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ABOUT THE COVER:

***Untitled,* by Rudolf Stingel, 1994.**

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Each of the Buddha's arms holds one of the tools used to execute a Stingel painting: a wide brush, scissors to cut tulle, a mixer, a spray gun, a wallpaper spatula, and a tube of paint. The Buddha figure, a universal symbol of enlightenment, holds the tools for "artistic enlightenment," thereby making the creative process available to anyone.

EDITOR'S PAGE

Xianyang Carl Jerome *has been practicing Buddhism for the past eleven years. His first Teacher was Zen Master Zenshin Philip Whalen in San Francisco. For the past six years, Carl has been a student of Master Ji Ru at the Mid-America Buddhist Association (MABA) and the International Buddhism Friendship Association (IBFA), where Carl has taught meditation and Buddhism classes and has led retreats. He maintains an inside-out practice, teaching Buddhism and meditation and leading 3-day reteats in Missouri prisons. In 2006 Master Ji Ru granted him Lay Teaching Endorsement. Carl is the editor of Rightview Quarterly magazine and editor and founding teacher of Rightview Online.org. He resides at MABA, his home monastery, just outside St. Louis, MO, with frequent jaunts to IBFA, the monastery's sister temple in Chicago's Chinatown.*

Over the past few weeks and months, the Rightview staff has been busy constructing an interactive website to accompany and complement Rightview Quarterly magazine.

We invite you to visit often and help yourself to its many offerings.

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Rightview Online is a unique Buddhist learning center; it is there for you to view and use in whatever way benefits your practice. Explore it for self-study, or establish an interactive Teacher-Student relationship with one of the Guiding Teachers. All the information and programs are designed and organized to be easily accessible and to be directly relevant to those who wish to understand and follow this Path. Our mission is to present "Dharma in Practice," to present what Ajahn Buddhadasa called "pristine Buddhism," the essential principles of the Buddhadharma before they became hidden under 2600 years of the cultural rites and rituals, sectarianism, commentarial analysis, clerical politics, and secularization. And it is to present this information for self study and for interactive use.

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FIND translations of two of the world's most renowned monks, Ajahn Buddhadasa, founder of Suan Mokkh monastery in Thailand and recognized for his lifetime service to humanity by the United Nations, and Master Yin Shun, considered the greatest Buddhist intellectual of the twentieth century.
READ through the FAQs for short answers to often-asked questions about Buddhism.

May the Rudolf Stingel sculpture reproduced on the cover of this issue remind us all, in print, online, wherever and whenever, moment to moment, that the Buddha taught that Dharma was only meant to be practiced.

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BOWING

By Rev. Zuiko Redding

Before we sit down to do zazen, we perform a gassho bow, hands together in front of face, the body inclined a bit, we bend at the hips once towards our zafu, then once away. In the zendo, it's a greeting to our neighbors and to those across the room. "Hello. Thank you for your presence and your effort." We greet the whole universe, which is sitting with us. "Hello. Thank you for sitting with me." We bow even when no other person is present.

This is not the only time we bow. We do it when entering and leaving the zendo, when doing services, sometimes when we greet one another. Sometimes we just bob our heads. Sometimes we touch our foreheads to the floor and lift our hands in a full prostration. There's a good deal of it going on. So, what's it all about and where does it come from?

Bowing is a salutation and an expression of respect. Shunryu Suzuki said we should bow to everything we meet. Jack Kornfield talks about how, in the Thai monastery where he practiced, he was expected to bow to all the other monks and how at first, he resented having to bow to monks he didn't respect. His solution? He learned to find something in each person that he could bow to. He could respect each person: there was no longer "good person," "bad person."

There was only “this person.” Can we do that?

Bowing is also about making our spirits more flexible and gentle; about giving up our obstinate, stubborn, dualistic mind that centers on ourselves as the most important thing in the universe and on our ideas as the reality of how things are and should be. If we bow, gradually our hearts will follow. In Japan I heard the story of Kishizawa Ian-roshi, who when asked how low one’s head should be in bowing to the floor, answered that the forehead should touch the floor. He added, “I would like to bow even lower, but the floor stops me.” He felt that he had that much arrogance and selfish stubbornness to get rid of.

BOWING IS A SALUTATION AND EXPRESSION OF RESPECT. SHUNRYU SUZUKI SAID WE SHOULD BOW TO EVERYTHING WE MEET.

The meaning of bowing comes only through bowing. Blooming in the heart, it is a different flower for each of us. At Shogoji, we did about fifty full prostrations in the course of morning services. (And all before breakfast!) I used to think of them as Zen calisthenics, dutifully holding my robes and trying to do them in proper form. Then one morning as I knelt touching my head to the floor, I remembered sleeping this way as a small child. Bowing this way, I realized I had the same confident trust in the Dharma as an innocent child has for his or her parents.

It’s best to give up all the ideas I’ve been talking about and just bow. Bowing is the same as doing zazen - just do it, with no you, no bow, no “Did I do it right?” no “Does it mean what it’s supposed to?” When you do it completely, there is no need for anything extra.

