanding, the fact that Buddhism is able to collaborate with science in this way is wondrous indeed.

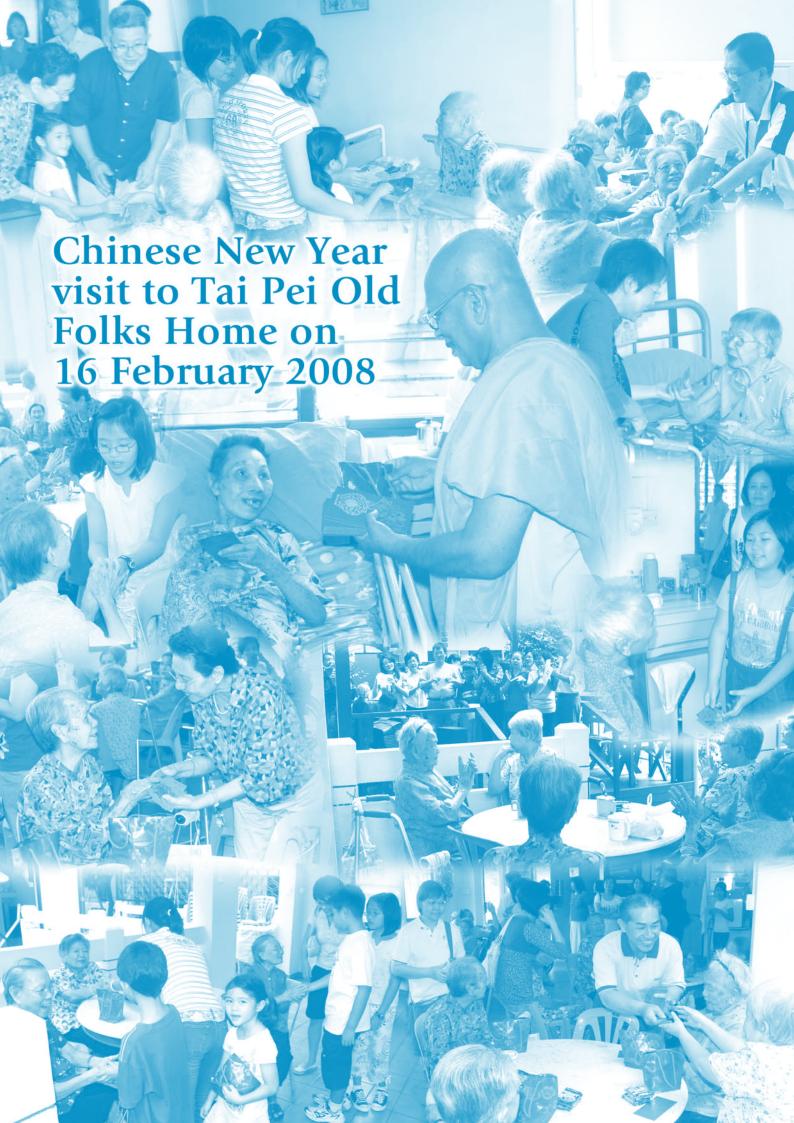
That's why it's ironical that in many traditional Buddhist countries, including Thailand, young people are abandoning the religion of their birth, believing it to be superstitious and irrelevant to their sophisticated modern lives.

Sadly, they fail to realise that the cause of their disillusionment is not any deficiency on the part of Buddhism but their own ignorance of what the Buddha actually taught.

As always, I wish you all pleasant reading.

Chwee Beng Editor



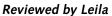


# Book Review

# **Mindful Moments for Stressful Days**

 Simple Ways to Find Meaning and Happiness in Daily Life





The thing that attracted me to this book was its title.

Curiosity got the better of me as I flipped through the pages. I found myself unable to put the book down. The simple and easy style of writing made it possible to finish reading the whole book in one night.

Every page of this compact size book is filled with helpful and practical suggestions to solve life's daily problems. Attractive background graphic designs in faded blue go easy on the eye too. Throughout the book, the author adopts a theme of inspiration or motivation.

