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*'BL celebrates Dharma Day 2012'*

*'If my sickness is of benefit to living beings, let me be sick.  
If my death would help, may I die.  
But if my recovery would help, may I be cured.  
Bless me to accept whatever happens with JOY and use it as my PATH.'*

Gyelsay Togmay Sangpo



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# Bhante Says

## Simply the Best

In the history of religion, the Buddha was, in my opinion, the most outstanding teacher. It should not surprise anyone that I say this. I am, after all, a Buddhist monk. But the fact remains that it is true.

Let me show you what I mean by referring to a discourse called the *Udumbarika-Sihanada Sutta* (*The Great Lion's Roar to the Udumbarikans*). This is a long sutta and the dialogue is very important so please bear with me.

In the sutta, a Buddhist layman, Sandhana, had a conversation with Nigrodha, the leader of a non-Buddhist group of wanderers practising strict austerity.

Sandhana told Nigrodha that while Nigrodha's wandering ascetics loved noise, the Buddha cherished silence.

*'The Blessed One's way is different: he seeks a lodging in the forest, in the depths of the jungle, free from noise, with little sound, far from the madding crowd, undisturbed by men, well fitted for seclusion.'*

This upset Nigrodha who immediately threw a challenge.

*"Well, now householder, do you know whom the ascetic Gotama talks to? Whom does he converse with? From whom does he get his lucidity of wisdom? The ascetic Gotama's wisdom is destroyed by the solitary life, he is unused to assemblies, he is no good at conversation, he is right out of touch. Just as bison, circling around keep to the fringes, so it is with the ascetic Gotama. In fact, householder, if the ascetic Gotama were to come to this assembly, we would baffle him with a single question, we would knock him over like an empty pot."*

The Buddha overheard the conversation and approached Nigrodha, asking, *"What was the subject of conversation just now? What have I interrupted?"*

Nigrodha posed his question to the Buddha, *"... Lord, what is this doctrine in which the Blessed One trains his disciples, and which those disciples whom he has so trained as to benefit from it, recognise as their principal support and the perfection of the holy life?"*



The Buddha replied that it would be hard for Nigrodha to understand his teachings as he held *'different views, being of different inclinations and subject to different influences, following a different teacher.'*

*"Come on then, Nigrodha, ask me about your own teaching, about your extreme austerity. How are the conditions of austerity and self-mortification fulfilled and how are they not fulfilled?"*

Nigrodha obliged the Buddha and repeated the question.

The Buddha named some of the practices of austerity and asked Nigrodha, if a practitioner has performed all these practices of austerity, *'is the higher austerity thereby fulfilled?'*

Nigrodha replied, *"Indeed, Lord, it is fulfilled."*

But the Buddha disagreed.

He pointed out that this practitioner could still be faulted in many ways. What if he *'elevate(d) himself and disparage(d) others?'* What if he was *'mean and spiteful, envious and jealous, crafty and deceitful, obstinate and proud, with evil desires and under their sway, with wrong views and given to extremist opinions, being tainted with worldliness, holding on firmly, unwilling to give up?'*

Nigrodha had to agree with the Buddha that these were indeed faults.

Then the Buddha asked Nigrodha to consider the converse situation.



What if the practitioner did not do any of these things?  
Could he still be faulted?

Nigrodha agreed that in such a case the practitioner would be purified.

Now the Buddha was ready to answer Nigrodha's question directly. It was *'by something more far-reaching and excellent'* that he trained his followers, namely, the Noble Eightfold Path of morality, concentration and meditation.

Anyone who was *'intelligent, sincere and straightforward'* and practised the Noble Eightfold Path would, in as short a period as 7 days, be able to *'attain that unequalled holy life and goal ... by his own knowledge and realization.'*

Then the Buddha assured Nigrodha with a statement which is unequalled in the history of religion to this day.

*"Nigrodha, you may think: 'The ascetic Gotama says this in order to get disciples.' But you should not regard it like that. Let him who is your teacher remain your teacher... Let your rules remain as they are... Let your way of life remain as it was... Let those things you consider wrong continue to be so considered... Let whatever you consider right continue to be so considered. Nigrodha, I do not speak for any of these reasons.*

*There are, Nigrodha, unwholesome things that have not been abandoned, tainted, conducive to rebirth, fearful, productive of painful results in the future, associated with birth, decay and death. It is for the abandonment of these things that I teach Dhamma. If you practise accordingly, these tainted things will be abandoned and the things that make for purification will develop and grow and you will all attain to and dwell, in this very life, by your own insight and realisation, in the fullness of perfected wisdom."*

What does this discourse tell us about the Buddha as a teacher?

Obviously, the Buddha was systematic, logical and rational. He taught in graduated stages, from the easy to the difficult, from the familiar to the unfamiliar, from the known to the unknown. He tested Nigrodha's understanding by questioning him each step along the way.

But, above all, the Buddha had compassion and unconditional love for Nigrodha and his men, not caring whether they became Buddhists or not. His only concern was to show them how to get rid of suffering and find lasting happiness.

And when Sandhana finally revealed Nigrodha's boast to the Buddha to *'baffle (the Buddha) with a single question (and) ... knock him over like an empty pot'*, the Buddha did not castigate or condemn him. Instead, he readily accepted Nigrodha's apology because to do so *'is a mark of progress in the discipline of the Noble Ones, if anyone recognises the nature of his transgression and makes amends as is right, restraining himself for the future.'*

What I want to stress here is that the Buddha was consistent in this approach throughout his 45 years of teaching.

In the *Upali Sutta (To Upali)*, Upali, a leading disciple of another religious teacher, wanted to take refuge in the Buddha after hearing a discourse. The Buddha refused his request and advised him to *'investigate thoroughly .... It is good for such well-known people like you to investigate thoroughly.'*

Instead of being discouraged, Upali was encouraged by this refusal. He told the Buddha, *"Venerable sir, I am even more satisfied and pleased with the Blessed One for telling me that. For the other sectarians, on acquiring me as their disciple, would carry a banner all over Nalanda announcing: 'The householder Upali has come to discipleship under us.' But, on the contrary, the Blessed One tells me (to investigate thoroughly)."*

The Buddha was concerned that Upali might stop giving support to his teacher. Only when Upali agreed not to cease providing alms to his teacher, did the Buddha accept him as a lay follower.

It is not surprising therefore to find that throughout the centuries Buddhists in general have avoided converting others in situations where it would not be wise or compassionate to do so.

A contemporary Buddhist leader who teaches in the same spirit of compassion and unconditional love for sentient beings is His Holiness, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

In his book, *'Becoming Enlightened'*, he wrote –

*'... I have met with some Christians who take interest in certain Buddhist practices, study them, and even practice them. They take particular interest in Buddhist methods for achieving one-pointed meditative concentration, as well as how to increase love, compassion and patience. Since these practices are common to Christianity and Buddhism, I express my admiration for what they are doing. To Christians, however, who have become interested in the view of emptiness, I lightheartedly respond that this is distinctly Buddhist and has little connection*



*with Christian doctrine. Why? Probing emptiness requires looking into dependent arising, and if its implications are understood, it becomes difficult to accept a single, permanent, unchangeable God as the creator of the world.'*

This compassionate and respectful attitude of Buddhists towards other religions is, in my opinion, one of our greatest moral strengths. But we should also be mindful of our weaknesses.

