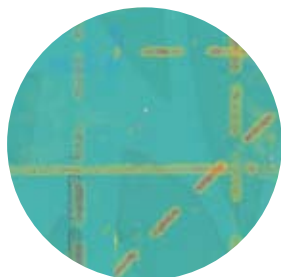


RIGHTVIEW QUARTERLY

DHARMA IN PRACTICE

WINTER 2007



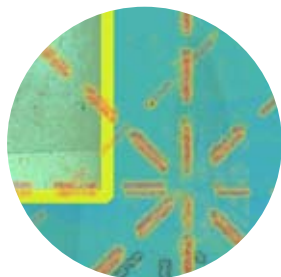
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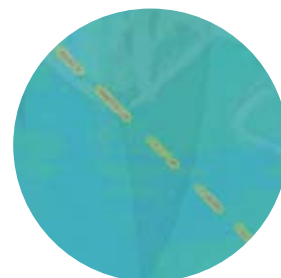
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and distributing Rightview Quarterly.

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Pictured on the cover is a limestone panel of the *Buddhapada* from the Amaravati Stupa in India. This *Buddhapada*, this "footprint of the Buddha," is one of the earliest known representations of the Buddha, dating back to the first century BCE. According to legend, after the Buddha attained enlightenment his feet made an imprint in the stone where he stepped. The Buddha's footprints are depicted here, as is traditional, with the toes of all one length and with a *dharmachakra* (dharma wheel) in the center. It is a reminder of both the presence of the dharma in our lives and of the impermanence of all phenomena.

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Present View

PONDERING THE FIVE HINDRANCES ON A RUSH HOUR TRAIN.

Here editor Xianyang Carl Jerome explains how he grew to understand that the five hindrances are hindrances to being present, as well as to practice. Not that the two are different.

Xianyang Carl Jerome's first teacher was Zen Master and Beat Poet Zenshin Philip Whalen in San Francisco. For the past seven years, Carl has been a student of Master Ji Ru at the Mid-America Buddhist Association (MABA) and the International Buddhism Friendship Association (IBFA) in Chicago. In 2006 Master Ji Ru granted him Lay Teaching Endorsement and Carl continues to teach Buddhism classes and lead retreats. He is the editor of Rightview Quarterly magazine and editor and founding teacher of RightviewOnline.org.

It's 5:20 in the afternoon and I needed to go from our Temple into downtown Chicago on the El (the subway). It is only a two-block walk from the Temple to the El stop, so I decided to use that few minutes of walking time to follow my breath, rather than to be distracted by the colorful shop windows filled with Chinese trinkets and doodads. I took the mala off my wrist so I could move my fingers across the beads with each breath. Holding to my breath, I strolled to the El. I got one of the few remaining seats on the train, which would soon be rush-hour full.

At the next stop, the car was packed with tourists and students and commuters, all trying to carve out a space for themselves. There was a backpack on my right that kept banging me, a precariously balanced woman in heels in front of me that kept falling onto my knees. There were arms stretched in front of my face reaching for the pole that stops those who are precariously balanced from falling. And in another minute, as the train stopped and the loudspeaker bellowed, more people were pushing their way into the car, and into me. Follow my breath? I realize I haven't even noticed my breath since I sat down.

But I have felt sensual desire (isolated sights and sounds reminding me of places and things I had liked), and ill-will and impatience (particularly with the woman who kept falling on me), sloth and torpor (if ever I were going to feel like a sloth, this was it), worry and restlessness (yes, I was concerned about how I would get out at my stop, and I certainly noticed myself fidgeting), and skeptical doubt (there just no way I can practice in here right now, I thought to myself after failing to be able to even find my breath in all the commotion, much less follow it). All five of the hindrances had arisen in me, I noticed, not just hindering my practice, but obliterating it, not just removing me from my breath, but also removing me from being present.

It was then that I stopped seeing the five hindrances in the traditional perspective as just hindrances to meditation practice and began to understand them as more omnipresent hindrances to everyday practice.

For more about the five hindrances, please read Venerable Sujiva's article on page 29.

In our last issue we mistakenly said that Matsuoka Roshi founded the Chicago Zen Center. In fact, he founded the Zen Buddhist Temple of Chicago. We apologize for the confusion.

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It's All About Building Habits

BY ZUIKO REDDING



Wherever there are people, there is strife. The truth of our lives is that we exist in a web of interdependence in the midst of constant change, but we usually forget this, don't we? We think we are separate, permanent, very important beings. As such, we are entitled to certain things. When the world doesn't treat us as we think we deserve, we grow angry and fight with others.

Over a cup of coffee one afternoon, one of our members told me that, during a rather heated encounter, her husband said simply, "You know, my dear, it's not about being right. It's about being together." Our notion of the "rightness" of our ideas is just a red herring distracting us from the real goals in our lives—peace and harmony with ourselves and with those around us. How often we get lost following after the fragrance of our self-centered ideas! Let's let the fish be and turn back toward reality. It's not about winning or losing. It's about living in the midst of things as they are. Kosho Uchiyama in his book *Opening the Hand of Thought* notes, "Winning is delusion, loss is enlightenment." Winning is only our idea of winning—what makes us feel powerful, what gives us rewards. Victory is often temporary. The one we have beaten, feeling humiliated and angry, will be waiting for us. Loss is enlightenment. It forces us to confront our egoistic desires. It allows us to examine them and see how destructive they are.

Actually, neither winning nor losing is best. If we win, we have to deal with the other person's resentment. If we lose, we have to deal with our own resentment and hurt. In both cases, we continue in our dualistic ideas. The secret lies in dropping the duality of self and other.

Uchiyama Roshi tells of a temple teacher who hears noises in the garden. He goes out and finds the squashes fighting. He has them all sit zazen for a while, then asks them to feel the tops of their heads. Of course, there's a stem growing there and everyone's stem is attached to the same vine. Seeing this, the squashes cease their fighting.

I suspect they forgot this lesson in a day or two and were at it again—that's how things usually go. We forget that others and ourselves are not two—we are all part of the same world—and we begin fighting. To remember that "It's not about being right," is to wake up to non-duality. Big mind, the mind that sees equally from all sides, opens up. Then we can consider solving the problem rather than winning or losing.

Thinking we should have everything we want and others should behave exactly as we wish them to is simply the dream of the mind that forgets that reality is not the same as our ideas. When we wake up, we see that to have true peace we have to let go of our ideas and work with reality just as it is. Peace happens when everyone gets something and everyone gives up something.

*Actually,
neither
winning
nor losing
is best.*

Lasting peace is a situation in which neither party feels the settlement was unfair and wants to reopen the fight.

If there is lasting peace, we've won whether we've gotten everything we wanted or not. Acting with wisdom and compassion in the realization of our role in the vastness of this world is what brings peace of mind. No matter what happens, we suffer if we have contributed to it with dishonesty, bullying or manipulation. When, no matter what the outcome, we have done our best to be honest, fair, and respectful, we will have peace.

It's about building habits. Each response makes the next one easier. It's as if each action wears a rut in our path, making it easier simply to follow it as it gets deeper and deeper. Finally, it becomes almost impossible to climb out. The rut has become deep and comfortable—climbing out takes big-time effort and courage. Best to build ruts that we will be satisfied with and that will help our lives. If we see ourselves creating ruts that won't result in a peaceful mind, it's best to change them as soon as possible.

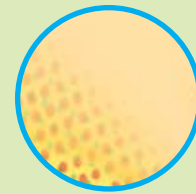
Zuiko Redding is the resident teacher of Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She grew up in Texas where she encountered Zen as a university student, later practicing in Milwaukee with Rev. Tozen Akiyama and in Minneapolis with Dainin Katagiri Roshi. In 1992 she was ordained in Japan by Rev. Tsugen Narasaki, practicing under his direction at Zuioji Monastery and its mountain training center, Shogoji, where she received teaching transmission in 1996. She is a member of the American Zen Teachers' Association and one of Righview Online's guiding teachers.



TRADING CANDY FOR GOLD

Renunciation as a Skill

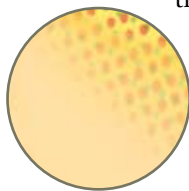
Thanissaro Bhikkhu



IN OUR QUEST FOR LIBERATION, HOW MUCH ARE WE WILLING TO SACRIFICE, AND WHAT SACRIFICES ARE REASONABLE AND INTELLIGENT?

Buddhism takes a familiar American principle—the pursuit of happiness—and inserts two important qualifiers. The happiness it aims at is true: ultimate, unchanging, and undeceitful. Its pursuit of that happiness is serious, not in a grim sense, but dedicated, disciplined, and willing to make intelligent sacrifices.

What sort of sacrifices are intelligent? The Buddhist answer to this question resonates with another American principle: an intelligent sacrifice is any in which you gain a greater happiness by letting go of a lesser one, in the same way you'd give up a bag of candy if offered a pound of gold in exchange. In other words, an intelligent sacrifice is like a profitable trade. This analogy is an ancient one in the Buddhist tradition. There's something in all of us that would rather not give things up. We'd prefer to keep the candy and get the gold. But maturity teaches us that we can't have everything, that to indulge in one pleasure often involves denying ourselves another, perhaps better, one. Thus we need to establish clear priorities for investing our limited time and energies where they'll give the most lasting returns.



That means giving top priority to the mind. Material things and social relationships are unstable and easily affected by forces beyond our control, so the happiness they offer is fleeting and undependable.

But the well-being of a well-trained mind can survive even aging, illness, and death. To train the mind, though, requires time and energy. This is **one reason** why the pursuit of true happiness demands that we sacrifice some of our external pleasures.

...the well-being of a well-trained mind can survive even aging, illness, and death.

Another reason is that sacrificing external pleasures frees us of the mental burdens that holding onto them often entails. A famous story in the canon tells of a former king who, after becoming a monk, sat down at the foot of a tree and exclaimed, "What bliss! What bliss!" His fellow monks thought he was pining for the pleasures he had enjoyed as king, but he later explained to the Buddha exactly what bliss he had in mind:

"Before... I had guards posted within and without the royal apartments, within and without the city, within and without the countryside. But even though I was thus guarded, thus protected, I dwelled in fear—agitated, distrustful, and afraid. But now, on going alone to a forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty dwelling, I dwell without fear, unagitated, confident, and unafraid—unconcerned, unruffled, my wants satisfied, with my mind like a wild deer."

A third reason for sacrificing external pleasures is that in pursuing some pleasures—such as our addictions to eye-candy, ear-candy, nose-candy, tongue-candy, and body-candy—we foster qualities

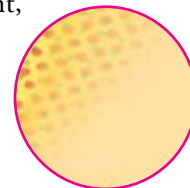
of greed, anger, and delusion that actively block the qualities needed for inner peace. Even if we had all the time and energy in the world, the pursuit of these pleasures would lead us further and further away from the goal. They are spelled out in the path factor called right intention: the intention to forego any pleasures involving sensual passion, ill-will, and harmfulness. “Sensual passion” covers not only sexual desire, but also any hankering for the pleasures of the senses that disrupts the peace of the mind. “Ill-will” covers any wish for suffering, either for oneself or for others. And “harmfulness” is any activity that would bring that suffering about. Of these three categories, the last two are the easiest to see as worth abandoning. They’re not always easy to abandon, perhaps, but the intention to abandon them is obviously a good thing. The first intention, to renounce sensual passion is difficult even to make, to say nothing of following through.

Part of our resistance to this intention is universally human. People everywhere relish their passions. Even the Buddha admitted to his disciples that, when he set out on the path of practice, his heart didn’t leap at the idea of renouncing sensual passion, didn’t see it as offering peace. But an added part of our resistance to renunciation is peculiar to Western culture. Modern pop psychology teaches that the only alternative to a healthy indulgence of our sensual passions is an unhealthy, fearful repression. Yet both of these alternatives are based on fear: repression, on a fear of what the passion might do when expressed or even allowed into consciousness; indulgence, on a fear of deprivation and of the under-the-bed monster the passion might become if resisted and driven underground. Both alternatives place serious limitations on the mind. The Buddha, aware of the drawbacks of both, had the imagination to find a third alternative: a fearless, skillful approach that avoids the dangers of either side.

To understand his approach, though, we have to see how right intention relates to other

parts of the Buddhist path, in particular right view and right concentration. In the formal analysis of the path, right intention builds on right view; in its most skillful manifestation, it functions as the directed thought and evaluation that bring the mind to right concentration. Right view provides a skillful understanding of sensual pleasures and passions, so that our approach to the problem doesn’t go off-target; right concentration provides an inner stability and bliss so that we can clearly see the roots of passion and at the same time not fear deprivation at the prospect of pulling them out.

There are two levels to right view: focusing (1) on the results of our actions in the narrative of our lives and (2) on the issues of *dukkha* and its cessation within the mind. The first level points out the drawbacks of sensual passion: sensual pleasures are fleeting, unstable, *dukkha*. Passion for them lies at the root of many of the ills of life, ranging from the hardships of gaining and maintaining wealth, to quarrels within families and wars between nations. This level of right view prepares us to see the indulgence of sensual passion as a problem. The second level, viewing things in terms of the four noble truths, shows us how to solve this problem in our approach to the present moment. It points out that the root of the problem lies not in the pleasures but in the passion, for passion involves attachment, and any attachment for pleasures based on conditions leads inevitably to stress and suffering, in that all conditioned phenomena are subject to change. In fact, our attachment to sensual passion tends to be stronger and more constant than our attachments to particular pleasures. This attachment is what has to be renounced.



Both sides of sensual attachment, as habitual patterns from the past and our willingness to give in to them again in the present, are based on misunderstanding and fear.

How is this done?

By bringing it out into the open. Both sides of sensual attachment, as habitual patterns from the past and our willingness to give in to them again in the present—are based on misunderstanding and fear. As the Buddha pointed out, sensual passion depends on aberrant perceptions: we project notions of constancy,

*There are two levels to right view: focusing (1) on the results of our actions in the narrative of our lives and (2) on the issues of *dukkha* and its cessation within the mind.*

ease, beauty, and self onto things that are actually inconstant, *dukkha*, unattractive, and not-self.

These misperceptions apply both to our passions and to their objects. We perceive the expression of our sensuality as something appealing, a deep expression of our self-identity offering lasting pleasure; we see the objects of our passion as enduring and alluring enough, as lying enough under our control, to provide us with a satisfaction that won't turn into its opposite. Actually, none of this is the case, and yet we blindly believe our projections because the power of our passionate attachments has us too intimidated to look them straight in the eye. Their special effects thus keep us dazzled and deceived. As long as we deal only in indulgence and repression, attachment can continue operating freely in the dark of the subconscious. But when we consciously resist it, it has to come to the surface, articulating its threats, demands, and rationalizations. So even though sensual pleasures aren't evil, we have to systematically forego them as a way of drawing the agendas of attachment out into the open. This is how skillful renunciation serves as a learning tool, unearthing latent agendas that both indulgence and repression tend to keep underground.

At the same time, we need to provide the mind with strategies to withstand those agendas and to cut through them once they appear. This is where right concentration comes in. As a skillful form of indulgence, right concentration suffuses the body with a non-sensual rapture and pleasure that can help counteract any sense of deprivation in resisting sensual passions.

In other words, it provides higher pleasures, more lasting and refined, as a reward for abandoning attachment to lower ones. At the same time it gives us the stable basis we need so as not to be blown away by the assaults of our thwarted attachments. This stability also steadies the mindfulness and alertness we need to see through the misperceptions and delusions that underlie sensual passion. And once the mind can see through the processes of projection, perception, and misperception to the greater sense of freedom that comes when they are transcended, the basis for sensual passion is gone.