Tzivia Gover is a student of Christianity, Buddhism and Judaism She firmly believes that '... living in the moment can deepen your everyday experiences and put you in touch with joy and inner peace, does not challenge any other spiritual practice you may undertake.' Although she presents her ideas and groups them according to the daily activities in which many of us engage, she reminds us that 'these are suggestions, not instructions. Don't try to incorporate all of these tips and ideas at once. Choose the ones that work for you in the context of your life.

Tzivia Gover writes - 'Living mindfully allows you to make choices from a place of compassion rather than one of competition, and it trains you to respond with gratitude rather than with greed ... To be mindful means to be

thoughtful in the truest sense of the word.'

The book has a few chapters on meditation. The author explains the often talked about 'monkey mind.' A useful technique on meditation - 'Meditation is about observing in a detached but loving manner. Watch your thoughts, but don't judge them...simply be an observer.'

We can learn how to be mindful at home, and to be home in our minds. Household chores and routines that feel like drudgery can offer opportunities to come home to the present moment.

There is also a chapter on *metta* meditation. Her explanation is easy to follow.

One of the hardest emotions to control is anger.

Tzivia Gover recognises this and says -

'Anger is indeed a dangerous emotion – if it is allowed to dictate your speech and actions. Instead, regard anger as a messenger. Often the message it carries is that someone is stepping on your toes, literally or figuratively. Observe your anger, but don't follow it. Listen for the insight it contains, but don't let it be your invoice. Try not to act until it passes. Simply state that you are feeling angry now and will gladly discuss the situation or problem once you calm down.'

On forgiveness, she writes -

'Forgiveness is one of the most misunderstood concepts in human relationships. To forgive does not mean to accept bad behaviour. It does not mean that you weren't hurt or that the other person wasn't wrong. Forgiveness is like cancelling a debt. You simply wipe it off the books. When you forgive someone, you let go of your anger and resentment so you can find peace and move on. You let go of the suffering you feel every time you think of the person or situation in question. You are not letting someone else off the hook; you are letting yourself leave the past behind so you can move into the present moment.

Mindful Moments

I'm sure many of us can relate to this and can agree with the writer's opinion.

For parents with children, the author recognises that parenting presents challenges but they are also opportunities for mindful living. There is a lot to learn from young people. She points out that 'children are instinctive teachers'.

I can recall my childhood days when I was often reprimanded for day dreaming in class. Tzivia Gover's stand, on the other hand, is like a fresh breath of air. I wish I had her for my teacher. She writes – 'Don't criticise your children for' drifting off into la-la land. 'Along with asking your children what they did in school, ask what they thought about and how they felt too.'

# **Voices of Insight**

- Teachers of Buddhism in the West share their wisdom, stories and experience of insight

Edited by Sharon Salzberg,

Published by Shambala (1999)

#### Reviewed by Clara

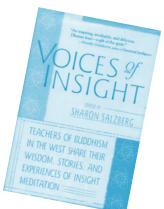
This book has a collection of writings by teachers of insight meditation who have taught at the Insight Meditation Society (IMS). IMS was founded by several young Americans in 1975, promoting Theravada Buddhism in the West.

I count my blessings that I am staying in Singapore, a country where the majority of Singaporeans are Buddhists. Learning the Dharma in Singapore is so much easier since it is so readily available compared to the western teachers at IMS. These foreigners had to overcome their basic culture, religion, family and friends' rejection in order to learn and spread the Dharma. A sense of heartfelt respect and admiration for them emerges as I read their insightful writings on meditation.

One of my favourite chapters is "Path of Parenting, Path of Awakening" by Jack Kornfield. He mentioned in page 242 an excellent instance of conscious parenting in Africa.

There was a tribe in Africa who counts the birthday of a child from the day the child is a thought in its mother's mind. A mother would sit under a tree and wait until she listens to the song of the child. Then she will go to the man she envisioned to be the father of the child and teach him the song so that they can sing the song when they make love, inviting the child to join them.

The expectant mother will also sing this song to the midwives who will sing it when the child is born. The same song will be sung to this child when it hurts itself, marries and dies.



This is indeed a beautiful way human beings bring comfort to fellow human beings.

To be honest, I breathed a sigh of relief when I finished reading this thick book. It took me 2 1/2 months to complete the book.

