

The Path of Joy

ISSUE 32 OCT-DEC 2009

Publisher: Buddhist Research Society, 2 & 4 Lorong 24 A Geylang, Singapore 398526
Printer: Citi Print & Design Pte Ltd, 10 Ubi Crescent, Ubi Techpark #03-34, Singapore 408564



Bhante Says The Master Wheelwright Sutta - How to become a Master of Minds

Today, I would like to discuss one of the Buddha's short suttas from the *Anguttara Nikaya*.

This discourse is normally referred to as the *Rathakara (Pacetana) Sutta* or the *Chariot Maker Sutta*. We may also call it *The Master Wheelwright Sutta*. We may even call it *A Discourse on How to become a Master of Minds* because there the Buddha talked about how we can master our own minds.

When the Buddha was living at the Deer Park at Isipatana near Sarnath, the place where he delivered his first sermon, he told the monks a story.

Once there was a king called Pacetana.

One day, the King summoned his master wheelwright to the palace and told him, "6 months from today, I'll be going into battle. I need a perfect pair of wheels for my chariot. Can you make a new pair of wheels for me?"

The wheelwright immediately said, "Yes, your Majesty." Of course, saying 'no' to a monarch, especially in those days, was not an option.

6 days before the appointed period expired, the master wheelwright went to see the King. He had only one wheel with him.

Noticing this, the King said, "You have taken nearly 6 months to make one wheel. Now there are only 6 days left. Can you finish the other wheel in time?"

The master wheelwright replied, "Yes, my Lord."

Then, on the very last day, he returned to the palace, this time with both wheels.

The King was puzzled.

He asked the master wheelwright, "I can't find any difference between these 2 wheels. Why did you take nearly 6 months to make one wheel but only 6 days to finish the other one?"

The master wheelwright replied, "Sir, actually, there are many differences between these 2 wheels."

"But I don't see anything," the King insisted.

The master wheelwright took the first wheel. He rolled it on the ground. It went as far as the momentum could carry it, then circled a few times and fell on the floor.

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MICA (P) 003/10/2009

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He did the same thing to the second wheel. It too rolled. But it did not shake or circle. After rolling, it simply stopped dead in its tracks as if it was fixed on an axle.

The master wheelwright explained, *"The one I rolled first which I made within 6 days was not perfectly made. Its spokes and hub were crooked. The wood was not well-seasoned. Therefore, it did not have perfect balance."*

"But the other wheel which took me 6 months minus 6 days to complete was perfectly made. The spokes and hubs were well placed. The wood was well-seasoned. It's a perfect wheel in every sense and so it had perfect balance."

Having related this simple story, the Buddha explained to the monks its significance.

The crooked wheel represented ordinary people who have crookedness of body, speech and mind. Their nature is tainted with imperfections.

By crookedness of the body, the Buddha was, of course, not referring to physical deformities or ill health. He was talking about the unskilful actions that ordinary human beings perform using their bodies.

To have a perfect balance of our bodies, we need to practise morality. We have to observe Buddhist precepts such as abstaining from killing, stealing, adultery and other kinds of harmful actions.

Crookedness of our words refers to speech accompanied by cruel thoughts, anger or greed. This includes harsh words, lying and malicious rumours.

To avoid crookedness of our words, we have to abide by certain principles. On the one hand, we abstain from harmful words that hurt or harm others. On the other hand, we use beneficial words, words endowed with love and compassion that bring benefit to both ourselves and others.

Mental crookedness refers to thoughts that poison our minds. Thoughts like greed, hatred and delusion which are mental poisons. These mental afflictions cause our minds to lose balance which can be harmful and dangerous.

To prevent crookedness of body, speech and mind, and to regain balance, the Buddha taught us 2 types of meditation - concentration meditation (*samatha*) and insight meditation (*vipassana*).

Concentration meditation helps us to attain purity of mind. The Buddha called this *cetto vimutti* or freedom from all mental ills. *Cetto vimutti* is achieved by getting rid of evil thoughts.

However, *cetto vimutti* is not complete freedom. It's only a temporary relief because the root of the impurities in our minds - ignorance - has not been totally removed. That's why it's still possible for people who have attained a high level of concentration or *jhana* to revert back to their old bad habits.

According to Buddhist teachings, complete freedom of the mind can only be attained through *panna vimutti* or freedom through wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to see reality, to perceive things as they really are, inter-dependent and impermanent.

To be totally free from defilements therefore requires us to get rid of our tendency to see things as independent and permanent. Until we do this, we are like the crooked wheel, liable to wobble and collapse.

This sutra also shows us the style usually adopted by the Buddha when he taught. He usually began with a simple example which ordinary people could easily understand and relate to. Based on this example, he then explained some profound teachings.

In this sutra, for example, the Buddha talked about wheels, then he explained Dharma and meditation.

The sutra also sends a powerful message to meditators.

Meditators need to decide for themselves what their objective in practising meditation is. Do they want to be like the crooked wheel or the perfect wheel?

Perfection does not come so easily. We need a lot of practice. We have to be patient. We have to take time.

However, we should not confuse patience with procrastination. People living in a big city like Singapore have a tendency to postpone spiritual practice believing that they don't have any time for it or that it's not important to their lives.

"This sutra also sends a powerful message to meditators"

On the other hand, people who undertake their spiritual practice seriously may also have a problem of their own. They can't wait to see results.

But rushing is not helpful.