At this stage, we can then turn to analyze our attachment to the pleasures of right concentration.

When our understanding is complete, we abandon all need for attachment of any sort, and thus meet with the pure gold of a freedom so total that it can't be described.

The question remains: how does this strategy of skillful renunciation and skillful indulgence translate into everyday practice? People who ordain as monastics take vows of celibacy and are expected to work constantly at renouncing sensual passion, but for many people this is not a viable option. The Buddha thus recommended that his lay followers observe day-long periods of temporary renunciation. Four days out of each month—traditionally on the new-, full-, and half-moon days—they can take the eight precepts, which add the following observances to the standard five: celibacy, no food after noon, no watching of shows, no listening to music, no use of perfumes and cosmetics, and no use of luxurious seats and beds. The purpose of these added precepts is to place reasonable restraints on all five of the senses. The day is then devoted to listening to the dhamma, to clarify right view; and to practicing meditation, to strengthen right concentration. Although the modern work week can make the lunar scheduling of these day-long retreats impractical, there are ways they can be integrated into weekends or other days off from work. In this way, anyone interested can, at regular intervals, trade the cares and complexities of everyday life for the chance to master renunciation as a skill integral to the serious pursuit of happiness in the truest sense of the word.

And isn't that an intelligent trade?

Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff) is an American monk of the Thai forest tradition. After graduating from college, he studied meditation under Ajahn Fuang Jotiko in Thailand, himself a student of the late Ajahn Lee, and was ordained in 1976. In 1991 he helped establish Metta Monastery in the hills of San Diego County, California, where he is currently the abbot. He is a prolific translator of the Pali scriptures.

We blindly believe our projections because the power of our passionate attachment has us too intimidated to look them straight in the eye.



NOTES FOR A BUDDHIST TRANSFORMATION

Here **Dr. David Loy**, one of the world's foremost writers on socially engaged Buddhism, examines what the *Buddhadharma* has to offer in response to the social and political challenges of our times.

Buddhism is a personal path of spiritual transformation, not a program for political or economic revolution. Yet is it always clear where the one ends and the other begins? Or is this another duality of the sort that Buddhism likes to critique? Together, our ways of thinking and acting create society, but the opposite is also true: social institutions condition what we think and how we act. This means that, sooner or later, the *bodhisattva's* devotion to the awakening of everyone will bump up against the constraints of present economic and political systems, which in order to thrive need our complicity as consumers and defenders of that way of life.

According to a few scholars (most notably Trevor Ling in *The Buddha*), Shakyamuni saw the *sangha* as modeling a new kind of society. Such a claim is difficult to evaluate, because almost everything we know about the Buddha was filtered through the memory of many generations of monks before being written down. The dharma that they eventually recorded emphasizes the difference between everyday life and religious renunciation. Nevertheless, the Buddha's teachings still have many implications that extend beyond the individual spiritual path. He had much to say about the role of a good householder and the responsibilities of a wise ruler.

As Buddhism also emphasizes, however, times change. We live in a world radically different from anything that even Shakyamuni could have anticipated, which requires creative ways of adapting his profound insights to new challenges. The greatest of those challenges, of course, is survival: not only the effects of rapid climate change on human civilization, but also

the continuation of countless other species threatened by our technologies and population growth. The first precept—not to harm any living being—calls upon us to consider the consequences of our actions for the biosphere as a whole.

Of course, that does not mean we can ignore the social problems that confront us. As we know, and as Buddhism also implies, ecological, political and economic crises are interconnected. We won't be able to meet the challenge of global warming unless we also figure out how to rein in an economic system that depends on continuous expansion if it is to avoid collapse.

The real issue isn't our reliance on fossil fuels but our reliance on a mindset that takes the globalization of corporate capitalism (and its dominant role in supposedly democratic processes) as natural, necessary, and inevitable. We need an alternative to "there is no alternative." What can Buddhism contribute here?

Is a reformed capitalism consistent with a dharmic society, or do we need altogether different kinds of economic institutions? How can our world de-militarize? Should representative democracy be revitalized by stricter controls on campaigns and lobbying, or do we need a more participatory and decentralized political system? Should newspapers and television networks be better regulated, or non-profit? What should be done about advertising, which continues to colonize our collective consciousness? Can the United Nations be transformed into the kind of international organization the world needs, or does an emerging global community call for something different? I do not think that



Buddhism has the answers to these questions. We should hesitate before deriving any particular economic or political system from Buddhism's various teachings. Different aspects of the dharma can be used to support capitalism, socialism, anarchism, and (a favorite of mine) *Georgism*. The basic limitation of all such arguments is that Buddhism is really about awakening and liberating our awareness, rather than prescribing new institutional structures for that awareness.

understand the problem of social change as the need for me to dominate the socio-political order. Add a conviction of my good intentions, along with my superior understanding of the situation, and one has a recipe for social as well as personal disaster.

This emphasis on one's own transformation is especially important for more individual and life-style issues such as racism,

BUDDHISM IS REALLY ABOUT AWAKENING AND LIBERATING OUR AWARENESS, RATHER THAN PRESCRIBING NEW INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES FOR THAT AWARENESS.

We cannot determine what awakened awareness will decide when applied to the problem of social *dukkha*. There is no magic formula to be invoked. That no one else has such a formula either, so far as I can see, means that solutions to our collective *dukkha* cannot be derived from any ideology. They are to be worked out together.

This suggests the role of socially engaged Buddhism: not to form a new movement but, along with other forms of engaged spirituality, to add a valuable dimension to existing movements already working for peace, social justice, and ecological responsibility. What does Buddhism have to offer those movements?

The importance of a personal spiritual practice.

Buddhism begins and ends with individual transformation. The basis of Buddhist social engagement is the necessity to work on oneself as well as on the social system. Why have so many revolutions and reform movements ended up merely replacing one gang of thugs with another? If we have not begun to transform our own greed, ill-will and delusion, our efforts to address their institutionalized forms are likely to be useless, or worse. Even if our revolution is successful, we will merely replace one group of egos with our own. If I do not struggle with the greed inside myself, it is quite likely that, when I gain power, I too will be inclined to take advantage of the situation to serve my own interests. If I do not acknowledge the ill-will in my own heart as my own problem, I am likely to project my anger onto those who obstruct my purposes. If unaware that my own sense of duality is a dangerous delusion, I will

patriarchy, homophobia, "moneytheism" and consumerism, and family size (number of children). While new laws addressing these concerns may sometimes be needed, the main battle for social acceptance is fought in local communities and the most valuable tool is personal example. Any solution to consumerism, for instance, must include public demonstration of an improved quality-of-life based on relationships rather than consumption. Some recent economic studies have discovered that, once a minimum standard of living has been achieved (about \$10,000 per person), an increase in income has little if any effect on one's happiness. The Buddha would not be surprised.

Commitment to non-violence.

A non-violent approach is implied by our nonduality with "others," including those we may be struggling against. Means and ends cannot be separated. Peace is not only the goal; it must also be the way. We ourselves must be the peace we want to create. A spiritual awakening reduces our sense of separation from those who have power over us. Gandhi, for example, always treated the British authorities in India with respect. He never tried to dehumanize them, which is one reason why he was successful. However, this is not an argument for absolute pacifism, which seems to me a dogmatic attitude inconsistent with Buddhist pragmatism. One might decide to resist not evil, in any form, yet I do not see that being a Buddhist is always incompatible with legitimate self-defense. If my wife and son are

about to be physically attacked, I have a responsibility to defend them, by force if necessary. The point of nonviolence is that even in such dangerous situations it is usually the more appropriate and effective way to respond.

Of course, once the principle of collective self-defense is accepted then every act of aggression becomes rationalized as self-defense, the 2003 invasion of Iraq being an especially visible example. The solution, I suggest, is not to assert unconditional pacifism in every possible situation but to be prepared to challenge the propaganda and manipulations of those who are

The world is not a battleground where people who are good must destroy those who are evil, but the place where we do stupid things to ourselves and to each other because we are ignorant of our true nature. The fundamental social problem is that our individual and collective awareness gets manipulated in ways that aggravate rather than relieve *dukkha*. We are all victims of such manipulations which have become institutionalized and taken on a life of their own. Our leaders or rulers have been so preoccupied with gaining and wielding the ring of power that they don't realize what their lust for that ring has done to them. Sympathy for

perfections (*paramitas*) that *bodhisattvas* develop include *kshanti* (patience) and *virya* (persistence). These are essential for self-less social action. We don't expect to be rewarded for what we do or gratified by what we have achieved. We should not expect to see the fruits of our labors, but neither are we free to give up the work. Although this can be frustrating, it accords with Buddhist emphasis on nonattachment and "just this!" This moment is not to be sacrificed for a future one – for example, some social utopia that may or may not be just around the corner. What is happening right here and now is whole and complete in itself, even

...IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT BUDDHISM TRACES OUR COLLECTIVE SUFFERING BACK TO DELUSION, NOT TO EVIL.

willing to use violence in pursuit of what they see as economic and political gain. This is a difficult issue, however, and we can expect a diversity of opinion among engaged Buddhists because the best approach cannot be determined simply by invoking some dharmic principle that trumps all other considerations.

Although nonviolence may not make a social struggle easier or more successful, it incorporates an essential issue: not merely wresting power from others who are misusing it but challenging their delusions in ways that might prompt them to rethink what they think they know. The righteous anger that often incites resistance movements is understandable, to say the least, yet from a Buddhist perspective hatred is never a skillful response. According to one Tibetan metaphor, wanting to hurt someone is like picking up a burning coal in one's bare hand in order to throw it at someone else.

In deciding how to respond to such situations, it is important to remember that Buddhism traces our collective *dukkha* back to delusion, not to evil.

their plight must not deflect us from working to achieve justice for their victims, but Buddhism is not concerned with one side to the exclusion of the other. *Bodhisattvas* vow to do whatever is necessary to help awaken everyone.

Awakening together.

Contrary to the way that the *bodhisattva* path is often understood, Buddhist social engagement is not about deferring our own happiness to help others who are less fortunate. That just reinforces a self-defeating (and self-exhausting) dualism between them and us. Rather, we join together to improve the situation for all of us. As one aboriginal woman put it: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up with mine, then let us work together." The point of the *bodhisattva* path is that none of us can be fully awakened until everyone "else" is also awakened. If we are not really separate from each other, our destinies cannot really be separated from each other. The difficult world situation today means that sometimes *bodhisattvas* need to manifest their compassion in more politically engaged ways. The six

as we devote ourselves to addressing its *dukkha*. That is the daily practice of a *bodhisattva*. Such an attitude, along with emphasis on one's personal spiritual practice, is the key to avoiding the exhaustion and burn-out that plagues social activists.

Impermanence and insubstantiality.

These two Buddhist principles have special implications for social transformation. Everything is related to everything else and changes as they change. Impermanence means that no problem is intractable since it is part of larger processes that are constantly evolving, whether or not we notice. My generation grew up during a cold war that would never end, until suddenly it did. Apartheid in South Africa seemed inflexible and implacable, but below the surface tectonic plates were gradually shifting and one day that social system collapsed. These characteristics are not always encouraging: things can slowly worsen too, and solutions as well as problems are impermanent. It depends on us to understand how things are changing and how to respond to those changes.

That highlights two other principles: non-dogmatism and *upaya* “skillful means.” Shakyamuni Buddha’s own flexibility and Buddhism’s lack of dependence upon any fixed ideology implies the pragmatism of *praxis*. We build whatever raft will work to ferry us to the other shore, and we don’t carry it around on our backs. Non-attachment allows for the openness and receptivity which awakes *upaya*: imaginative solutions that leap outside the ruts our minds usually circle in.



To sum up, what is distinctively Buddhist about socially engaged Buddhism? Emphasis on personal spiritual practice, commitment to non-violence, the flexibility implied by impermanence and non-substantiality, along with the realization that ending our own *dukkha* requires us to address the *dukkha* of everyone else as well. While we need to address the militarization of our society and the ecological impact of our economy, Buddhism has something more distinctive to offer with its critique of

the ways that our collective awareness has become trapped and manipulated. One place to start is by challenging

the pervasive role of advertising, but in order to do that effectively I think that we will eventually find ourselves addressing the institutionalized social *dukkha* perpetrated and perpetuated by our globalizing, corporation-dominated economic system.

We may well feel overwhelmed by such a prospect, so it is important to

remember that any role socially engaged Buddhists might play will be minor, as part of a much larger movement for peace and social justice that has already begun to develop in the same direction. This movement has many faces and involves many different perspectives. Buddhist emphasis on the liberation of our collective attention suggests that a socially-awakened Buddhism might have a distinctive role to play in clarifying the basic problem and assisting in the transformations that are needed if we are to survive and thrive throughout this century.

David R. Loy is Besl Family Professor of Religion and Ethics at Xavier University in Cincinnati. He is the internationally renowned author of numerous books and scholarly articles on engaged Buddhism, many of which have been translated into French and German. Of particular interest to those of our readers who enjoyed this article might be *Money, Sex, War, Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution* and *Buddhist History of the West, Studies in Lack*.

5 SKANDHAS FACTORIAL CHART

"Ordinary sentient beings take the five skandhas to be the self. Hinayana practitioners consider the five skandhas to be other than the self. Mahayana practitioners, however, are of the understanding that while it is true that the skandhas are not the self, it is equally true that the self cannot be separated from the skandhas."
--Master Sheng Yen.

How It Works: First there is form. When we make contact with form we have feeling (often translated as sensation), that is, what we feel or sense as pleasant, painful, or neutral. Next is perception, the ideas we have about it. Then comes volitional formations, impulses to act based on past experiences (karma). And finally there is consciousness, the naming.

FORM [RUPA]

- Form or matter, materiality
- Internal or external, within one's body or outside of it
- Something that offers resistance to the senses
- Comprised of the Four Elements: earth, air, fire, and water
- Becomes a sense object only when contact by a sense organ

FEELING (SENSATION) [VEDANA]

- First contact through the six individual sense-consciousnesses arises from contact between a sense organ and a sense object
- Includes three modes of cognition (positive, negative, and neutral) which condition our responses
- Essential to understanding the Theravada idea of saving all sentient beings!
- Takes place through the six sense organs (which are themselves *rupa*!)

PERCEPTION (COGNITION) [SANNA]

- The subjecting of the three modes of cognition (positive, negative, and neutral) to conceptualizations and associations
- Cognition of patterns takes place: color, shape, motion, etc., which leads to recognition of objects
- Arises from the sixth consciousness

VOLITIONAL FORMATIONS (FABRICATIONS, DETERMINATIONS, KARMIC CONDITIONING; MENTAL FORMATIONS, HABITS, PRE-DISPOSITIONS) [SANKHARA]

- The karmic latent tendencies which predispose us to perceive or react in certain ways based on previous *vedana*-contact (second *skandha*) and mode assignment
- This is a kind of recognition, a second cognitive recognition
- It might be considered the intend-to-do part of us

CONSCIOUSNESS (BIFURCATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS) [VINNANA]

- Has three aspects: cognition, differentiation, and storage.
- Splits the world into the duality of self and other, experiencer and experienced, establishes delusion from the seventh, the *manas* consciousness, from the eighth, the *alaya* consciousness.

No-Self



In this article, Ayya Khema examines the concept of “self” so that we can deepen our understanding of “no-self,” which is the essence of the Buddha’s teaching.

