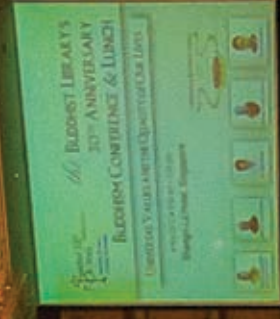


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THE PATH OF JOY

BL'S 30th Anniversary
Buddhism Conference and Lunch



佛學圖書館
the Buddhist Library



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*If my sickness is of benefit to living beings, let me be sick.
If my death would benefit them, 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

Bhante Says«



How to Practise and Benefit from Renunciation

Generally, when we use the word 'renunciation', many people have a misconception. They think we are talking about giving up lay life and responsibilities and ordaining as a monk or nun.

This idea came about because when we talk about the Buddha's life, we usually talk about the 'Great Renunciation' of Prince Siddhartha Gotama when he left the palace and became an ascetic. So we tend to think that when we practise renunciation, we have to give up everything and ordain. However, this is only one method of renunciation.

Nevertheless, I can say that even when a person has ordained as a monk or nun, it is difficult to say that there is real renunciation because real renunciation occurs in our mind. It is a psychological decision. We can ordain, yet remain very attached to lay life.

On the other hand, lay people can also practise renunciation up to a high level. For example, there are stories in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions of lay people who were spiritually accomplished like Anathapindika and Vimilakirti. So if lay people think that their responsibilities to family or society prevent them from practising renunciation, this is also a misconception.

Thus the Buddhist way of renunciation is for everybody but in a different way for each category.

For example, human beings are habitual creatures. Some habits may be helpful to ourselves and others. Other habits may not be so helpful. If we find any habit which is not meaningful or helpful, we should try to overcome it but gradually. This is another form of renunciation because renunciation means giving up.

One example I can give you is the Buddha's advice to King Kosala who was very close to the Buddha. According to the text, King Kosala, who had a very large body, used to visit the Buddha every day. One day, he came late. Usually, he would go before lunch but on that day, owing to his official duties, he was late.

When the Buddha was talking to him, the King dozed off. The Buddha stopped talking. The King woke up, then dozed off again. This happened several times. The Buddha finally asked the King, "Are you very tired?"

The King replied, "Yes, I came here immediately after my lunch."

"How much did you eat?"

"I took 12 bowls of rice."

' ... even when a person has ordained as a monk or nun, it is difficult to say that there is real renunciation because real renunciation occurs in our mind... We can ordain, yet remain very attached to lay life. '



'Whenever we do good deeds, we just need to radiate thoughts of love and compassion for the loved ones.'

Bhante Says

The Buddha smiled and said, *"Don't you think this is too much?"*

"Yes, Sir, but I have this habit. I have difficulty stopping my habit."

"Great King, I will give you some advice. Try to follow it. If you follow my advice, you will be able to overcome this problem. On the 1st day, reduce your meal by one bowl of rice. Then carry on with that for a few days. When you feel comfortable eating 11 bowls, try to reduce it by one more bowl for a few days. After that, reduce it by another bowl. In this fashion, you can reduce your meal to 3 bowls a day."

The Buddha was compassionate. He did not ask the King to reduce his meal to one bowl at one go!

The King struggled but eventually managed to attain his target. He came back to see the Buddha one day, looking healthy, slim and active. He thanked the Buddha repeatedly.

This is also an example of renunciation. The King had become addicted to eating. By letting go, the King practised renunciation. He reduced the food and, at the same time, his attachment to food. I am not saying that you are eating too much! But you may have some habits that are not so helpful for your material or spiritual development.

Renunciation can be practised without too much uneasiness. We need not stop immediately but can do so gradually. It is a very meaningful practice that is good for everybody.

Attachment or *tanha* has many levels. When it reaches a very high level, we call it *uppadana* or grasping. In Buddhist teachings there are 4 types of grasping.

The 1st one is *kamma uppadana*, grasping of sensual pleasures. Pleasing our 5 senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue and body) is not necessarily an evil thing or a sin. We have 5 senses. They need pleasant experiences. We have all our experiences through our 5 senses so naturally we want to please our senses. We also want to avoid unpleasant experiences.

The 2nd *uppadana* is *ditthi uppadana*. *Ditthi* means beliefs. Clinging to wrong beliefs is called *ditthi uppadana*. It can be religious beliefs like blindly believing that if we mortify ourselves,

it is useful for ending suffering. In short, we can say having wrong views means believing in wrong practices to find salvation.

The other extreme is to seek sensual pleasures with attachment.

The Buddha taught that going to these 2 extremes will not bring salvation. On the other hand, practising renunciation can prevent us from engaging in these extremes.

The 3rd *uppadana* is clinging to rites and rituals (*silabbat uppadana*). It is very difficult to say what rites are good and what are bad. Human beings have the habit of following rites and rituals blindly, thinking they will be able to achieve happiness that way.

The Buddha showed that salvation has nothing to do with rites and rituals. The Noble Eightfold Path that he taught comprises morality, concentration and wisdom. But the Buddha, in his compassion and wisdom, did not ban all rites and rituals. If the rituals are not harmful but can promote compassion, gratitude and love, they are acceptable, even if they are not strictly Buddhist rituals.

I will give one simple example, namely, memorial services for departed ones. If we follow Buddhist teachings, our funeral rites should be very simple. Certain rites performed by Buddhists are not Buddhist. For example, offering of food to departed ones. No departed person can receive food. I have even come across people offering drinks in front of the coffin or after burial. This is not a Buddhist practice although many Buddhists may be practising it. Still, we can't say that this is a bad practice because people may practise it with love, compassion and respect for the deceased ones. But this does not mean that this is a Buddhist practice.

Even offering merits in front of monks is not compulsory. Whenever we do good deeds, we just need to radiate thoughts of love and compassion for the loved ones. It does not necessarily mean they will receive the merit but this is still a good practice.

Then there is animal liberation. King Kosala was a very devout person but not very intelligent. Once he had a very bad dream. He summoned his counsellor. The counsellor told him that his life was in danger unless he sacrificed hundreds of goats, cows, horses and the like. The King ordered the preparations to be made. The Buddha happened to pass by that place at that moment.

'As death comes to all of us sooner or later, it is a good idea to practise renunciation gradually while we are still in good health, physically and mentally.'



He contacted the King and told him that this was a wrong practice. If the King intended to overcome danger or fear, killing so many animals would not help. The Buddha advised him to release the animals instead.