Buddhists, in general, take a very relaxed attitude towards their own religion.

We should learn from our friends from other religions by making more serious effort to study and understand Buddhism as much they do their own religions. We should also make sure that our children study Buddhism from an early age. People belonging to other religions commonly take it as their solemn duty to pass their religion on to their children as part of their heritage. But many Buddhist parents seem to think that their only responsibility is to make sure that their children get good grades and jobs.

In short, many Buddhists lack knowledge of, and commitment to, their religion.

The result is that Buddhists generally tend to stray, either to other religions or by getting lost in the material world.

Of course, I am not saying that converting to another religion is something bad.

In the famous *Kalama Sutta (Instructions to the Kalamas)*, the Buddha himself said that people should not believe anything just because it was said by their teacher or contained in a holy text. People have the right to believe whatever they like.

But it is one thing to convert to another religion because we have found truth in that other religion, the same truth that we are unable to find in Buddhism despite thorough study and investigation.

It is quite another thing to lose faith in Buddhism out of ignorance, not having taken the time and trouble to study and investigate it properly.

If we had, we might have been able to appreciate the rational, wise, compassionate and unique teachings of the Buddha. We might even have been able to correct any misconception or misapprehension that others may have had about Buddhism and help them to understand and respect Buddhism even as we respect and understand their religions. Mutual respect, after all, can only come from mutual understanding.

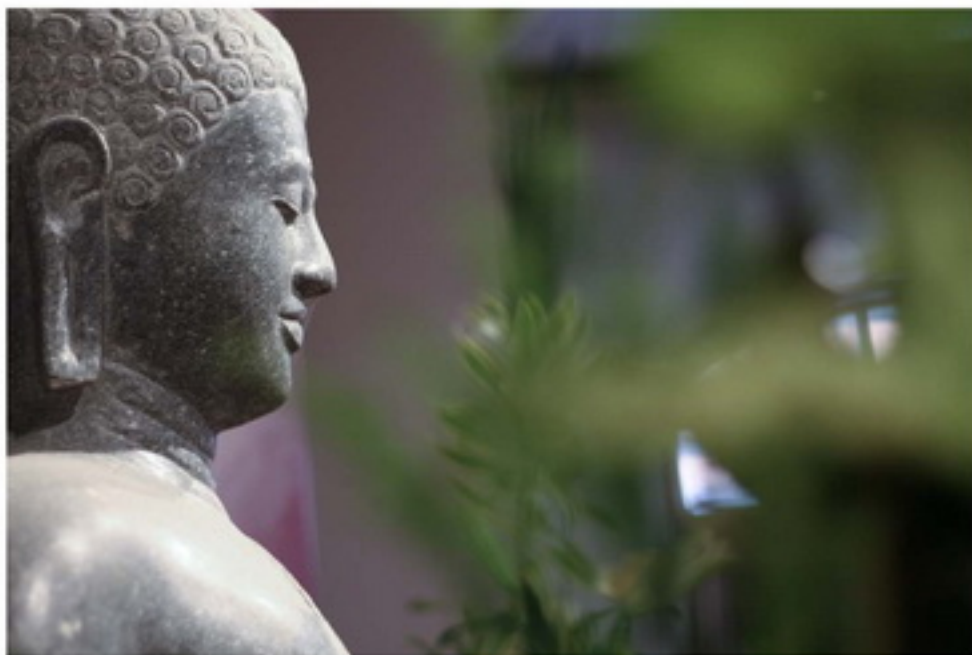
Bhante B. Dhammaratana  
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*'They do not speculate,  
they do not esteem any views and say,  
'This is the highest purity.'  
They release the knot of dogmatic clinging  
and do not long for anything in this world.*

*Giving up the notion of a permanent abiding self,  
and not grasping it again, they do not even  
depend upon knowledge.  
Not conforming with those of dissenting views,  
they do not fall back on any view at all.'*

*Sutta Nipata  
(The Essential Teachings of Buddhism Ed.  
Kerry Brown & Joanne O'Brien).*



# EDITORIAL

## In Pursuit of Happiness

Clayton Christensen is a Professor at Harvard Business School. In 2011, he was named *'the world's most influential business thinker.'*

Each year, on the last day of his course, he asks his students 3 questions –

*'How can I be sure that*

- I will be successful and happy in my career?*
- my relationships with my spouse, my children, my extended family and my close friends become an enduring source of happiness?*
- I live a life of integrity – and stay out of jail?'*

To set the context, Christensen tells his students about his own ex-classmates.

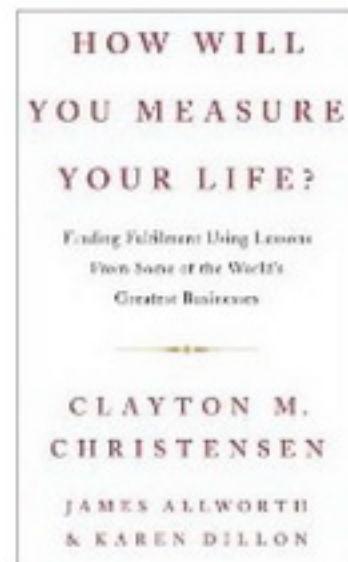
At their 5 year reunion, *'... everyone seemed so polished and prosperous – we couldn't help but feel that we really were part of something special'* - great jobs, exotic job locations, even great looking spouses.

Come their 10 year reunion, however, many of his ex-classmates *'were clearly unhappy.'* Many *'did not enjoy what they were doing for a living. There were also numerous stories of divorces or unhappy marriages.'* This, despite their being *'executives at renowned consulting and finance firms', 'on their way to top spots in Fortune 500 companies', 'already successful entrepreneurs' or 'earning enormous, life-changing amounts of money.'*

By their 25 and 30 year reunions, *'the problems were worse. One of our classmates – Jeffrey Skilling – had landed in jail for his role in the Enron scandal.'*

Clearly, something was amiss.

In his book - *How Will You Measure Your Life* – Christensen offers *'the best of the insights'* he and his students came up with in their discussions.



To help readers find happiness, the book recommends theories from rigorously tested research done at Harvard Business School and elsewhere.

Christensen seeks to apply these theories to personal situations. Let's examine an example from each category.

### *Career Choices*

On the 1<sup>st</sup> question, Christensen adopts the distinction between *hygiene factors* and *motivation factors* drawn by Frederick Herzberg in his article in the Harvard Business Review.

Challenging work, recognition, responsibility and personal growth are motivation factors because they *'cause employees to love their jobs.'* In contrast, hygiene factors like status, compensation, job security, work conditions, company policies and supervisory practices do not.

To mistake one for the other can *'make the difference between dreading or being excited to go to work every day.'*

### *Personal relationships*

As for the 2<sup>nd</sup> question, Christensen advises nurturing relationships with family and friends constantly and consistently. He draws an analogy with the case of a company which fails to invest in new businesses when the going is good - until its main business fails and then it's too late.

*'Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind.'*

Ralph Waldo Emerson - Self-Reliance



## *A life of integrity*

With regard to the 3<sup>rd</sup> question, Christensen proposes only one theory - *'full versus marginal thinking.'*

He cites the case of Blockbuster, the DVD rental giant, which made the fatal mistake of ignoring the challenge of Netflix, thinking that Netflix's DVD mail rental business was merely a *'niche business'*.

