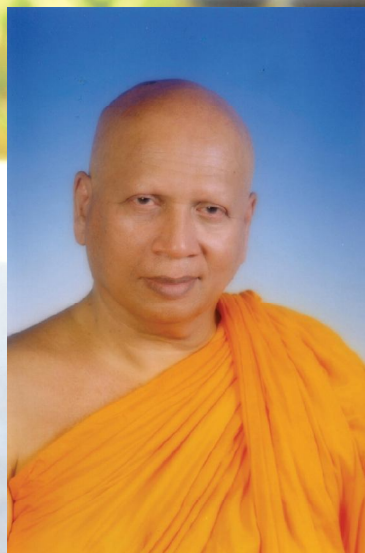


The Path of Joy

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One of the greatest qualities of the Buddha is his ability to heal people.

That is why the Buddha is sometimes called *Bhesajaguru* (in Pali) or *Bhaisajyaguru* (in Sanskrit), meaning the *Healing Buddha* or the *Medicine Buddha*.

In Mahayana Buddhism, this concept of the Medicine Buddha has been developed to its fullest extent, referring to a different Buddha altogether. But here, I would like to use the term to refer to one and the same person, which is the historical Buddha, Sakyamuni Buddha.

When the Buddha talks about 'the world', he refers to the people in the world and he usually says that the world is not a very healthy place. The world is, in the words of the Buddha, 'basically sick.'

Healing the Sick in Buddhism

Indeed, this is the fundamental premise of the entire Dharma.

In a famous sutra, the Buddha says—

'Now, as before, I just point out dukkha and its outcome.'

Majjhima Nikaya, Vol I, pg 16

But we have to be careful here.

To some people, the word 'sick' may give the wrong impression that Buddhism is negative. But, of course, it is not. It is merely being realistic.



Indeed, the world has many positive characteristics as well.

MICA (P) 003/10/2009

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We welcome contributions which we may edit, if accepted. Write to—The Editor, The Path of Joy, Buddhist Library, Nos. 2 & 4 Lorong 24A Geylang, Singapore 398526 Email: joyeditor@gmail.com Fax: 67417689 Telephone 67468435 BL's website: <http://buddhlib.org.sg> Please include name and contact details. We may publish letters of general interest, subject to editing.

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But still we should not ignore the fact that the world is *'basically sick.'* Why did the Buddha say that the world is *'basically sick'*?

The world is basically sick because it is unsatisfactory. And as long as suffering or unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) exists in the world, we have to say that the world is basically sick.

For example, we may lead quite a good life, know something about Buddhism, try to follow its teachings and have good morals. We may be quite contented with our lives. This is normally the way in which we view our own lives.

But even so, we can't say that we are totally satisfied with the world.

If we are totally free from suffering or unsatisfactoriness, we won't have to suffer from time to time. Suffering comes to us because we are victims of this disease. And as long as this condition persists, we can never be truly happy or achieve total happiness.

It is precisely because Prince Siddhartha Gotama wanted to help people overcome this disease that he strove for and attained enlightenment, thus becoming the Buddha or the Awakened One.

But how do we, ordinary human beings, normally try to solve this problem of suffering or unsatisfactoriness in life?

We acquire whatever we want as much as we can. And when we don't want something, we try to get rid of it as soon as possible.

We have been doing this since time immemorial. In this way, we have been victims of attachment and aversion for as long as we can remember.

But despite our efforts, the permanent satisfaction which we expect by acquiring desirable things and disposing of unwanted things continually eludes us.

For example, we try to satisfy our 5 senses – sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. Yet permanent satisfaction does not come in this way.

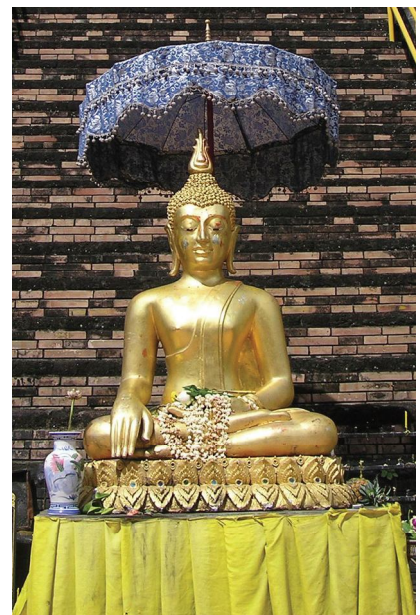
The reason is that our 5 senses simply do not have the ability to permanently satisfy our ever-changing likes and dislikes.

Why? Because our happiness is dependent on the availability and non-availability of things.

Bhante B Dhammaratana and the Executive Committee of the Buddhist Research Society thank all members, supporters and stall holders who contributed in one form or another to the success of the Buddhist Library Family Fun Fair held on November 22, 2009.

They, and the Editorial Team of POJ, also wish all members, readers and friends a Happy 2010 and a Happy and Prosperous Year of the Tiger on February 14, 2010.

In our own minds, the values of the things we want increase if we are unable to get them. The more we can't get them, the more we want them. We may even begin to feel that life is unbearable without them.



In this manner we artificially add value to things that we can't have.

But once we are able to acquire them, their values in our minds instantly drop. Then we have to get more of the same things in order to be happy. Or we want something else instead.

The Buddha knows that this manner of thinking is wrong in principle because in this way we can never sustain happiness. This is truly a tragic situation.