This was partly because there was no consistency in the writing styles since it was a compilation of different writers.

Furthermore, many of the terms used in the different accounts by the teachers were foreign to a beginner like me.

As such, I recommend this great book only for those who have time and patience to read and appreciate it.

continued from page 8

The author also discusses how to handle the 'contemporary juggling act' at the office. She reminds us and rightly so that '... no matter what you do for a living, there's more to who you are than your job title. Remember why you work.'

And she makes this very pertinent and useful suggestion. 'Often the values we associate with conscious living – behaving in a kind and patient manner – are left behind when we leave for work...Why not try to integrate our personal values with your job, to make life in general more rewarding?'

Many Singaporeans can't wait to retire from work as they operate in a pressure cooker environment. For those who wish to retire early, Tzivai Gover has this to say –

'Try imagining today is your very

last day of work. See yourself packing up your desk. Notice the details. You are putting your files, stationery and other paraphernalia into boxes. Your colleagues come to your desk to say goodbye. See their faces. Listen to what they are saying. Are they telling you they'll miss you? Saying what a good job you've done? What are you thinking now? Which of them will you miss? What will you miss doing now that your employment is over? When you finish this meditation, return to work with a new awareness of the things you truly appreciate about your job.'

Tzivia Gover seems to have considered almost everything including the plight of people with financial problems. She writes –

'Although you may still need to take steps to improve your financial

situation, you don't need to cling to the fear and stress that accompany the thought about your mortgage. Fear and worry don't improve a situation. They cloud your thinking and make it more difficult to act in a calm and productive manner. Next time you feel fear, worry or stress, remind yourself that these are just thoughts. You can let go of a thought. Instead of worrying about your bills, think creatively about how to restore yourself to financial health. Affirm that you can do it.'

This book will certainly make a wonderful gift and a practical guidebook for those who are new to meditation. Even those familiar with meditation may want to keep a copy for their personal library for times when they feel that they need a wake-up call or a refresher.

# 编辑说

# 使佛法有效

在这一期里,我们的达摩拉达那法师谈 到怎么把佛法融入我们的日常生活中, 不管我们是如何的忙碌 \ 成功或重 要。

他为佛陀推荐给信徒的七誓言经的七承 诺给了解释。

#### 引用法师的话:

"能够每天重复这些誓言是有益的。这不只能够提醒我们守着这些誓言,每天朗诵也会给于我们而外的力量守誓言并帮助我们更有觉知。"

在这一期,关于佛法融入我们的日常生活的重要性,我在曼谷邮报读了一个最生动的故事。

有一位典型中产阶层的都市泰国人叫普 拉查婉 ● 科塔凡。

她受过良好教育 、 聪明 、 有创意并 事业成功。她过着一个繁忙的职业生 活。和她许多同胞一样,她把宗教视为 次要,偶尔会去寺庙做功德。

但当她去了西藏, 一切突然改变了。

一次普拉查婉前往西藏,因为她想要"追求她对西藏家具,工艺品用的颜色和几何图案的热诚,还有该国的天然美景。"简短来说,那不过是个普通的商业行程。

但是, 它却彻底改变了她的一生。

她离开了她的全职工作而现在从事自由 职业。钱少了,时间多了。给她家人和 自己的时间。有时间去参与静修以及为 佛学活动做自愿工。

当她看到一瓶啤酒上印着布达拉官的图时, 普拉查婉感到"伤心"和"不舒服"。

"我认为我们应该问,到底我们在做的事情是道德上负责任的。我不再对为消费者不需要的产品工作而感到舒服。我不喜欢在人们中创造需求的想法。"

到底西藏或藏族有什么能让她这么激烈的改变主意?