Of course, the Buddha did mention in another sutra that people can attain the first stage of sainthood within 7 days. Actually, there were monks in those days who attained enlightenment just by hearing some words uttered by the Buddha.

But this does not happen accidentally or without causes. These people had the capacity to make spiritual progress. They acquired this ability through practice in their previous lives.

When I say this, I'm wary that people may take this to mean that they can give up meditation because they had no meditation experience in their previous lives. "Oh, I don't have much experience in my past life so there's no point in starting now!"

Giving up is the worst thing. We have to try. But trying alone is not enough. We have to put in the right effort because effort can be right or wrong. Even to do good deeds, we have to use right effort. Our intentions may be good but ignorantly we may be doing the wrong things.

What I want to stress here is that impatiently expecting good results is definitely not putting in right effort.

But if we take to heart the Buddha's advice to sincerely and diligently put into practice his teachings, slowly but surely, we are bound to make spiritual progress even though the results may not be so evident at first sight.

But if we pause to review our practice from time to time, say, since the time we first started our meditation practice compared to our situation now, we may be able to see quite clearly that we have made some progress.

Indeed, if we are sincere, patient and diligent in our spiritual practice, progress is bound to follow, no matter how gradually.

After all, we do have the Buddha's assurance, based on his own personal experience, that –

'Meditation, when augmented with moral conduct, gives great fruit and great benefit. Wisdom, when augmented with meditation, gives great fruit and great benefit. The mind, when augmented with wisdom, is completely freed from the outflow of selfhood, that is the outflow of sensuality, the outflow of becoming, the outflow of views and the outflow of ignorance.'

Digha Nikaya

Bhante B Dhammaratana
Religious Advisor
Buddhist Library



[editorial]

Of Kids, Stocks and Chariot Wheels

*If you have no feelings about worldly things,
they are all Buddhism
If you have feelings about Buddhism,
it is a worldly thing*

Zen proverb

In this issue, we feature an exciting, innovative children's training scheme called the Innerkids Program. It aims to nurture children's *'social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being'* in the broader context of fostering a *'peaceful, harmonious and compassionate society'*.

This programme has been running successfully in California, USA, for some time. It's now being introduced to Singapore.

Our interviewer, John Siak, speaks to Susan Kaizer Greenland who developed the programme and Wee Sin Tho, who's instrumental in importing it into Singapore.

When I was first told about this programme by Sin Tho, it captured my interest instantly.

Living in a traditional Buddhist country like Thailand as I do, I witness at first hand how the pragmatic, dynamic and compassionate teachings of the Buddha have become fossilised and trapped in a cocoon of culture, superstitions, extraneous practices and attachment to rites, rituals and merit making. Indeed, the great Thai Buddhist monk-reformer, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, once doubted whether the Buddha himself, were he alive today, would be able to recognise the religion he founded.

Each year, hordes of Thais leave the religion of their birth, believing it to be irrelevant to their modern needs. They convert to other, perhaps more skillfully packaged, religions, or, worse, lose themselves in 21st century hedonism and consumerism.

Back in Singapore, the situation may not be quite as dire. But each time, I attend a Dharma teaching, the overwhelming sight of grey hair and the corresponding absence of black hair isn't quite so reassuring either.

And so I readily welcome this programme.

I hasten to add, though, that the programme will be conducted on a strictly secular basis. This is as it should be because conversion has never been a priority in Buddhism.

Indeed, if there's any religion in the world that's specially suited to perform this secular role, it's Buddhism. Even Richard Dawkins, who attacked religion in his best selling book, *The God Delusion*, exempts Buddhism from its scope, claiming that it's more a way of life than a religion.

Take the famous *Kalama Sutta*.

When the Kalama people implored the Buddha for guidance as to what religious practices they should adopt, he did not ask them to pray to God, or to him. Nor did he seize the golden opportunity to convert them.

Rather the opposite.

He advised them to adopt and maintain a spirit of inquiry and investigation. Not to accept ideas just because those ideas are hallowed by, amongst other things, tradition, scripture or the authority of a teacher.

When these hallmarks of religion are discarded, what then remains?

A pragmatic and beneficial life principle that anyone with an objective mindset can readily accept.

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

I welcome the Innerkids Program not only because it's addressed to the most important people in society – kids – but also because it introduces to these impressionable young minds, untainted by baggage and ideology, the positive values of mindfulness, loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy and equanimity. Not to mention a focused mind and the Kalama spirit of investigation and inquiry.

In Buddhism, we can trace these core teachings to the first 2 of the 3 segments of the Noble Eightfold Path (ethics and concentration). The Noble Eightfold Path, of course, is the complete path to enlightenment taught by the Buddha.

Unfortunately, in a country like Thailand, understanding the core teachings of the Buddha and practising them often plays second fiddle to merit making, rites and rituals and propitiation of spirits.

Ironically, despite its secular bent, an initiative like the Innerkids Program has the potential to resuscitate Buddhism in its traditional homeland because, if it succeeds, its success encourages Buddhists to take a second look at the religion of their birth.

Of course, the Innerkids Program is not the first to adopt Buddhist ideas in a secular way. Psychotherapy and mind science research are 2 areas of human inquiry that have interacted with Buddhism successfully in recent years.

This is hardly surprising because, if we put our minds to it, we can see that the Dharma permeates every aspect of life.

Take something as 'unspiritual' as trading on the stock exchange.