In Buddhism we use the words “self” and “no-self,” and so it is important to understand just what this “no-self,” *anatta*, is all about, even if it is first just an idea, because the essence of the Buddha’s teaching hinges on this concept. And in this teaching Buddhism is unique. No one, no other spiritual teacher, has formulated no-self in just this way. And because it has been formulated by him in this way, there is also the possibility of speaking about it. Much has been written about no-self, but in order to know it, one has to experience it. And that is what the teaching aims at, the experience of no-self.

Yet in order to experience no-self, one has first to fully know self. Actually know it. But unless we do know what this self is, this self called “me,” it is impossible to know what is meant by “there is no self there.” In order to give something away, we have to first fully have it in hand.



We are constantly trying to reaffirm self. Which already shows that this self is a very fragile and rather wispy sort of affair, because if it weren’t why would we constantly have to reaffirm it? Why are we constantly afraid of the self being threatened, of its being insecure, of its not getting what it needs for survival? If it were such a solid entity as we believe it to be, we would not feel threatened so often.

We affirm self again and again through identification. We identify with a certain name, an age, a sex, an ability, an occupation. “I am a lawyer, I am a doctor. I am an accountant, I

am a student.” And we identify with the people we are attached to. “I am a husband, I am a wife, I am a mother, I am a daughter, I am a son.” Now, in the manner of speech, we have to use self in that way—but it isn’t only in speech. We really think that that self is who we are. We really believe it. There is no doubt in our mind that that self is who we are. When any of these factors is threatened, if being a wife is threatened, if being a mother is threatened, if being a lawyer is threatened, if being a teacher is threatened—or if we lose the people who enable us to retain that self—what a tragedy!

The self-identification becomes insecure, and “me” finds it hard to say “look at me,” “this is me.” Praise and blame are included. Praise reaffirms “me.” Blame threatens “me.” So we like the praise and we dislike the blame. The ego is threatened. Fame and infamy, same thing. Loss and gain. If we gain, the ego gets bigger; if we lose, it gets a bit smaller. So we are constantly in a quandary, and in constant fear. The ego might lose a little bit of its grandeur. It might be made a bit smaller by someone. And it happens to all of us. Somebody is undoubtedly going to blame us for something eventually. Even the Buddha was blamed.

Now the blame that is levied at us is not the problem. The problem is our reaction. The problem is that we feel smaller. The ego has a hard time reasserting itself. So what we usually do is we blame back, making the other’s ego a bit smaller too.

Identification with whatever it is that we do and whatever it is that we have, be it possessions or people, is, so we believe, needed for our

survival. Self survival. If we don't identify with this or that, we feel as if we are in limbo. This is the reason why it is difficult to stop thinking in meditation. Because without thinking there would be no identification. If I don't think, what do I identify with? It is difficult to come to a stage in meditation in which there is actually nothing to identify with any more.

Happiness, too, may be an identification. "I am happy." "I am unhappy." Because we are so keen on survival, we have got to keep on identifying. When this identification becomes a matter of the life or death of the ego, which it usually is, then the fear of loss becomes so great that we can be in a constant state of fear. Constantly afraid to lose either the possessions that make us what we are, or the people that make us what we are. If we have no children, or if they all die, we are no longer a mother. So fear is paramount. The same goes for all other identifications. Not a very peaceful state of living and what is it due to? Only one thing: ego, the craving to be.

This identification results, of course, in craving for possessing. And this possessing results in attachment. What we have, what we identify with, we are attached to. That attachment, that clinging, makes it extremely difficult to have a free and open viewpoint. This kind of clinging, whatever it may be that we cling to—it may not be clinging to motor cars and houses, it may not even be clinging to people—but we certainly cling to views and opinions. We cling to our world view. We cling to the view of how we are going to be happy. Maybe we cling to a view of who created this universe. Whatever it is we cling to, even how the government should run the country, all of that makes it extremely difficult to see things as they really are. To be open-minded. And it is only an open mind which can take in new ideas and understanding.

Lord Buddha compared listeners to four different kinds of clay vessels. The first clay vessel is one that has holes at the bottom. If you pour water into it, it runs right out. In other words, whatever you teach that person is useless.

The second clay vessel he compared to one that had cracks in it. If you pour water into it, the water seeps out. These people cannot remember. Cannot put two and two together. Cracks in the understanding. The third listener he compared to a vessel that was completely full. Water cannot be poured in for it's full to the brim. Such a person, so full of views he can't learn anything new! But hopefully, we are the fourth kind. The empty vessels without any holes or cracks. Completely empty.



I dare say we are not. But may be empty enough to take in enough. To be empty like that, of views and opinions, means a lack of clinging. Even a lack of clinging to what we think is reality. Whatever we think reality is, it surely

is not, because if it were, we would never be unhappy for a single moment. We would never feel a lack of anything. We would never feel a lack of companionship, of ownership. We would never feel frustrated, bored. If we ever do, whatever we think is real, is not. What is truly reality is completely fulfilling. If we aren't completely fulfilled, we aren't seeing complete reality. So, any view that we may have is either wrong or it is partial.

Because it is wrong or partial, and bounded by the ego, we must look at it with suspicion. Anything we cling to keeps us bound to it. If I cling to a table-leg, I can't possibly get out the door. There is no way I can move. I am stuck. Not until I let go will I have the opportunity to get out. Any identification, any possession that is clung to, is what stops us from reaching transcendental reality. Now we can easily see this clinging when we cling to things and people, but we cannot easily see why the five khandhas are called the five clung-to aggregates. That is their name, and they are, in fact, what we cling to most. That is an entire clinging. We don't even stop to consider when we look at our body, and when we look at our mind, or when we

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look at feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness—*vedana, sañña, sankhara,* and *viññana*. We look at this mind-and-body, *nama-rupa*, and we don't even doubt the fact that this is my feeling, my perception, my memory, my thoughts, and my awareness of my consciousness. And no one starts doubting until they start seeing. And for that seeing we need a fair bit of empty space apart from views and opinions.



Clinging is the greatest possessiveness and attachment we have. As long as

we cling we cannot see reality. We cannot see reality because clinging is in the way. Clinging colors whatever we believe to be true. Now it is not possible to say “all right, I'll stop clinging.” We can't do that. The process of taking the “me” apart, of not believing any more that this is one whole, is a gradual one. But if meditation has any benefit and success, it must show that first of all there is mind and there is body. There isn't one single thing acting in accord all the time. There is mind which is thinking and making the body act. Now that is the first step in knowing oneself a little clearer. And then we can note

“this is a feeling” and “I am giving this feeling a name” which means memory and perception. “This is the thought that I am having about this feeling. The feeling has come about because the mind-consciousness has connected with the feeling that has arisen.”

**The
spiritual
path
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Take the four parts of the *khandhas* that belong to the mind apart. When we do that while it is happening—not now when we are thinking about it—but while

it is happening, then we get an inkling that this isn't really me, that these are phenomena that are arising, which stay a moment, and then cease. How long does mind-consciousness stay on one object? And how long do thoughts last? And have we really invited them?

The clinging, the clung-to, are what make the ego arise. Because of clinging the notion of “me” arises and then there is me, and me having all the problems. Without me would there be problems? If there weren't anyone sitting inside

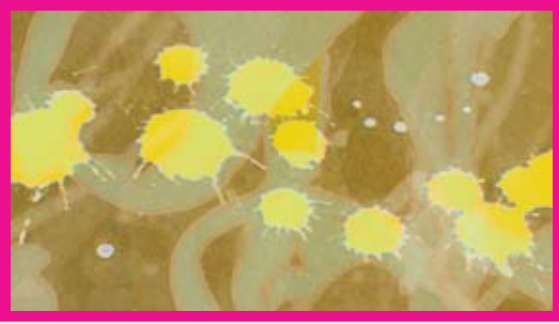
me—as we think there is—who is called I or me or John, Claire, then who is having the problem? The *khandhas* do not have any problems. The *khandhas* are just processes. They are phenomena, and that is all. They are just going on and on and on. But because I am grasping at them, and trying to hold on to them, and saying: “it's me, it's me feeling, it's me wanting,” problems arise.

If we really want to get rid of suffering, completely and totally, then clinging has to go.

The spiritual path is never one of achievement; it is always one of letting go. The more we let go, the more there is empty and open space for us to see reality. Because what we let go of is no longer there, there is the possibility of just moving without clinging to the results of the movement. As long as we cling to the results of what we do, as long as we cling to the results of what we think, we are bound, we are hemmed in.

Now there is a third thing that we do: we are interested in becoming something or somebody. Interested in becoming an excellent meditator. Interested in becoming a graduate. Interested in becoming something which we are not. And becoming something stops us from being. When we are stopped from being, we cannot pay attention to what there really is. All this becoming business is, of course, in the future. Since whatever there is in the future is conjecture, it is a dream world we live in. The only reality we can be sure of is this particular moment right now; and this particular moment, as you must be able to be aware of, has already passed and this one has passed and the next one has also passed. See how they are all passing! That is the impermanence of it all. Each moment passes, but we cling, trying to hold on to them. Trying to make them a reality. Trying to make them a security. Trying to make them be something which they are not. See how they are all passing. We cannot even say it as quickly as they are doing it.

There is nothing that is secure. Nothing to hold on to, nothing that is stable. The whole universe is constantly falling apart and coming back together. And that includes the mind and the body which we call “I.” You may believe it or not, it makes no difference. In order to know it, you must experience it; when you experience it,



it's perfectly clear. What one experiences is totally clear. No one can say it is not. They may try, but their objections make no sense because you have experienced it. It's the same thing as biting into the mango to know its taste.

To experience it, one needs meditation.

An ordinary mind can only know ordinary concepts and ideas. If one wants to understand and experience extraordinary experiences and ideas, one has to have an extraordinary mind. An extraordinary mind comes about through concentration. Most meditators have experienced some stage that is different from the one they are used to. So it is not ordinary any more. But we have to fortify that far more than just the beginning stage. To the point where the mind is truly extraordinary. Extraordinary in the sense that it can direct itself to where it wants to go. Extraordinary in the sense that it no longer gets perturbed by everyday events. And when the mind can concentrate, then it experiences states which it has never known before. To realize that your universe constantly falls apart and comes back together again is a meditative experience. It takes practice, perseverance and patience.

And when the mind is unperturbed and still, equanimity, even-mindedness, peacefulness arise. At that time the mind understands the idea of impermanence to such an extent that it sees itself as totally impermanent. And when one sees one's own mind as being totally impermanent, there is a shift in one's viewpoint. That shift I like to compare with a kaleidoscope that children play with. A slight touch and you get a different picture. The whole thing looks quite different with just a slight shift.

Non-self is experienced through the aspect of impermanence, through the aspect of unsatisfactoriness, and through the aspect of emptiness. Empty of what? The word emptiness

is so often misunderstood because when one only thinks of it as a concept, one says "what do you mean by empty?" Everything is there: there are the people, and there are their insides, guts and their bones and blood and everything is full of stuff. And the mind is not empty either. It's got ideas, thoughts and feelings. And even when it doesn't have those, what do you mean by emptiness? The only thing that is empty is the emptiness of an entity.

There is no specific entity in anything. That is emptiness. That is the nothingness. That nothingness is also experienced in meditation. It is empty, it is devoid of a specific person, devoid of a specific thing, devoid of anything which makes it permanent, devoid of anything which even makes it important. The whole thing is in flux. So the emptiness is that. And the emptiness is to be seen everywhere; to be seen in oneself. And that is what is called anatta, non-self. Empty of an entity. There is nobody there. It is all imagination. At first that feels very insecure.

That person that I've been regarding with so much concern, that person trying to do this or that, that person who will be my security, will be my insurance for a happy life — once I find that person — that person does not really exist. What a frightening and insecure idea that is! What a feeling of fear arises! But as a matter of fact, it's just the reverse. If one accepts and bears that fright and goes through it, one comes to complete and utter relief and release.

I'll give you a simile. Imagine you own a very valuable jewel which is so valuable that you place your trust in it so that should you fall upon hard times, it will look after you. It's so valuable that you can have it as your security. You don't trust anybody. So you have a safe inside your house and that is where you put your jewel. Now you have been working hard for a number of years and you think you deserve a holiday. So now, what to do with the jewel? Obviously you cannot take it with you on your seaside holiday. So you buy new locks for the doors to your house and you bar your windows and you alert your neighbors. You tell them about the proposed holiday and ask them to look

An ordinary mind can only know ordinary concepts and ideas.

after you house — and the safe in it. And they say they will, of course. You should be quite at ease and so you go off on your holiday.

You go to the beach, and it's wonderful. Marvelous. The palm trees are swaying in the wind, and the spot you've chosen on the beach is nice and clean. The waves are warm and it's all lovely. The first day you really enjoy yourself. But on the second day you begin to wonder; the neighbors are very nice people, but they do go and visit their children. They are not always at home, and lately there has been a rash of burglaries in the neighborhood. And on the third day you've convinced yourself that something dreadful is going to happen, and you go back home. You walk in and open the safe. Everything is all right. You go over to the neighbors and they ask, "Why did you come back? We were looking after your place. You didn't have to come back. Everything is fine."

The next year, the same thing. Again you tell the neighbors, "Now this time I am really going to stay away for a month. I need this holiday as I've been working hard." So they say, "Absolutely no need to worry, just take off. Go to the beach." So once more you bar the windows, lock the doors, get everything shipshape, and take off for the beach. Again, it's wonderful, beautiful. This time you last for five days. On the fifth day you are

barring of doors and windows and heart and mind is no longer necessary. You can just go and enjoy yourself while you're still in this body. After proper investigation, the frightening aspect of losing this thing that seemed so precious turns out to be the only relief and release from worry that there is.

There are three doors to liberation: the signless, the desireless, and emptiness. If we understand impermanence, *anicca*, fully, it is called the signless liberation. If we understand suffering, *dukkha*, fully, it is the desireless liberation. If we understand no-self, *anatta*, fully, then it is the emptiness liberation. Which means we can go through any of these three doors. And to be liberated means never to have to experience an unhappy moment again. It also means something else: it means we are no longer creating karma. A person who has been completely liberated still acts, still thinks, still speaks and still looks to all intents and purposes like anybody else, but that person has lost the idea that I am thinking, I am speaking, I am acting. Karma is no longer being made because there is just the thought, just the speech, just the action. There is the experience but no experiencer. And because no karma is being made any longer, there is no rebirth. That is full enlightenment. In this tradition, three stages of enlightenment have been classified before one

There are three doors to liberation: the signless, the desireless, and emptiness.

convinced that something dreadful must have happened. And you go home. You go home, and by golly, it has. The jewel is gone. You are in a state of complete collapse. Total desperation. Depressed. So you go to the neighbors, but they have no idea what has happened. they've been around all the time. Then you sit and consider the matter and you realize that since the jewel is gone, you might as well go back to the beach and enjoy yourself!

That jewel is self. Once it is gone, all the burden of looking after it, all the fears about it, all the

comes to the fourth stage, full enlightenment. The first stage, the one we can concern ourselves with, at least theoretically, is called *sotapanna*, stream-enterer. It means a person who has seen nirvana once and has thereby entered the stream. That person cannot be deterred from the path any more. If the insight is strong, there may be only one more lifetime. If the insight is weak, it can be seven more lifetimes. Having seen nirvana for oneself once, one loses some of the difficulties one had before. The most drastic hindrance that one loses is the idea that

this person we call “I” is a separate entity. The wrong view of self is lost. But that doesn’t mean that a *sotapanna* is constantly aware of no-self. The wrong view is lost. But the right view has to be reinforced again and again and experienced again and again through that reinforcement.