There were a few occasions like that. In this way, we could say that the Buddha was involved in animal liberation. But, of course, we need to release the animals wisely so that they can survive and thrive in freedom.

In Buddhist teachings, there are several kinds of the practice of giving or *dana*. Giving 'non-fear' to animals is a form of *dana*. We can say that this is giving life, freedom from danger or fear. I myself have witnessed this. I have visited slaughter houses. Many cows have so much fear. Tears come down from their eyes. They may even bite your hand out of fear. So, in the name or memory of someone, performing this kind of *dana* is a good practice, a good ritual.

The 4th type of clinging is *attavadda uppadana* or clinging to a permanent 'I'. This is believing that body and mind constitute a permanent self, the most important entity. But the Buddha said that this belief is only a concept.

The Buddha divided the human personality into 5 aggregates – form, feeling, perception, concept and consciousness. A person is nothing but these 5 aggregates. Besides these 5 aggregates, there is no permanent self. But even though we may have studied this, we may still have strong attachment to a permanent self. That is why this form of clinging is the most difficult one to renounce.

Let me summarise by quoting from the *Abhaya Sutta* (Fearless Discourse). In that sutra, one Janussoni, a brahmin, said to the Buddha, "I am of the view (and) opinion that there is no one who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death."

The Buddha disagreed and described 4 kinds of people who are afraid of death and 4 kinds of people who are not. Here, I will mention only the first 2 kinds of people, those who cling to sensual pleasures and the body. The remedy for their fear is renunciation.

'And who is the person who, subject to death, is afraid (and) in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, (and) craving for sensuality. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "O, those beloved sensual pleasures will be taken from me, and I will be taken from them!" He grieves (and) is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, (and) grows delirious. This is a person who, subject to death, is afraid (and) in terror of death.'

Furthermore, there is the case of the person who has not abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, (and) craving for the body. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought occurs to him, "O, my beloved body will be taken from me, and I will be taken from my body!" He grieves (and) is tormented, weeps, beats his breast, (and) grows delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is afraid (and) in terror of death.'

And who is the person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death? There is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for sensuality. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought does not occur to him, 'O, those beloved sensual pleasures will be taken from me, and I will be taken from them!' He does not grieve, is not tormented; does not weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.'

Furthermore, there is the case of the person who has abandoned passion, desire, fondness, thirst, fever, and craving for the body. Then he comes down with a serious disease. As he comes down with a serious disease, the thought does not occur to him, 'O, my beloved body will be taken from me, and I will be taken from my body!' He does not grieve, is not tormented; does not weep, beat his breast, or grow delirious. This, too, is a person who, subject to death, is not afraid or in terror of death.'

Bhante B. Dhammaratana

Religious Advisor
Buddhist Library

Reference:

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Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu

EDITORIAL

The Magic of Emptiness

'When we say we see the world, you know, our vision is often wrong.'

Lisa Randall, Professor of Theoretical Physics

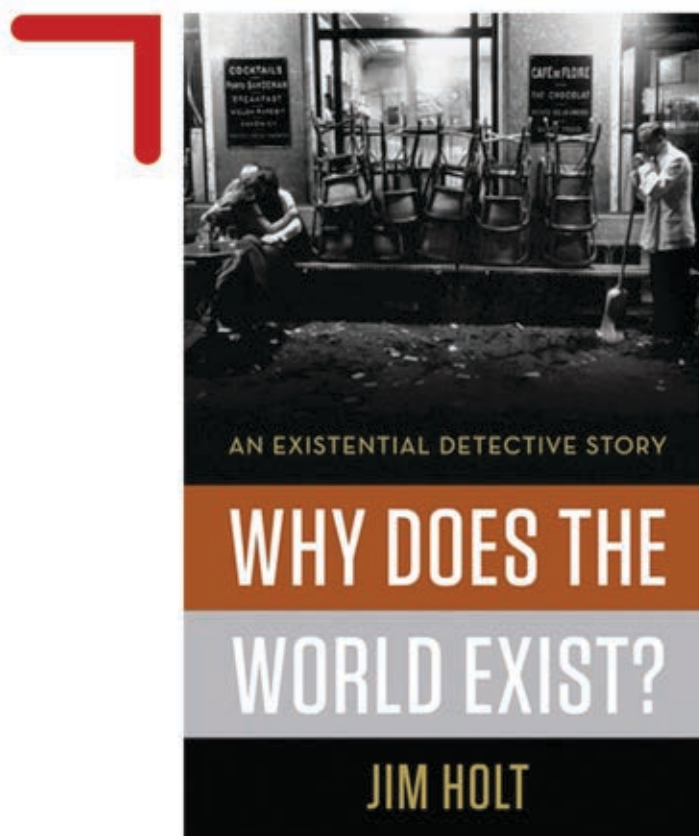
Why is there something rather than nothing? Jim Holt has been obsessed with this question ever since he was a teenager. He wanted to know how the universe began, how the 'nothing' prevailing before the Big Bang became the 'something' that came afterwards.

Atheists believe that only science, particularly quantum theory, can provide the answer. Theists, on the other hand, say that God created the universe. Then there are the 'brute fact' theorists like Sir Bertrand Russell who say that the universe just happened and requires no explanation.

In his book, *Why Does the World Exist – An Existential Detective Story*, Jim Holt interviews the leading experts, including philosophers, theologians, particle physicists, cosmologists, mystics, even a novelist. Theories abound. Most are interesting, some mind-boggling. The eye-catching prize goes to one that says a physicist hacker created the universe – just for the heck of it.

Buddhism has always maintained that the choice between 'something' and 'nothing' is a false one. In the *Kaccayanagotta Sutta: To Kaccayana Gotta (on Right View)*, the Buddha firmly rejects both extremes.

'Kaccayana, the world usually depends upon the duality of 'existence' and 'non-existence'. But for those who see, with perfect realization, the truth of the arising of the world, there is not for them any 'non-existence' in the world. And for those who see, with perfect realization, the truth of the passing of the world, there is not for them any 'existence' of the world.



'It exists' is one extreme; 'it does not exist' is the second extreme. Not going to either extreme, the Buddha sets forth a teaching by the middle way (of conditional causality).'

Holt's book does include a Buddhist monk. He catches Ven. Matthieu Ricard on TV discussing his question with a Dominican priest and a physicist.