*'Marginal thinking made Blockbuster believe that the alternative to not pursuing the postal DVD market was to happily continue doing what it was doing ... (b)ut the real alternative to not going after Netflix was, in fact, bankruptcy.'*

Christensen relates his own personal experience.

While studying at Oxford, he was the star basketball player in his university team. *'We killed ourselves all season, and our hard work paid off – we made it all the way to the finals.'*

But, to his horror, Christensen found that the championship game that year was scheduled for a Sunday. At the age of 16, he had made a promise to God that he would never play ball on a Sunday.

Despite impassioned pleas from his coach and teammates, Christensen kept his promise. The team won anyway but to Christensen, he had made *'one of the most important decisions in (his) life.... (b)ecause life is just one unending stream of unending circumstances. Had I crossed the line that one time, I would have done it over and over and over in the years that followed.'*

## *The big picture*

In the final part of the book, Christensen discusses the role of purpose.

Purpose is essential for every company as it is for an individual. If you don't have one, find one. Purpose is *'too important to leave to chance. It needs to be deliberately conceived, chosen, and managed.'* And so Christensen divides purpose into 3 parts – *likeness* (the person you want to become), *commitment* and *metrics* (how do you measure your progress?).

## *The Buddhist perspective*

Let us re-examine these issues, this time from the perspective of Buddhism.

In the *Dighajanu (Vyagghapajja) Sutta – (Conditions of Welfare Discourse)*, the Buddha was requested by a group of laypeople to teach them the Dharma

*'in a way that will lead to (their) welfare and happiness...'*

The Buddha taught 4 things – *'the accomplishment of persistent effort, the accomplishment of protection, good friendship, and balanced living.'*

A person has the *accomplishment of persistent effort* if he is *'skillful and diligent...he investigates the appropriate means, and is able to act and arrange everything properly.'*

He has the *accomplishment of protection* if he *'sets up protection and guard over the wealth acquired by energetic striving, amassed by the strength of his arms, earned by the sweat of his brow, righteous wealth righteously gained ...'*

*Good friendship* is where a person *'associates with (people) of mature virtue, accomplished in faith, moral discipline, generosity, and wisdom; he converses with them and engages in discussions with them. He emulates them in regard to their accomplishment(s)...*

A person's life is balanced if he *'knows his income and expenditures and leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, so that his income exceeds his expenditures rather than the reverse.'*

In the *Sappurisa Sutta (A Person of Integrity Discourse)*, the Buddha defined *'a person of no integrity'* as someone who *'reveals another person's bad points'* but not his good points. A person of integrity does the converse. And in the *Katannu Sutta (Gratitude Discourse)*, the Buddha compared integrity to gratitude.

Finally, we want to avoid certain occupations.

*'Monks, a lay follower should not engage in five types of business. Which five? Business in weapons, business in human beings, business in meat, business in intoxicants, and business in poisons.'*

Vanijja Sutta - Business  
(Wrong Livelihood) Discourse

These are the ways to find happiness at work and in personal relationships and how to live a life of integrity, according to Buddhism.

Of course, the Buddha's teachings are expressed in general terms compared with Christensen's theories but then those theories were derived from modern research.

Nevertheless, the Buddha's teachings work as well today as 2,555 years ago. If people had observed balanced living before 2008, the Great Recession that began in 2008 might well have been averted.



As regards purpose, the goal of the Buddhist spiritual path is, of course, to find permanent happiness for ourselves as well as others.

Happiness is permanent if it is not dependent on external causes and conditions. As B. Alan Wallace has said, permanent happiness or *genuine happiness*, as he calls it, *'is not stimulus-driven... It is the truth that we are, in our innermost nature.'*

Ultimately, the Buddhist aspiration is to be free from suffering permanently. For this, the Buddha prescribed the Six Perfections of generosity, ethics, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom.

To be sure, most of us are unlikely to master these Perfections in one lifetime. Nevertheless, so as to facilitate, rather than obstruct, our progress on the spiritual path, we could begin with baby steps.

For example, we could follow the example of a friend of mine. After a deep sea fishing trip in Sri Lanka, he decided to hang up his fishing rod for good and live a life of *'non-violence'*, becoming a vegetarian.

Or we could try to make a real difference to the life of even one total stranger in any way we can.

Or, more simply still, we could be nice to people we meet or work with, whether they reciprocate or not.

In terms of commitment, Buddhists ought to practise the Dharma sincerely. We find a realistic level of commitment, then raise the bar appropriately as we go along.

Finally, the metrics. The Buddha provided many guidelines to help us assess our own spiritual progress. One good guideline with clear signposts can be found in the *Satthusasana Sutta (The Teacher's Instruction Discourse)* -

*The things of which you know:*

*These things lead to dispassion, not to passion;  
to detachment, not to attachment;  
to diminution, not to accumulation;  
to wanting little, not to wanting much;  
to being easily satisfied, not to being hard to satisfy;  
to seclusion, not to socializing;  
to putting forth energy, not to indolence;  
to frugality, not to luxury;*

*of them you should surely know that they belong to the teaching, to the training, to the Teacher's instruction.*

In conclusion, we can say that business theories are great but perhaps mostly for careers and the like. Christensen himself did not resort to any business theory to keep his promise to God. He relied on his religion.

As Buddhists, we have the Dharma as our compass – a rational, consistent and inclusive worldview, offering unconditional love and compassion for all beings, regardless of race, religion, even species.

It is what we need more than ever in this globalised world. As Dov Seidman has observed –

*'... in a hyperconnected world, (mere) individuals and small groups can be a stronger force for more good or more evil. One individual can steal millions of personal identities, and one individual can spark revolutions for freedom across the Arab world. Essentially, we've democratized the production of good and evil. The closer we're all connected, the more frequently we should expect the unexpected to happen. In a world of constant, radical change, we all need a bulwark that will act simultaneously as propellant and guide. We need to root ourselves in what we know should never change – our values' (emphasis mine).*

As always, I wish you pleasant reading.

Chwee Beng  
Editor

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*Vanijja Sutta – (Discourse on Wrong Livelihood) – Anguttara Nikaya 5.177* Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu

*How – Why HOW We Do Anything Means Everything*  
– Dov Seidman

*A single day's life of one who puts out great effort  
Is better than a life of a hundred years  
Lived in idleness and sluggishness.*

The Dhammapada  
(trans. Ven. Balangoda Ananda Maitreya)



# BL EVENT



BL EVENT : Teaching by Ven. Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche and  
Ven Matthieu Ricard on '*Lives and World of Great  
Masters from Tibet*'