Such a person no longer has any great interest, and certainly no belief, in rites and rituals. They may still be performed because they are traditional or that are customary, but such a person no longer believes they can bring about any kind of liberation (if they ever believed that before). And then a very interesting thing is lost: skeptical doubt. Skeptical doubt is lost because one has seen for oneself that what the Buddha taught was actually so. Until that time skeptical doubt will have to arise again and again because one can easily think: “Well, maybe. Maybe it’s so, but how can I be sure?” One can only be sure through one’s own experience. Then, of course, there is no skeptical doubt left because one has seen exactly that which has been described, and having seen it, one’s own heart and mind gives an understanding which makes it possible to see everything else.

Dharma must have as its base the understanding that there is no special entity.

There is continuity, but there is no special entity. And that continuity is what makes it so difficult for us to see that there really isn’t anybody inside the body making things happen. Things are happening anyway. So the first instance of having seen a glimpse of freedom, called stream-entry, makes changes within us. It certainly does not uproot greed and hate—in fact, they are not even mentioned. But through the greater understanding such a person has, the greed and the hate lessen. They are not as strong anymore, and they do not manifest in gross ways, but do remain in subtle ways.

The next stages are the once-returned, then the non-returned, then the *arahant*. Once-returned, one more life in the five-sense world. Non-returned, no human life necessary, and *arahant*, fully enlightened. Sensual desire and hate only go with non-returneds, and complete conceit of self, only with *arahant*.

So we can be quite accepting of the fact that since we are not *arahants*, we still have greed and hate. It isn’t a matter of blaming oneself for having them: it’s a matter of understanding where these come from. They come from the delusion of me. I want to protect this jewel which is me. That is how they arise. But with the continued practice of meditation, the mind can become clearer and clearer. It finally understands. And when it does understand, it can see transcendental reality. Even if seen for one thought-moment, the experience is of great impact and makes a marked change in our lives.



Ayya Khema (1923-1997) was born in Berlin to Jewish parents. In 1938, she escaped from Germany with two hundred other children and was taken to Scotland. Her parents went to China and, two years later, she joined them in Shanghai. With the outbreak of the war, however, the family was put into a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and it was here her father died. Her experiences led her to become a Buddhist nun in Sri Lanka in 1979. She established several Thai forest monasteries and Buddhist centers throughout the world, and wrote twenty-five books on meditation and the Buddha’s teachings, books which have been translated into seven languages. She has served as a model and inspiration for women from all the Buddhist traditions who have sought to revive the practice of women’s monasticism in modern times.

WHAT IS ZEN?



If you think Zen is sitting in meditation, occasionally chanting a sutra, and formally bantering with a roshi, then you have only seen the tip of the iceberg, as **Matsuoka Roshi** explains.

To answer the question, “What Is Zen?” I might say Zen can be compared to an arctic iceberg, floating in the northern seas. To the eye, only the sharp peak is visible while its greatest part lies concealed by the cold water. Zen Buddhism is like this iceberg. To the eye, Zen is often seen as sitting in meditation, chanting a sutra, or perhaps discoursing with a Zen master and receiving his blows in turn. Seen this way, the greatest part of Zen is overlooked and never discovered. It is completely misunderstood. A person may be content with reading numerous books about Zen and then discussing them with their friends to see if they have understood them in the same way. To them, Zen is only intellectual. But Zen cannot be intellectualized! Or, one may think of Zen as sitting quietly for a few minutes so that one can better face the maddening day with a calm mind. To that person, Zen is a tranquilizer. But Zen is more than just a tranquilizer. Or, Zen to some is the cult that must be joined to be modern. To these it is only a status symbol. But Zen does away with distinctions. It may be thought of as a sign of a rebellious artist, or a liberal college student. Lastly, quite often, Zen is something to talk about when the conversation lags. This kind of Zen is not Zen; it is an imitation and far from being known for what it is. This is Zen seen from a distance and from the wrong perspective. It is like seeing only the peak of the iceberg and not knowing what lies beneath the water.

In most monasteries in Japan, a small plaque can be found. The plaque encloses a famed work of calligraphy which was painted by a well-known priest. The words on this plaque contain the essence of Zen.

In English, they might be loosely translated as: “There is nothing. But in this nothingness, there is everything, there are boundless things.”

The plaque refers to *mu* or emptiness, and it explains the boundless power that is to be found in it. The essence of Zen is this emptiness. Seen

“There is nothing. But in this nothingness, there is everything. There are boundless things.”

from afar, Zen is often known by its strict practice of meditation, of cleanliness, by its simplicity, its profundity, its quiet and its action. But these only describe the peak of the iceberg. Underneath is the greatest part, *mu* or emptiness, which must be experienced to be known and must be known to have its infinite power unleashed. In Soto Zen, we seek to know this emptiness. To do so, we practice meditation and we find that it is revealed to us. We believe that an individual who sits in meditation is already in the world of emptiness or enlightenment, but has not yet become aware or experienced it. Knowing and experiencing can be two different things. Your mind may tell you that everything in this world has the potential to become a Buddha, or that all existence is basically the same in its essence, or that mind and matter are merely two aspects of the same existence, but unless you have let your mind go so that there is nothing in it but this emptiness, your knowledge will not become a vital part of you.

It will remain something apart from your everyday life. In Soto Zen, the mind must be made empty so that each moment of the day can be made the most use of. If a person's mind is not empty of distinctions between oneself and others, or of oneself and the outer world, if a person is not free from attachments to their life and to

"Zen is seeking a world free of suffering in this life and not waiting until an afterlife."

the things within it, they will not be able to put their whole power into living a daily life. In Soto Zen, this is what we strive for—living our lives in the present moment, not in the past, and not in the future. An empty mind is not one which is dull, uninformed or uneducated, but one which has known the absolute. Emptiness is the same as the absolute, but it is important not to confuse this with a god. In Zen Buddhism, there is no god. There is only the constant change of the universe and the law of cause and effect. In saying emptiness is the absolute we mean that an experience of emptiness is to know the absolute reality of the universe and to know that everything is one. Objects are not distinguished between in their reality. An individual who has experienced this truth has entered Nirvana or has become enlightened as a Buddha. In their daily life, they are not hampered by anything. They are free and yet abide by the utmost concern for the rights of others. When one's mind becomes empty, an awareness of the oneness of all things enters into it, and one no longer is limited by thoughts of self. One then acts with a spontaneous freedom that is in complete harmony with the world of which one is a part. All one's power can be put into each task. Although one lives a daily life in this world, one does so as a Buddha.

By this time, you may be able to

tell that in Soto Zen we do not distinguish between this life we are presently living and a life after death.

We do not separate our body and its consciousness, personality or spirit, and we do not mention a "soul." As to an afterlife, we give it no mention or concern. We are only concerned with how we live in this moment. Instead of thinking of a cycle of life after life, or of rebirth, or reincarnation after we die, we think only of reincarnation as occurring in this present life. How is this? If you think for a moment, you will realize that everyone has their ups and downs, almost every day. Sometimes we are feeling fine, we are wonderful to ourselves and others and sometimes we have a quick temper and are quarrelsome or actually evil. To put it into Christian terms, sometimes we are an angel and sometimes a devil. To a Soto Zen Buddhist, we can live in heaven or hell every day, depending on how we make our lives. We leave the question of a life after death to the unknown, and only strive to perfect this life.

The power for daily life that lies in Zen is usually unknown to one first learning about Zen. It is the part of the iceberg that is left unseen. But the profundity of Zen can be discovered and lived by anyone; the depth of Zen becomes known to one who has begun to live Zen. Zen is not apart from life like a treatise or doctrine in an orthodox religion. The potential to be a Buddha and the power of Zen lies in each of us, to be discovered by meditation and faithful attention to the tasks of everyday life. Zen is action in harmony with the rhythm of the universe.

In Zen, we believe that this truth can be found within ourselves. We do not put our faith in the Buddha, because he is not a god, but a fine example, and we do not rely on anything outside of

ourselves. Zen is seeking a world free of suffering in this life and not waiting until an afterlife. In Zen, we do not concern ourselves with life after death. We only believe in becoming Buddhas in this life. There are many Buddhas and everyone has the potential within them to become one. A Buddha is awakened, an enlightened one. We also seek to enter into enlightenment, to have our self-centered, clinging desires blown out like the flame of a candle. Enlightenment is to be found in this world. We believe that only ignorance of life's true nature and attachment to that which cannot be had keeps us from it. Meditation clears our minds of this ignorance. In meditation, we come to know our true selves and the true nature of all things. We see the world as always changing and so we understand the futility of clinging to things. We do not expect to keep things that are inevitably changing. We understand that life is constantly changing and so we do not fear either life or death.

Zen Buddhism is the conquering of the fear of death. A Zen Buddhist does not dream of a heaven nor fear a hell. There is no punishment in Zen for wrongdoings, except for the consequences that follow our own acts. A Zen Buddhist believes in cause and effect. Zen also has a highly ethical code. It is a mistake to believe that Zen allows a person to do anything they want because there is no god as in Christianity. Buddhists believe in being kind to others, compassionate, honest, truthful and charitable. They do not believe in stealing, lying or being harmful to beings and other forms of life. And, they do not call it a sin if such things are done. Rather, if a person fails to be perfectly charitable, or compassionate, that is the cause of something happening to them which may not be to their liking. In Zen, we believe that a person makes their own life, and that each person acts with others to make the world. We have a

responsibility to act in a way that will be good for others and ourselves.

Some people wonder about reincarnation or rebirth in Zen.

They have heard of the Hindu concept of being reborn a number of times on the earth, notably in castes, on one's journey up a spiritual ladder to being a Brahman. In Zen, we do not believe this. Instead, we do not concern ourselves with an afterlife and concentrate on this life. But, we do believe it is possible for a person to live many lives, or die and be reborn many times within this life. It is because of cause and effect. What a person does in their life affects their future life; what they have already done in the past, affects their present life. And yet, it is all within their one, earthly life. Their past deeds may have been good, kind, and charitable, so that their present moments are peaceful with a good conscience. But, if their past deeds and motives were bad, selfish, and evil, their conscience may well bother

"There is no punishment in Zen for wrong doings, except for the consequences that follow our own acts."

them at this time. A person cannot escape the consequences of their acts. Each act they commit or omit will have its effect upon them. The result is that psychologically, a person can live several lives in a lifetime. Or they can live several lives in even a moment. In this sense, there is reincarnation in Zen. But only in the sense that the way we live our life has its effect on us, our future and on others. What we do with our lives is very important because it determines our future. Every moment must be made full use of. It can contain an eternity.

To explain this further, we might say that we must live moment by moment.

The future is always uncertain, but the present moment is here right now to be used. We believe in putting our whole selves into whatever we do, each moment. We stress a simple life of daily work and meditation where we can easily learn how to put our whole power into everything we do if we only put our whole power into each momentary task. We put our whole power into cleaning and even picking up a small piece of dust. We put our whole power into each moment of meditation because we appreciate its value for our whole lives. Meditation becomes the foundation for the rest of our waking moments. We do not separate meditation from the rest of our lives. We do not know the future and we do not worry about the past. We only live in this present moment to the fullest and in the best way we know how. Zen teaches this is the world of enlightenment, but that most people are not aware of it. Meditation will make them aware of their own powers, and it will so unify their own spiritual and physical powers that they will be surprised of their own potential.

Zen is not just theoretical. It is highly practical and has led thousands of persons for centuries to a highly spiritual and a healthy physical life, even though it has no religious creed common to most religions. It is a way of living in the present moment, giving many benefits to persons who are sincere and dedicated in following its way. It will make a person's body remain youthful, for this way of moderation is the best thing for it. It will make your mind very alert and calm at the same time, so that you are very little troubled. Your judgment becomes mature and wise because of your calm and quick mind. Your body is filled with the feeling of good health and is elastic like a rubber ball. Your mind is refreshed and you will find happiness in whatever you do. You find the richness of life everywhere. You know your life's

direction and have no hesitancy or fear. You are openhearted and spontaneous. You find that you are in harmony with your surroundings and have little cause for concern. These are just some of the benefits of Zen meditation. When you have practiced meditation for some time you will know them for themselves. The richness of life which they reveal is to be experienced rather than talked about. This is because Zen is a way of experience. It does not rely on a theological doctrine or philosophy, but an individual's experience in silent meditation. It is very suitable to life in this modern age.

The pace today is faster than in the centuries gone by even though we have more leisure time. Perhaps this is the trouble. We must move faster when we are on the go but when our working day is finished we have time on our hands. Some people can never stop and they fill even these leisure hours with numerous activities. These people may never be able to stop themselves from running around from one activity to another, but if they do they find that they cannot be at peace within themselves. If our minds are troubled our lives are troubled. Our ceaseless activity will not calm our minds, but only distract them for a while. This is why Zen is so important for the modern world.

Zen is especially appropriate to the modern world for two reasons. First, Zen does not conflict with the modern scientific spirit of inquiry for it does not present an unchanging religious creed. It is a way of experience, like the way of scientific investigation. And Zen recognizes the nature of change in the universe as one of its basic tenets. Yet Zen is a refuge for people. It gives us a place to relax and to refresh our spiritual life while keeping up with the fast pace of the world. In this Zen is unique. Zen is just as appropriate to the modern world as it was to medieval Japan. It is never outdated. Zen is taking its place in the modern world as a philosophy and a way of life that

is suited to the world's modern spirit of science and unceasing change. While it keeps in step with the fast moving modern world it also provides a sanctuary where one can retreat from the fast pace to the quiet and deep tranquility of meditation. It is a necessary way of life for modern people because those who cannot be at peace with themselves suffer needlessly. Zen moves along with the speed of lightening, along side the most modern of philosophies, yet contains within it an island of calm. This is why Zen is becoming so popular throughout the world. It does not conflict with the modern mind and it actually feeds the modern spirit. It gives us a spiritual foundation suitable to life in a modern, scientific world. It prevents people from becoming like the machines that run their lives and it provides us with deep spirituality that makes us more human. Zen welcomes anyone and enriches their lives in turn.

Let me tell you the story of Zen in ancient Japan. This is the story of O-Nami. O-Nami was a famous wrestler who lived in the Meiji period in old Japan. His name meant "Great Waves." O-Nami was known to have great wrestling skill and to be able to throw even his own teacher when he wrestled away from the eyes of a crowd. But when he had a public bout O-Nami became very bashful and was easily defeated by the younger students. Finally, O-Nami decided that he would consult with a Zen priest about his problem in hopes that he could be helped. By chance, there was a traveling Zen priest by the name of Hakuju visiting the village temple, and O-Nami hurried to see him to explain his woe. The priest listened patiently to the sorrowful wrestler and was very sympathetic towards him. His advice to O-Nami was to sit quietly in meditation in the temple that night to imagine he was what his name signified: Great Waves. At that, the Zen priest retired to his room and left O-Nami alone in the temple.

Throughout the night, O-Nami did as he was instructed. He thought and thought, and imagined surging waves that broke on the nearby shore each day. Gradually, O-Nami became less aware of himself and began to feel like the powerful waves of the sea. His mind became empty and what entered in was the awareness of the *Buddha-nature* that was common to both his old self and the rushing water. O-Nami no longer clung to the vision of himself, but gradually imagined himself as the great billows. It was as if the whole temple became flooded with the waves of O-Nami that

night, so deep was his perception of the true form of existence.

The next day, the wandering priest returned to the temple to find O-Nami sitting where he had left him. O-Nami had a sweet smile on his face. The priest knew without asking what had occurred there that night. "Now nothing can disturb you," he said. "You are those waves. You will sweep away everything before you." The same day, O-Nami entered into a wrestling contest and won. He had become so unconscious of his inhibiting self and so intensely aware of the power that he had found in his meditation that he quickly defeated his opponents. After that, no one in Japan could defeat him.