"佛教在他们的日常生活中是多么的根深蒂固。你会看到祈祷文的旗帜与国旗并列。人们在街上诵经,算佛珠而在他们的谈话中,也有他们的信仰的某方面。

"我被看到的激起了。到处都是朝圣者。他们在圣地前,顶礼膜拜超过一万次。我觉得他们是解脱了并内心自由。 他们外表越肮脏,心却显得越纯洁。

整体来说,西藏人对他们的宗教义务比其他人认真。就如索甲仁波切曾说过: "佛法就象我们呼吸的空气"

但藏传佛教也有一个不大突出但跟更值 得注意的一面。我最近读了一本由咏给 明就仁波切写的书叫《世界上最快乐的 人》。

四十二岁的咏给明就仁波切, 被视为新生代大师中的新星。是藏传佛教于西藏地区之外所培育的一代, 对电脑和互联网以及以英语教导佛法都从容。

咏给明就仁波切在十三岁时,开始了他 的第一个三年闭关持修训练。闭关圆满 之后,他的导师对他的学习成果非常满 意,即刻指导他隔天开始他另一个三年 闭关。

如果不是当时仁波切发了恐慌症导致他精神崩溃,这可说是够非凡了。在他书中,仁波切形容他禅修的第一年是他一生中最糟糕的一年。

艾瑞克 ● 史旺森在这书的导言解释道:

"当他告诉我,他童年时的焦虑程度有 多么重时,我实在无法相信眼前这位亲 切又魅力十足的年轻人,竟然是在如影 随形恐惧之中度过童年。而这不仅见证了他性格中卓越过人的力量,更证明了藏传佛教修持方法的成效。仁波切在本书中介绍的修持方法,让他完全不须借助传统医药与痊愈方式,就掌握并克服了这些痛苦折磨。"

后来,在二零零二年,仁波切被十四世 达赖喇嘛挑选参加一项由享誉国际的神 经科学家主持的首创的研究项目,研究 在修禅时,人脑有什么动静。

艾瑞克 • 史旺森再说道:

"这项研究测验采用最先进的功能性核磁共振造影技术(fMRI), 能捕捉脑部不同区域瞬间连续活动变化的动态图像记录, 有别于普通核磁共振造影技术(MRI), 只是供脑部或身体活动的静态照片...

对这八位训练有素的禅修行者所做的功 能性核磁共振造影及脑电波扫描研究, 产生两个令人注目的实验结果。在「慈 悲心禅修」方面,实验对象分为两组: 长期修持佛法的行者,与实验前一星期 才遴选出来接受禅修指导, 每日进行禅 修的对照组。受试者脑部慈爱与同理心 活动较为频繁的区域中,前者的活动明 显比后者强烈许多; 而咏给明就仁波切 生起这种利他之正面心态的能力更是令 人讶异,因为即使没有恐慌症的一般人 躺在核磁共振器狭窄的扫描仓时,通常 还是会产生幽闭的恐惧感,仁波切却能 在可能导致幽闭的恐惧的空间中如此有 效地专注他的心, 显示他的禅修成就已 战胜了恐惧症发作的问题。

更让人瞩目的是,这些资深行者在进行禅修时,脑波活动的读数远远超过一般脑波读数范围。据我了解,实验室工程师最初以为是机械故障,赶忙再次检验设备之后,不得不排除机器故障的可能性,进而正视这个事实:这些资深行者脑中与专注及现象察觉相关的电流活动,完全超越他们曾亲眼目睹的范围。"

简短来说,佛教与现代科学合作,促进 脑部功能的科学知识。 令人惊讶吗? 未必。毕竟,爱因斯坦说过:

"如果有哪一个宗教能应付现代科学需求,它将是佛教。"

在他的书《相对世界的美丽: 达赖喇嘛的科学智慧》中,第十四世达赖喇嘛让读者注意到佛教与科学似乎都能彼此兼容,比如它们都注重观察实验法,以及量子理论与空的相似性。

达赖喇嘛也提出他在宗教领袖中的独特立场,就是如果佛学有任何教诲 - 例如曼陀罗 \ 四大部洲和梅鲁山是宇宙的中心 - 在科学上被证明是站不住脚的,我们作为佛陀的信徒,就要抛弃那个信念,而不是坚持它才是真理。否则,我们就不会是佛陀的真正信徒了。

话虽如此,我们也不要忘记科学的局 限。在他书中,达赖喇嘛提到这两点。

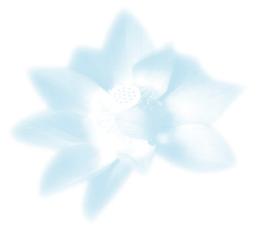
虽然科学已经创造了许多奇迹,但它本身无法告诉我们到底使用任何一种科技产品,是对或错。这处于道德境界中。