And so the Buddha, being the great doctor or physician that he was, found a way to cure this disease

The Buddha teaches us that instead of trying to gain more and more things, we should try to overcome the root of the problem which is our own attachment or greed.

How do we do this? By being contented.

In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha describes contentment as '*the greatest wealth*'.

Why? Because, without contentment, even if we possess all the wealth in the world, we will never be happy. Just look at the tragic, untimely death of Michael Jackson (who had more talent, fame and money than most of us could even dream of) and you know what I mean. Ask yourself - *Was he a happy man?*

But, with contentment, we'll be happy with what we have, having done our best to acquire it legally and morally.

The Buddha also gave practical advice on the prerequisite qualities of a good care-giver. In the *Kucchivikara-vatthu Sutta* or the *Discourse of the Monk with Dysentery*, the Buddha mentioned 5 qualities that are necessary in order for a person to be a good care-giver.

1. *Knowing medicine well.*

This is obvious but it does not mean that a care-giver must be a qualified doctor. He or she must, however, know how to administer the medicine prescribed by the doctor properly.

2. *Knowing what is good and what is bad for the patient.*

A patient often craves for his or her favourite food, not to mention unhealthy things like alcohol and tobacco. A good care-giver must know what is good for the patient and be firm, yet kind and gentle.

3. *Not expecting any gain by attending to the sick person.*

A care-giver must tend to a patient with love and compassion without expecting anything in return, even gratitude. Of course, this does not mean that a care-giver cannot receive a salary or other remuneration.

4. *When there's a need to attend to the patient, the care-giver must attend to it without any hesitation.*

This is why nursing is such a demanding job.

5. *Counselling with right words.*

Just giving medicine is not enough. Kind words and actions are necessary.

If a care-giver has a negative attitude and provides care grudgingly or hesitatingly, the patient's morale will be adversely affected.

The Buddha also mentioned 5 characteristics that are not appropriate in care-givers. They are the exact opposites of the positive qualities so I need not go into any detail with them.

According to the Buddha, a care-giver (nurse) plays a very important role for healing people. So he encouraged his disciples to help the sick.



Bhante B Dhammaratana
Religious Advisor
Buddhist Library



[editorial]

Finding Joy and Sharing It

'Grief can take care of itself, but to get the full value of a joy you must have somebody to divide it with.'

Mark Twain

Pongpol Boonyabhum was a 10 year old boy who suffered from leukaemia since the age of 6. When his illness deteriorated to its final stages, the boy decided to accept only pain relief and oxygen. Nothing more.

On the eve of his passing away, the youngster asked to go to the beach. During the journey home, he rested his head on his mum's shoulder and said, *"I'm so happy mum."*

"I am too, son," Mum responded.

That night, he coughed blood and was rushed to hospital.

"Am I dying?" he asked Mum.

Mum was choked and couldn't respond.

So the palliative nurse replied instead,

"Yes, dear, you are dying. But there is nothing to be afraid of. Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and your friends are waiting to welcome you. Go on, you are a brave kid."

The boy became calmer, showing no signs of pain. Finally, he looked into his mother's eyes and muttered, *"Mum, goodbye."*

This story, which appeared in the Bangkok Post of June 30 2009, sprang to my mind recently as I watched a movie on TV.

The Bucket List features 2 of Hollywood's greatest actors, Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman. They play terminally ill cancer patients meeting for the first time in hospital. After an awkward introduction, they eventually break out of hospital to live life to the fullest before they *'kick the bucket'*.

They draw up a list of things to do. It ranges from simple wishes like *'laughing until I cry'* to indulgent desires like sky diving, luxury trips, even eating as much caviar as they can.

But they return home before completing their list.

Despite themselves, each finally comes to terms with unfinished business at home. Each man helps the other to discover that what he seeks comes from within, not without.

In one scene, as they tour the pyramids, Freeman tells Nicholson a simple story.

The ancient Egyptians believed that when a person dies, he faces a test before he's allowed into heaven. He has to answer 2 questions - *Have you found joy in your life? Has your life brought joy to others?*

Each of the men is unable to find joy in his life because he's not at peace with himself. And yet without restoring joy in his own life, each man is unable to give joy to his loved ones before he dies, in itself an essential ingredient in the peace he seeks.

It's no secret that the Dharma resonates in every aspect of our daily lives. Even in fiction, which, after all, is often a mere reflection of *'real life'*.

Both Pongpol's story and *'The Bucket List'* deal with death and the fear of death.

Everyone fears death. It's a fear so ingrained in our consciousness that a Tibetan Buddhist nun once observed that if anyone claims that he's not afraid of death, he's probably lying.

She's right.

But why are human beings so afraid of death?

Obviously, pain is a huge factor. So is having to face the great unknown. Alone.

And, not least, there's final separation from loved ones.

James Cameron, the director of the blockbuster, *Titanic*, was once asked why his film was such a phenomenal hit. He replied that the story of the 2 unfortunate young lovers fascinate people because, more than pain and death, people are afraid of final separation from their loved ones.

And so people find ways to cope with this terrifying, but inevitable, prospect.

Religion is one of those ways.



A religious acquaintance of mine ('Nick') once said that of all the terminally ill patients he'd observed in hospital, those who don't believe in God find it the most difficult to die.

It's easy to see where Nick is coming from. Theistic religions promise their believers everlasting life in heaven if they believe in, and obey the commandments of, God.

Hence, it should be easier for the faithful to face death in the face.

Or is it?