'...(A)s a Buddhist, (Ven. Matthieu) believes that the universe has no beginning ...Nothingness...could never give way to being...because it is defined in opposition to that which exists. A billion causes

could not make a universe come into existence out of what does not exist. That is why the Buddhist doctrine of a beginning-less universe makes the most metaphysical sense.'

Ven. Matthieu uses Holt's question to explore the nature of reality.

'What is the universe after all? It is not nothingness. Yet it is something very close: an emptiness. Things don't really have the solidity we attribute to them. The world is like a dream, an illusion. But in our thinking, we transform its fluidity into something fixed and

'...emptiness and dependent origination are 2 sides of the same coin.'

solid-seeming. Buddhism, by correcting our metaphysical error, thus has a therapeutic purpose. It offers a path to enlightenment. And it resolves the mystery of being.'

His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama's book, *Becoming Enlightened*, has a simple definition of emptiness.

'When you are not satisfied with the surface but seek the inner nature of things through investigation and analysis, you discover their true nature, which is empty of independent, or inherent, existence.'

Thus when we say that a cup is empty, we don't mean that there is no cup, just that the cup has no contents.

Similarly, when His Holiness says things are empty, he doesn't mean that those things don't exist but that their existence and continued existence depend on causes and conditions. This is the doctrine of *conditional causality* (often called *dependent origination*) mentioned by the Buddha in the *Kaccayanagotta Sutta*.

Professor Asanga Tilakaratne in his book, *Nirvana and Ineffability*, elaborates.

Dependent origination 'is presented in early Buddhism as the timelessly existing nature of reality. (A)ccording to this doctrine, all the phenomena in the world are dependently originated'.

...(D)ependent origination does not involve theistic absolutism or substantialism based on the belief of an unchanging soul. The explanation involves only a set of mutually conditioned phenomena serving as both causes and effects which in themselves are a part of the experienced reality.'

From the above, we can deduce that emptiness (lack of inherent existence) and dependent origination (lack of substantialism) are 2 sides of the same coin.

Thus Lama Tsong Khapa, in his seminal text, *The Three Principles of the Path*, stresses that true realisation of dependent origination and emptiness is 'simultaneous' and 'concurrent'. Realising one, we realise the other. Seeing them as discrete or separate is a fundamental error.

Why is realising dependent origination important? Prof. Asanga explains.



The Magic of Emptiness



'According to Buddhism, suffering occurs as a result of one's perception of objects with a possessive mentality. The cause of suffering is described as 'thirst' (tanha) or desire to possess. The possessive mentality is supported by the idea that the objects in the world (including oneself) possess substances. Therefore, in order to get rid of suffering, one has to get rid of the substantialist view. In other words, one has to view the world as non-substantial (anatta). The realization of non-substantiality changes one's perception of the world: (one is no longer) attached to or repelled from objects. (One's) perception of the world is changed. It does not cause (one) suffering any longer.'

This is the 'therapeutic purpose' that Ven. Matthieu talks about.

In Buddhist texts, there are several metaphors for emptiness. One of them, my favourite, is a magic trick. In the *Phena Sutta* (Foam Discourse), for instance, the Buddha says –

'Now suppose that a magician were to display a magic trick and a man with good eyesight were to see it, observe it, and appropriately examine it. To him it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in a magic trick? In the same way, a monk sees, observes, and appropriately examines any consciousness. To him – seeing it, observing it, (and) appropriately examining it – it would appear empty, void, without substance: for what substance would there be in consciousness?'

This analogy is highly instructive. How instructive it is manifests itself in the story of another obsessed youngster. Ever since Alex Stone, a professional magician, received from his father a simple magic pack as a boy, he has been obsessed with magic. His attempt at the Magic Olympics failed spectacularly. His trick was discovered and his performance curtailed.

In his book, *Fooling Houdini: Magicians, Mentalists, Math Geeks, and the Hidden Powers of the Mind*, Stone recounts his painful journey back. To succeed, he had to master not only magic but human psychology, reading research studies, even taking part in one experiment himself.

Research confirms that even when we actually see a magic trick unfolding before our very eyes – 'the image enters our pupils, strikes the retina, and barrels down the optic nerve all the way to the brain' – we can still be misdirected. That is why Stone says that '(m)agic happens not in the hands of the magician but in the mind of the spectator.'

The Magic of Emptiness



'To truly understand the art of magic and its timeless appeal, you wind up asking questions not just about how the mind works – and why sometimes it doesn't – but also some of the most fundamental aspects of human nature.... How does the brain perceive the world and parse everyday experience? What is reality, and how much of it do we consciously take in? Why are humans programmed to believe in the supernatural?'

'The gap between what we think we notice and what we actually notice is a reflection of our tendency to make judgments based on what readily comes to mind, something psychologists call the availability bias.'

'The scam artist appeals to the desire for a quick and easy solution to life's problems.'

The Buddha wouldn't disagree. 'The world', according to him, is what we experience through our 6 senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind). Through this filter, we 'conceive conceits about the world' and we see only what our ego wants us to see. Hence we are misdirected, not by the magician, but by our ego.

As for Holt, he mistakes emptiness for nothingness. And so he wonders how people can die and become nothing, and yet be able to enjoy the peace of nirvana. He quotes a joke that the definition of nirvana is 'having just enough life to enjoy being dead.'

But this is ignorance, not wit. According to Buddhism, mind consciousness survives the destruction of the brain. If this sounds far-fetched, it's no more so than the theories in Holt's book. The internet would have seemed incredible 100 years ago.

For sure, no one has provided a conclusive answer to Holt's question. Science hasn't been able to supply the answer. But some day, no doubt, it will. When that happens, it stands to reason that dependent origination and emptiness may have a role to play.

But, more importantly, no matter how the universe began, Buddhists should be able to accept reality without flinching. In the Buddha's words, his followers '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.' (Sutta Nipata).

Ultimately, what is more important than the origin of the universe is what we do right now with our lives. In that context, Buddhism's 'therapeutic purpose', the perfection of the mind as a vehicle to achieve a suffering-free world, based on unconditional love, wisdom and compassion, is surely something worth striving for.

As always, I wish you pleasant reading.