Of course this story is figurative. But, it is meant to show the power that can come from Zen meditation and from a meditative spirit in everyday life. Meditation grows into a spiritual life that each person must have if they are to make the most use of their potential. Without a strong spiritual life a person's efforts in anything they do are all but meaningless. They can be like soap bubbles which appear so beautiful to the eye but in reality are hollow inside and easily burst. True Zen will make a person's life deep, strong and enduring.

There is another story which illustrates the power of Zen in a person's life. This story is about an expert knife-thrower who learned how Zen meditation could help him in his sport. This knife-thrower told how he would meditate in the Zen manner for 60 hours before entering a match of experts. "After my meditation," he said, "it seems as if the bull's eye on the target has grown to ten times its normal size." What he meant by this is that his many hours of Zen meditation made his mind and reflexes so quick that he hit the bull's eye with ease. In fact it was so easy; it was as if the target had grown. But in this case, just as in the story of O-Nami the wrestler, Zen meditation intensified a sports technique. It enabled them to put their undivided attention and whole power into what they were doing.

These stories are examples of how Zen is like an iceberg that is ancient and huge; the iceberg's true dimensions are concealed by the sea. Its huge size

"Zen is especially appropriate to the modern world for two reasons."

largely lies concealed from the eyes. True Zen, when it is known, is beyond words and their labels. Like the iceberg whose true dimensions stretch the imagination, Zen can only be truly known and appreciated when its depth has been experienced.

To end my introduction to Soto Zen, I would like to tell you one more Zen story. In this story, a man is hanging over the edge of a cliff and his only hold on life is by his teeth. His teeth are clenched on a branch of a tree. His hands are full and his feet cannot reach the face of the cliff to hang on. Another man happens to come by and leans over to ask him, "What is Zen?" What answer should the man make? Can he let go of his only hold to answer the question with words? Can he fully explain it with the gestures of his hands? Dr. Suzuki once said that some people "go round and round on the surface of the mind without stopping." He added, "But Zen goes deep." "Westerners," says Dr. Suzuki, "have a habit of thinking dialectically in terms of "either-or" or in positive or negative. Zen sees only one instead of two. Westerners analyze things, but in the East we see a thing all at once and with our whole bodies, instead of just our minds." This is the experience Zen gives. It is a way of deep understanding without words. What should the man answer to the question, "What Is Zen?" Or should he answer it at all? The answer to the question, "What is Zen?" cannot be explained fully in words. The answer is to be found in Zen meditation and a Zen life. It reveals itself in the clear, alert mind and in the fearless spirit. This small story reveals the profundity of Zen. The question, "What is Zen?" must be answered for yourself in the deep calm of meditation. You will find that Zen is not out of date. It is relevant to all walks of life. You will find it is truly the way of living enlightenment.

"Westerners," says Dr. Suzuki, "have a habit of thinking dialectically in terms of "either-or" or in positive or negative. Zen sees only one instead of two."



Rev. Soyu Matsuoka(1912-1997) is considered pivotal in propagating the dharma in America. He established the Zen Buddhist Temple of Chicago, and the Zen Center of Long Beach (Zen Buddhist Temple), as well as Zen centers in Detroit, Atlanta, and Phoenix. A recently published book of this influential Zen master's early dharma talks, *The Kyosaku*, is available from the Atlanta Soto Zen Center at www.aszc.org.



IN MEMORIAM

CHIA THENG SHEN DIES IN NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 2007.

A SUCCESSFUL MAN

The Buddhist Association of the United States (BAUS), an organization dedicated to promoting Chinese Buddhism in America, the Chuang Yen monastery in New York, and the Buddhist Text Translation Society in California exist largely because of the vision and generosity of Chia Theng Shen, who died at his home on the grounds of Chuang Yen this past November at the age of 93.

Shen was born in 1913 in Chekiang, China, and after a successful business career there, moved to the United States in 1952. He had always been spiritually drawn to Buddhism, even as a child, but when he came to the United States he began to study Buddhism seriously. As his personal practice deepened, he dedicated himself to spreading the Buddhadharma. Shen's efforts and financial support led to the formation of BAUS in 1964, and the Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions in 1971. Believing that the accurate translation and publication of the Buddhist scriptures was essential, he donated a property in San Francisco to Master Hsuan Hua to establish the Buddhist Text Translation Society.

But not all of his efforts were institutional, and there was a genuine personal warmth and deep-seated humility that pervaded Shen's nature. While he often lectured at major dharma centers around the world, he always made time to talk school children as well. And he quietly supported and encouraged monastics in America. One of those monks was the young Ji Ru Shi, who first came to the United States at Shen's invitation, and who would later become abbot of Chuang Yen Monastery and Enlightenment Temple, and then abbot of the Mid-America Buddhist Association.

Shen fled from the Communists in 1948 and made his fortune by shipping oil from the Persian Gulf to Taiwan. He was the chairman of the American Steamship Company and a business partner of Charles E. Wilson, who became the Secretary of Defense during Eisenhower's presidency.

Reviewing his life, Shen made the following statement in *Who's Who in America*: "To benefit all human beings and to work toward freeing them from fear is my goal. To the extent that I succeed in this endeavor, I consider my life successful." *Shen Jushi*, as he was called, was, by that standard, a very successful man.

In his memory we now rededicate and renew our efforts on behalf of the dharma.

KOAN PRACTICE:

The Awe and Wonder We All Know



As **Sensei Sevan Ross** explains here, koan practice is not for everyone, but for those whose karma has brought them to koans, it can open the gate to direct awareness.



In the practice of Zen (*Chan* in the Chinese) we generally find two schools of training. The Soto School (*Caodung* in Chinese) tends toward what might be called an organic exploration of Mind, *shikintaza*, “just sitting” with nothing in the mind. Here one allows the mind to settle in the deep faith that insight into the true self will result. We could say that one “starves” the discursive mind, not so much through any overt action or operation of the will upon the mind, but through the continual turning away from the information (and therefore opinion) stream that constantly flows through the mind. If we do not feed the beast, the beast becomes weaker and weaker until it can no longer assert its will upon the meditator. When the mind becomes still enough, the self is seen through, or, more accurately, the self becomes irrelevant. It would be incorrect and unfair to assert that a special state of “mind emptiness” has to exist prior to insight into one’s true nature, as is often asserted, even though that is often the case.

In the Rinzai (Chinese, *Lin Chi*) school, things are done somewhat differently. Here koans are used. We should note that there are quite a few Soto lines which actually do genuine koan work, and in fact it is from within one of these schools that I write, since my own background is that of a Zen practitioner who has gone through extensive koan training in two different strands of the Harada-Yasutani Line, a Soto line steeped in the traditional Rinzai koan curriculum.

The koan curriculum is a very different practice institution from the *shikintaza* and similar practices. First of all, it should be noted that when we discuss koan study in this framework we are not speaking of the common practice of examining the contents of various koan cases

in some sort of discussion group. This practice is surprisingly common within Soto temples, and it leads to some confusion when koan training is considered by the untrained eye.

Koans are spiritual puzzles which are transformative only when lived out of one’s experience, and this living out has a specific form—the koan demonstration.

And this demonstration has currency only so long as it is performed for and approved by a Zen master who has had a similar demonstration approved by their own teacher—all the way back to the beginning of the formal use of these questions to test the student’s understanding of some aspect of the great matter. While there may be some benefit to studying koans, rather like forms of poetry in a literature discussion, it cannot be asserted seriously that doing so will allow one to undergo the profound change of awakening or enlightenment simply from arriving at a literary or metaphorical understanding of koans, no matter how profound the resulting “insights” may seem.

In koan practice we are speaking of a true curriculum—a system of more-or-less progressive problems which are given to the student by the master in order to pry open the mind. The student’s ability to actively demonstrate the heart of a given koan comes from that student’s embodiment of the spirit of the koan, and this embodiment is not possible if the student is trapped by knowledge of any kind—the student cannot even be there to “know”; the student must disappear into the koan, must so thoroughly absorb the koan that no trace of “self” remains; and the student must do this openly before the master in the interview room.

Why would one embark on such an arduous journey?

If one fails a koan demonstration, one must wholeheartedly continue work on questioning the koan until one can present it to the master's satisfaction. Each koan should be seen as a unique examination of the great matter. Each is necessary, and all are needed. In our lineage there are several hundred of these questions to take up, and all of these must be done for one's training in koans to be considered complete. It may take many years to demonstrate the insight to pass even the first koan. Not all students pass koans, and not many ever complete the entire curriculum. This is a constantly assessing, demonstrable system of spiritual practice. It is difficult and rigorous. It is not for the faint of heart.

So why would one embark on such an arduous journey? Imagine two people standing under a tree which bears the fruit of awakening. One waits patiently while the fruit ripens in the deep faith that that fruit will fall when it is ready. The other is afraid that death will arrive before the ripened fruit and prefers to shake the tree. The later will get fruit first, but the fruit may well not be ripe, while the former will get ripe fruit, but may not get it in time. There is no wrong or right here, just different temperaments. For some practitioners, their karma leads to naturally quieting the mind, *shikintaza*, and for others to the pursuit of the truth to the point of forcing the issue through deep questioning.

Notice that earlier it was stated that one "questions" the koan. This means that the practitioner actually examines the assigned koan in a profound spirit of inquiry. Questioning is not a trying to "figure out" of the koan, like one would figure out the meaning of a play in school by analyzing the characters. Take the first case in the *Mumonkan*, "Joshu's Mu." The case goes

like this: "A monk, in all sincerity, asked Master Joshu, 'Does the dog have Buddhature?' Joshu answered, *Mu*."

When first assigned this case almost every practitioner labors under the weight of the discursive mind. They try to figure out what to do with it. Is there a special meaning to *mu*? Why doesn't Joshu answer the question properly? Is there something special about dogs here? On and on, blind street after bad road we go. They try to deal with the historical question. They look to Buddhist doctrine. They consider a subplot. As they present one terrible response after another to the teacher in the interview room and get "rung out" with his or her hand bell they first become frustrated, and then begin to panic. Interview after interview they continue to have nothing to show. If they are lucky it starts to dawn on them that they are not engaging some essential gear here, that they have been skimming across the surface of the case and that their job must be to present *mu* to the teacher right here and now, as a living reality which is in no way trapped by the circumstantial context of the koan. Once they have arrived at this understanding of their mission they can really begin to question the case. And this order of questioning is radically different from the questioning assumed by the beginner or the casual observer.

But the nature of the questioning that is at the bottom of koan work is not nearly so foreign to us as we may think. When students hear that they have to "go deeper" over and over again they may wonder exactly how one does this, or even what is meant by this "deeper." And yet, ironically, they do know what is meant and how to do it, even though they can't explain it.

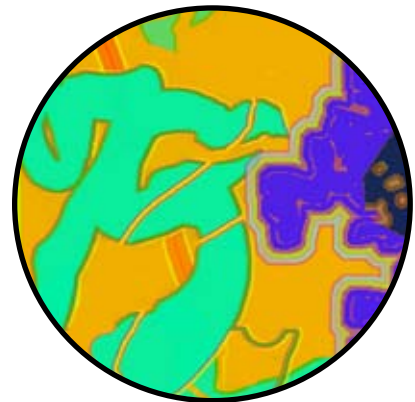
As it turns out, this deep inquiry is both familiar and natural to all of us. We have known it our whole lives and it has often manifested right before us, although not usually in lasting or highly visible ways. This questioning is our own innate and fundamental inquiry about the very nature of life, death, and the observable world, the universe itself.

As it turns out, this deep inquiry is both familiar and natural to all of us.

We have all always wanted to understand the world in a primary way, down under all the scientific and philosophical questions. We form questions, surely. They take the shape of religious inquiry, or philosophical interrogations. Who are we? What purpose does life have? What is the universe? Is there a god? Why must I live, suffer, and finally die? Why is life so unsatisfactory, confusing, brutal, and short?

But if we were to either deconstruct these questions and seek out their commonality, or we were to roll them all into a huge and context-less ball of fundamental inquiry, we would discover that there is a root of inquiry which does not even have a name or form. It is the wonder of a child who crushed a leaf and looks at it in awe. It is all the unspoken inquiry that is fundamental to making us human, and we have always known it. Koans, and most especially our first koan, give this inquiry teeth. For the first time in our life there is an all-embracing question, a question so simple and profound that it houses all our other questions, both formed and unformed. We no longer seek to answer it with hollow religious doctrine, nor do we attempt to bury it under things, position, love, success, or well-adjusted children. Koan inquiry puts us squarely in the game. The race with death is afoot. Our primary purpose—to deeply understand—has been engaged.

All of us have this root inquiry. Those whose karma is ripe in the right way may shape it into a koan and begin to directly seek. But koan practice is not for everyone. To some it feels rather forced and artificial. To others however it is the right tool for opening the great secret, and now it is here now.



Sensei Sevan Ross was ordained in 1992 at the Rochester Zen Center. In 1996 he became director of the Chicago Zen Center, and in May of 2007 he received dharma transmission in the Rinzai lineage from Ford Roshi. He is a member of the American Zen Teachers Association.



the 5 hindrances

Overcoming the five hindrances is our practice, on many different levels, as we see in this article by Burmese meditation master, **Venerable Sujiva**.

Anyone who meditates encounters the hindrances in their full force, usually in the beginning phases of practice or in the first few days of a long retreat. The hindrances are five kinds of mental defilements. They are:

1. **Sensory desire**
2. **Ill-will**
3. **Sloth and torpor**
4. **Restlessness and remorse/worry**
5. **Doubts**

In order to develop concentration powerful enough to act as a base for insight, we have to overcome the force of the hindrances. This takes time and practice. First we have to spend enough time working with the hindrances building our success in overcoming them. Then our concentration can develop to such a degree that finally our practice will be strong enough to begin to develop insight. In order to overcome the hindrances we need to develop mindfulness. The way we develop mindfulness is in practicing to overcome the hindrances.

These initial difficulties should not be unexpected. As beginners in practice we're not very skilled at maintaining mindfulness. In the beginning of a retreat, we are breaking away from our normal practice and submitting ourselves to the more rigorous routine

of the retreat. Though this initial phase is critical; we don't want the hindrances to linger while we try to build up our concentration. We must be careful not to have wrong concentration. Patience is essential. Meditators should not push themselves. Only this way, through patient practice, do we allow ourselves to cultivate mindfulness and be freed from the hindrances. The safest way is to allow mindfulness to be cultivated with the least amount of stress.

When the hindrances do arise, there are two kinds of methods for overcoming them:

1. **Vipassana methods**
 - **Mindfulness is applied to the hindrance**
 - **Mindfulness is applied to objects other than the hindrance**
2. **Non-vipassana methods:**
 - **Development of opposing wholesome mental states**
 - **Creating conditions conducive to pure states of mind**

1 **SENSORY DESIRE** **(KAMACHANDA)**

Sensory desires are cravings for, attachment to, or indulgence in the five sense objects and the thoughts

connected with them with regard to their beauty, pleasantness, and so forth.

We are born into a world delighting in and enjoying these senses and sense objects—beautiful pictures, great music, irresistible perfumes, gourmet food, soft warm clothes and a barrage of sensuous thoughts. We pay a significant price for the fleeting pleasure and joy they provide. This hindrance is often compared to incurring a debt because of the high cost of our suffering before and after the brief moment of pleasure. Yet that brief moment of pleasure brings us no peace. It's exciting perhaps, but not truly peaceful.