Does that mean that atheists, or the unreligious, necessarily fear death more than the religious?

Whatever Nick may have observed, his conclusion is clearly erroneous.

We only have to read the life stories of great Dharma masters like Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Ajahn Chah and the 16th Karmapa to see how these extraordinary human beings not only faced death with singular dignity and calmness but were also able to use their own death processes as opportunities to teach their disciples what death is really all about.

And even a 10 year old kid like Pongpol could muster the courage to face death without necessarily having to seek refuge in an almighty deity.

Of course, it's true that he was told that a revered monk and his own friends await him when he dies. But this only goes to show that so long as the dying person has faith in something, that faith is sufficient to tide him over until he dies.

In contrast to absolute and unquestioning faith in God, the Buddhist solution is completely different.



The Buddha exhorts us to see and understand reality. Nothing more, nothing less. This is suffering. This is the cause of suffering. This is the cessation of suffering. And this is the path to that cessation.

In short, only by invoking our Buddha nature and uncovering our innate wisdom will we realise the true nature of phenomena. And once we're able to do that, ignorance and fear will automatically disappear.

The *Heart Sutra* says it most succinctly –

'Without obscurations of mind, (bodhisattvas) have no fear.

Completely transcending false views

They go to the ultimate of nirvana.'

This antidote of wisdom is so powerful that a bodhisattva does not hesitate to do what it takes, even sacrificing his life for the sake of others. Just look at the stories of the previous lives of the Buddha and you will know what I mean.

What's important to realise here is that a bodhisattva does this not because it's a good thing to do but because it's *the* thing to do.

In his book, *Hua Yen Buddhism, The Jewel Net of Indra*, Francis Cook puts it this way –

'I must be prepared to accept the fact that I am made for the use of the other no less that it is made for my use. If I can really grasp this, then even though I may recoil and scream as the eager tiger pounces on me, which is natural for me to do, perhaps in the last moment of consciousness before I am gratefully consumed by the tiger, I may have the grace to reflect that this is the tiger's world as well as mine, and that I am for the use of hungry tigers just as much as carrots are for my use. Thus the least we can do is to be fair in our estimation as to the propriety of things.'

This is such a radical transformation of the mind that it seems incredible, maybe even insane to us. But it's incredible or insane only if we're looking at it from our normal, egocentric viewpoint.

Perhaps that's why it takes 3 eons for us to become enlightened, a length of time and a perfect state of being that are inconceivable to our ordinary mindsets.

And so until that happy day comes when we are enlightened, as ordinary human beings, we hobble along. And, hobbling along, it's quite understandable if we need placebos or psychological crutches to meet life's challenges and death.

And when, from time to time, we learn of the extraordinary courage of people like 10 year old Pongpol, it lifts our spirits and nourishes our own courage, such as it is, to seek solutions to problems from within ourselves, as the Buddha taught.

Overcoming fear, we find joy not only for ourselves but also to share with others, come what may.

And we won't have to do way-out things that we concoct in our own bucket lists.

As usual, I wish you pleasant reading.

**Chwee Beng
Editor**

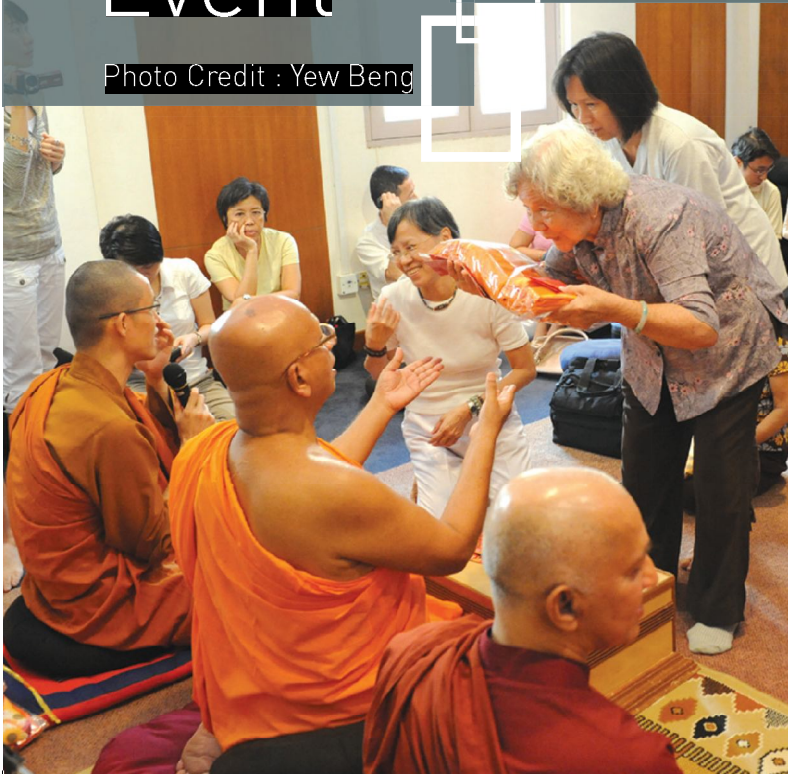




BL Event

Robes & Books Offering at the Buddhist Library
October 11, 2009

Photo Credit : Yew Beng



Interview

Phra Ajahn Suthep Chinawaro

Interviewer - Tjiep Hoe

Date - August 4, 2009

Venue - BL

Questions were submitted by various people - editorial team members, students, including Thai students, and a trader, among others. A mixed bag, really.