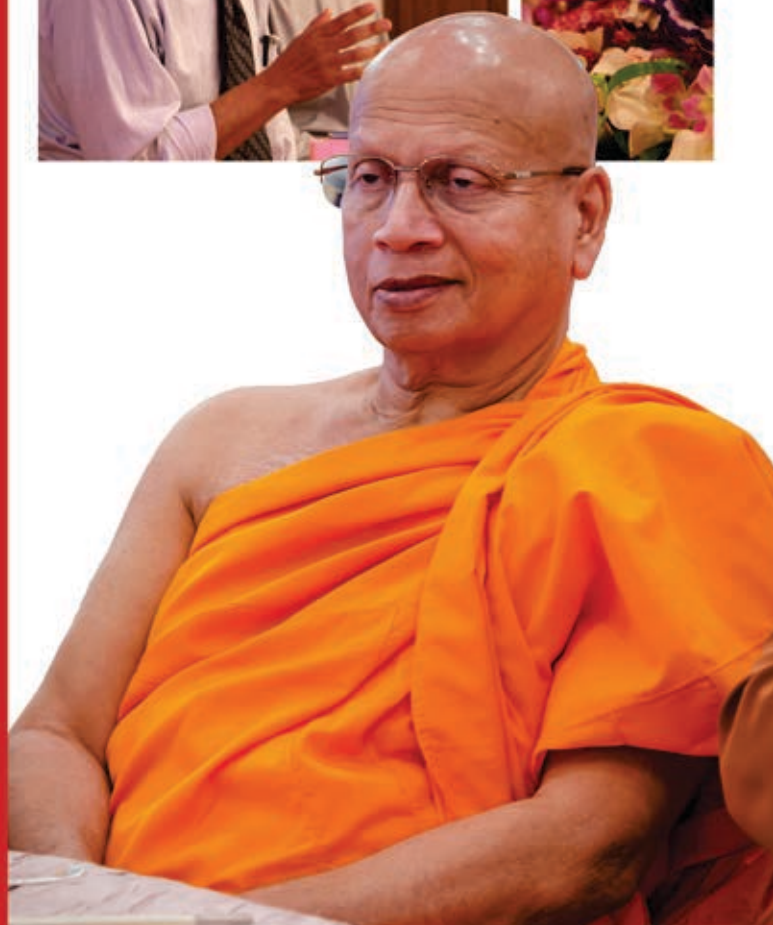
Chwee Beng
Editor

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Cula-Malunkiyovada Sutta: The Shorter Instructions to Malunkya (MN 63). (Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu).
Phena Sutta: Foam (SN 22.95). (Trans. Thanissaro Bhikkhu).
Kaccayanagotta Sutta: To Kaccayana Gotta (on Right View) SN 12.15 *The Essential Teachings of Buddhism* (Ed. Kerry Brown and Joanne O'Brien)
The Three Principles of the Path – Lama Tsong Khapa. (Trans. Ven. Thubten Chodron and others).
The Essential Teachings of Buddhism – Ed. Kerry Brown and Joanne O'Brien, page 53.
Sutta Nipata, verse 794 (*Suddhatthaka Sutta: Pure*) Quoted in *The Essential Teachings of Buddhism* – Ed. Kerry Brown and Joanne O'Brien.



Event: BL's 30th Anniversary Celebration Talk
Date: Oct 30, 2012
Venue: Buddhist Library
Topic: *Two Scientists & the Monkey Mind*
Speakers: Dr Lobsang Rabgay and Dr Poh-Jang Hsieh
Moderator: Dr John Whalen-Bridge
Photo credit: Yeow Foo





Event: Books & Robes Offering

Date: Oct 28, 2012

Venue: Buddhist Library

Photo credits: Tan Yew Beng, Wong Weng Fai





Event: BL's 30th Anniversary Family Day Funfair
Date: Nov 18, 2012
Venue: Vacant Land adjacent to Aljunied MRT Station
Photo Credit: Tan Yew Beng



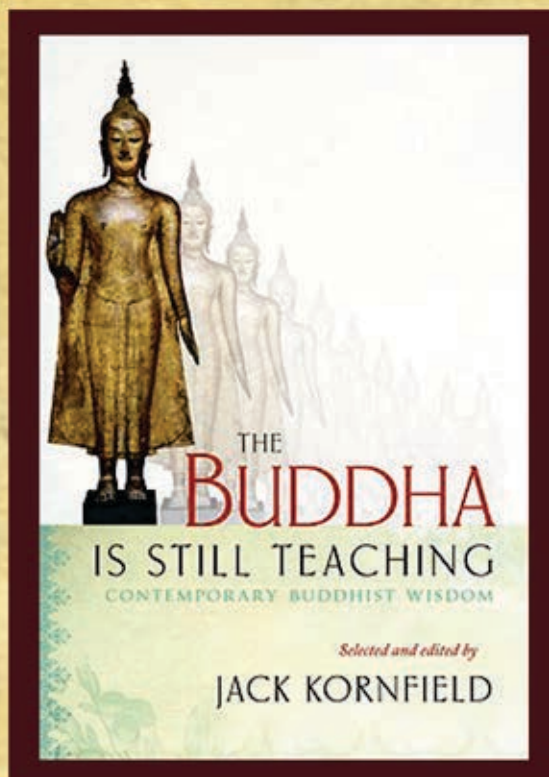


BL EVENT



Event: BL's 30th Anniversary Buddhism Conference and Lunch
Date: Nov 4, 2012
Venue: Shangri-la Hotel Function Room
Topic: *Universal Values & the Quality of Our Lives*
Speakers: Ven Ratmalane Somaloka - *Success without Stress*
 Dr Mark Greene - *What is Dream Consciousness?*
 Ven Tenzin Priyadashi - *Transformative Values for Happiness & Well-being*
Moderator: Dr Po-Jang Hsieh
Photo credits: Randy Foo, Rony Tan, Ro Nie & Yeow Foo





The Buddha is Still Teaching - Contemporary Buddhist Wisdom

Edited by Jack Kornfield

Shambhala Publications (2011) (288 pages)

Reviewed by Professor Chandima Wijebandara

Every one of us, including even the most ignorant, the most criminal or sinful, is a Buddha – well, let me qualify – a potential Buddha. More than the number of grains of sand in the River Ganges, they say.

That was, perhaps, the reason that a Zen monk, looking at a dog wagging its tail, said, "*Buddha in action*". So why should not a collection of sayings extracted from the writings of reputed contemporary Buddhist teachers be entitled '*The Buddha is still teaching*'?