In this issue, we carry an article by a trader explaining how trading in the stock market can be, despite its reputation, in and of itself, a spiritual practice.

You can read all about this in Tjiep Hoe's article. I need only point out here that, in recent times, more and more books about trading and investing in stocks and shares, written by successful traders, are beginning to resemble Dharma books. They talk about patience, mindfulness, equanimity, the importance of containing our egos, even compassion and morality, as essential prerequisites of a successful trader.

And guess what graces page 223 of a new best seller entitled *Trend Following* written by Michael W Covel? The Buddha's famous words in the Kalama Sutta.

In his regular column, *Bhante Says*, in this issue, our Bhante B Dhammaratana explains *The Master Wheelwright Sutta*, a short discourse in which the Buddha drew an analogy between an enlightened mind and a chariot wheel perfectly created by a master wheelwright.

Bhante stresses the importance of right effort and patience in spiritual training and explains the crucial difference between concentration meditation and wisdom meditation.

Only wisdom can lead us to enlightenment. Wisdom in the Buddhist sense, as Bhante points out, is the *'ability to see reality, to perceive things as they really are, inter-dependent and impermanent.'*

Wisdom meditation comprises the 3rd and last segment of the Noble Eightfold Path. It complements the first 2 segments (ethics and concentration).

Wisdom is a quintessentially Buddhist component of the Path, the Buddha's unique discovery. In other words, wisdom, in the Buddhist sense, or, at least, subscribing to the notion and hoping to achieve it one day, is what makes a Buddhist a Buddhist.

Hence it forms no part of the Innerkids Program's curriculum. The kids who participate in the Innerkids Program will therefore never be in any danger of becoming Buddhists!

But they can, and hopefully will, one day, become, as rich as successful as traders on the stock exchange, or, as skillful as master chariot wheel makers (or nuclear physicists, for that matter).

More importantly, if they've not forgotten what the Innerkids Program taught them, they could also be balanced, focused, compassionate, and responsible adult members of tomorrow's world.

As always, I wish you pleasant reading.

Chwee Beng
Editor



BL Events

Sunday Dharma School Outing - Our students have a day of fun and learning at Marina Barrage on 21 April 2009.



Mother's Day - BL honours Mothers with a Lunch at Grand Court Vegetarian Restaurant on Mother' Day (17 May 2009).

ARTICLE

Dharma and the Stock Market by Tjiep Hoe

At first glance, the title seems to be a contradiction in terms.

One is the arena of capitalism, greed and unadulterated materialism. The other advocates the spiritual and non-materialistic path.

However, as I read more books on the stock market and financial trading, I get the strange feeling that some of the concepts taught in these books seem to come right out of Dharma teachings.

To me, the stock and financial markets are a distilled version of life, albeit more concentrated and fast moving than 'real life'. They are a vital part of the economic life of the more developed societies worldwide and they affect the everyday lives of millions of people.

The Dharma, on the other hand, is a mirror of reality itself manifested in human experience and activities.

Logically, therefore, should not the Dharma also apply, with equal force, to the financial markets? In particular, would the application of Dharma principles make us better traders and investors?

Most books on trading and investing concentrate on the 'nuts and bolts' of trading strategy and analysis through a myriad of methods that include fundamental and technical analysis.

Some teach serious applied economic theory, balance sheet analysis and the like, and use complex mathematical models. Others teach charting, Fibonacci, and astrological methods.

There are, however, books and studies that touch on the psychological, emotional and spiritual aspects of trading, notably titles by Alexander Elder and Mark Douglas. The Market Wizards series by Jack Schwager consists of interviews with top traders and *Reminiscences of a Stock Operator* by Edwin LeFevre chronicles the life story of Jesse Livermore, the great speculator.



Interestingly, top traders and investors emphasise the importance of the psychological and emotional over trading signals, indicators and 'secret methods' that most beginning traders are obsessed about.

To reinforce this, I find that among traders I know, there's a wide disparity in the level of success among practitioners of similar methods. There are rich and poor fundamental traders as well as rich and poor technical traders. There clearly is something else besides trading methodology that determines success.

The reality is that the trading business is deceptively simple but actually very difficult, with a lasting success rate of around 10%.

It's like the success rate of dieters. Losing weight is deceptively simple in theory too - eat less, exercise more.

The key to trading success is similarly theoretically simple. Let your profits run, cut your losses quickly.

But the outcome of any human activity ultimately depends on the person undertaking it, and the emotions, fears and shortcomings that are part of his or her being. After a certain point, it is all mental.

Fear, greed, delusion, ego and ignorance are universal problems. But they are particularly magnified when put in the context of the stock market and trading.

For instance, fear and greed drive the stock market.

The fear of loss or of seeing a losing trade turn around after we have 'cut loss' or of missing out on the last cent in a stock's advance, and its mirror image, greed, are arguably the main reasons why otherwise rational, intelligent people do irrational things. Things that I've been guilty of many times myself.

Our ego prevents us from admitting – and, hence, correcting – our mistakes or asking for help. It also amazes me that we often buy stocks in companies and do not even know what they do. Ego also prohibits us from seeking advice from those who are more knowledgeable or experienced than ourselves.

In *Trade with Passion and Purpose*, Whistler, a full time trader and, I suspect, a Buddhist, advocates that traders start with a Purpose Center or Mission Statement, so that we know what we hope to achieve by trading and what we are going to do to achieve our aim.