另外,我们绝不能从超自然的观点去看 待科学,而忘了它原来的作用,只是一 种方法而已。

虽然有这些分歧, 佛教能够在这方面与 科学合作是令人惊奇的。

这也就是为什么很讽刺的, 许多传统佛教国家, 包括泰国在内, 年轻人都放弃他们出生的宗教, 认为它是迷信和对他们先进的现代生活不切实际。

可悲的是,他们了解不到造成他们对佛 教失去信心并不是佛教的不足,而是他 们对佛陀的教诲的无知。



(接自第12页续)

也是为什么有法律禁止出版会引发种族 和宗教的紧张和冲突的刊物。

#### 第五誓言: 好施无悭

这意味着要慷慨, 从慈善活动 ` 供给和分享中取得喜悦。

在新加坡有很多慈善机构。有些人很 有热诚加入它们。这说明他们有好的念 头。

这样,我们可以帮助减少人们的苦与 痛。我们不需要等到觉悟后才来帮助人 们脱离苦与痛。

但是, 要记得对他人也要对自己慷慨的 重要性。

### 第六誓言: 恒修实语, 终不 欺诳

人们可能想讲真话,但情况可能会妨碍 他们这样做。因此,我们需要发展坚强 的意志只讲真话。

许多人有错误的想法。他们认为如果他们每时每刻都诚实,他们会在这世界上吃亏。他们不能有世间的进展。例如,如果他们从事商业,而他们讲真话,他们未必会吸引到顾客。

这可能在短期内属实,但长远来说,俗话说: "真相迟早水落石出"。到时该怎么办?你会失去你的顾客和朋友的尊重和支持,但最重要的是你会失去你的自尊。

你们也许能记得美国当年的安隆案祸。 人们比较尊重谁?参与诈骗的人们还是 谢论。沃特金斯,那位暴露她称为"复 杂的会计骗局"的公司副总裁。

因此,我们绝对有必要记得如果事情是 不诚实或有害的,我们不应该沉迷于 它。

#### 第七誓言: 不起瞋恚

这是另一个很难的誓言,但它却很实际。

在我们生活中,愤怒很显性。有时,我们因为愤怒而犯错并失去很好的朋友。 所以我们必须重复对愤怒特别注意。

当愤怒达到某个程度,它会变得很危险。我们实行的美德会因为愤怒而统统失去。

如果我们觉得这誓言本身太困难,我们可以这样修改它:

"如果愤怒生起时,我会努力尽快摆脱 它。"

发怒不是罪行。有时候,人们会说:"哦,你是一个佛教徒,你怎么可能生气呢?"

这种观念会带来很多的问题,尤其是对 僧侣们。

身为一位佛教僧侣,我不可展示愤怒。 那我该怎么办呢? 当一名伪君子而隐瞒 自己的愤怒? 当然不是。那样做,我会 犯双重错误 - 愤怒并虚伪。

如果我们是佛陀的真正信徒,我们所该做的是对自己诚实。我们如何做到这一点?通过承认:"我愤怒。我必须尽快摆脱它"。那就不会虚伪了。

如果每个人可以实践这些誓言,就没必要象帝释王等轮回到天界。因为到时天 界会在此时此刻。就没有暴力,没有冲 突,没有战争也没有恐怖活动。

所以无论帝释王实际上存不存在,或他 有否在凡人时实践这些誓言而后来轮回 到天界成为帝释王,都不重要。

最后, 让我引用佛陀在法句经里的话:

以不忿胜忿[以无忿(即慈爱)战胜忿 怒者。]

以善胜不善[以善战胜恶人] 以施胜悭吝[以布施战胜吝啬的人] 以实胜虚妄[以说真实话战胜妄语者] 谛语[人们应说真实话] 不瞋恚[不忿怒]

分施与乞者 [ (已物虽少)仍然施与乞 求者]

如此是三事,能圣于诸天[以此三事他得以上生天界]

波无害牟尼[圣者不伤害他人] 常调伏其身[常防护自身行为]