Date : September 16, 2012

Venue : BL

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# BL EVENT



BL EVENT : DHARMA DAY 2012

Date : July 1, 2012

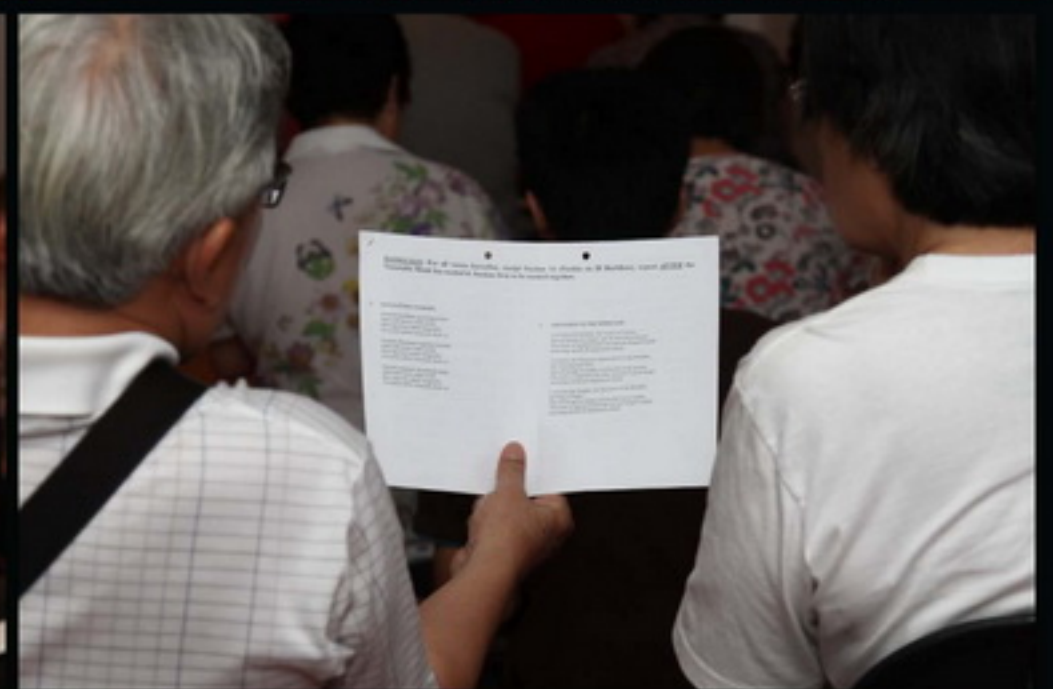
Venue : BL

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# BL EVENT





# INTERVIEW

VENERABLE YOGAVACARA RAHULA

by email on May 30 2012

*'Drugs do not cause 'highs',  
they just interfere with our rigid,  
conditioned way of thinking...'*

Ven. Rahula

## INTRODUCTION

Bhante Rahula (Scott Joseph DuPrez) was born in California in 1948 and ordained as a Buddhist monk in Sri Lanka in 1975. He lived there for 10 years studying and practising mindfulness and *vipassana* meditation under different teachers, living alone in secluded hermitages.

Bhante also studied yoga in South India under Swami Gitananda.

Bhante Rahula's teaching integrates the practice of yoga and meditation.

Since 1987, Bhante Rahula has been residing and teaching at the Bhavana Society Forest Monastery in West Virginia with Bhante Henepola Gunaratana. He also conducts meditation retreats in Germany and other parts of the world periodically.

## GENERAL QUESTIONS

*How, if at all, have your experiences in the Vietnam War and with hashish influenced or impacted your life, including your life as a monk, for better or worse?*

Being in the U.S Army and also in the Vietnam War helped me see a wider segment of different types of people and their conditioning, including mine. It helped me to see that greed, hate and delusion are deeply rooted in most people.

The use of drugs helped me to see how the mind and consciousness can easily be altered, that the mind is not just confined to its conditioned perceptions, thoughts and emotions. There are also other states or dimensions of consciousness available. Drugs do not cause 'highs', they just interfere with our rigid, conditioned way of thinking, so that we have access to other more pleasant states available within the spectrum of consciousness.

*Why did you decide to ordain as a Buddhist monk in the Theravada tradition and not the Tibetan tradition which you encountered in Nepal before you went to Sri Lanka?*

When I started to learn and practise *vipassana* meditation, I also began to study the Theravada or Pali Dhamma teachings. I guess these teachings, with less emphasis on *mantras*, *mandalas* and *Bodhisattvas*, appealed to my mental (and) spiritual needs at that time, as it was unfolding.

That drew me to Sri Lanka where the conditions for practising *vipassana* and access to the Theravada sutras were better. Also, I had heard that it was easier to get ordained as a monk and live more secluded in the forest monasteries in Sri Lanka.

This is how I gradually shifted from Mahayana practice to Theravada, and how I envisaged my life as a monk.

## QUESTIONS ON BUDDHISM

*In one word, or phrase, how would you describe the essence of Buddhism? Why do you choose this word or phrase?*

*'Suffering, and the ending of suffering'.*

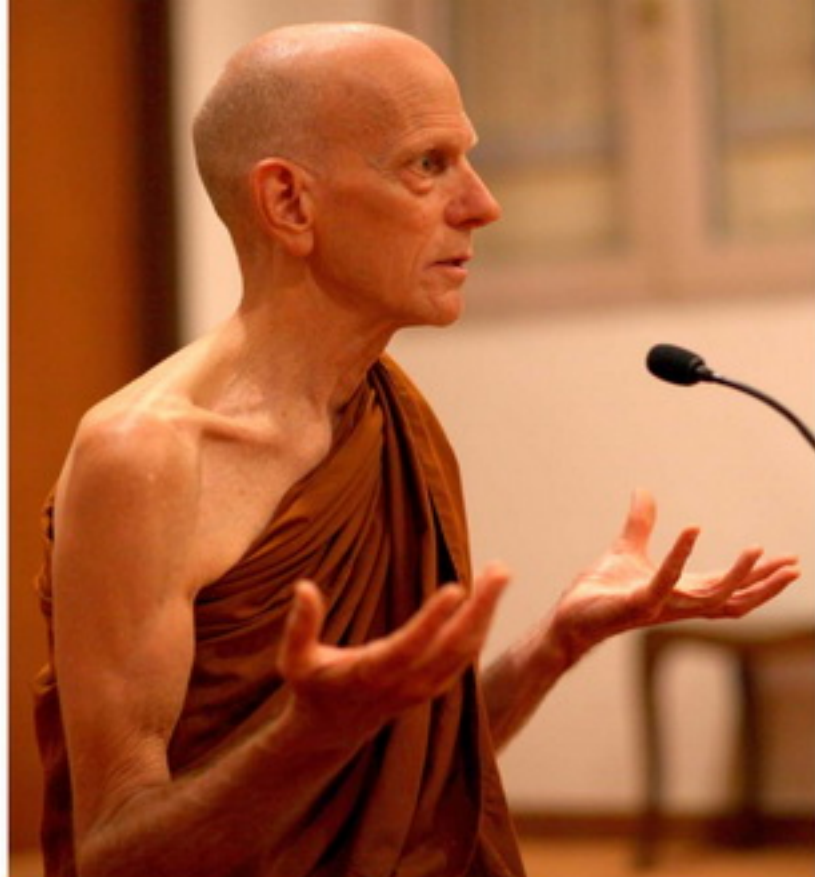
I choose it because that is how the Buddha himself defined it. He hit it right on the head. There is no need to sugar coat it.

*How is Buddhism faring in the USA? Is a 'western Buddhism' emerging? If so, how is it different from its Asian roots?*

Buddhism is definitely growing or spreading in terms of the number of Buddhist temples, meditation (and) retreat centers, and Buddhist study and discussion groups that you can find in most medium and large size cities in almost every state. Every school or sect professing to be Buddhist is represented in one way or another with its own followers.

Most Buddhist groups originate from Asian Buddhist countries and they try to maintain the traditions, rites or





rituals as they have learned them or brought them to America from their home countries. However, some find that they need to modify some practices to help attract more followers, especially younger western educated people.

Some people, especially the American-born converts and people practising 'pure vipassana', minimise or dispense entirely with devotional practices and what they see as rites or rituals.