Then we need the knowledge and preparation required for the activity and to keep our mind focussed on the present (now) rather than the past or future.

This strikes me as a quintessentially Buddhist notion, most strikingly emphasised in the Zen tradition. Interestingly, the cover of Whistler's book shows a samurai wielding his sword in intense concentration.

Focussing on the present moment prevents us from succumbing to irrational fears and regrets. It firmly roots us in the present reality.

Once we're clear and focussed on the present, it's also easier to handle stress. We don't worry about what may happen in the future. We recognise that both bull and bear markets must end at some time.

Besides the skills directly involved with the analysis and execution of trading in stocks, shares and other financial instruments, the skills and attributes that we need are actually those that we learn from Dharma class. We do need to develop the skills and cultivate the knowledge necessary to engage in trading, but after we've acquired the requisite level of skill, it is all internal and within our own mind.

'Irrespective of whether the markets are the result of a random walk, of a pattern, of cycles, or a product of chaos, we make our profit by controlling the only element we can realistically control – ourselves.'

Daryl Guppy – Market Trading Tactics

"It is not a selfish activity in that helping a friend become successful does not deprive us of our own share of success."

We should next try to understand the true nature of the stock market and the business of trading. The stock market was established so that companies could expand their businesses and raise capital by selling shares or fractional ownership of their enterprises to investors who have excess capital. The nature of the stock market is that of a marketplace and not a casino. This means investing in a business, and not 'gambling' or 'betting'. An example is Warren Buffet, who invests in companies rather than trade in stocks, acting according to the nature of the market and becoming the most successful investor of our time in the process.

For those like me, without the deep pockets and the long time horizon of Mr Buffett, the nature of trading rather than the nature of the market is more important. While it is an immensely competitive activity, 'prizes' are given to all those who are profitable, not only the top 3 (gold, silver and bronze) or any limited number. It is not a selfish activity in that helping a friend become successful does not deprive us of our own share of success. To be a successful trader, we do not need to 'beat' the market, we just have to go along with where it wants to go. We cannot impose our will or logic or ego on what the market 'should' do. The market will tell all those willing to listen where it is going.

And so being a trader is not incompatible with being a Buddhist. There's nothing which a trader does that, in essence, violates Dharma principles in engaging in 'haram' or prohibited activities. An investor should of course not invest in a company that conducts itself badly or whose activities breach Buddhist principles. Buying shares in a company means participating in the company's fortunes and its activities.

I'm convinced that Dharma principles, if sincerely and diligently applied, would make us better traders, just as they can also help people improve their performance in sports and the arts and any other human activity.

But, in the final analysis, we do need to realise that the aim of trading is very different from the aim of practising the Dharma. So as we go along, we should review and revise our Purpose Centre, especially after reaching important milestones. If that means that, at some point, we should renounce the idea of being a trader, even a fabulously successful one, in order to progress along the Dharma path, so be it.



Handing Over of Medical Supplies - Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery and BL hand over medical supplies to the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka at Bellanwila Mahavihara, Colombo for Victims of Sri Lanka's Terrorist Conflict on 26 May 2009.



BL Events



Bhikku Sanghasena speaks on 'Compassion in Action: Transforming lives in the Himalayas' at BL on 30 May 2009.



INTERVIEWS

Innerkids Program Interview 1

The Innerkids Program, which originated in California, USA, is a scheme to develop in children and teens (pre-school to pre-university) 'mindful awareness', defined as a 'non-reactive, clear, compassionate way of living' through games and activities.

Wee Sin Tho realised that in a highly competitive, achievement oriented, materialistic society like Singapore, such guidance and experience is exactly what is needed to restore focus, balance and meaning to our children's stressful lives. He's worked tirelessly with Susan Kaiser Greenland (who developed the Program) to import it into Singapore.

John Siak interviewed both of them by email.

Susan Kaiser Greenland

Can you briefly describe to our readers what the Innerkids Program is and what it aims to achieve?

To promote a more peaceful, harmonious and compassionate society, the InnerKids Program nurtures children's social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being, by teaching secular, and age-appropriate mindful awareness to children, teens and families. We have chosen to focus on cultivating mindful awareness in children because brain plasticity is greatest during the developmental periods of childhood. Hence, nurturing social, emotional, physical and intellectual well-being early in the lifespan is likely to yield the greatest impact on mental health and well-being.

What basically is the difference between the way this Program addresses the problems of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactive disorder) children and the way these children are treated conventionally?

We don't approach working with children who have ADHD, (or any diagnosis frankly) any differently than we approach the general population. The general rule is to work with the child who is in front of you now, in the way that is most helpful to him or her right now.

Kids on the less-regulated side of the attentional spectrum (those with ADHD for example) are not always distracted. For instance, sometimes they are hyper-focused, and sometimes they are in a wonderful creative mindset.

When we work with them, we choose different practices (or games and activities) depending on how they're behaving during class. If a child is quite distracted, we use practices that develop concentration or focused attention skills. (For instance, listening to the sound of a tone and raising your hand when the sound fades away)

If a child is having trouble sitting still, we practice mindfulness while moving - so that they can develop concentration and focus attention skills even though it's uncomfortable for them to sit still.

If a child is hyper-focussed, and has a hard time pulling attention away from something (a video game for example) we work on skills that develop a more receptive - or wider frame of attention, or on practices that develop positive relationships with other people and the community at large.