It is true that the historical Buddha is not here to teach. Yet, as Jack Kornfield has pointed out, many generations of Dharma teachers across history have continued to find skillful ways to communicate (to us) the evergreen teachings of the Buddha; sometimes so skillfully as to confuse rather than convince! Isn't it true that we have a generation of Bodhisattvas, as confused as the Kalamas of the 6th century BCE, in the bewildering jungle of contemporary MTV (Mahayana, Theravada and Vajrayana)? Yet, this is no reason to be unhappy. It is where we all should start our journey towards enlightenment. The very fact that we are here, even to be confused, is a blessing. As one early Indian Mahayana writer has said, "*Even a doubt does not arise for unfortunate people regarding this teaching called Buddhism.*"

***"Nothing for the New Year in my hut.
But there is everything."***

-Basho

And so we are very fortunate to get at least confused or interested, even though being at (some) distance from attaining nirvana. And for us, who wish to explore more of Buddhism, Jack Kornfield is offering help with his long years of monastic training and vast reading (experience). He shares his fragrant, nourishing and digestible dish of highly positive and enlightening 'chicken soup' extracted from many modern 'sutras'.

This collection contains refreshing thoughts from highly revered contemporary writers of Buddhism like His Holiness the 14th the Dalai Lama, Ajahn Chah, Ven. Nyanaponika Thera, Thich Nhat Hanh, Ajahn Sumedho, Jon Kabat-Zinn, Goenka, Sylvia Boorstein, Pema Chodron, Mark Epstein, Joseph Goldstein, Schumacher, B. Alan Wallace, Alan Watts and many others. The selected writings are beautifully presented in 4 assortments – *Wise Understanding, Compassion and Courage, Freedom, Enlightenment and the Bodhisattva Path.*

The book is designed to have the Buddhist wheel symbol over every quote, making the reader visually feel the chosen theme of the editor – the continued rolling of the wheel of Dharma. And, of course, the selected thoughts of these Dharma teachers convince us that the wheel of Dharma has never stopped rolling, (and) with interesting meanderings too.

The very first 'starter bite' the reader is offered (comprises) challenging, interesting and confidence building words from Kalu Rinpoche. Even a simple (person) not very keen on philosophy may get curious and provoked to delve (further) into Buddhist teachings after reading them.

'You live in illusion and the appearing of things. There is a reality, but you do not know this. When you understand this, you will see that you are nothing. And being nothing, you are everything. That is all.'

This reminds (me) of Basho's haiku – *'Nothing for the New Year in my hut. But there is everything'.*

Rinpoche has made us think beyond the misleading translation of 'empty' for the Buddhist meditation of *sunyata*. *Sunyata* is not a negation of reality, even though many people think, mistakenly, that it is a clever negation of everything. Reality is beyond naive affirmation and negation. It is neither dualism nor monism. Here we have a good example of the poverty of language, even though English is one of the most powerful, precise and sophisticated languages in the world. It was to illustrate the inaccuracy of language in transmitting wisdom that the Buddha, with a smile, passed a lotus flower to Kashyapa who responded with a smile too. As Sylvia Boorstein has emphatically affirmed – *'Remembering the two views simultaneously is a great challenge.'*

I wish to emphasise, in this regard, a highly confrontational statement of Pema Chodron – *'Here we are with so much wisdom and tenderness, and – without even knowing it – we cover it over to protect ourselves from insecurity. Although we have the potential to experience the freedom of a butterfly, we mysteriously prefer the small and fearful cocoon of ego.'*

(And so we may) start reading this exciting collection of teachings (as) a cocoon and, hopefully, end up flying like a butterfly.

On the whole, this thought-provoking collection of spiritual gems serves as a handy asset for any open-minded seeker of truth. Not being an ordinary didactic handbook, it is an unusually challenging, sometimes confusing, but mostly enlightening treasure of philosophical wisdom. And, it definitely proves that the Buddha is still teaching.

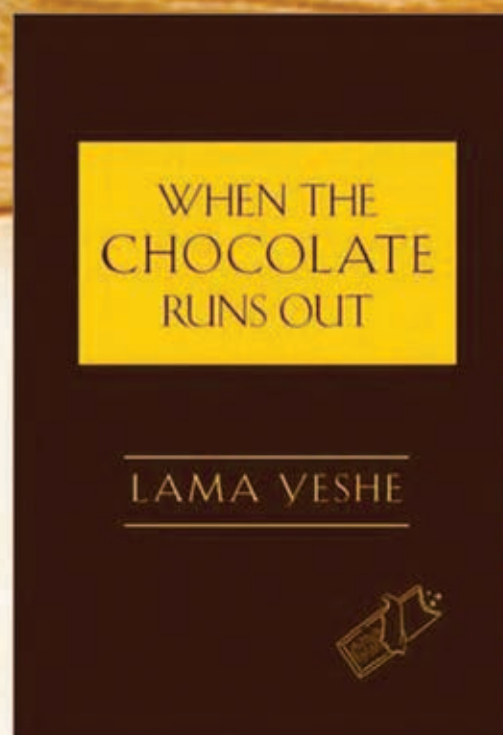
++ BOOK REVIEW

When the Chocolate Runs Out

by Lama Yeshe, Josh Bartok and Nicholas Ribus

Wisdom Publications (2011) (288 pages)

Reviewed by Beng Suan



Not only is the title eye-catching, the layout of the book is, too. There are common sense statements in bold print littered all over with spaces strategically placed for tired eyes. The language used is down-to-earth to the point of (being) conversational - *chocolate comes, chocolate goes, chocolate disappears* - and that helps sustain the interest of the reader. I found it hard to put down the book and was able to finish reading it in one sitting.

Lama Yeshe gives the reader useful tips that can help bring peace of mind and happiness. It is evident that Lama Yeshe, who has also walked the path of the Buddha's teachings, has an insight that he generously shares to help others 'wake up' since 'we have been asleep for countless lives.'

The tone is uplifting, although, occasionally, he gently pokes fun at human folly to put across the seriousness of being too attached to the 'uncontrolled mind' and not putting in concerted effort to 'control the mind'. Overall, the general reading of connecting with the mind is positive.

It can get a bit boring when the reader is often told that everything is 'inside our minds'. Luckily, Lama Yeshe has amusing anecdotes to help break the monotony of constant reminders to watch the mind and be rid of attachment. He presents information that will make the reader think and then nod in agreement as the latter relates to it.

The Four Noble Truths are not explicitly mentioned but the themes of dissatisfaction, craving/clinging, getting rid of dissatisfaction and wisdom/morality/mental development run throughout the book.