Some see little need for the institutionalised Sangha of monks and nuns. They have their own western lay teachers.

Many may not even call themselves Buddhists.

Some may call this type of practice, *Western Buddhism*, or Buddhism without beliefs or rites and rituals. They might rather strive to be a Buddha than a Buddhist. That is not necessarily bad.

However, I think that it will be a very long time, many generations, before any homogenous type of American Buddhism would emerge, one type that all (western) Buddhists would practise.

*Should Buddhism have a more recognisable response to social issues like abortion, gender issues, contraception - issues which dominate the headlines in this US election year?*

It may be a bit difficult to get all Buddhists - Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana - to uniformly agree on those issues, just as in Christianity, there is disagreement between conservatives and liberals.

Whether it would be good for all Buddhists to agree the same way on the different issues, I don't know.

It might help non Buddhists see Buddhists as being more united. And perhaps that united consensus could influence the political arena and outcome of local or national elections.

But until then, or until they attain enlightenment, each Buddhist will probably have their own views and make up their own minds, based upon their understanding of the Dharma.

## QUESTIONS ON MEDITATION

*Should we try to practise calm abiding (samatha) meditation first - to calm the monkey mind, so to speak - before attempting insight (vipassana) meditation?*

In a way, yes.

Without some initial concentration, mental relaxation (or) calmness, cultivating meditative insight and *vipassana* meditation will be very slow and difficult. The five hindrances need to be weakened to some extent.

But one need not wait until one has reached perfect concentration or attained the *jhanas* (meditative states of profound stillness and concentration) before opening up to the flow of body and mind, though this stronger concentration certainly will help make it easier.

*Besides making the body more supple and more resilient, how else does yoga benefit meditation practice?*

Meditation happens through the nervous system. Meditation is about remaining awake, relaxed and focused in the present moment.

If we cannot keep the spine and head straight, the flow of nervous system impulses to the brain gets dulled, the mind will tend to be more dull, allowing sleepiness to arise or be mostly caught up in, as you say, 'monkey mind'.

So practising something like yoga, *tai chi* or *qi gong* will help keep the spine more strong and healthy, the nerve channels open with better circulation of blood and *prana (chi)*, all of which will make meditation easier and deeper.

And for modern busy people beginning first with some body/mind exercise will also help them have better mindfulness and concentration when they sit to meditate.





*Can meditation cure, or relieve the symptoms of, mental illnesses like Alzheimer's, schizophrenia or depression?*

Until more studies and research have been done, it is difficult to say whether meditation can help with these mental disorders.

But offhand, I would say meditation, especially mindfulness meditation, probably would not hurt or make those conditions worse.

Many psychologists are using meditation now as one of their tools in treating depression in some of their patients.

But it would be wrong and even dangerous to think that meditation alone can completely replace medication to treat these disorders.

*Meditation seems very personal with personal struggles and attainments. Can it have a greater impact on the social world beyond the individual?*

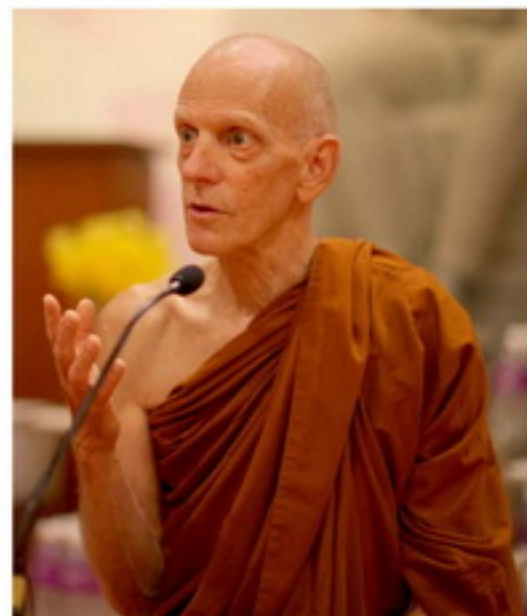
The social world is comprised of all the individual people. The individual mind is affected by everything it comes in contact with. As more people meditate and thus reduce their neurotic greed, hatred and delusion, it will directly and indirectly affect others and gradually, society as a whole. But this will take a considerable amount of time.

*How can the benefits of meditation practice be shared in workspaces in a manner mindful of other religions and belief systems?*

The benefits of meditation are the gradual reduction of greed, hate and ignorance in the individual mind. Regular meditation practice will help a person be more relaxed, less neurotic, less agitated and angry. It will help one be more friendly and compassionate towards others, whether in the family, the workplace or on the street.

In this way we share the benefits of our meditation with others. This is the best publicity or advertisement for meditation. This has nothing to do with, or certainly does not interfere with, the religion or belief system of others.

*'Regular meditation practice will help a person be more relaxed, less neurotic, less agitated and angry.'*





# BOOK REVIEW

## *The Precious Present*

by Spencer Johnson MD

Published by Doubleday (1984)

80 pages

Reviewed by Chew Beng Suan

*'The present has nothing to do with wishing...when you have the present, you will be perfectly content to be where you are...The richness of the present comes from its own source...The present is not something that someone gives you...It is something you give to yourself.'*

Just two main characters are involved - an old man and a boy. The old man tells the boy of the existence of the precious present. The boy takes it to mean a gift that he hopes to receive for Christmas or his birthday.

While growing up, the boy keeps pondering over what that precious present is since he has still not received it yet. Whenever he asks the old man about it, the latter simply answers in riddles.

Only when the old man is gone and the young man is left to solve the riddle himself does he realise what the precious present is.

(This book has made a great difference to me). I have had moments of negative emotions. When they arise, I am definitely an unhappy person filled with anger, hatred, sadness, depression and fear.

Since reading this book, I have tried to be in the precious present and, yes, the peace for that instant can be noticed and felt. I can experience this precious present only when I make a conscious effort to be mindful of it. The precious present makes a difference to me only when I am aware of its existence. Those moments of awareness have given me peace, contentment and joy.