Zuiko Redding *grew up in Texas where she encountered Zen as a university student. She studied in Milwaukee with Tozen Akiyama and in Minneapolis with Dainin Katagiri. In 1992 she was ordained in Japan by Tsugen Narasaki. She remained to practice under his direction at Zuioji Monastery and its mountain training center, Shogoji. She received certification as a teacher in the Soto tradition from Rev. Narasaki in 1996 and returned to the US in 1997. She is a member of the American Zen Teachers’ Association and of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association. Zuiko is one of Rightview Online’s Guiding Teachers.*

The Soul of Buddhism:

MIND, KARMA, REBIRTH AND BUDDHIST MIDDLE PATH PHILOSOPHY

Punnadhammo Bhikkhu

Is there a soul in Buddhism? To give the short answer first: "No."

As you might expect, the long answer is much more nuanced. The short answer depends on the commonly understood idea of "soul" as an unchanging personal principle that continues in time infinitely. This is the concept of "soul" usually implicit when one begins with the assumptions of a theistic religion. On the other hand, if by soul we mean simply that human beings have a spiritual aspect that is not ultimately bound up with physical processes, then Buddhism would be much more sympathetic to the idea. Buddhism may deny the existence of a "soul", but it is not for that reason "soul-less", in the same way as materialist philosophy.

Buddhism is often called the "Middle Path." This has been explained in different ways in different contexts. The first use of the phrase is found in the Buddha's very first sermon, in which he laid out the "middle way" between the extremes of asceticism and hedonism. On the metaphysical level, Buddhist doctrine (and more specifically Dependent Origination) has been called the "middle way" between the extreme views of eternalism and annihilationism (*sassatavada* and *ucchedavada*).

The first sutta of the ***Digha Nikaya*** lays out sixty-two false views, or philosophical errors. These make a complex matrix of nuanced positions regarding metaphysical questions but we can simplify them all into two broad categories, (and one additional minor category.) The first major category of error is eternalism, or the belief that there are some "things" (such as a soul) that continue essentially unchanged forever. This was represented in the Buddha's time by all those Indian schools which postulated an eternal *atman*, the Self or Soul or *jiva*, life-principle. In later times, this philosophy was adopted in some form or another by all the theistic religions like Christianity, Islam or most forms of Hinduism.

The belief in an *atman* or soul in this sense usually goes hand-in-hand with the belief in a Creator God, who is the first, most perfect and most powerful of the "souls". Sometimes the soul is seen as a part or a spark of the One Big Soul, as in the Upanashadic idea that Atman equals Brahman. Sometimes the human soul is seen as a separate entity created by God with an act of will. There are other variations on this theme. In any case, the idea of a God as First Principle or Creator would seem to be required once we accept the notion of an essential and eternal soul. The question of where these souls come from can only be answered by tracing them back to a first cause. The inquiry must end in an act of creation by a special ontologically privileged great-soul.

The opposite extreme view is annihilationism, which is a nearly literal translation of *ucchedavada* (the "cutting-off" view). This, in its simplest formulation, is the view that beings are "cut off" at death and utterly cease to exist. In the Buddha's time this was represented by various philosophies that either postulated the existence of a finite "life-principle" or took a hard-materialist line that denied any separate reality apart from the body.

In Western philosophy, this view was developed by some of the stoics and has never completely died out. Today, in the form of so-called rationalism or philosophical materialism it is becoming established as the dominant world-view of the educated classes. On the metaphysical level, it is represented by what is called "physicalism," the argument that all mental functions are in the last analysis dependent on physical processes. As a corollary, this would mean that such processes are also explicable in purely physical terms, i.e., as specific sequences of firing neurons.

Such a view of course presupposes atheism; there is neither room nor need for a God in such a philosophy. Likewise, it rejects completely any idea of a life after death, and tends to be extremely skeptical about what are called paranormal phenomena like telepathy or precognition.

It can be seen that one of the principle differences between these two philosophic tendencies is on the question of the "Great Matter of Life and Death." One believes in a separate soul that continues forever, the other believes only in physical reality and denies any kind of post-mortem existence. They would seem to be completely irreconcilable polar opposites, and in most respects they are. However, from the point of view of Buddhism they both share one underlying false assumption.

Before we get to that, it is necessary to explain something of the Buddhist view. Buddhists have made the claim that they are the Middle Path between both of these erroneous extremes and have presented the Master's doctrine of Dependent Origination as a middle-way cutting across the thickets of views. Dependent Origination is a complex study, with many aspects in different contexts. Nevertheless, the core idea is both simple and profound. The general principle of Dependent Origination is that things arise from causes and not otherwise. "This arising, that must be. This ceasing, that must cease."

Stated baldly like this, it seems almost a truism; but the implications are far-reaching and profound. It is a radical statement of the lawful nature of the universe. It says there are no exceptions to the Laws of Cause and Effect. (This is not a complete statement, as we will see later when we consider the very special case of the Unconditioned.)