It is easier for us to see sensory desires by taking note of them as they arise. During retreats the observation of precepts helps to minimize attractions and distractions, but even there our sensory desires are still active; the desire arises to look around, to listen, to talk. We should be mindful of it by noting the "desire" or the "craving" when it arises, making certain that we are noting mindfully the mental state and not the object. The presence of sensory desire itself indicates that the mind is weak. If we can develop our mindfulness, make it strong and continuous, then desires will no longer arise. We need to make sure that we note the sensory desire with detachment otherwise we slip back into attachment inadvertently. If we can do this, we'll find that craving or sensory

desire is one thing, and the pleasure that may accompany it, is another.

This pleasure lasting only a brief moment then passing away, is uplifting and exciting but still only a cover hiding our real mental state, that of attachment and suffering. If you can be mindful of this sensory desire, mindful of its attachment to the object, you will see that it's unsatisfactory and also true suffering. It's a relentless, hungry state, always desiring attachment, often compared to a hungry ghost. It's a burning state so we say, "There is no fire like lust."

Through mindfulness sensory desires fade away soon enough. Mindfulness and sensory desire cannot exist at the same time. The more we practice with mindfulness the more sensory desire ceases to arise. As we see the real nature of desire, it begins to lose its appeal. The trouble is, sometimes we still crave sensory pleasures. Through right understanding and a resolution to overcome desire, by letting go of indulgence in it, we shall be freed from it.

This method of watching the mental hindrance directly serves two purposes:

1. **Purifying the mind of the defilement**
2. **Understanding the true nature of the hindrance with regards to the three universal characteristics: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self.**

Watching sensory desire directly will also reveal other things that can help us overcome it. For example, we can see the conditions that bring about the many varied forms of such desire, the conditions that maintain it, and the conditions that bring about its dissolution. One of the main conditions for desire arising is the presence of an attractive object. As such, mindfulness of the six senses contributes greatly to the prevention and overcoming of sensory desires.

Craving can only arise when we are not mindful of the attractive object at our sense door. By noting "seeing," "hearing" and so forth when sensory desire arises, we bring our mindfulness to bear on it and bring about its demise. Developing our awareness that the desire or the pleasure it brings is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and non-self helps to dissolve it too.

There will be times when the attractive object is very dominating. At such times, it may be better to willfully ignore it, shifting our attention to another object that helps to generate mindfulness. For a *vipassana* practitioner, one can first note the object as a *vipassana* object, that is, with the aim to purify the mind by understanding the true nature of the object. For example, when a meditator experiences a pleasant state of mind, he or she may become attached to it after some time. After a period of watching it, if the feeling of attachment doesn't subside but instead remains as strong as ever, you are advised to shift your attention to a less attractive object—such as "rising" and "falling" of the abdomen or the "sitting" and "touching" sensations.

This method of ignoring can be seen in the rather humorous advice given by the Buddha to Ananda with regard to monks' behavior towards women:

"How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regards to womankind?"
"As not seeing them,"
Ananda. "But if we should see them, what are we to do?"
"Not talking," Ananda. "But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?"
"Keep awake, Ananda."



Other methods of overcoming sensory desire include meditation on conceptual objects to help develop a mental state in opposition to desire. For example, in trying to overcome lust of the body, you can do *asubha bhavana*, contemplation on the 32 parts of the body, the cemetery contemplations and so on. If greed for food is the problem, then developing the perception of loathsomeness of food may help. We can also contemplate on the loathsomeness and danger of attachment to other objects. How these contemplations are done does not, unfortunately, come within the scope of this article. Please speak to a qualified teacher to learn these, and to learn when they are appropriate and beneficial.

How much time you want to spend on these practices depends on your individual temperament. Usually it doesn't take very long to overcome the hindrances and return to *vipassana*



proper. Of course the more time you spend on them, the more your concentration will increase, and this requires additional skill in handling the mind.

Other non-*vipassana* ways of combating sensory desires include the thirteen austerities or ascetic practices of monk. For example, a monk may choose to observe having only three robes, a practice of contentment with regard to wardrobe. Lay people can follow the lead here, although I am not suggesting you have only three sets of clothing yet clearly the practice advocates restraint in regard to our clothing. Another practice is to associate ourselves with those living lives of simplicity and to dissociate ourselves from the greedy.

2 ILL-WILL (VYAPADA)

The second hindrance, ill-will, refers to the angry state of mind. It is a violent state of mind that seeks to destroy the welfare and happiness of oneself and others. It can come in many forms and is easier to detect than sensory desire because of its gross nature, as well as the unpleasant feeling that comes with it. As in all defilements, it is easier to overcome when detected early. We note mindfully “anger, anger,” or “fear” or “jealousy”—whichever form it appears. While noting, one should remain as calm and firm as possible. Being mindful of anger is like driving along a bad, winding road full of potholes and rocks. One has to be very alert, steady and firm. Being mindful of ill-will is like mediating between two violently feuding groups; one must remain calm but not become so lax that one gets clobbered by both sides.

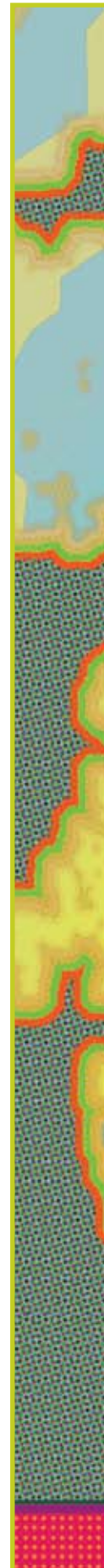
If we can be mindful of the characteristics of anger, savageness, or harm to its object, we will see that it is a very unsatisfactory state of mind. Yet people who bear grudges cling to these adverse mental states, never willing to let go. Anger is never justified. See its true nature and drop it like a hot potato.

One should also watch it detached from the concept of “I,” “mine,” etc., until the anger vanishes altogether. If you can think, “there is anger,” instead of “I am angry,” or “here is my anger,” this may help you separate the anger from the object of the anger. If the anger still stays, one will have to resort to other tactics, such as shifting one’s mind to another *vipassana* object.

One of the main conditions for the arising of anger is the repulsive object. A common repulsive object encountered by meditators is pain. Painful physical sensations are often objects of *vipassana*. After all, pain or *dukkha* is one of the three universal characteristics of existence to be realized. My Burmese Teacher used to encourage meditators to make heroic efforts to watch pain. No other teachers say that pain is a good friend of the meditator, but it’s true. No matter how we look at it, we have to be patient when watching pain.

Most of the unpleasant objects we encounter in the course of daily life can easily be handled with mindfulness, that is, if we make an effort to note them as soon as they arise. However, there are times when we may have to use other methods as our mindfulness and insight may still not be matured enough. Depending on the nature of the ill-will, the opposing mental state can be aroused. For simplicity, we can divide ill-will into three categories:

1. **Ill-will towards living beings**
2. **Sadness, sorrow, and lamentation**
3. **Fear**



Ill-Will Towards Living Beings

There can be a variety of reasons why a person would bear ill-will towards another. But none of them can be considered justifiable. These emotions of ill-will can become so very deep that one may consider murdering one's enemy. The development of the sublime abodes would help one to overcome ill-will. Meditation on lovingkindness can overcome anger and hatred towards any being. We can develop compassion towards suffering beings that overcomes cruelty. There is the meditation on developing sympathetic joy towards which is directed at happy beings. There is also the development of equanimity, in which we develop the ability to greet each moment with the same calm mental attitude. Besides overcoming the hindrances and gaining concentration of mind, there are manifold benefits to be gained by practicing these meditations.



Sadness, Sorrow and Lamentation

These are unhappy states of mind that are usually brought about in the event of separation from or loss of what is near and dear to us. These may be property or loved ones. The deeper and stronger the attachment, the more painful it will be when the time for separation comes.

Meditation on equanimity helps to appease these sorrows. Here we reflect on karma and its results with regard to others and ourselves. We can also reflect on the eventual coming of birth, old age, sickness and death. Mindfulness, when employed in such contemplations, should be very detached.

Fear

We fear the unknown, ghosts, mad men, heights, disease, and so on. There is a whole range of phobias and paranoia from which people suffer. Panic, shivering, and confusion characterize fear. Mindfulness engaged to note it should be very firm to hold the shaking mind for a sufficiently long period of time. Confidence and courage are helpful. So when one is at a loss, one can quickly resort to the recollection of the virtues of the triple gem—the Buddha, dharma and sangha. Frequent recollection of the triple gem also arouses a lot of joy.

What about other supportive conditions to overcome ill-will? The meditation manual, *Path of Purification*, suggests pleasant weather, pleasant

dwelling, pleasant means in search of food, pleasant people, pleasant postures and so on for the hateful temperament. The pattern there can be adapted to modern life and choices of supportive conditions.

3 SLOTH (THINA) AND TORPOR (MIDDHA)

Thina refers to the unwieldiness and indisposition of the mind, like one refusing to move, to do work or refusing to start to note mindfully in one's meditation. *Middha* refers to those same conditions in mental factors. In such a state, the heavy and cloudy mind envelops, enshrouding the meditator, who finally dozes off to sleep.

These two arise together and make one rather weak—like a sick man who cannot sit up for long or walk straight. This mental tiredness is to be differentiated from physical fatigue. From experience, it has been found that for a normal person during an intensive retreat, four hours of sleep is sufficient for the body to recover from physical fatigue (from the day's meditation). Of course, some may disagree, especially as we have been told a person needs at least seven to eight hours of sleep a day. I do not think this applies to normal meditators. But it can be readily agreed that the body must have its rest (much as some enthusiastic meditators would like to do without), especially when one's practice is not deep enough to go into deep absorptions for long periods of time.

We must learn to promptly note sleepiness when it arises. Often, we are not aware of it until we are badly affected. Sloth and torpor contribute to a weak, blurred, still and dull state of mind. So, some skills need to be acquired to overcome it. Two points to remember in noting sloth and torpor are:

1. Sharp Perception of Its Characteristic

- Here one cannot be contented with just being mindful. One should note sharply and precisely the nature of sleepiness—an unwieldy, drowsy, heavy state of mind. Only by first noting its specific characteristics can one later detect its general characteristics—its passing away.

2. Noting Energetically

(Energy and effort are opposed to sloth and torpor.)
Energy can be developed through:

- Contemplation on the virtues of the triple gem and the energetic endeavor of the Buddha and his disciples to abound inspiration for oneself; reflections on the danger of sloth (such as being reborn in the woeful states) and benefits of energy.
- Making a strong resolution to note energetically to overcome the hindrance. The energy aroused should be light—not heavy—and smoothly flowing.
- Increased initial application of mind to the object. This can be brought about by the increased number of notings, continuously without a break and at a rapid pace. Such notings can be especially effective if applied to clearer and grosser objects such as pain or the touch points. For example, one may note the touch points—three or more—in a systematic and rhythmical manner to increase the momentum of the mindfulness. If sleepiness still persists, one can get up and do walking meditation with an increased but clear pace.

Standing meditation has been recommended for meditators frequently plagued by obstinate bouts of drowsiness. It has been found to be quite effective as a lot of energy is required to maintain one's meditation in the standing posture.

Methods other than *vipassana* in overcoming sloth include the development of perception of light. The nature of light is bright and expanding as opposed to sloth and torpor. The practice involves *kasina* meditations. Meditating in a bright, open room is also helpful. Thinking and reciting the dharma also stimulates the mind to be active. Suitable conversation falls within this method. Then, there is washing the face, bathing or rubbing the hands and pulling the ears. They are also effective to some degree. If everything fails, some meditators resort to sitting in a very uncomfortable posture to cause the arising of pain. This may sound surprising but it is not as bad as those who are asked to meditate at edges of cliffs where the chance of falling and doing real harm to oneself is quite real.

4 RESTLESSNESS AND REMORSE (UDDHACCA AND KUKKUCA)

Uddhacca means restlessness and *kukkucca* means remorse. They refer to the turbulent and flurried state of mind that is running in all directions and is occupied with a great many matters, causing the meditator to become distracted and be unable to settle down to do his or her work of mindfulness.

This state of mind will occur in a beginner though he may not be consciously aware of his mind's wanderings. He is therefore reminded to make a point to note it as soon as his mind has wandered. Since his mindfulness is not yet sharp, he will have to note "thinking" or "wandering" until it ceases altogether. Again, the thinking, etc., should not be allowed to go on for too long, say, more than one or two minutes. If thinking or wandering persists, one should force one's mind back to watch one's primary object. If one is able to watch this hindrance well, one will also know the various types of restlessness, how it arises according to conditions, how it proceeds on and then ceases.

If one watches the restless and thinking mind, there may seem to be no coherence, but on close scrutiny one finds that the restlessness often revolves around some unsettled or troubling points. It is like one or two stones thrown into the water, giving rise to many ripples and minor disturbances. Here, we shall attempt to discover some of the causes of this hindrance.

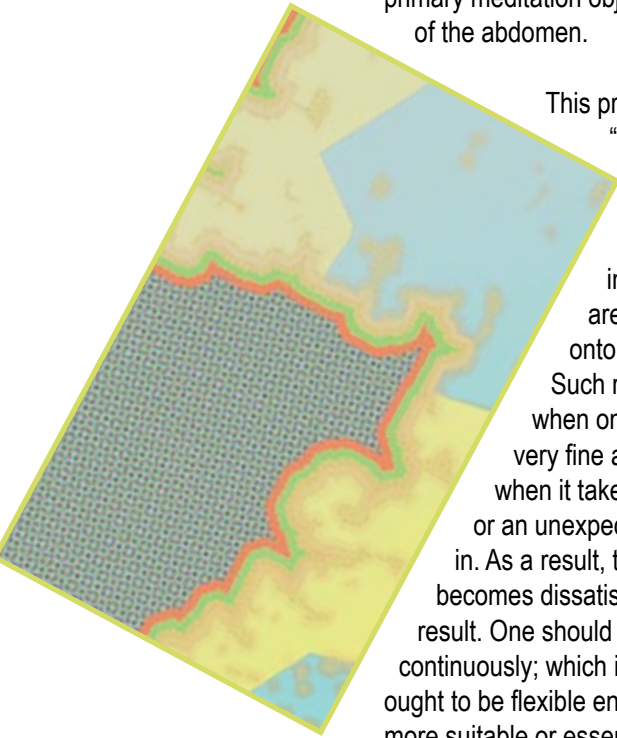
It frequently comes in the form of persistent remorse and worry over things done and left undone. Actually, a lot of these things are not very important and can be brushed aside. After all, there will always be problems to solve or things to be done in this world. Having taken the necessary steps, all we can do is to wait. Remorse and worry will certainly not help. Mindfulness certainly will.

If the restlessness is caused by one particular problem or matter, it is advisable to be on the alert for it. This is like sending yourself an alert to be on the lookout for a culprit that will be running riot in your mind. If you can catch and subdue him, then the problem is solved. Such restlessness may arise many times in a minute; every time it does, it must



be noted. In due time, its strength will weaken and disappear. This method can also be applied to a persistent habit or tune-playing that recurs.

Persistent types of restlessness may arise because of a persistent disturbance present at one of the five sense doors—such as a continuous sound or pain. As a result, one is unable to note clearly one's primary meditation object, such as rising and falling of the abdomen.



This problem falls on those with “square” mindfulness rather than “rounded” mindfulness. That is, people who are rigid and inflexible and also those who are obsessed with holding onto an object for a long time.