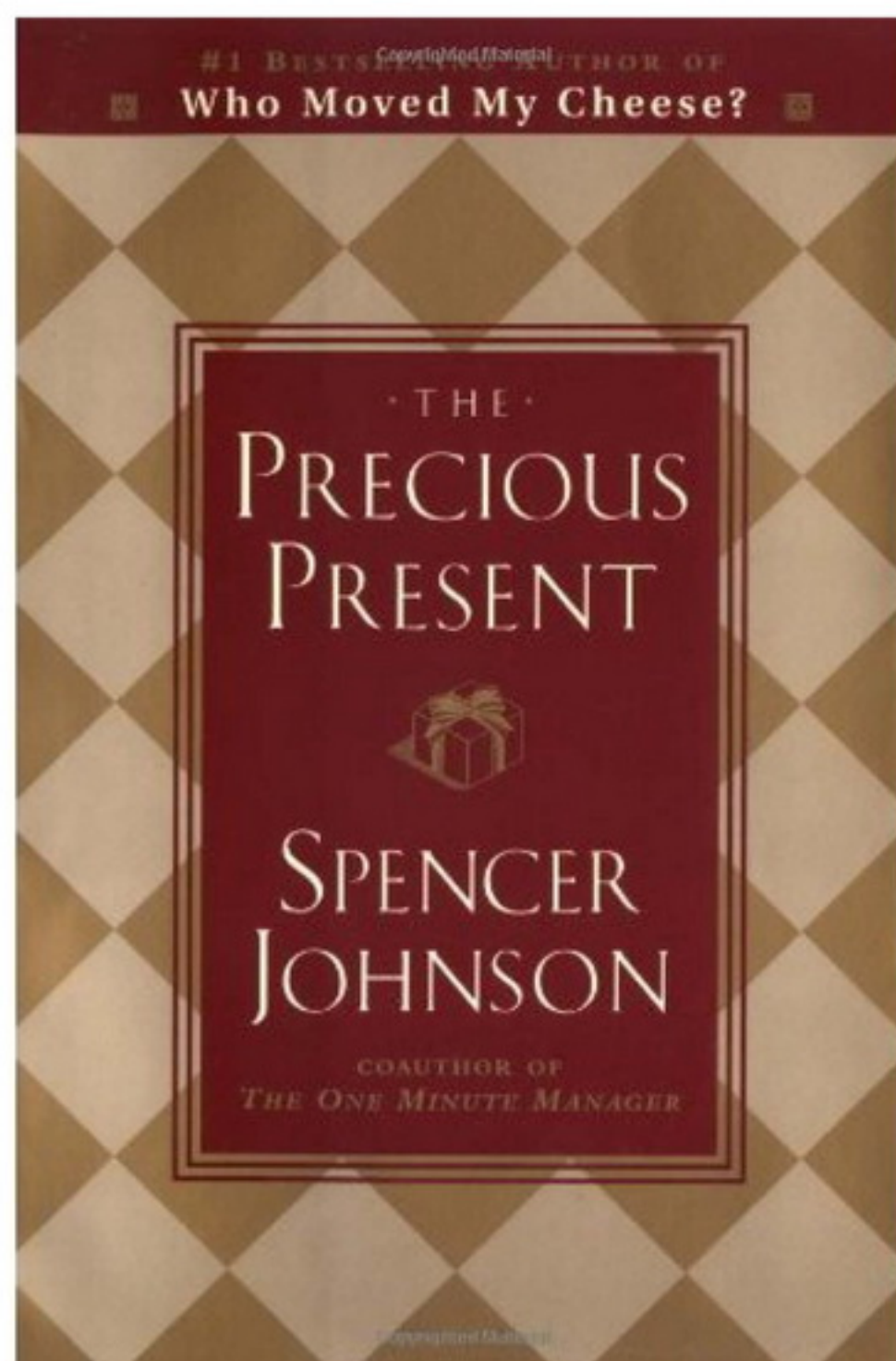
While waiting for the bus, especially when I am running late and I feel agitated as there is no sign of the bus, I chant the '*mantra*' - the precious present. It does wonders to my agitated mind. I feel calmer and I look at the surroundings and I see the beauty around me.

Each time I remind myself of the precious present, I become more appreciative of who I am and what I have. I no longer compare myself with others and (as a result) feel inadequate. The awareness of this precious present helps me to accept what I am facing instead of getting upset in my unmindful state of mind.

One day, I listened to a friend's problems and quietly, I guided her to be in the precious present. She was receptive to this and claimed that she was happier for that moment. This made a difference to her and it also made a difference to me because I know that I can use this precious present '*mantra*' to help, not only myself, but others too. With this knowledge, I feel a sense of confidence and self-worth.

Try being in the precious present and see for yourself what I mean.

*Note: This review won the first ever prize in BL's Make a Difference (M.A.D.) Book Competition.*







## M . A . D – Make A Difference Book Competition

Ever come across a book which you felt made a huge difference to your life?  
Ever thought how great it would be if you could share that book with the rest  
of the world? Ever imagined how that book could make the same difference in  
the lives of others?

Your chance is here!

To commemorate Buddhist Library's 30th anniversary, BL has launched  
M.A.D (Make A Difference) Book Competition. All you need to do is to  
tell us in 300 words what that book is about and, more importantly, how  
it has impacted your life.

The book must be related to Buddhism.

Every month from Mar to Dec 2012, we will select one entry to be featured  
on the Buddhist Library webpage.

The selection is based on 2 criteria: originality and ability to inspire others.

Each featured entry will be given a \$300 book voucher from OpenTrolley  
([opentrolley.com.sg](http://opentrolley.com.sg)).

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### What are you waiting for?

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Log on to <http://www.buddhlib.org.sg/Events/MAD.aspx> for more details.



于《善士经》中，佛陀说到‘自夸以轻蔑其他。诸比丘！此非善士法也’。而善士‘不敢自夸，亦不蔑他’。佛陀于《感恩经》讲述了正直与感恩。

最后，有些行业是我们应避免的。《买卖经》就提到：

‘比丘们！此等五买卖，不应被优婆塞作。何者是五？买卖刀，买卖人，买卖肉，贩卖醉品，买卖毒。’

依据佛法，这些方法不但可使我们在工作及人际关系中得到快乐，也能使我们做个正直的人。

当然，相比之下佛法用的词汇较克里斯滕森的理论来得概括性些。另外，那些理论也是通过现代研究而得的。

尽管如此，佛陀的教导至今依然如2555年前一样适用。要是大家在2008年之前都遵守正命，就可能幸免2008年的大衰退。

佛学的目标便是为自己与他人找寻永久的快乐。

不依赖外在的因素与条件的快乐方能永久。艾伦华莱士曾说过，永恒的快乐或真正的快乐不是靠刺激推动的，而是我们本来就具有，内在深层的本质。

最终，佛教徒的志向是脱离痛苦。为此，佛陀教导了六度，即布施、持戒、忍辱、精进、禅定及智慧。

我们绝大部分的人要在一生内圆满成就这六度的可能性不大。话虽如此，为了促进而不是阻碍这心续的发展，我们可以从小步做起。

就以我朋友的例子做为学习的榜样。自他到斯里兰卡出深海钓鱼后，他便决定收起钓鱼竿不再钓鱼。从此过着不伤害其他生命的生活，也成为一名素食者。

我们也可以尽我们所能的去帮助陌生人，使他的生活有所改善。

又或者，我们即使没得到回应仍善待同事及所接触的人。

身为佛教徒的我们，应当诚心地实修所学的佛法。刚开始时，我们不需过于投入，可从比较实际的程度开始再逐步加强。

对于度量，佛陀给予我们许多为修行评估的方针。其中，《增支部·导师言教经》就提出了很好的指示：

“对于某些法，如果你知道：‘这些法导向完全厌离、离欲、灭尽、寂止、胜智、正觉、涅槃。’。你就可以肯定地受持：‘这是法，这是律，这是导师的言教。’

最后，商务理论固然很好，但似乎比较适合用于职场上。克里斯滕森也并没有采取这些商务理论来守住他对上帝的诺言。他仰赖了宗教。

佛教徒有佛法做为指南针，一个理性、一致及概括性的世界观，对众生无条件的慈悲也不因不同种族、宗教及种类而异。

处于全球化的世界中，现在比任何时候都更需要。多弗塞德曼观察道：在这个过于紧密连接的世界中，更多个人与小组的力量有可能成为更强大的力量，可以造作更多的善或恶行。一个人有能力偷走上百万人的个人资料，另外，一个人就足以引发自由革命，影响整个阿拉伯世界。基本上，善与恶的产生已民主化。我们被连系的越密，就越要有心理准备难以预料的事情的频密发生。在一个持续、彻底改变的世界里，我们需要一个壁垒，作为前进的力量与指导。我们需要扎根于不可改变的 - 价值。