Please give our readers an example of a case where the Program has been able to help a child overcome his attention problems.

There are many, many examples of times where children have used mindfulness to help them settle down before taking a test, or settle in to work on an extended project either at home or at school. Issues of attentional regulation also affect a child's social skills and the use of breath awareness to calm down when you're over-excited (not necessarily upset but simply over stimulated) has been of great benefit to many children, teens, and their parents.



Has there been any case where, from your point of view, the Program has failed to achieve its intended purpose?

Not really, but the issue of parental or school buy-in is critical.

Kids are very attuned to what their parents and teachers are thinking and feeling about a program, especially young children. So if a classroom teacher or parent has doubts about the efficacy of a program it can impact how the children buy-in (or whether they buy-in).

That being said, in 2 of the 3 research studies conducted over the past 3 years at UCLA there have been examples of one class each year where there was a question as to how much a classroom teacher or parents bought-in to the program. In both those cases the students showed benefit (even in the teacher's reports themselves) regardless of whether or not there was buy-in.

How is the kind of mindfulness training taught in this Program different from the Buddhist meditation practice of mindfulness of the breath?

The language is quite different, every word is carefully considered from the point-of-view of secularization.

Otherwise, it really depends on how you view the Buddha's teachings on mindfulness of in and out breathing.

In my perspective, that teaching includes and emphasises 3 components - the introspective experience itself, understanding that experience, and then taking what you've seen through introspective, and now understand, out into the world with an intention to be of service.

Thus I see mindfulness of breathing as a 3 step process of introspection, understanding, and application which includes community service.

There are Buddhist scholars (Alan Wallace for example) who, I believe it's fair to say, would agree with this approach. But there may be others who see mindfulness of breathing as focusing on the introspective process alone.

How do you initially get the children to sit down quietly, given their active state of mind?

We teach our teachers to do 3 things when working with kids (a) to keep it simple (b) to keep it fun and (c) to keep their sense of humor. If the work isn't fun - at least some of the time - kids won't want to do it.

In addition, we always make it clear that mindfulness can help you manage real-life situations even challenging ones. So long as kids see applications for mindfulness in their lives - we approach mindfulness in a playful way, and teachers/students and their parents have realistic expectations for what a child can accomplish given his or her age - we generally don't have problems with buy-in.

Part of the training aims to help children to be kind and compassionate to others. How is this developed under the Program?

Through secularization of the 'Four Immeasurables' practices (loving kindness (which we call sending friendly wishes), sympathetic joy, equanimity, and compassion) - and through building awareness of other people and the world around them.

Through practices that develop awareness of what's happening outside of us (other people and in our environment) children quickly see the truth of interconnection, interdependence and impermanence - understanding those key concepts helps children understand the importance of kindness and compassion - and to be frank, it also helps them understand how being kind and compassionate can help them in real-life situations (even challenging situations).

Does the Program employ activities such as play acting and music?

We sing a lot - but we don't act or do dramatic play.

Thank you so much, Susan.



Innerkids Program Interview 2



WEE SIN THO

What initially got you interested in the Innerkids Program?

I first heard about the Program from Dr Alan Wallace when he visited us last December.

I liked the idea of applying mindful awareness to teachers (who have to interact with children on a daily basis) as well as kids and teens (who are growing up in what David M. Levy labels as an 'information environmental crisis') on a secular basis. The mind after all needs to be 'well-balanced'.

Why do you think it is suitable for introduction to Singapore?

It is secular and developed for kids, in particular. I think young children have a much more non-judgmental mind than adults, and I believe this is universal.

However, the Program is based on the Buddha's teachings and I think culturally Singaporeans will have an affinity with the philosophy and holistic approach.

One of the biggest problems faced by Singaporean students is the constant pressure from the home and the school to excel, not only in studies, but also in other activities. How can the Program help in this regard?

I think the pressure is not only from the home and school, but also in the 'environment', the 'environment' in the sense of information space.

This is substantially the consequence of the IT revolution. How much time do kids spend on the PC these days? Some even 'create' a 'second life'!

The 'net' universe is where kids I think 'live' these days. That is where the 'pressure' is coming from most forcibly, aside from parents and school.

I am confident that if properly shared in Singapore, the Program will have the same benefits as it has shown in the USA.

Although the Program is based on Buddhist meditation practices, it will be taught on a non-religious basis. Can you explain why this is so?

I think a secular approach to the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha's discourse on which the Program was based on, makes it suitable and, I would even say appropriate, for the global community. The Program was developed in the US by the co-founders and intended for the US community. The approach makes good sense in any secular society.

What feedback have you received from the InnerKids Programme Training Course held in Singapore in June 2009?

If you are referring to the response to the Program for trainers, I think it has been way beyond my expectation and hope. Susan and I were targetting to train no more than 25 to 30 people. On last count, we have more than 150 people who have registered for the 2 sessions we had decided to run. Let's say we have a happy problem.

What future plans, do you have, if any, with regard to this Program?

The intention is to find out how the participants of the Program feel about it.

If the Program is well-received and the participants want to continue to apply and develop it for the local community, we will see how we can continue to offer the Program. It would be wonderful if our schools in Singapore make the InnerKids Program part of its curriculum.

Our plan is to organise a residential Kids Camp during the December school holidays. This will give those trained in the coming InnerKids Trainers' Course the opportunity to work with children in a real life setting. Susan will be visiting again to provide supervision and guidance.