The chapter 'How to Meditate' gives useful recommendations and techniques that help the reader to trust the value and practice of meditation. Lama Yeshe explores and explains these tools in depth. He presents the chapters 'The Indisputable Fact of Karma' and 'The Meaning of Emptiness' in a matter-of-fact way and in bite-size (portions) which the reader will find easy to follow and digest.

His advice that impresses me most is 'Guarding your karma day in and day out is also meditation and can be a powerful way to develop insight.' It is an encouraging and a practical advice that (promises) a meaningful outcome (insight) when one watches one's bodily, verbal and mental actions.

This is a must-read book for those who have no inkling of the dangers of craving/clinging. Those who are aware of them may want to read the book for further insight.

**'Guarding your karma
day in and day out is also
meditation and can be a powerful
way to develop insight.'**

为什么缘起法的觉悟如此重要呢？阿桑嘎教授解释道，“依佛教教法，苦是由于占有的心态而产生。‘饥渴’（巴利语tanha）或欲是导致苦的因。而欲是由于认为世间的事物（包括自我）是实质的。所以要去除苦，首先要去除这实质性的观点。换句话说，应该视这世间为非实质性（巴利语anatta）。悟到世间为非实质性会使一个人改变他对世间的观念：他将去除对事物的执著或产生排斥。他对世间的观念已改变。他也不再造苦”。这就是马修法师所说的治疗性用意。

佛教经中，有好多对空性的比喻。其中一个，是我个人最喜欢的，是魔术。如在《佛说水沫所漂经》中，佛陀说道，“假设有一位魔术师... 表演着魔术... 还有一位男士拥有很好的视力去看、观察及做适当的检验。对他而言，那是空的、虚的、毫无实体的魔术伎俩

同样的，一个僧人以类似方式来看、观察及适当的检验任何意识。对他而言，若看着它、观察它及适当的检验它，它便会显得空、虚与无实质。意识能有什么实质？

这比喻非常有教育性。它的教育性可从一个痴迷少年的故事中看出来。亚历克斯斯通是一位专业魔术师。自他父亲在他年幼时送了魔术包给他后，他就对魔术很着迷。他在魔术奥运的参赛彻底失败。他的把戏被视穿，因此表现被削弱了。

斯通在他的著作《愚弄霍迪尼：魔术师、读心术士、数学怪才以及心灵的隐秘力量》里讲述了他当时的痛苦之旅。为了要成功，他不但要精通魔术还要精于心理学，多阅读研究报告，还甚至亲自参与了试验。

研究证实了当一个魔术在我们眼前展现时，‘那影像会进入我们的眼珠，触击视网膜，然后传达至视神经一直到脑部’——我们仍然会被误导。所以斯通才会说‘魔术不是发生在魔术师手上而是在观众的心理’。

‘要真正理解魔术的艺术以及它永恒的吸引力，你到头来不只会问及头脑怎么运作，为何有时又不运作，还会问一些人性的基本方面的问题。什么才是真实的，而我们又自觉的看清多少？为何人类会相信超自然的事物？’

‘我们认为所注意到的与我们实际上所注意到的差异反映了我们做判断时，往往偏向于出现在我们脑海的那一方，心理学家称之为可用性偏见’。

‘骗子的伎俩吸引的是那些想要在生活中得到快速又简单解决方式的人。’

佛陀也同意。‘世间’对他而言毕竟是透过我们的六根（眼，耳，鼻，舌，身与意）而体验的。经过这过滤器，我们‘构思了关于世界的想像’，我们只看见自我要我们看的。所以我们不是被魔术师误导了，而是被自己的自我误导了。

话说回霍尔特。他好奇的想知道一个人怎么可以死了，变成什么都没有还可以沉浸在涅槃的喜悦里。他还引用了一句笑话说到涅槃的定义是‘拥有刚好足够的人生来享受死亡’。

这是因为霍尔特错把空性当成什么都没有，这是可以理解的。但，依据佛教，心续不会在死亡时消灭。如果这听起来有些不着边际，也不会比霍尔特书中的理论来得勉强。网际网路在一百年前也是很不可思议的。

没人能够为霍尔特的问题提供决定性的答案。我投注在科学上因为它在合理性，理由，以及客观性上的严格标准。现在不能证实的将来或许可以。倘若科学真的成功，而最后的答案跟缘起法与空性有关联也没什么令人惊讶的。

尽管如此，就算佛陀的教法是证实错误的，他的弟子仍旧能毫不畏缩的接受事实。佛陀说他的弟子‘... 不推测，不敬重任何看法而说“这是最纯净的。”他们释放了教条式的执著，也不渴望要世间的任何事物。’（经集）

最终，比宇宙的来源更为重要的是我们如何运用现有的有限生命。因为无论宇宙是如何开始的，佛教的‘治疗用意’，以及通过修持无条件的爱，智慧与悲心来圆满我们的心是值得我们去争取的。

一如往常，我祝您阅读愉快。

编辑

Chinese Translation: Tenzin Lobsang, Lew Yook Kim, Goh Hiap Leng

中文翻译：丹增洛桑、刘毓金、吴协龙



编辑语录

空性的魅力

为什么是有东西而不是没东西呢？吉姆霍尔特自少年时期就对这个问题十分着迷。他渴望知道宇宙从何开始，而宇宙大爆炸之前的‘没东西’如何演变成之后的‘有东西’。

无神论者相信只有科学能够提供答案，特别是量子论。有神论者则相信宇宙是由上帝创造的。另外，秉持‘原始事实’理论的如柏特兰罗素爵士，认为宇宙就这样来的，没什么可解释的。

吉姆霍尔特于著作《世界为何存在，一部存在主义的侦探小说》中，所采访的各个专家包括宇宙科学家、数学家、物理学家、哲学家、神学家、神秘主义者、还有小说家。论理芸芸。有些很有趣，有些则令人难以想象。而最引人注目的说法则指宇宙是由物理学家“黑客”所创，而且是为了创造而创造。

佛教中言‘有’与‘无’的抉择是假想。于正见经中，佛陀对迦旃延的发问否决了两个极端。

“迦旃延！此世间多依止於有与无之两[极端]... 依正慧以如实现世间之集者、则此世间为非无者... 依正慧以如实现世间之灭者，则此世间为非有者。”

“说‘一切为有’，此乃一极端。说‘一切为无’，此乃第二极端。如离此等之两端，而依中道说法...（依缘起法）。”

霍尔特的书提及一名佛教僧人。他从电视采访中，看到僧人马修李卡德与多米尼加共和国教士和物理学家在谈论他所关注的问题。“... 身为佛教徒，僧人马修相信宇宙是无始的... 是空性的... 不能为有... 因为它与‘有’是相违的。纵然有十亿个起因也无法从不存在中创造一个宇宙。这就是为何佛教的宇宙无始学说在形而上学最具意义...”