祝愿各位，阅读愉快。

编辑  
Chwee Beng

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《导师言教经》- 《阿含经》凯利布朗, 乔安奥布莱恩英译  
《感恩经》- 《阿含经》坦尼沙罗尊者英译  
《买卖经》- 《阿含经》坦尼沙罗尊者英译  
《HOW 时代：方式决定一切》，多弗·塞德曼

若人活百年，破戒不修定，  
不如活一日，持戒与修定。  
若人活百年，无智无禅定，  
不如活一日，具慧修禅定。  
若人活百年，怠惰不精进，  
不如活一日，坚心行精进。  
若人活百年，不见生灭法，  
不如活一日，得解生灭法。  
若人活百年，不见不死道，  
不如活一日，得见不死道。  
若人活百年，不见最上法，  
不如活一日，得见最上法。

-南传法句经 第八：  
千品，第 110-115





‘自己廉正的思想才是最为神圣。’ 拉尔夫·华尔多·爱默生 - 自助论

克莱顿·克里斯滕森是哈佛商学院的教授，在2011年被誉为‘世上最具影响力的商业思想家’。

每年的最后一个堂课他都会问学生们3个问题。那就是：

我要如何确保

- 我在事业上会成功与快乐？
- 我与配偶、孩子们、家属及亲友的关系是持久性的幸福源泉？
- 我一生正直，不会有牢狱之灾？

克里斯滕森接着就述说有关于他同学的遭遇。

在他们的第五年团聚时，各个看来即优雅又富贵，使大家都不禁感觉自己很特别、很美好。他们享有好的工作，含异国风情的工作地点，更有郎才女貌的配偶。

可是到了第十年的团聚，有些前同学看起来很不开心。尽管他们是著名咨询与金融企业的执行人员、财富位于500强的人选、成功的企业家、赚取庞大并能改变生活的收入，许多前同学对自己的工作没多大的兴趣。其中，也有不少人陷入婚姻不美满，甚至是离婚。

到了第25与30年的团聚，问题更糟了。其中一名前同学杰弗里斯基林，因为涉及安然公司（Enron）欺诈案而入狱。

很显然的，其中有问题。

克里斯滕森于他的著作《生命该如何度量？》（“How Will You Measure Your Life?”）中，提供了他与学生们讨论后而得的‘最佳见解’。

为了帮助读者找寻快乐，书中也推荐了一些经哈佛商学院及他处严厉测试的研究理论。

克里斯滕森也将这些理论用于人生道路上。让我们从各项问题来一一探讨。

### 职业的选择

对于前面的第一项问题，克里斯滕森于〈哈佛商业评论〉的文章里运用了弗雷德里克·赫茨伯格的保健因素及激励因素。

附挑战性的工作、受到赏识、给予工作责任以及个人成长都属于激励因素，因为它们能使员工热爱自己的工作。相反的，保健因素却不能，例如：地位、工资、工作保障、工作条件、公司政策、监督等。

若误当此为彼，将影响员工是否带着兴奋的心情上班或是拖着脚步上班。

### 人际关系

关于第二个问题，克里斯滕森劝说与家人、亲友的关系需要不断地去经营。他也将此比喻为一家公司因为没趁着生意兴旺时投资新生意，直到连主业也失败就为时已晚了。

### 正直的人生

至于第三个问题，克里斯滕森就提议了‘固定成本与边际成本’思维。

他举一家规模庞大的DVD出租店Blockbuster为例。Blockbuster视Netflix在线影片出租为利基业务，因此不加理会而犯了致命的错误。

‘边际成本思维使Blockbuster认为不需要投资DVD递送市场，可安逸于继续发展原有的业务。但实际上，不追上Netflix的后果是破产。’

接着克里斯滕森讲述了他自己的人生经历。

他在牛津大学就读时，是大学篮球队非常出色的球员。‘我们每个赛季都全力以赴，也成功地打入大决赛。’

但，他骇然发现，那年的冠军赛安排在一个星期天举行。他十六岁那年曾答应过上帝不在星期天打球。

尽管教练与队员恳切的要求，克里斯滕森依然坚守承诺。球队获胜了，但对克里斯滕森而言他做了‘他一生中最重要的决定。。。因为人生是充满着连绵不绝的状况。倘若我当时越了界，接下来我便会反复的越界。’

### 重点

克里斯滕森在书中的终段，谈及目标所扮演的角色。

## HOW WILL YOU MEASURE YOUR LIFE?

Finding Fulfillment Using Lessons From Some of the World's Greatest Businesses

CLAYTON M. CHRISTENSEN

JAMES ALLWORTH & KAREN DILLON

不管对公司或个人而言，拥有目标是不可或缺的。若你没有目标，应该找一个。他表示，目标很重要，不能任命运摆布。目标，需要用心酝酿，选择与经营。克里斯滕森将目标分成三部分：喜欢度（你想成为的对象）、承诺及度量（如何衡量你的进展？）。

### 佛教的观点

让我们以佛法的角度来探讨以上问题。

《增支部》的《虎径经》（也称《长膝经》）里说到一群信徒请佛陀开示‘如何得到现世安裕及现世快乐，以及后世安裕及后世快乐’。

佛陀教导了四法，即‘方便具足、守护具足、善伴党具足及正命具足’。

何谓方便具足？‘谓善男子经营种种工巧业处以自维生... 对于这些工巧业处精勤修行，善知正确营生方法，善行工巧业处工作，是名方便具足’。

守护具足是指‘所有财物，精勤方便所得，自手执作，劳苦而得，如法而得；能极守护，不令国王、盗贼、水、火劫坏损失，或由恶子嗣败坏，是名善男子善守护’。

善伴党具足是说一个人若与‘具信，具戒，具施，具慧之善知识交往，言语。举止有信，有戒，有施，有慧，是名善男子善伴党具足’。

一个人若‘钱财出内称量，周圆善护，不令多人少出、亦不令多出少入’便谓正命具足。



不过，优波离非但不感到气馁，反而备受鼓舞。他告诉佛陀：“尊敬的行者，世尊对我说的话，让我感到更满足和喜悦。其他宗派收我当弟子后，会拿着布条到那烂陀各处宣布：‘优波离尊者已成为我们的门徒。’不过，相反的，世尊告诉我（要彻底探讨）。”

佛陀担心优波离可能会停止照顾他的导师。唯有当优波离答应，不会停止供养导师后，佛陀才接受他成为一个在家弟子。

因此，我们不难发现，多个世纪以来，只要是不理智或不慈悲的情况下，佛教徒一般会避免让其他宗教的信徒改信佛教。

以同样的慈悲心和无条件的爱向众生弘扬佛法的当代佛教领袖，正是第十四世达赖喇嘛。

他在《开心：达赖喇嘛的快乐学》一书中写道：

“……我曾遇过一些基督徒，对佛教的一些修行方式感兴趣，进行研究，甚至加以实践。他们尤其感兴趣的，是佛教达致一心不乱的静坐方式，以及如何增长爱、慈悲和耐心。既然这些修行方式是基督教和佛教共有的，我对他们的做法感到钦佩。不过，对空性感兴趣的基督徒，我总是轻描淡写地回应说，这纯粹属于佛教，与基督教没什么联系。为什么？探索空性，必须探讨缘起，如果可以理解其含义，将难以接受单一、永久、不可替代的上帝乃世界创造者的说法。”