[book review]

There's More to Dying than Death - A Buddhist Perspective

Author: Lama Shenpen Hookham
Publisher: Windhorse Publications (2006)

Reviewed by Kim Li

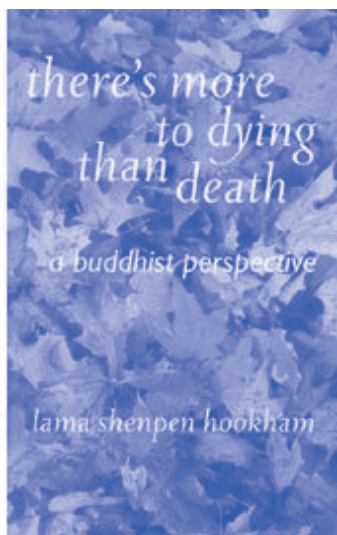
I must admit upfront that I had high expectations from this book.

Death and the Buddhist perspective of viewing death and the dissolution process have intrigued me ever since I first read Sogyal Rinpoche's *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. And I'm currently also reading (albeit extremely slowly) *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* edited by Graham Coleman and Thupten Jinpa.

Bardol Thodol which can also be translated as *Liberation Through Hearing* or in this case, *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, is primarily a text that has its roots in Tibetan Nyingma literature. It is a text that describes, and is intended to guide one through, the experience after death, during the interval between death and rebirth, and rebirth itself.

Of the 3 books, I personally prefer *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* but I feel that that is only because of my own karmic inclination.

There's More to Dying than Death is primarily a book written for westerners with limited or perhaps no experience with Buddhist teachings.



According to the author –

So my intention is to give an account of the Buddhist perspective on death that will increase people's confidence and provide practical guidelines on what they can do for themselves and for others when the time comes.

Taken in this context, I feel that the book is well written with a clear gradual introduction to death and the various processes (from birth to death and during death itself). It also explains what one can do for others when they are going through the death process. There is also a chapter on planning for one's own death.

It is not the intention of the book to be morbid about death. It is more of a practical approach so that when death knocks on our door, we are better prepared and not in a state of shock or denial which will then impede our death process and perhaps rebirth. By describing the dissolution process at death, if we are able to recognise part of it, perhaps we will be able to remember the teachings and apply them accordingly so that we will not die with extreme fear or attachment.

I find that death is something that most people avoid thinking about so this book is good in that it tackles head-on that avoidance by reflecting on the fear and how we can open our hearts even while we are alive.

There were times when I attended funerals with a feeling of helplessness as I was unable to console my friends in their times of grief and also when I reflected on the fact that I too will die one day. I believe that I'm not alone in such feelings. Hence I feel that this book will be good for those who wish to learn more or better understand how we can help others in their times of grief.

In brief (because I feel this subject is extremely challenging), this book makes a good read for those who wish to understand more about the death process, the intermediate state and the rebirth process. It deals with the various topics in a manner that makes it not too dry. It's well written for people to be able to relate to, yet it is careful not to be presumptuous or simplistic about the entire process.

【编辑说】

编辑说

小孩、股市及战车之轮

“不执着于世俗之物，世俗之物皆佛法。执着于佛法，佛法既落入世俗之物。”

禅宗谚语

这一期，我们将讨论精彩的、具创意的儿童训练课程，名叫Innerkids计划。它旨在从更宽广的层面，培育儿童的“社交、情绪、身体与智能的健全成长”，从而建立一个“和平、和谐及慈悲的社会”。

这个计划早前已在美国加州取得成功，如今被引入新加坡。

我们的采访者John Siak同Innerkids计划的设计者Susan Kaizer Greenland和将之带到新加坡的Wee Sin Tho作了一段访谈。

当Sin Tho首次向我介绍这一计划时，它立即引起我的兴趣。

生活在像泰国这样的传统佛教国家里，我亲眼目睹了佛陀实际、深切与慈悲的教诲，如何被僵化，牢牢受困于文化之茧，并成天沉醉于礼节、仪式与求取功德等迷信与不相干的修持里。难怪伟大的佛教改革者佛使比丘也曾感慨，如果佛陀本人生活在现今的泰国，他也许再也无法辨认自己所创立的宗教。

每一年都有不少泰国人自出生开始就已经脱离了佛教，因为他们认为佛教是多余的，无法满足他们的现实需求。他们转而改信那些包装较为诱人的宗教，更糟的是，有些甚至迷失在21世纪的享乐与消费主义里。

新加坡的情况可能没那么糟。可是当我每次去听佛法讲座时，出席的银发族人山人海，而年轻人却寥寥无几，这也是相当令人担忧的事。

因此，我非常欢迎这个计划。

我要补充，这计划是基于在严格的世俗基础上执行的。这是合理的，因为佛教从来都不以改变别人的信仰为主调。

的确，如果世上有任何宗教适合扮演融入社会的角色，那应该是佛教。即使是曾在其畅销书“The God Delusion”中抨击宗教信仰的Richard Dawkins，也认为佛教不是一般的宗教，它更像是生活的一种方式。

就拿著名的卡拉玛经（Kalama Sutta）来说吧！当卡拉玛人就应该修学哪个宗教的问题，而恳求佛陀指引时，佛陀并没有叫他们去向上帝祷告，也没叫他们膜拜他。他也没趁此难得机会改变他们的信仰。