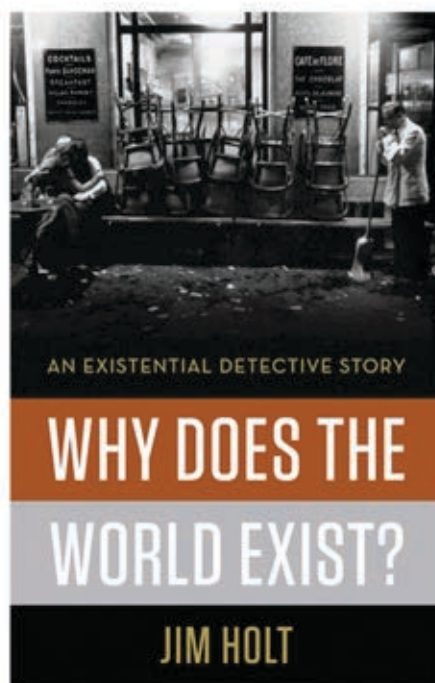
因此，宇宙大爆炸很可能是无始大爆炸系列中的仅仅一个。

马修法师用了霍尔特的方法来探讨真实的本质。

“宇宙究竟是什么？... 它不是虚无。但却很接近，它是空性... 事物其实没有我们赋予他们的实体性。世间犹如梦、幻觉一般。但我们在思想中，将其流动性转变成固定及实体性的事物。佛教更改了这形而上学的错误，达到了治疗用意。它提供的是通往证悟的道路。也解决了存在的神秘感。”

‘当我们说看到了世界，我们的视觉往往是错的。’

丽莎蓝道尔，理论物理学教授



法王第十四世达赖喇嘛在他的著作《Becoming Enlightened（暂译：成为觉者）》中，对空性做了简单易懂的解释。

“当你不满于表面而通过调查与分析去寻求事物更深层的性质，你会发现它们的真实性质是非独立、非固有或非存在的。”

所以当我们说杯子是空的，我们不是指没有杯子，而是杯子里没有东西。

相同的，当法王说一切事物是空的，他不是说这些事物不存在而是指它们都缺乏了实质性、恒长的实心以及它们的存在和继续存在都依赖着因缘和条件。这就是佛陀在正见经中所说的因缘法（通称缘起法）。

阿桑嘎替拉卡拉尼（Asanga Tilakaratne）教授就在他的书‘涅槃与不可言喻’做阐述。缘起法“在早期佛教被视为是现实恒长存在的性质... 根据这个学说，世界的一切现象都是依因缘而生。”

“... 缘起法不涉及有神论的专制主义或基于灵魂不变的实体论。这解释里只有一组因缘和合的现象以及被体验为真实的因果果报。”从以上的解释，我们便能推断空性（无恒长性）与缘起法（无实体性）都是同一个硬币的两面。

宗喀巴大师的著作《三主要道》里，强调了缘起法与空性的觉悟是同时与并发的。悟其一则悟另一。视两者为独立且分离是根本性的错误。

法师开示



Tanha 或贪爱有很多不同层次，当它达到很高的层次时，我们称作uppadana或取。在佛教教义中，共有四种执取。

第一种称为欲取 (kamma uppadana)，即对情欲的执著。让我们的五种感官（眼、耳、鼻、舌及身）感到愉悦不一定是邪恶或罪孽的。人有五种感官知觉，它们须要有愉快的体验。我们的所有体验都来自五种感官，所以自然想要让感官感到愉悦。我们也不想有不好的体验。

第二种执取是见取 (ditthi uppadana)。Ditthi是指见解。如果紧抓着错误的见解不放，就称为见取。这可以指宗教信仰，譬如盲目相信自我克制就能终结痛苦。简单地说，若持有错误的见解，即意味相信错误的修行之道，以致无法得到解脱。

另一个极端是执著于追求感官的愉悦。

佛陀教导我们，踏上这两种极端都无法得到解脱。另一方面，修出离心可防止我们走向这些极端。

第三种执取是戒禁取 (silabbat uppadana)。我们很难判断哪些礼仪是好是坏。人们总是盲目地遵守礼仪，以为这么做就能得到快乐。

佛陀指出，解脱与礼仪或仪式无关。佛陀教导我们的八正道包含了道德、定力与智慧。但充满慈悲与智慧的佛陀并没有禁止所有的礼仪与仪式。如果礼仪可以让人学会慈悲、感恩和爱，那么尽管这些礼仪严格来说并不属于佛教仪式，但它们还是可以接受的。

让我举个例子说明：为逝者举行的追悼会。如果我们按照佛教教义，丧礼是非常简单的。如今有些佛教徒实行的仪式，其实并非源自佛教。例如，供奉食物给逝者。其实，逝者是不能获取食物的。我还看过有人在棺木前或丧礼之后供奉饮料。虽然很多佛教徒这么做，但这并非佛教的做法。尽管如此，我们认为这么做并非不好，因为人们是抱着关爱、慈悲及尊敬之心对待逝者。但须说明的是，这不是佛教的礼仪。

即使供奉僧侣也不是强制的。当我们做了好事时，只须默想着至亲至爱的人就行了。话虽如此，但这仍是一种好的做法。

另外，还有放生。波斯匿王虽然非常虔诚，但他不太聪明。有一次，他做了个恶梦。之后，他召见大臣，大臣指波斯匿王的性命有危，除非他将上百头羊、牛、马等动物宰杀祭祀。波斯匿王于是下令准备宰杀牲畜，正巧佛陀经过，便告诉波斯匿王这么做是错的。因为如果他为了克服恐惧或危难而杀害这么多动物，根本无济于事。相反的，佛陀劝他放生。