In addition to answering the questions, Phra Ajahn Suthep volunteered some comments. He stressed the basic principle that Dharma is everywhere and all the time, not just when we go to the temple or when we sit in meditation.

In particular, Phra Ajahn pointed out that -

- 1.Simple everyday things like walking and going to the market, if done mindfully, are part of Dharma practice.
- 2.There are lessons to be learned even from bad emotions and unfortunate events.
- 3.The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path are always relevant.
- 4.The purpose of meditation and Dharma practice are not to solve or handle specific, materialistic problems. The aim is always to gain wisdom and to calm the mind. Everything else follows from this.

I was deeply impressed by Phra Ajahn Suthep's answers. The simplicity and purity of his approach were very appealing. When asked for his comments on the problems facing Thai Buddhism and Thai women's ineligibility for full ordination, he did not hedge but gave direct and refreshing answers.

'Dharma is everywhere and should be practised all the time, not just when we go to the temple or when we sit in meditation'

To me Phra Ajahn Suthep's stance harkens back to the teachings of Early Buddhism taught by the Buddha before the rise of the various Buddhist traditions, including the Theravada. These teachings are venerated by all Buddhist schools today. In them - especially the principles that the Dharma is universal and its lessons can be learned in all life experiences, good or bad - can be traced the seeds of all Buddhist traditions that would arise later.

Phra Ajahn Suthep's interview is clearly well-worth reading and contemplating on.



1.How does walking meditation, as opposed to sitting meditation, help us to improve our Dharma practice?

Sitting and walking meditation are, of course, different but they are complementary. They both help in Dharma practice, to understand and to know the nature of the mind.

Walking meditation is to discover the truth. Sitting meditation is to consider the truth. Standing meditation is to confirm the truth and lying meditation (supine position) is to understand the truth.

Each type of meditation has its appropriate time. For example, walking meditation is very good in the morning. After we wake up, even before we go to the bathroom, mindful walking in a pattern is very useful.

2.Can you suggest any easy way to practise meditation for people who don't go to the monastery or have time to meditate?

This is a common misconception that you have to go to the temple to meditate or to practise the Dharma. Meditation is the method to see body and mind as they are and it is part of our daily life. Meditation and Dharma can be practised anywhere. We can go to the temple when we are free. That is like re-charging our batteries.

3. Strict meditators insist on correct posture – lotus or half lotus. For city people like me, this posture can be painful and distracting. How important is posture in meditation?

The lotus and half-lotus are very stable positions. They help to keep the spine straight which is the most important positional consideration in meditation. That is why these positions are the recommended ones.

Obviously in walking, standing and lying meditation, the meditator is not in a lotus position but he must still keep the spine straight.

If it is painful for you to sit cross-legged, then sit on a chair, but you must keep your spine straight.

Above all, one must approach meditation with joy. How can one achieve a peaceful mind if one already dreads sitting cross-legged?

4. Meditation helps me get through my personal and business problems. Often my motivation for meditating is worldly (to be a better trader) rather than spiritual (to gain enlightenment). How can I progress from one to the other?

First of all, you must understand the aim of meditation. It is to have a calm mind and to gain wisdom. The calm mind and wisdom lead naturally to the solution of many problems including worldly ones. The right aim will bring the benefits. But first, have the correct aim or motivation.

'If it is painful for you to sit cross-legged, then sit on a chair but you must keep your spine straight'

5. Should I set myself a meditation goal (e.g. to improve my meditation in 3 months) or should I just let progress, if any, come naturally?

Progress should not be measured by quantity but by quality. You can increase your meditation sessions from 20 minutes to an hour, but if you spend part of the time sleeping, that is not progress.

Also, focussing too much on making progress is too much 'I'.

6. Which is the better way to be free from ignorance and suffering – by meditating or by listening to Dharma talks?

Meditating and listening to Dharma talks go together. Dharma talks are the first level. After you listen, you look inward. Dharma talks plant the seed, meditation nurtures it, and the result is a fruit tree. Dharma talks wake up the realisation in us and help us achieve right understanding.

7. How does the Dharma help us deal with anger?

Anger is 'unwholesome dharma' as opposed to virtues which are 'wholesome dharma'. Anger is our teacher. When anger arises, we must observe it, and see it as it is. We have to learn from anger. Understand the conditions that cause anger and the root of the anger. Then we can resolve the problem.



8. Can you relate an incident from your experience as a Dharma and meditation master of how contact with the Dharma has made a big difference to a person's life?

During the 'Tom Yam Goong' (Asian) financial crisis in 1997, there was a sad case of a woman with very young children who lost her husband, her business and her money. She was extremely worried and unhappy.

After she followed the Dharma teachings, she became a lot calmer and understood that she had to live in the present moment.

Since then she has rebuilt her life and is now helping others through Dharma teachings.

It is her memory (of her bad experiences) and worries about the future that caused unhappiness.

9. Thai Buddhism faces many serious problems today ranging from scandals involving Thai monks to superstitions widely practised not only by lay people but by monks as well. How can the situation be improved?

This [situation] is caused by fear, greed and ignorance.

Once we are internally clear, we can address society's problems. How? By helping one person at a time, energise each other and empower others by our own good examples.

Take, for example, amulets. This is not Buddhism. But many monks are selling them because of greed and many people are buying them because of fear.

To solve this external problem, we first have to solve our internal problems.