我认为，佛教对其他宗教所持的慈悲和尊重态度，是我们最大的精神力量之一。不过，我们也应该意识到自己的弱点。

一般上，佛教徒对自己的宗教采取相当放松的态度。

我们应该向其他宗教的朋友学习，更认真地学习与了解佛教。我们也应确保孩子从小学习佛教。其他宗教的信徒，往往把宗教传给孩子视为自己庄严的职责。不过，许多佛教徒父母似乎认为他们的唯一责任，就是确保孩子拥有好成绩及好工作。

简而言之，许多佛教徒对自己的宗教缺乏认知与责任感。

结果，佛教徒一般倾向于偏离到其他宗教或迷失在物质世界中。

当然，我不是说改信其他宗教是一件坏事。在著名的《卡拉玛经》(Kalama Sutta) 中，佛陀曾亲口说，人们不应该为

了导师说的话，或经典中有所记载，就全盘相信某些事情。人们有权利相信他们所喜欢的事情。

不过，如果是因为经过研究和探讨后，发现其他宗教具有佛教中找不到的真理，那改信其他宗教是无可厚非的。

不过，如果是因为无知，因为没有花时间和精力去好好钻研和探讨，而对佛教失去信心，那就另当别论了。若我们曾花时间和精力去钻研与探讨，就可体会合理、明智、慈悲和独特的佛陀教诲。我们甚至可能纠正他人对佛教存有的任何误会或误解，在尊重和理解其宗教的情况下，帮助他们理解和尊重佛教。毕竟，唯有相互理解，才能相互尊重。

佛教图书馆  
宗教顾问  
达摩拉达那法师



#### 参考书目：

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若人活百年，破戒不修定，不如活一日，持戒与修定。  
若人活百年，无智无禅定，不如活一日，具慧修禅定。  
若人活百年，怠惰不精进，不如活一日，坚心行精进。  
若人活百年，不见生灭法，不如活一日，得解生灭法。  
若人活百年，不见不死道，不如活一日，得见不死道。  
若人活百年，不见最上法，不如活一日，得见最上法。

-南传法句经 第八：千



# 法师开示

## 最好的导师

我认为，在宗教史上，佛陀是最优秀的导师。我会这么说，应该不会让人感到惊讶。毕竟，我是个佛教僧人。不过，事实上也是如此。

让我以《优曇婆罗狮子吼经》（Udumbarika-Sihanada Sutta）为依据，说明我的论点。这是一部很长的经书，其中的对话非常重要，因此请多多包涵。

在经书中，一名佛教在家人桑达纳（Sandhana）与非佛教流浪苦行团体领袖尼瞿陀对话。

桑达纳告诉尼瞿陀，流浪苦行僧团喜爱喧嚣，佛陀则重视静默。

“世尊的方式不同：他在森林里寻找住宿，在丛林深处，没有噪音，很少声音，远离喧嚣人群，不受人干扰，适合隐居。”

尼瞿陀听了很难受，立即提出挑战。

“好了，户主，你知道苦行者乔答摩和谁说话吗？他和谁交谈？从谁身上获得清明的智慧？苦行者乔答摩的智慧让孤独的生活破坏了，他不习惯于集会，不善于言辞，完全与现实脱节。正如野牛，在边缘盘旋，苦行者乔答摩正是如此。事实上，户主，如果苦行者乔答摩来到这个集会，我们以一个问题就足以将他击倒，就像推倒一个空锅般。”

佛陀无意中听到他们的对话，走近尼瞿陀，问：“刚才对话的主题是什么？我打搅了什么吗？”

尼瞿陀问佛陀：“……世尊以什么教义指导弟子，让他们从中受益，并让他们视之为主要的支柱，以及可以圆满圣洁生活的途径？”

佛陀回应说，尼瞿陀将难以了解佛陀的教诲，因为他“持有不同的看法，拥有不同的倾向，受到不同的影响，跟随不同的导师”。

“那么，来吧，尼瞿陀，问我关于你自己的教义，关于你的极端苦行。要如何完成苦行及自我屈辱，在什么情况之下又无法完成呢？”

尼瞿陀听从佛陀的话，重复他的问题。

佛陀列举了一些苦行的做法，问尼瞿陀若一名修行者完成这些苦行的做法，“是否就完成了更高层次的苦行？”

尼瞿陀回答：“是的，世尊，完成了。”

不过，佛陀不表同意。

他指出，这名修行者在很多方面仍可能出差错。如果他“抬高自己及贬低他人”呢？如果他“刻薄及恶毒、羡慕及嫉妒、狡猾及诡诈、顽固及骄傲、具邪念并受其控制、有错误的见解并发表极端的看法、受世俗污染、执著、不愿意放下”呢？

尼瞿陀不得不同意佛陀的说法，这的确存在问题。

然后，佛陀请尼瞿陀进行逆向思考。

如果修行者没有做这些事情呢？他是否还有问题？

尼瞿陀同意，在类似情况下，修行者将获得净化。

现在，佛陀准备直接回答尼瞿陀的问题

了。他是以“更深远及优秀”的教义来指导其弟子，即八正道中涵括的道德、正定及禅修的内容。

任何“聪明、真诚及直接”的八正道修行者，将在短短的7天内，就能“根据自己的认知和悟性……证得无以伦比的圣洁生活和目标”。

接着，佛陀向尼瞿陀所说的话，是直至今日宗教史上都力不能及的。

“尼瞿陀，你可能认为：‘苦行者乔答摩这么说是为了吸引门徒。’不过，你不应该这么认为。继续跟随你的导师……继续遵守你原有的条规……继续保留你的生活方式……你认为错误的事物，就继续这么认为……你认为正确的事物，就继续这么认为。尼瞿陀，我并不是为了这些原因而说法的。”



“尼瞿陀，这世上还有好些不圆满的事仍未摒除，例如内心的染执，助长轮回和恐惧、并且在未来将导致痛苦的事情，以及那些与出生、败坏和死亡相关的事。我教导佛法，就是为了让人们摆脱这些事物。如果你依教奉行，就能消除这些染执，从而壮大净化的因缘，以致可在这一生当中，凭着自己的洞见力和证量，达到圆满的智慧。”

这件事说明了佛陀是个什么样的导师？

显然的，佛陀很有系统、逻辑和理性。他循序渐进，从易到难，从熟悉到陌生，从已知到未知。他一路通过发问，测试尼瞿陀的理解程度。

不过，更重要的是，佛陀对尼瞿陀及其追随者展现了慈悲和无条件的爱。佛陀不在乎他们是否成为佛教徒。他唯一关注的是，引导他们如何离苦得乐。

当桑达纳终于透露，尼瞿陀曾大言不惭，声称“一个问题……就能像推倒一个空锅般将（佛陀）击倒”，佛陀并没有严厉批评或谴责他。反之，佛陀欣然接受尼瞿陀的道歉，因为“若有人承认犯错的本质，做出相应的赔偿，并在未来自我约束，就是圣者纪律有所进步的标志”。

我所要强调的是，佛陀在弘扬佛法的45年里，做法始终如一。

在《优波离经》（Upali Sutta）中，优波离是另一名宗教师的优秀弟子，他在一次听闻佛陀说法后，希望能皈依佛陀。不过，佛陀拒绝了，并劝他“彻底探讨……像你这么知名的人，最好是彻底探讨。”