这类情况还有很多。依此而言，佛陀其实也参与了放生。不过，我们当然得懂得正确的放生方法，这样这些动物才能在大自然中生存和繁衍。

在佛教教义中，有不同的布施或dana。让动物“没有恐惧”是布施的其中之一。这也可以视为一种放生，让它们脱离危险与恐惧而得到自由。我本身就曾目睹过这些景象。我到过很多屠宰场。很多牛只充满了恐惧，甚至还流下眼泪。它们还会因恐惧而咬你的手。所以为了追悼某人而进行这类仪式是好的。

第四种执取是我语取 (attavadda uppadana)，即执著于永恒的“自我”。这是指相信身体和心结合成一个固定不变的自我，即最重要的个体。但佛陀认为这种观点只是一种概念。

佛陀把人格分成五蕴，即色、受、想、行、识。若少了五蕴，一个人就什么都不是。在五蕴以外，没有永恒的自我。不过，即使我们已做了多方面的研究，但我们还是对永恒的自我有所执著。这也是为什么这种执取是最难舍弃的。

让我用《无畏王子经》的话加以概括。在该经文中，有个婆罗门的生闻向佛陀说：“在我看来，当面临死亡时，没有人不害怕死亡或不对死亡感到恐惧。”

佛陀不同意他的说法，并描述了四种怕死的人及四种不怕死的人。这里，我只说前两种人，即执著于情欲及身体的人。而消除其恐惧的方法是修出离心。

“在面临死亡时，什么人会感到害怕，并对死亡感到恐惧？正是那些还未舍弃激情、欲望、钟爱、饥渴、狂热及渴望情欲的人。然后，他患上了严重的疾病。当他患上严重疾病时，这才想到：‘啊，那些美好的感官愉悦将离我而去，而我也将与它们分离！’他哀号痛哭、捶胸顿足、胡言乱语。在面临死亡时，正是这种人会感到害怕，并对死亡感到恐惧。”

“再者，还有那些未舍弃激情、欲望、钟爱、饥渴、狂热及对身体有所眷恋的人。然后，他患上了严重的疾病。当他患上严重疾病时，这才想到：‘啊，我那美好的身体将离我而去，而我也将与它分离！’他哀号痛哭、捶胸顿足、胡言乱语。在面临死亡时，正是这种人会感到害怕，并对死亡感到恐惧。”

“在面临死亡时，什么人不会感到害怕，亦对死亡不感到恐惧？正是那些已舍弃激情、欲望、钟爱、饥渴、狂热及渴望情欲的人。然后，他患上了严重的疾病。当他患上严重疾病时，他不会想：‘啊，那些美好的感官愉悦将离我而去，而我也将与它们分离！’他不会哀号痛哭、不会捶胸顿足、不会胡言乱语。在面临死亡时，正是这种人不会感到害怕，亦不对死亡感到恐惧。”

“再者，还有那些已舍弃激情、欲望、钟爱、饥渴、狂热及对身体有所眷恋的人。然后，他患上了严重的疾病。当他患上严重疾病时，他不会想：‘啊，我那美好的身体将离我而去，而我也将与它分离！’他不会哀号痛哭、不会捶胸顿足、不会胡言乱语。在面临死亡时，正是这种人不会感到害怕，亦不会对死亡感到恐惧。”

由于我们迟早都会面临死亡，因此我们应趁身心还健康时，循序渐进地修出离心。

达摩拉达那法师
宗教顾问
佛教图书馆

参考文献：

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法师开示《

如何修出离心并从中获益？

一般来说，当我们谈到“出离心”（Renunciation）时，很多人都会有所误解，以为我们说的是放弃世俗的生活与责任，出家成为僧人或尼姑。

这是因为当我们提起佛陀时，通常都会说到悉达多乔答摩太子离开皇宫成为苦行者的“伟大出离心”。所以当我们修出离心时，总会想到必须舍弃一切，才是修行之道。不过，这只是修出离心的方法之一。

即使当一个人已出家成为僧人或尼姑之后，我们仍难以确定这是否为真正的出离心，因为真正的出离心是存在于我们心中。这是个心理决策。我们可以修行，同时保持世俗的生活形态。

另一方面，一般人也可把出离心修至更高层次。比方说，在南传与北传佛教中，就有像给孤独（Anathapindika）及维摩诘（Vimalakirti）等普通人获得心灵解脱的故事。所以，如果一般人以为家庭及社会责任导致他们无法修出离心的话，那也是个误解。因此，佛教修出离心的方法是适用于所有人，惟各人的修行方法不尽相同。

举例说，人类是习惯性动物。有些习惯对我们及其他人有益，但有些习惯却并非如此。如果发觉某些习惯对我们毫无意义或毫无帮助，我们就该尝试慢慢克服它。这也是另一种修出离心的方式，因为出离心意味我们要学会放下。

让我告诉你一个例子，即佛陀给予波斯匿王的忠告。波斯匿王与佛陀的关系亲近。根据经文记载，身形高大的波斯匿王以往每天都会拜访佛陀。某日，他来晚了。一般上，他都会在午餐前来访，但那天他因公务繁忙而迟到。

当佛陀跟他说话时，波斯匿王竟打瞌睡。佛陀停止说话。波斯匿王醒来后不久又开始打瞌睡。这种情况重复了数遍，佛陀终于开口问：“你是不是很累？”

波斯匿王回答：“是啊，我吃完午餐后就立即赶来了。”

“你吃了多少？”

“我吃了12碗饭。”

佛陀微笑着说：“你不觉得吃得太多吗？”

“没错，我有这个毛病，但很难改掉这个坏习惯。”

“伟大的国王，让我给你一些忠告，你不妨试试看。如果你照着我的话去做，你就能克服这个毛病。第一天，你少吃一碗饭。接下来几天，你也继续这么做。当你已适应吃11碗饭时，不妨试着再少吃一碗饭数天。在这之后，你继续递减饭量。长此下去，你就能减至每餐只吃3碗饭。”

佛陀充满慈悲之心，他并没有要求波斯匿王一下子就把每餐的饭量减至1碗！

波斯匿王刚开始颇不适应，但久而久之终于达成目标。他回去见佛陀时不但更健康、纤瘦，而且也更精神充沛。他不断向佛陀道谢。

这也是出离心的另一个例子。波斯匿王对食物成瘾，但在修出离心之后，他不但减少了食量，同时也减低了对食物的执著。

我不是说你吃得太多！但你可能有一些不良习惯，不利于你的身心发展。

你可以较自在修出离心。你无须立即改掉那些不良习惯，而是逐步把坏习惯改过来。这是一个对大家都很有意义的修行之法。