10. Women are often more serious in their Dharma practice than men. At any rate, they constitute half of the Buddhist population. Shouldn't they therefore be allowed to ordain as fully ordained nuns?

Women are the main supporters of many temples. They are the ones who feed the monks.

However, nuns are not given official recognition in Thailand. While monks are given subsidies, nuns are not.

The reason is that the Buddha's teachings were recorded by men. And the Buddha had to be sensitive to the cultural norms of the day.

Nevertheless, women can take comfort in the fact that they don't have to be ordained to be enlightened.



Photo Credit : Charmaine



BL
Event



The Holy Land - An Exhibition of Paintings
by Patrick Yee, Buddha images and sculpture
at the Buddhist Library
October 17 to November 7, 2009

Photo Credit : Yew Beng



ARTICLE

Fighting the flu bug with Dharma

Written by Hui Yun

(Dharma student of BL Sunday School)

Most people might think that falling sick is obviously a very bad thing, especially when you catch a cold during the outbreak of the Influenza A (H1N1) flu. They would just freak out. After all, all you'll get is quarantine and that loneliness in your cold dark little room.

Well, that really bad thing just happened to fall on me!

Worst of all, I was not allowed to go out with my friends whom I missed so terribly. Like having salt added to my wound, I was banned from my favourite drama series. Well, it's *Boys Over Flowers* if you are curious.

Then, I began to worry about school. My goodness! I could never ever imagine what would happen if I missed school for just a day. I would practically have gone bonkers. I would fall terribly behind my peers and would have to skip more lunches to book supplementary lessons with my teachers. Of course, this also means that the poor teachers have to sacrifice their lunches for me.

At this point of time, I was really freaked out, with a million worries flooding through my mind. Needless to say, one of the worries was whether I was down with that horrible flu. Oh, my, that thought really made me shudder.

So, what to do now?

Haha... It's time to let the Dharma guide me.

First things first. Now the thing you most hate is that disgusting flu bug. To remove that hatred, you've got to try to love that flu bug.

After reading Ajahn Brahm's book *Opening the Door of your Heart*, I began to see things in a different light.

So, following what he wrote in the book, without hatred, let the door of my heart be open to the cold bug. Of course, I still have to try to fight it off too and not let myself succumb. This is just to help me remove the hatred.

Secondly, I need to cast all the unpleasant things and unlucky things into an optimistic point of view. Not meeting my friends... Ha! I have got to be thankful that I have not been meeting them. If not, they would be down with a cold, feeling terrible all over. I certainly would not want that to happen to them.

Missing the TV drama of my dreams? Well, thanks to this cold, I have finally lost some of my addiction to it. At least, now I will not die without it and be able to focus my attention more on my studies.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

I now finally know what it feels like to miss school. All the while, I have always dreaded going to school but suddenly this wave of nostalgia washed up my throat.

Last but not least, this cold bug made me see the love my family gives me. They all cared for and fussed over me, hoping that I would get well soon. Worries were all etched on my mother's forehead. They did not isolate me like an alien. They even went up to hug me. How touched I was.

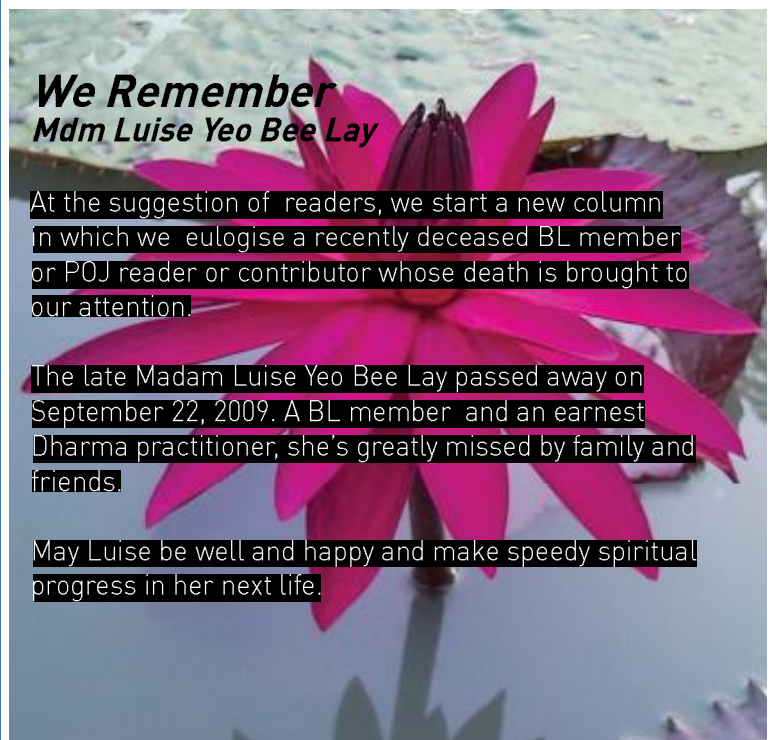
Of course, their efforts were fruitful. If not how can I be here bursting with energy, typing away? Thank you, cold bug. You have certainly taught me a valuable lesson and given me a chance to apply the Dharma in my life. I have gained something more precious than gold.

We Remember **Mdm Luise Yeo Bee Lay**

At the suggestion of readers, we start a new column in which we eulogise a recently deceased BL member or POJ reader or contributor whose death is brought to our attention.

The late Madam Luise Yeo Bee Lay passed away on September 22, 2009. A BL member and an earnest Dharma practitioner, she's greatly missed by family and friends.