Such restlessness can also occur when one's primary object becomes very fine and difficult to note, or when it takes an unexpected change or an unexpected interfering object slips in. As a result, the mind is confused and becomes dissatisfied. Restlessness is the result. One should therefore note mindfully and continuously; which is to say, one's mindfulness ought to be flexible enough to change its object to a more suitable or essential one when required.

The *vipassana* object is a changing object; it also exhibits unsatisfactoriness. Often it neither behaves nor comes about as we would wish it to. Be ready for it!

Another reason why restlessness may occur is that the mind is unbalanced. For example, with too much forcing, the mind becomes over-active. The energy faculty is excessive. Even excessive faith can lead us to this state. In such cases, the relaxing of effort is important.

Last but not least, one may be able to spot the root which gives rise to the restlessness. There are these three evil roots—greed, anger, and delusion—which, when noted precisely, will disappear. It is more difficult for the practice if the three roots are not recognized when they arise.

The greed, etc., which causes the restlessness may still be present even though the more active thinking has ceased. One should try to watch

mindfully until it ceases altogether. Then the mind will be clearly rid of the hindrance. When abruptly freed of restlessness and worry, the mind experiences something like a sudden onset of silence. Similarly, being freed from both sloth and torpor is like having the dark clouds disperse and the bright sun revealed. However, if we are to leave traces of the hindrances behind, we will merely be inviting their swift return, repopulating the mind more intensely than ever before.

As can be seen, the whole affair of restlessness is quite complicated since all the defilements may be involved. Only through really continuous mindfulness can it be sufficiently put down. In summary, we tackle this hindrance by:

1. Noting “thinking, thinking” until it disappears.
2. If it stays on for more than one or two minutes, ignore it and pull the mind back to the primary object.
3. If the hindrance still persists, identify the nature of the restlessness—such as what is the evil root for its cause and deal with it appropriately, that is, by more noting.

Sometimes a meditator comes and says, “I think the mind is really nasty. Sometimes it thinks of really horrible things, even about my teachers and the Buddha. I know that is really bad karma. Why does it arise and how do I handle it?” It arises because of defilements. To handle it, one has to recognize the nature of the defilement first and then make the appropriate response.

There are also means of dealing with distracting thoughts such as those set out in the *Discourse on Thought Forms*, the *Satipatthana Commentary*, and so on. Some of these measures are: correct association and conversation with helpful and sympathetic companions, acquiring right knowledge, considering the dangers of restlessness and the benefits of concentration, and so on. As a last resort, the *Discourse on Thought Forms* advises one to fight mind with mind: “With the teeth clenched, with the tongue pressed against the palate, if one subdues, restrains, dominates the mind by the mind, those evil unskilled thoughts associated with desire, aversion and confusion, these are got rid of and come to an end.” By getting rid of these, the mind steadies, calms down, and is single-pointed, concentrated.

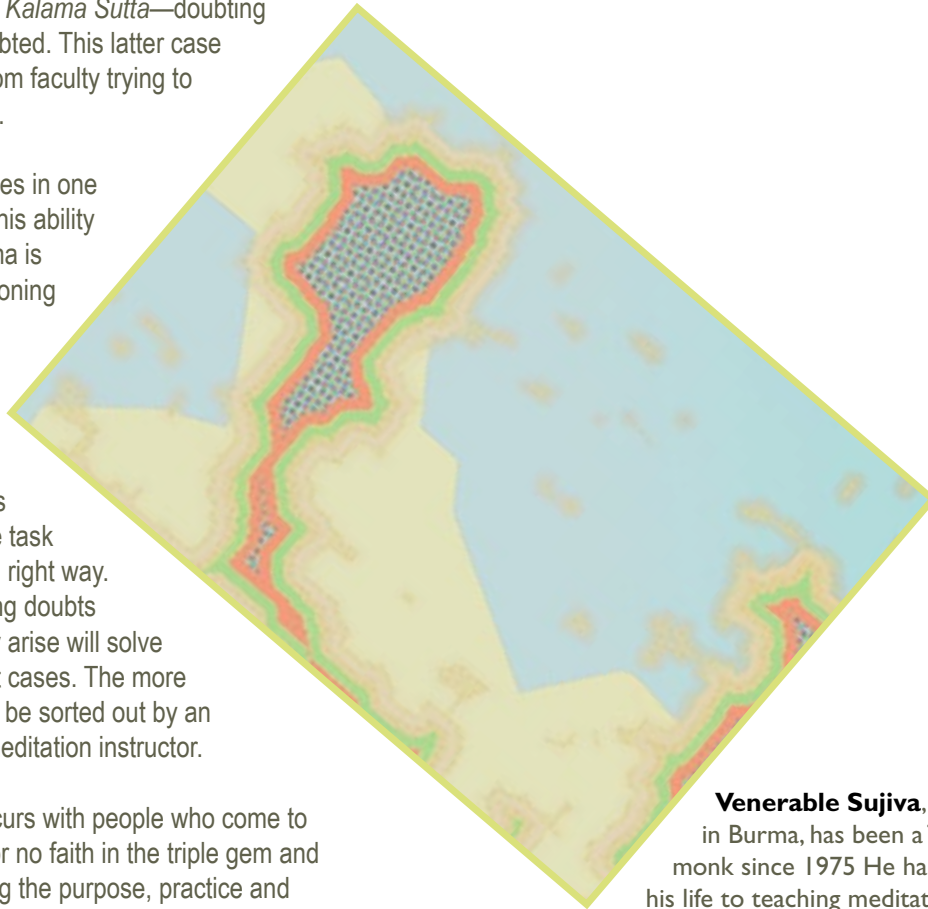
5 SKEPTICAL DOUBT (VICIKICCHA)

Vicikiccha, the fifth hindrance, refers to the confused and perplexed state of mind that makes one skeptical and leads one to disbelieve what is true (in this case, the triple gem). One should, however, differentiate this from the healthy doubts as referred to in the *Kalama Sutta*—doubting what should be doubted. This latter case is actually the wisdom faculty trying to understand the way.

Skeptical doubt arises in one who thinks beyond his ability to do so. The dharma is beyond logical reasoning that works on the conceptual level. As a result, such people end up confused and undecided. This paralyzes the whole task of proceeding in the right way. The method of noting doubts mindfully when they arise will solve the problem in most cases. The more persistent ones can be sorted out by an interview with the meditation instructor.

The real trouble occurs with people who come to meditate with little or no faith in the triple gem and without fully realizing the purpose, practice and nature of the dharma.

Proper theoretical understanding removes most of these skeptical doubts, as well as provides adequate faith for one to practice long enough to acquire lasting faith gained through *vipassana* meditation.



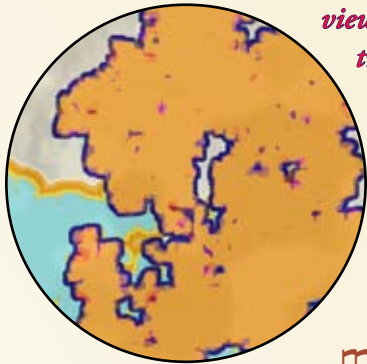
Venerable Sujiva, who was born in Burma, has been a Theravada monk since 1975. He has devoted his life to teaching meditation—in Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America. Venerable Sujiva is author of several books on meditation and on his two “hobbies,” Buddhist poetry and the *Abhidharma*.



Abbot of Bodhi Monastery and disciple of the great Chinese scholar monk, Venerable Yin Shun, MASTER JEN-CHUN takes a poetic look at acquiring right view.

INSPIRATIONS FROM THE NATURAL WORLD

If we are inspired by these four great phenomena of the natural world—the sun, space, the ocean, and the mountain peaks—then we can make the great resolve to acquire the right view that functions effectively within the world and the penetrating vision that transcends the world.



The Sun

With high spirits,
welcome
the glorious
morning sun.

With the light shining through the dark shadows, our eyes open wide and see clearly.

When we get up early in the morning, we feel a pure energy running through us, invigorating us and filling us with vitality. Most of us have dark shadows or blind spots either within us or around us. Therefore, if we can see the sunlight of the dharma, we will be able to rise up from the dark places in our life and obtain a clear, open vision of everything.

The Buddha, Offspring of the Sun, awakened and transcended the world.

The Buddha Shakyamuni, like all the other Buddhas, was called the Offspring of the Sun. If we can learn from the Offspring of the Sun, we will be able to transcend mundane, worldly affairs. Like the sun, the Buddha was so bright that he could shine through everything. His enlightenment goes beyond the mundane world and can enlighten everyone. However, though the Buddha was the Offspring of the Sun, born into the so-called solar race, he was not the

least bit arrogant or conceited. He always had the most humble attitude.

In the Mahayana scriptures, the Buddha is described as the foremost in brilliance. This means that he is the foremost in conduct. His conduct is most majestic and sublime. There are no inconsistencies between the Buddha's mental conduct and his bodily and verbal conduct. His mental conduct is most pure. His appearance is most pure. His physical appearance, all his bodily features, manifest his pure state of mind. So he is able to devote his entire life to all sentient beings, and he has the greatest aspiration, the greatest resolve to work for the benefit of everybody. His virtue is the greatest, for it does not center on the self. Because he was able to abandon the self, the ego, he was able to devote himself to delivering all sentient beings from suffering.

Learn transcendence. With backbones straight, we offer ourselves to the world and obliterate the danger of defilements.

Whether we are monastics or laypersons, we should learn from the Buddha. With this kind of spirit to deliver yourself, when you follow the spirit of the Buddha, you will be able to return to the world and devote yourself purely to the benefit of all sentient beings. All your actions, speech, and mental activities will be consistent with this spirit, and you will be able to totally remove all the terrors of the world.

Space

Space is a grand opening
that is endlessly vast.



The space that we are familiar with is only a small portion of space in its entirety. The greatest space of the world is boundless, vast beyond description.

With steady footsteps, he marches straight into the state of the foremost in meaning.

What is the "state of the foremost in meaning"? It is all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. They are permanent and not subject to change. Because they are permanent and not subject to change, for them there is no birth, aging, illness, and death. What does this mean? If people maintain the five precepts well, they will be reborn in heaven. However, that kind of rebirth is tainted. One day, they will lose their merit and will fall down from heaven. However, the attainments of the Buddhas and great bodhisattvas are taintless. They have true brightness, true liberation, and true excellence, and they realize truth without ever falling away from their realization.

Because such attainment and realization is not subject to change, this realization transcends the mundane, transcends all phenomena tied-up with birth, aging, illness, and death. The great parinirvana attained by the Buddha and the bodhisattvas is not subject to birth, not subject to aging, not subject to illness and death. Therefore, it is called the taintless attainment. It will never again be touched by affliction and suffering. The Buddha Shakyamuni realized such truth and the truth he realized is so universally true in the world today that we say it is without birth, aging, illness, or death.

Only when the ground has frozen over and the air is chilling cold can the seed germinate in the barren field.

Venerable Master Yin Shun once said that we must have the spirit of a person who is willing to spread the seed in the most barren climate, in chilling cold and on frozen ground. We need to have such spirit and to spread the seed of the dharma wherever we are. Why is that? If we vow to practice the bodhisattva way among people of good predispositions and under favorable conditions, then when we meet such conditions we will feel satisfied and not want to move forward. When the situation is bad, we will feel frustrated and want to give up the practice. So the seed of the Buddha's dharma needs to be spread no matter what kind of climate we are in, no matter what our conditions might be. Whether the climate is extremely cold or extremely hot, we must unrelentingly spread the Buddha's dharma.

With resilience, we take up our responsibility with humility, humbled by our own inadequacies.

We need to accept responsibility for spreading the Buddha's Dharma, both by our own practice and by benefiting others. We need to arouse a great sense of shame and moral dread so that we will not waste our lives. I am warning you here, everyone: if you waste your time, you will never be able to see the Buddha. As I have said again and again, we need to make the great resolve to wholeheartedly devote ourselves to the practice of the six paramitas in order to deliver the sentient beings of the six realms from suffering.

Please pay careful attention to this.



Ocean

The vast ocean
seen from the shore.
How spectacular the view!

If we come to a seashore or a great body of water, we can appreciate the spectacular view and all the varieties presented by the view of the ocean. Without selection or bias, the ocean provides food and transport for all.

It provides all human beings with all kinds of nutrition and sustenance. Great products, including fish, come from the ocean. The ocean also provides the connection between civilizations. When civilizations first needed to communicate with each other, the ocean provided the best channel of traffic, which facilitated communication between civilizations. Human beings were able to create culture and civilization, but the ocean is able to provide the means of communication. Therefore, we should learn from the ocean to become the great medium of different civilizations and different cultures.

The ocean is extremely vast. It does not discriminate against people. Whether you are Caucasian, African-American, or of a different race, the ocean is not concerned.

**For the great ocean, everybody is equal.
The great dharma, so wonderful and extensive, is also an ocean.
It liberates universally, without distinction or bias.**

So we often refer to the "ocean of dharma". Why is the dharma referred to as an ocean? It is because the dharma is spectacular and most pure. It is just like a lotus flower, whose every part, from its roots to its leaves, is useful and beneficial to others. Because the lotus flower is without any clinging, it can completely devote itself to benefit others.

The Buddha's dharma teaches us to be levelheaded: not impeding our own practice or that of others. Hence it is vast and deep, like the great void. It is this virtue that brings deliverance to everyone rather than to a select few.

All Buddhas and *bodhisattvas* deliver sentient beings from suffering without discrimination. They do not pick just a select few and deliver them but not others. Such a sense of equality is as if we had a square shape and every side of the square is equal.

Like a square shape, the Buddha and *bodhisattvas* will deliver sentient beings without any boundaries, without any end.

Mountain

High and solemn beneath the sky,
the mountain towers
above a store of wealth.

**Likewise, the virtues and merits abound
in a bodhisattva's mind.**

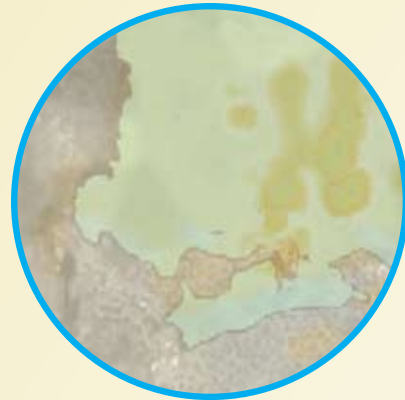
An ancient Chinese saying teaches us that if we learn to be like an ocean and a mountain, we will be able to store all wealth. Just as a mountain has the greatest wealth stored inside, so the mind of a *bodhisattva* is a store of excellent qualities. A *bodhisattva's* mind is as vast as a mountain and also stores all the wealth under the great blue sky.

As firm as Mount Diamond, as equally indestructible, it benefits beings with wholesome deeds throughout endless eons.

When there are earthquakes, some mountains break down and can even be brought to ground-level. However, a mountain of diamond cannot be broken. The excellent qualities of the *bodhisattva* are similar. No matter what kind of affliction people try to inflict upon the *bodhisattva*, nothing can diminish his excellent qualities. Not even Mara can distract him from his mission.

It is the landmark. Through an extremely long period of time, throughout extremely vast space, a Bodhisattva is able to establish the landmark, the symbol of true virtue, to guide and benefit all sentient beings.

**In closing,
I encourage you
to have the qualities
of the sun,
the sky,
an ocean,
and a mountain.**



Master Jen-Chun lives a simple life at Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey which he serves as spiritual leader. He embraced the monastic life at age 7, ultimately becoming the senior disciple of Chinese Grand Master Yin Shun. In 1973 he came to the United States, where he founded Bodhi Monastery with help from the Yin Shun Foundation.