相反的，他劝他们培养询问和验证的精神，不要因为那些观念被传统、经文或权威等视为神圣，就随意接受它。

当这些宗教的特征被摒弃时，我们还剩下什么？

即实际和有益于生活的原则，那也是任何可客观看待事物的人都能欣然接受的。

“… 经过观察与分析，当您发现任何原理是合理而又能够为自己和他人带来好处与利益时，就可以接受它、履行它。”

我欢迎Innerkids计划，不只因为其对象是在社会占多数的孩童，也因为这项计划所灌输的正面价值观。孩童的心智可塑性极高，他们没有包袱，也还没有受意识形态的影响；这个计划将有助于灌输例如警觉、慈悲、随喜之乐及平等心等正面的价值观，其中当然还包括集中力及卡拉玛经所提倡的询问和验证精神。

在佛教，这些主要的教义可以归纳在八正道的第二和第三段里，那些有关品行和定印的修持。当然，佛陀所教导的八正道才是圆满的成佛之道。

不幸的是，像泰国这样的国家，许多人通常视追求功德、礼节、仪式及迷信神灵比了解佛陀的教导和依法奉行更重要。

讽刺的是，尽管受到世俗化思想的影响，像Innerkids这样的计划仍具有潜能，可让佛教在传统的佛教国家复兴，因为如果计划取得成功，这将鼓励佛教徒重新认识这个他们出世即信奉的宗教。

当然，Innerkids并非首个以入世手法引用佛教概念的计划。心理治疗和科学精神研究这两个领域近年来也成功与佛教交流。

这也不奇怪，如果细想，我们不难发现佛法渗透生活的每个层面。

例如不含宗教性质的股票交易活动。

在这一期里，有一篇由专业交易员所撰写的文章，告诉我们股票交易虽然看起来与修行无关，其实也可以成为修行的途径。

您可以阅读Tjiep Hoe的文章。我只想在此告诉您一个现象，最近看到许多成功的交易员所著作的书籍里，不难发现佛法的踪影。它们提到耐性、正念、平等心、慈悲、道德以及消减我执的重要性，这些都是成为一个成功交易员所应具备的先决条件。

您知道，在麦克（Michael W. Covel）著作的最畅销书“Trend Following”里，出现什么句子呢？的确，那是佛陀在卡拉玛经所批示的名言。

在“法师的话”栏目里，达摩拉达那法师解释有关The Master Wheelwright Sutta（暂译：战车制造商经）。在这部经里头，佛陀以觉悟的心智，和战车制造商所制作的完美战车车轮作比喻。

法师强调正精进与忍辱修持的重要性，并解说禅定（concentration meditation）和慧观（wisdom meditation）主要不同之处。

只有般若可以指引我们迈向智慧及觉悟之道。法师指出，佛教中的智慧是指“实观的能力、实观事物的本来面目、认清一切无法独立存在以及无常。”

智慧观包含第三及最后一段的八正道。它与前两段（品行和正念）相辅相成。

智慧是佛教徒典型的修行成分，也是佛陀的独特发现。换言之，智慧是身为佛教徒不可或缺的元素。在佛教的概念里，佛教徒至少也要心持智慧的理念，希望有朝一日可以真正达成。

它并没有包括在Innerkids计划的教材里，因此参与学习Innerkids计划的小孩不存在成为佛教徒的可能性。

不过，他们可以，也希望有一天，可以如股票交易所的交易员般富裕和成功，或者如战车车轮制作者（或成为核子物理学家等）般，掌握高超技巧。

更重要的是，如果他们忘了Innerkids计划所教导的东西，他们将来将能成为一个平衡、集中力强、慈悲和富有责任感的成人。

和往常一样，祝您阅读愉快。

Chwee Beng
编辑

比如这部经典，佛陀讲轮子后便解释佛法与禅修。这部经典也同时给禅修者一个重要的讯息。

禅修者要能够自己决定他们禅修的目的。他们是想要做弯曲的轮子还是完美无缺的轮子？

要达到圆满并不容易，我们需要持之以恒的练习。我们必需有耐心，需要一些时间。

可是我们不可以把耐心及蹉跎混为一谈。住在像新加坡这样的大城市里，许多人倾向于拖延修行的时间。他们相信自己没有时间修行或是修行在他们的生命中并不重要。

另一方面，那些非常认真修行的人，也可能遇上困难。他们迫不及待要获得成就，可是匆忙反而误事。

当然，佛陀曾经在另一部经典里提到修行人可以在七日内证得初果。其实，在佛陀时代确实有比丘只听闻了佛陀的几句开示便开悟。

这可不是巧合或空穴来风。这些人在修行上有潜力，他们在过去世已修出这个能力。

当我这么说，有人可能会误以为应该放弃禅修，因为他们过去世没有禅修的经验。“啊！既然我前世没有经验，现在开始又有何意义！”

放弃是最糟的选择。我们要尝试，但是单单尝试是不够的。我们需要正精进，因为精进可以是正确或不正确。即使做善事也要用正精进。我们的出发点或许是善的，但有可能会因愚痴而做错事。

在这里，我要强调的是，心急地等待好的成果肯定不是正精进。但是如果我们用心照着佛陀的教诲，努力实践教法，渐渐地，我们肯定会在修行的道路上有所收获，即使成果在一开始时并不显著。

但如果我们时不时停顿下来检讨自己的修行进度，就说从我们第一次静坐时跟现在的情况比较，我们或许可以看到自己的进步。

确实，如果我们在修行道上诚恳，耐心与努力，不论需要多久，进步是迟早的事。

毕竟，我们拥有佛陀的担保，根据佛陀的亲身体验：

原文：‘Meditation, when augmented with moral conduct, gives great fruit and great benefit. Wisdom, when augmented with meditation, gives great fruit and great benefit. The mind, when augmented with wisdom, is completely freed from the outflow of selfhood, that is the outflow of sensuality, the outflow of becoming, the outflow of views and the outflow of ignorance.’