May Luise be well and happy and make speedy spiritual progress in her next life.



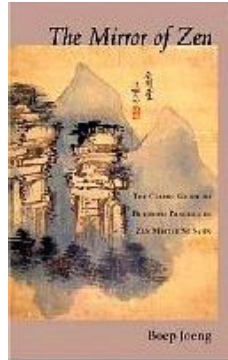
[book review]

The Mirror of Zen The Classic Guide to Buddhist Practice by Zen Master So Sahn

Author: Boep Joeng

Publisher: Shambala

Reviewed by Kim Li



Truth be told, I took up this book because I've always been interested in Zen koans. Blame it on my love for poetry or my uni friend who introduced me to the concept of one hand clapping.

Koans are to me things that carry so much in-depth, yet are portrayed in the simplest, most minimalistic approach.

But this book isn't about koans.

However, it does contain short selected texts, phrases that are meant to convey the essence of the teachings. This book has a total of 86 such phrases and each phrase comes with a short commentary. Some come with a *gatha*.

According to Plum Village Practice Centre *gathas* are short verses that help us practice mindfulness in our daily activities. *A gatha can open and deepen our experience of simple acts which we often take for granted.*

An example of a *gatha* will be:

*Seeing layer upon layer of mountains and flowing streams
Is itself my clear bright original home.*

Reading through the phrases, whether just reading them as you would read poems or pausing to reflect on the meaning of the phrases, you will find that there should be at least one that will 'speak' to you.

Personally, I like this one -

If you have no patience, the limitless compassionate functioning of the six paramitas cannot be attained.

What I've also found interesting is the fact that there are 30 or so pages of notes. Sometimes the notes are there to further explain an understanding. At other times, it is to give a background of a particular phrase.

And at yet other times, it is to indicate what a particular word means in its entire context. This is especially helpful if you read a phrase and start seeing stars.

But what really captured my mind was the fact that during the invasion of Korea by Japan, Master So Sahn, from whom the teachings came, took up the extremely tough decision to defend Korea against intruders.

How could men schooled in the tenets of compassion and non-harming be convinced to participate in the defence of the nation or the state – a worldly entity admittedly part of the artificial world of samsaric appearances?

Great Master So Sahn reflected deeply on the dilemma. Considering the uniqueness and depth of the Korean Buddhist tradition, he knew that if the nation were to fall, the world would potentially lose a vessel of the Dharma that was greater than merely the loss of a government or a state or even a particular race. He quickly determined that for the sake of preserving this unique treasure of Dharma that was Korean Buddhism, he had to protect the culture and the nation that had built and sustained it.

The Japanese were overwhelmed at the sight of these legions of Buddhist monks marching through the countryside, defending their country, yet committing no atrocities against their invaders. Those attackers who had the good fortune to fall into the hands of Master So Sahn's army were not beheaded or even tortured ... but treated with humanity and compassion.

The short extract here cannot fully illustrate the dilemma that Master So Sahn was in. While I think it was a necessary defence on the part of Master So Sahn (because I feel that his decision was based on compassion and not anger or attachment) I also feel that this decision is not something that most of us can make.

Overall, this book makes a very interesting read, from the translators' introductions to the actual texts, to the epilogue and even the notes.

【编辑说】

寻找快乐，分享快乐

“我们能自行处理悲痛，但要得到喜悦的所有价值，就必须同他人分享。”

——马克吐温

彭波（Pongpol Boonyabhum）在6岁时患上血癌，他的病情在10岁时恶化。到了癌症末期，他决定只接受镇痛剂和氧气的治疗，其他一概不接受。

在他临终前夕，这名小男孩要求到海边去。在回家的途中，他把头依靠在妈妈的肩膀上说：“妈妈，我很快乐。”

“我也一样，孩子。”妈妈回答。

当天夜里，小男孩吐了血，被送入医院急救。

“我是不是快死了？”小男孩问妈妈。

哽咽的妈妈已说不出话来。

这个时候，慈怀护理的护士说：“是的，亲爱的，你正在死去。不过，这没什么好害怕的。佛使比丘和你的朋友正等着迎接你。走吧，你是个勇敢的孩子。”

男孩镇定了下来，不再痛苦。时间到了，他望着母亲的眼睛，低声说：“妈妈，再见。”

正当在观看电视的一部电影时，这则今年6月30日刊登在泰国曼谷邮报的故事突然涌入我的脑海。

这部由两名好莱坞老戏骨杰克·尼克森和摩根·弗里曼主演的电影《遗愿清单》（The Bucket List），讲述两名末期癌症患者首次在医院见面。经过尴尬的自我介绍后，为了在逝世前，好好的活一次，最终决定逃离医院。

两人开出了一个清单，列出他们死前要完成的事。从简单的“笑得落泪”，到空中跳伞、豪华旅行，以及竭尽所能的吃鱼子酱等放纵行为。

不过两人在完成所有愿望之前，就灰头土脸的回家了。

两人最终发现，必须先处理好家里的事。他们从对方身上了解到，所要寻找的答案其实来自内心，而不是身外。

在其中一幕，当两人游览金字塔时，弗里曼为尼克森讲述了一个简单的故事。

古埃及人相信，人死后，在进入天堂前，必须接受考验，得先回答两道问题：你是否找到生命的喜悦？是否把喜悦带给他人？

由于两人心中都有无法放下的事务，因此他们都无法在自己的生命找到喜悦。与此同时，除非他们获得喜悦，否则两人都无法在死前，把喜悦带给他们的挚爱，因为把喜悦带给他人的这个举动，是自身获得喜悦前，不可或缺的先决条件。