SN 56.11

Dhammacakkavattana Sutta

This is another of the three cardinal sutras, the first three “dharma talks” of the Buddha. Together these three sutras present the core of the Buddhadharma. This sutra, which is translated here from the Pali by Ñānamoli Thera, sets out the vision of the truth particular to the Buddha, the truth of *dukkha* and the ending of *dukkha*.

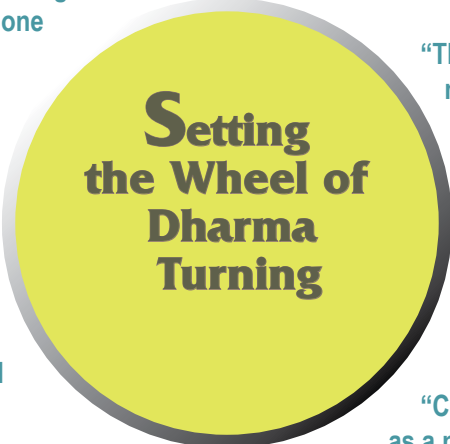
Thus I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Seers). There he addressed the *bhikkhus* of the group of five.

“*Bhikkhus*, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by one gone forth from the house-life. What are the two? There is devotion to indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire, which is inferior, low, vulgar, ignoble, and leads to no good; and there is devotion to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble and leads to no good.

“The middle way discovered by a perfect one avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nibbana. And what is that middle way? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the middle way discovered by a perfect one, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nirvana.

“Suffering, as a noble truth, is this: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and

lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the loathed is suffering, dissociation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering –in short, suffering is the five categories of clinging objects.



“The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: it is the craving that produces renewal of being accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that; in other words, craving for sensual desires, craving for being, craving for non-being.

“Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: it is remainderless fading and ceasing, giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting of that same craving.

“The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: it is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

“‘Suffering, as a noble truth, is this.’ Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. ‘This suffering, as a noble truth, can be diagnosed.’ Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding,

the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. 'This suffering, as a noble truth, has been diagnosed.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, can be abandoned.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, has been abandoned.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

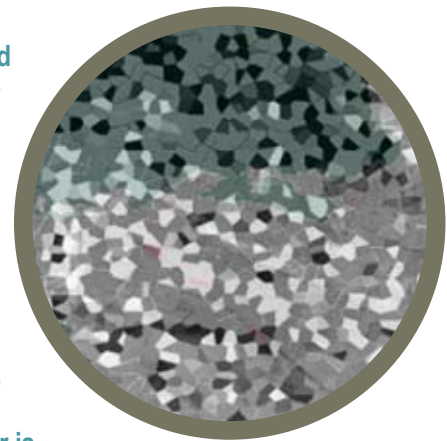
"'Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be verified.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been verified.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be developed.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to the cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been developed.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"As long as my knowing and seeing how things are, was not quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, I did not claim in the world with its gods, its Maras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, with its princes and men to have discovered the full awakening that is supreme. But as soon as my knowing and seeing how things are, was quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, then I claimed in the world with its gods, its Maras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmins, its princes and men to have discovered the full awakening that is supreme. Knowing and seeing arose in me thus: 'my heart's deliverance is unassailable. This is the last birth. Now there is no renewal of being.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The *bhikkhus* of the group of five were glad, and they approved his words.

Now during this utterance, there arose in the venerable Kondañña the spotless, immaculate vision of the true idea: "Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation."



When the wheel of truth had thus been set rolling by the Blessed One the earth gods raised the cry: "At Benares, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the matchless wheel of truth has been set rolling by the Blessed One, not to be stopped by monk or divine or god or death-angel or high divinity or anyone in the world."

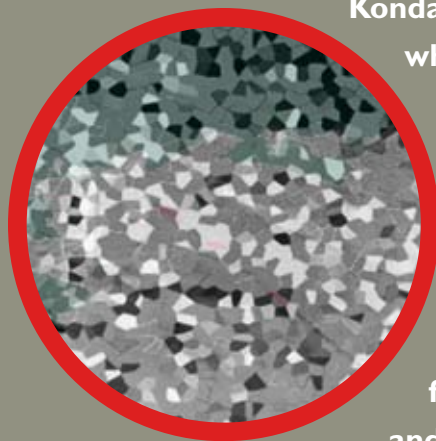
On hearing the earth gods' cry, all the gods in turn in the six paradises of the sensual sphere took up the cry till it reached beyond the retinue of high divinity in the sphere of pure form. And so indeed in that hour, at that moment, the cry soared up to the world of high divinity, and this ten-thousandfold world-element shook and rocked and quaked, and a great measureless radiance surpassing the very nature of the gods was displayed in the world.

Then the Blessed One uttered the exclamation: "Kondañña knows! Kondañña knows!" and that is how that venerable one acquired the name, Añña-Kondañña-Kondañña who knows.

SEE THE NEXT PAGE FOR A COMMENTARY.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

This discourse covers a lot of ground: the middle way, the four noble truths in their three phases and twelve aspects, the seven origins of suffering, the five-clinging aggregates, etc. In considering this important sutra, you might want to list each of the key concepts touched on in this sutra and explain their relationship to each other. For example, the eightfold noble path is the middle way and the five skandhas are the source of *dukkha*. More importantly, how would you apply each of these ideas to your life today to reduce your suffering? Consider changing the word right in the eightfold noble path to the word pure. How would this change your understanding of the path? Can you give an example from your life of each of the seven origins of suffering and explain why it is impossible to stop the wheel of dharma that the Buddha set in motion. Also, consider what it was that Kondanna understood, how he understood it, and what happened to him as a result of his understanding. Was this the reason the story of



Kondanna is included here? And finally, what are we to learn from this line about the importance of this sutra, and about the Buddhist cosmos: “So in that moment [upon hearing this discourse], that instant, the cry shot right up to the Brahma worlds. And this ten-thousand fold cosmos shivered and quivered and quaked, while a great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the devas.”?

SIMPLICITY IN LIVING

SIMPLICITY IN LIVING results from our practice. It is not something we can impose on ourselves externally. Once simplicity arises, contentment arises, and everything else follows, including liberation, as XIANYANG CARL JEROME outlines here.

In the 1970's, experiments with communal living arose from the peace and hippie movements in an attempt to find a more meaningful “simpler” life, in response to an aversion for the lifestyles of the previous generation. But these would not have enough stability to be long lasting, even if many of the principles they embodied, such as gender equality and non-violence, would become ingrained in American society as a result of these social experiments. Their failure was a result of the flimsy philosophical foundation from which they arose: denial, weakened even further by the frequent use of recreational drugs and experimentation with sexual freedom.

In the 1980's there was a small movement of frustrated baby boomers whose goal-driven and corporate-mediated lives and values were so distasteful and unsatisfying that they chose to downsize and dropout. Some did this by cashing out, having accumulated sizable portfolios early in their lives; others by throwing their hands in the air, quitting their jobs, and moving to small towns where less-pressured lives seemed possible. The small country house may have been lovely and comfortable, but how long could one sit around and read books and try not to watch TV without feeling imprisoned, without feeling the need to escape back to “reality”? Imposed “simplicity” like this is weak stuff and is not enough to

bring satisfaction or peace into one's life, so the dropouts eventually crept back into lifestyles similar to if not quite as “driven” as those from which they had fled.

In the 1990's another development in the simple living movement appeared. It was based on a sense that one needed to revert to the 19th century values of austerity, frugality, restraint and self-sufficiency. It was hallmarked by self-imposed isolation onto small “homesteads” where one produced as much of the necessities of life as possible through small-scale farming and through developing skills like weaving and sewing. This was not unlike some of the failed communes of the 1970's. What was different was that gender roles and differentiation became stronger rather than weaker. Large nuclear families were produced, not smaller ones as advocated by the zero population growth ideal of the 1970s, and children were homeschooled, to a considerable degree because they were needed as laborers and farmhands. This was less a dropping out than an attempt to turn the clock back to what some imagined was a “better” time. This only traded one kind of *dukkha* for another. It did nothing to end *dukkha*. Another failed social experiment.

Buddhism offers a dramatically different view of simplicity in living. Why? Because Buddhism allows simplicity in living to arise from practice, not from the youthful acting-out of ideals, not from denial or forced frugality, and not from an attempt to move to another samsaric era. It is not about scaling back, paring down and doing without. Instead, it is about allowing contentment to arise from the cushion, from one's practice, from the joy of giving and caring. It is not about seclusion arising from fear. It is not about imposed or forced anything. It

LIVING IN SIMPLICITY MEANS HAVING SIMPLE, STRAIGHT FORWARD AND HONEST INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, BUSINESS COLLEAGUES AND ASSOCIATES, AND WITH ALL BEINGS.

— MASTER JI RU



is living in simple peace and harmony with others and with the environment from which we get our nourishment.

The wonderful self-developmental aspect of this is that when we do simplify, the simplification stimulates our mind and emotions to contemplate the essence of reality, to practice more deeply, and when that happens, our lives become even simpler.

In Buddhism, as Master Ji Ru wrote in the Winter 2006 issue of this magazine: “Living in simplicity means living a life of lessened desire.” Only through lessened desire can we live simple lives. In the three movements discussed above, desire actually became the driving force, the new central value in life. Desire for a different life. Desire for different values. Desire for a smaller house. Desire for less materialism. Desire for self-sufficiency. Desire to live my life my way. Desire to prove my way is right. And desire, of course, keeps the samsaric wheel spinning, producing craving and clinging and attachment and “the whole mass of suffering,” as it says in the scriptures.

In Western psychology and socio-dynamics, it is relatively easy to isolate concepts like simple living and to present bulleted how-to lists. But such attempts at isolating an issue from the bigger picture of a life of practice are inherently flawed in terms of Buddhist logic, for they are an attempt to force things to happen—and forcing things to happen intrinsically arises from greed and lust, and anger and aversion, rather than from the more substantive base necessary for simplicity to take hold—a mind of peace and tranquility.

As we all know, cleaning out the closets and giving all the clothes we haven't worn in the last year to Goodwill inevitably leads to purchasing new clothes until the closets are filled again. “I just don't know where I got so many clothes,” as my mother would say. Hmmm.

I do not mean to imply here that simplifying our surroundings is of no value. In Zen monasteries, for example, everything a practitioner does is scheduled, prescribed and procedured to encourage simplicity and to order one's life. In this way, the external environment is meant to reflect the internal workings of the mind. There it works, where it didn't in my mother's clothes

closet, to some degree because of the peer pressure and groups support but in larger part because of a constant and ever deepening practice on the cushion. Lessened desire is what opens the door to a simpler life, to a self-sustaining life of contentment.

Lessened desire from our meditation practice, and from the development of compassion and wisdom. Lessened desire arises from our renunciation of self. Lessened desire is the result of following the eightfold noble path, from practicing with the six paramitas. And it is only lessened desire that will save us and the planet.

No one can define what a simpler life means for any one of us in specific terms. That comes from our karma and our practice. Which is why imposing external standards ultimately fails, why giving recipes outside of the context of a life of practice causes suffering rather than relieving it. For some, more meditation may be needed to see clearly enough to have a simple life arise; for others just doing it, just living more simply, is needed. For those who choose to move in this latter direction, the Buddhadharma suggests taking the middle way—walking the paramita path with a heart of lovingkindness.

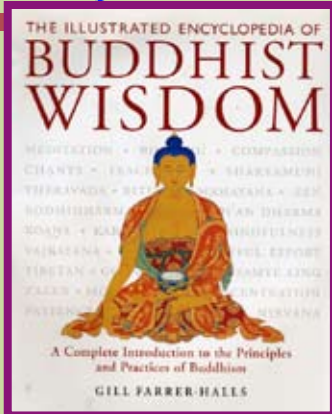
So how do we live simpler lives? We nourish the aspiration for simplicity with practice; we welcome simplicity when conditions make it appropriate. We allow our actions based on those new conditions to lead us to simplify aspects of our material world as they become appropriate and conditions allow. Doing that reinforces our practice by producing conditions that inherently nurture a simpler life.

When simplicity in living is natural, not forced, contentment arises. Without contentment, as we saw in the three decades of failed social experiments described at the beginning of this article, attempts at simplicity increase rather than decrease suffering.

But if we follow the middle path and maintain right view, the contentment of a simple life will appear. As our desire for more and bigger and better becomes a desire for less and little, there is less taking from others and the environment. As we become more content, we move closer to liberation, for ourselves, for all beings, and for the planet.



FROM OUR BOOKSHELVES



This beautiful book is as good for teens and adolescents as for adults who want to learn the basics of Buddhism.

"This is the book that inspired us to take on a formal Buddhist practice," said two students of Master Ji Ru.

This is an oversized, color-picture laden book worthy of the top spot on your coffee table. Not just because it is beautifully designed and produced, but because it delivers on content. If not exactly encyclopedic, it is after all only about 200 pages in length, Gill Farrer-Halls' *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Buddhist Wisdom, A Complete Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Buddhism* is reasonably comprehensive, and the writing is soft and welcoming, perfect for an introductory text. The author is a practicing Buddhist, mainly in the Vajrayana tradition, who spent extensive time in India and Nepal, and who has written about, taught, and promoted Buddhism in a variety of ways throughout her life.

The book starts with a life of the Buddha and an introduction to the four noble truths. The first chapter explains the development of Buddhism from its origins in ancient India through its expansion into the West today. Chapter two presents a dozen core beliefs of Buddhism, in language that is gentle and understandable, even explaining advanced concepts like impermanence and emptiness with ease. The what-is and how-to of meditation is covered in the next chapter. Finally, chapters four, five and six explain Theravada Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism, including explanations of many of the central practices of these three branches.

The meditation chapter alone is worth the price of the book, \$29.95

DHARMA IN THE MOMENT

AJAHN CHAH-ISMS

Proper effort is not the effort to make something happen. It is the effort to be aware and awake in each moment.

Whenever we feel that we are definitely right, right there we are wrong.

When you sit, let it be. When you walk, let it be. Grasp at nothing. Resist nothing.

Why are we born? We are born so that we will not have to be born again.

When one does not understand death, life can be very confusing.

Once you understand no-self, the burden of life is gone.

Ajahn Chah was born in 1918 in a small village in northeast Thailand. Having finished his basic schooling, he spent three years as a novice monk, then took a hiatus from monastic life to help his parents on their farm. At the age of twenty he resumed life as a monk and received higher ordination as a *bhikkhu*. In 1954, after years of wandering, he settled close to his home village, in a fever ridden, "haunted" forest called 'Pah Pong'. Despite the hardships of malaria, poor shelter and sparse food, disciples gathered around him in increasing numbers. The monastery, which is now known as Wat Pah Pong began there, gradually spreading the dharma around the world through the establishment of ten branch monasteries in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Numerous books and teachings by this venerable master are available online and in print. Ajahn Chah died in January 1992.



MABA **The Mid-America** **Buddhist Association**

MA BA is a Chan Buddhist monastery located on 60-acres of secluded woodland in the rolling hills of Missouri, about 45 minutes west of St. Louis. The monastery includes a meditation hall with a library and communal dining area. In addition, there is a nun's residence, a tea house, a guest residence, a Guan Yin Pavilion and Dizang Memorial Hall.

With the guidance and leadership of its abbot, Master Ji Ru, MABA has developed programs that include weekly meditation and Dharma talks, as well as periodic one, three, and fourteen-day retreats. Retreats are led by Master Ji Ru or other experienced Buddhist teachers. There are also weekly classes in Buddhist studies for beginners, intermediate, and advanced students, as well as a summer program for youth. And for those seeking a private retreat, whether a weekend, a week, or more, MABA can provide accommodations and a quiet practice environment.

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