Digha Nikaya

暂译：“禅修，因为净行而增长果实与利益。智慧，因为禅修而增长果实与利益。心智，因为有了智慧的滋养，圆满解脱我执的流域，这我执也是感官的、造作的、邪见的以及无知的泛滥之区。”

长部经典

达摩拉达那法师
宗教顾问
佛教图书馆

极乐之程

ISSUE 32

OCT-DEC 2009

the
Buddhist
Library

Publisher: Buddhist Research Society, 2 & 4 Lorong 24 A Geylang, Singapore 398526
Printer: Citi Print & Design Pte Ltd, 10 Ubi Crescent, Ubi Techpark #03-34, Singapore 408564



法师的话

战车制造商经 一如何成为心的主导

战车制造商回答: "可以的,陛下。"

在最后一天,他回到皇宫。这次只带了两个战车车轮。

国王不明白并问战车制造商: "我看不出这两个车轮有什么不同。为什么你需要将近六个月来造一个车轮,但却只用六天完成另一个?"

战车制造商回答: "主人,其实这两个车轮有很多不同之处。"

国王坚持说: "但我看不出。"

战车制造商提起第一个车轮,让它滚在地上。轮子滚了一段路,转了几圈就倒在地上。

战车制造商用第二个轮子,重复了之前的动作。这轮子也滚了但却没有摇晃或转圈上。滚后就停顿下来,有如固定在车轴上。

战车制造商解释: "我滚动的第一个车轮是在六天内完成,造得并不完美。它的辐条及枢纽都弯曲了,所以轮子的平衡不好。而另一个轮子用了将近六个月的时间才完成,但却造得完美。它的辐条及枢纽都没有任何错误或缺陷,木材也干燥坚固。它是个完美的车轮,因此平衡也当然极佳。"

说完这个故事,佛陀解释故事的含义。

弯曲的轮子就如一般身,语,意弯曲的人。他们的人品遭受污染。当佛陀说身体弯曲,并不是指身体残缺或生病。佛陀是在讲凡夫用身体造作种种恶业。

要拥有完美,平衡的身体,我们需要持戒。我们必需遵守佛教的戒律,比如:不杀生,不偷盗,不邪淫及其他恶行。

弯曲的语言指的是带有恶念,嗔或贪的语言。这包括恶言,妄语,造谣中伤。

为了避免弯曲的语言,我们应当持守一些原则。我们不仅不说伤害他人的话,还要讲有益的话。话中充满友爱及慈悲,能自利利他。

弯曲的意念是指那些荼毒我们心智的意念。贪,嗔,愚痴的念头都是有毒的。这些烦恼造成我们的心智失去平衡,有可能对我们造成伤害,并陷我们于险境。

为了避免弯曲的身,语,意及恢复平衡,佛陀教我们两种禅修—止观和内观。

止观有助于净化我们的内心。佛陀称这为cetto vimutti 或解脱一切精神上的烦恼。Cetto vimutti 是通过灭却一切恶念而证得。

不过,cetto vimutti并不是彻底的解脱。它只是暂时的解脱,因为内心的根本烦恼——愚痴,还未完全去除。这也能解释为何一些人可能进入深定,但恶习还是可能故态复萌。

根据佛教教义,真正内心的解脱必需通过慧解脱(panna vimutti)。智慧是有能力透视真理,如实的见解,看到它的因缘法及无常。

要完全解脱烦恼,需要去除我们可能看一切事物都是独立个体及恒常不变的习惯。只要还没领会,我们就像歪曲的轮子,随时会摇晃、倒下。

这部经典也让我们看到佛陀教学的方式。佛陀通常用一个简单的比喻让一般人都能够理解。通过比喻,佛陀深入浅出解释深奥的法义。

MICA (P) 003/10/2009

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《极乐之程》编辑部

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法师的话

战车制造商经 一如何成为心的主导

今天,我要和大家讨论佛陀在《增支部》经典里的一个简短经教。

这部经一般称为《车师种》或《战车制造商经》。我们也可以称之为车轮制造工经典。甚至可以称为“如何成为心的主导的开示”,因为佛陀在其中讲述如何主导我们的心。

当时佛陀居住在鹿野苑附近的依斯巴丹拿(Isipatana),靠近他初转法轮的地方,他告诉比丘们一个故事。

曾经有一位国王,名叫 Pacetana。

有一天,国王召见他的战车制造商入宫并告诉他: "六个月后,我将要打仗。我的车匠需要一对完美无缺的战车车轮。你是否可以制造一对新的车轮给我?"

战车制造商立刻答复: "是的,陛下。"当然,在那个时代对一位帝王说"不"是不可能的事。

只剩下六天的期限,战车制造商去见国王。他只带了一个车轮。

国王见了说道: "你用了将近六个月造一个战车车轮。现在只剩下六天,你是否能够在期限内完成剩下的车轮?"