这个故事凸显了，佛法和我们生活中的每一个层面，都能产生共鸣。小说也不例外，因为许多小说最终也是现实生活的反射。

以上两则故事都同死亡，以及畏惧死亡有关。

人人都怕死。这种深藏于我们内心的恐惧，是如此的根深蒂固。有位西藏比丘尼说，如果任何人声称他不怕死，他可能是在撒谎。

她说的一点也没错。

为什么人类如此怕死？

很显然的，痛苦是主要因素。另外，必须单独面对死亡不可预知的一面，也是主因。

最后，当然还有与所爱的人生离死别的痛苦。

曾经有人问美国著名导演詹姆斯·卡梅隆，为什么他执导的《铁达尼号》如此卖座？他说，人们为这部有关两名不幸年轻人的故事深深着迷，不是因为痛苦和死亡，而是人们害怕同心爱的人别离。

也正因为如此，人们想方设法来应对这个让人惧怕，但却无可避免的未来。

而宗教是应对方法之一。

我的朋友尼克是个对信仰虔诚的人，他曾经说过，在医院观察所有临终病患后发现，那些不相信上帝的人，死前较为难受。

尼克的言论很容易理解，因为有神论者的宗教向信徒承诺，如果他们信仰和服从上帝的戒条，他们死后将到天堂，并拥有永恒的生命。

因此，有信仰的人相信比较能够从容面对死亡。

情况是否真的如此？

是否这就意味着，无神论者，或是那些没有信仰的人，一定就比有信仰的人更畏惧死亡呢？

不论尼克的观察如何，他的结论肯定是错误的。

我们只要阅读铃木俊隆禅师、阿姜查比丘和第16世大宝法王等佛教高僧的生平，就能够了解这些异于常人的大德，如何在面对死亡时，保持一贯的尊严和平静。同时，利用他们的死亡引导弟子参悟死亡的真实意义。

即使那个10岁的小男孩彭波，也能在不需要仰赖全能之神的协助下，鼓起勇气面对死亡。

当然，他在临终前被告知，一位德高望重的比丘和他的朋友都在等待他。这显示了人只要在临死前拥有信仰，这个信仰就足以让他应对死亡。

同全心全意和毫不质疑的信仰上帝比较，佛教徒应对死亡的方法截然不同。

佛陀劝诫我们看清和明了实相，就是这么直接了当。他指出什么是苦、苦的根源、什么是灭苦，以及通往灭苦的道路。

简而言之，只有在释出我们内在的佛性和揭开内藏的智慧和智慧后，我们才会了解世间的实相。一旦拥有这种能力，无知和恐惧将会自动消失。

《心经》说得最简单明了：

“心无挂碍，无挂碍故，无有恐怖，远离颠倒梦想，究竟涅槃。”

智慧解除痛苦的威力是如此强大，以致菩萨会毫不迟疑，甚至是为了他人牺牲自己的性命。佛陀过去世所经历的一切，就是最好的证明。

我们必须了解，菩萨牺牲自我，不是因为这是一件好事，而是因为这本来就是应该完成的事。

弗朗西斯·库克(Francis Cook)在他的著作《华严佛教：因陀罗网》中指出：“我必须做好准备接受一个事实，就是我的存在除了是为了自己外，更是为了他人。如果我真的能领悟这点，就算被一只老虎攻击时，我会自然的退宿和尖叫，不过我最终还是心甘情愿被老虎吞噬。在失去意识之前，我可能会感恩，因为这个世界不止属于我，同时也属于老虎，而我为饥饿的老虎充饥，就如一根萝卜解决了我的饥饿一样。因此，在最低限度上，我们能做的就是衡量事物时，保持公平。”