到达不死境[去到不死(的涅槃)]

无有悲优处 [ 在其地无优无 ]

恒常觉醒者[时刻保持觉醒的人] 日夜勤修学[日以续夜地训练自己]

志向于涅槃[他真心地朝向涅槃]

熄灭诸烦恼[总有一天他的烦恼必会止 息]

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# 称第一卷

the Buddhist Library

Publisher: Buddhist Research Society, 2 & 4 Lorong 24A Geylang, Singapore 398526

Printer: Citi Print & Design Pte Ltd, 10 Ubi Crescent, Ubi Techpark #03-34, Singapore 408564



# 法师说 七誓言经

我想讨论一个从相应部的七誓言经。

我们常谈到誓言。誓言是一种承诺。

那些想信神明的人们会对神明作出承诺。他们期望能得到一些东西,如加薪或升职或克服一些问题。这是传统所谓的誓言。

但也有其他种类的誓言。

例如,在大乘传统,一个菩萨会为了普度众生而誓言要达到觉悟。他们誓言要 拯救众生脱离苦海。但是菩萨不会给他 人承诺,而是给自己承诺。

经文里的七誓言来自帝释王。他是天王 的领导。佛教徒认为他是天王中最强 的。佛陀在世时,帝释王会不时会见佛 陀听佛陀讲佛法。

帝释王在他还是凡人的前世作了这些誓

言。因此,他做了许多善事,后来轮回 成天王的领导。

我不是说你们应该相信帝释王存在或者 是他因为作了这些誓言而成为天王的领 导。

尽管如此, 我认为实践这七誓言有利于 我们。

我的看法是它们不仅非常重要,也跟人们的日常生活相关,尤其是有家庭的人。事实上,它们跟佛陀时代相关也跟现代相关。

能够每天重复这些誓言是有益的。这不 只能够提醒我们守着这些誓言,每天朗 诵也会给于我们额外的力量守誓言并帮 助我们更有觉知。

佛陀在教导这经文时,他住在王舍城。 他把七誓言——列出并解释给僧侣们。

#### 第一誓言: 孝顺父母

孝顺父母有不同层次。帝释王实践了最高层次。他从来不让他父母不开心并全心照顾他们。可说是个孝顺的儿子。

当然,我们有时跟父母会有些问题。父母也许会是难以相外的人。就是在这些时刻,我们必须练习慈裴 ` 智慧和自觉心。

我们应该了解,当人们达到某个年龄时,他们的记忆大不如前。例如,他们可能已经吃了午餐。但是,过了一阵子,他们便忘了而又再要求吃午餐。这并不是他们肚子饿,而是心理上,他们觉得有必要吃午餐,即使是在午夜。

因此,当我们花点精力去了解老人的心理,我们可以了解他们做这些事情不是 因为他们故意找麻烦。

我记得有一位年纪很大的僧侣, 他会

每隔二十分钟左右,叫他的助理并问他:"我今天去过厕所吗?"

### 第二誓言: 恭敬尊长

人们年纪大了,会越来越敏感。他们会 期望别人尊敬或承认他们以注做过的事 的贡献。

然而,年轻人比较容易忘记过去。

我们不必花钱或是出太多力来尊重老 人。我不是叫你们去做伪君子。我们可 以也必须对长者表现真诚的尊重。通过 尊重他们,我们可以让他们快乐。

## 第三誓言: 所言柔软

这誓言很难守,即使是象我这样的僧侣。

有时, 人们会, 比如, 用讽刺的言论使 我们恼怒。

遇到这种情况时, 我们会忘了保持温和。

问题是,一旦我们说出刻薄的话,我们 不能把它们收回来,即使我们会觉得很 内疚。 因此,守这个誓言是很重要的。

有时候,我们可能要说带讽刺的话,但 是如果我们留心,我们可以制止自己这 么做。

## 第四誓言: 断于两舌

我们所说的话,有时可以是很危险的。

我们可能会有意无意的给其他人造成误 解和猜疑。

所以我们必须努力留心并只说那些会帮 助人们和睦相处的话。

在一个象新加坡这样的多元种族多元宗 教的社会,这个誓言是特别重要的。这 (第11页续)