要在思想上进行如此极端的转变，似乎是不可思议。对一些人来说，甚至是感到莫名其妙。这是因为我们平时习惯以自我为中心的观点来看待事物。

也许这就是为何我们需要经过三大阿僧祇劫的修行才能证悟，这是我们凡夫所不可思议的时间和境界。

在证悟之前，我们仍需在修行道路上继续蹒跚前进，并需要生活的安慰剂或是心理拐杖来面对生命的挑战和死亡。

当我们偶然听到有关人性发挥勇气的光辉时，例如10岁小男孩彭波的故事，它就会激励我们，并滋养我们的勇气，从内心寻找答案，如同佛陀一向来的教导。

不论是在什么情况下，从容应对恐惧，将为我们带来喜悦，同时也能把喜悦同他人分享。这样我们就不必为了没完成的事，而必须在临终前列出一整张耸人听闻的清单。

和往常一样，祝您阅读愉快。

Chwee Beng
编辑

在 Kucchivikara-vatthu Sutta 或“患痢疾比丘之开示”里，佛陀提到了要成为一个优秀的看护者所应具备的五种品质。

1. 对药物了如指掌

这是很显然的，但这并不代表看护者必须是合格的医生。无论如何，他必须了解如何正确的使用由医生所开的药方。

2. 了解什么对病人有益或有害

一个病人通常会渴望他喜爱的食物，甚至是不健康的物品如烟和酒。一个优秀的看护者必须了解什么对病人有益，同时保持坚定但仁慈及温和的立场。

3. 照顾病患不期待从中获利

一个看护者必须以爱心和悲心来照顾病患，并不期待任何回报，甚至是对方的道谢。当然，这并不代表看护者不能接受薪水或其他酬劳。

4. 当病患需要护理时，看护者必须毫不犹豫地提供护理

这也就是为什么护理科是份要求很高的工作。

5. 以正确的言语提供辅导

单靠药物是不够的。仁慈的话语和行动也是必须的。如果一个看护者带着负面的态度，很勉强或很含糊地提供照顾，病人的信心也将会受到负面的影响。

佛陀也提到看护者五种不恰当的品性。它们是以上五种优秀品质的相反，因此在此没必要进入细节。

根据佛陀所说，一个看护者对于帮助病人康复扮演着重要的角色。因此他鼓励弟子们帮助病患。

达摩拉达那法师

宗教顾问

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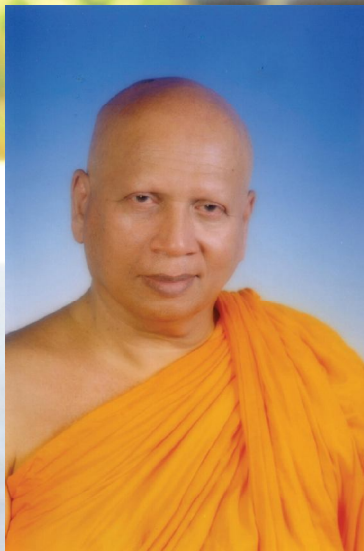
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法师语录 佛教的疗愈力

那是因为这个世界是不能令人满足的。只要痛苦或不满（dukkha）存在于世间，我们就得说这个世界基本上是有病的。

举个例子，我们也许过得还挺不错，对佛法略有所闻，尝试跟随法教，培养正德，对我们的生活感到相当满足。我们一般上都是如此看待自己的生活。

即使如此，我们却不能说对这个世界感到完全满足。

如果我们能够完全免于痛苦或不满，就不会偶尔受苦。我们遭受痛苦是因为已成为病毒的受害者。只要这种状态持续下去，我们将永远无法真正快乐或得到圆满的安乐。悉达多太子就是为了要帮助人们消除这个病毒，他精进修行并证悟成佛，也称觉者。

但是我们这些普通人，平时该如何解决生活中的痛苦或不满？

我们要的，就尽量去争取。我们不要的，就尽快将它丢弃，从无始以来都一直这么做。因此，打从我们有记忆开始，其实早已成了贪与嗔的受害者。

尽管我们如何努力去取得所要的东西及丢弃不要的东西，并期待从中获得永恒的满足，到头来却只是虚幻而已。

譬如我们尝试满足五种感官：视觉、听觉、嗅觉、味觉及触觉，但却不见拥有永恒的满足。原因是五官根本无法永恒的满足我们善变的喜好与厌恶个性。

为什么呢？因为我们的快乐仰赖于事物的拥有或失去。

在我们的心中，当我们无法得到一样东西时，它的价值随之提升。我们越是得不到就越想要。我们甚至会开始觉得没有这样东西就活不下去。如此，

我们不确实的为得不到的东西增添价值。但是一旦取得这样东西，它在我们心中的价值就马上跌落。然后我们为了追求快乐，而去取得更多相同的东西，或者去寻求其他的代替品。

这实在是很可悲的情形。佛陀知道这种想法基本上是错误的，因为我们不可能以这种方式来维持快乐。

因此，身为一位伟大的医师，佛陀找到了治愈这个病毒的方法。

佛陀教导我们，与其尝试拥有越来越多的东西，我们应该克服问题的根源，那就是执著与贪念。

那该如何克服呢？答案是知足。

在法句经（Dhammapada）中，佛陀将知足形容为“最大的财富”。

为什么？因为如果没有知足，即使我们拥有世界上所有的财富，我们仍然不会快乐。看看迈克杰逊悲惨的突然逝世。他比我们任何一位都拥有更高的天分、名誉和钱财。但你想，他在世时是个快乐的人吗？

可是如果知足，我们对于竭尽所能通过合法及合乎道德途径所取得的东西，就会感到快乐了。

对于一名优秀的看护者所应具备的先决条件，佛陀也给予了实用的忠告：

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《极乐之程》编辑部

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佛陀最优秀的品质之一是他治愈人们的能力。这就是为什么佛陀有时也被称为贝萨嘉固如（Bhesa jaguru巴利文）或拜萨嘉固如（Bhaisa jyaguru梵文），为治愈佛或药师佛的意思。

在大乘佛教中，药师佛的概念被发展得极为全面，指的是完全不同的另一尊佛。但我在这儿所提的药师佛，指的是在我们这个历史记载的释迦牟尼佛。

当佛陀提到“这个世界”时，他指的是这个世界里的人们。一般上他也说这个世界不是个很健康的地方。根据佛陀的说法，这个世界“基本上是有病”。

的确，这是整个佛法中最根本的前提。

在一著名经文中，佛陀说：“如前一般，我现在指出苦及其果。”（中部经典，第一卷，第16页Majjhima Nikaya, Vol I, pg. 16）

但我们在此也必须注意，对一些人来说，“病”这一词也许会带来错误的印象，以为佛教是悲观的。当然，这并非如此，佛教只不过是唯实论而已。这个世界的确还有很多正面的特性，但我们不应该否认这个世界“基本上是有病”的这项事实。

佛陀为什么说这个世界“基本上是有病”呢？