We'll have much more to say about this axiom of Buddhism, but first let us make a note that both of the extreme views, as opposite in most respects as day and night, share this salient characteristic: they ultimately deny cause and effect and fall back on arbitrariness. In the eternalist view the chain of cause and effect is explicitly traced back to a First Cause, a *Primum Mobile*, which is in most formulations some version of a Creator God who creates by an act of arbitrary will. The final answer as to why the universe is the way it is and not otherwise is that God did it that way.

The materialist or annihilationist view also falls back on an arbitrary principle, as it ultimately rests on randomness. Things are this way just because that is the way things are. The ultimately arbitrary nature of this view is seen in many instances. In the Big Bang model of the universe, for instance, there is an outstanding problem of "broken symmetry." The universe did not continue to expand into a universally diffuse soup of particles as would be expected by a strict application of cause and effect, instead the initial symmetry was somehow randomly (arbitrarily) broken and matter "clumped" into galaxies, stars and planets.

As an historical aside, Western science has always had an uncomfortable relationship with this arbitrary principle. The entire intellectual basis of science is predicated on seeking and explaining the laws of cause and effect. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, most scientists were comfortable with falling back on divine creation as the ultimate arbitrary first cause. Newton, for example, was very much a creationist and even maintained that God would intervene from time to time to keep the planets in their orbits, which we now know are actually chaotic, i.e., extremely complex non-repeating patterns, neither random nor regular.

> **"This arising, that must be. This ceasing, that must cease."**

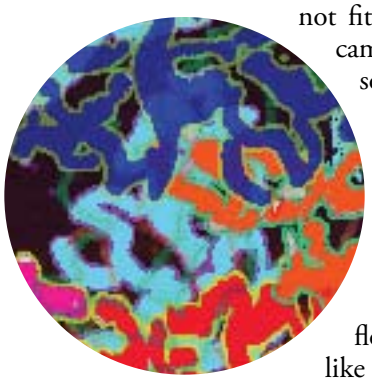
It was only with the advent of quantum mechanics that creationism was explicitly replaced with randomness. In fact, some thinkers today use quantum mechanics to justify the idea that the universe is inherently random. This is actually a misunderstanding. For instance, Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle maintains that certain fundamental quantities are inherently unpredictable, which is not at all to say that they arise without cause-and-condition. Most of the metaphysical arguments from quantum mechanics confuse the laws of quantum physics with their various interpretations. The former are mathematical, rigorous and experimentally verifiable, while the latter are philosophical attempts to explain how

the universe might work according to those laws. We will have a little more to say about quantum mechanics later, in relation to the topic of the nature of Mind.

To recap the argument so far, we can divide the world of metaphysical thought into that camp which believes that sentient beings are possessed of an immortal soul created by the arbitrary will of a God and those who believe sentient beings are nothing more than a complex arrangement of molecules arisen in the last analysis by pure chance. In the middle of these extremes, we have the third camp, the Buddhists who believe that beings arise according to laws of cause and effect and deny that there is any arbitrary or random aspect whatsoever.

The Buddhist writer and translator, Maurice Walshe, once came up with a very evocative metaphor for this situation. He said that the Buddhist Middle Way is like an island in the middle of a round lake. There is an optical illusion such that from either shore, the island always appears closer to the further shore. Likewise, to the eternalist Buddhism must always seem hopelessly nihilistic in its denial of Soul and God. This is in fact the argument presented by the official Vatican theologians against Buddhism. On the other hand, a modern, scientifically minded atheist looks at Buddhism as being hopelessly mystical with its talk of karma, rebirth, other realms and so on. To this atheist, the island appears just a short passage from the eternalist shore.

Before proceeding to an attempt to develop the implications of the Buddhist idea of Dependent Origination, we should tie up one loose end. The alert reader may have noticed that I mentioned a third minor category of false view that does not fit neatly into the two broader camps. I was referring to the so-called "eel-wriggler's" view (literal translation). This is the view of the person so caught up in the hindrance of skeptical doubt that they are unable to take a position anywhere around the lake or on the island but end up flopping about in the lake like eels. Nowadays this position attempts to gain some respectability by calling itself "agnostic." The Buddha was quite dismissive of this position in the Brahmajala Sutta.



He characterized them as saying "I don't say this, I don't say that and I don't say the other thing," and put their position down to either stupidity or cowardice.

Nowadays there is a strong movement towards an "agnostic Buddhism" which retains extreme skepticism toward such doctrines as karma and rebirth. The proponents of this position justify it with very selective quotations from the suttas. In particular, the Kalama Sutta is often cited which says in part that one should not subscribe to a view because of tradition or hearsay (and also because of having "hammered it out with reason" although this is less often cited). However, if we read the sutta through to the end the Buddha lists reasons by which we should subscribe to a view; if we find it contributes to our spiritual growth, and if it is commended by the wise.

This is significant because Buddhism is first and foremost practical. It takes its stand less on metaphysical truth (although that shouldn't be downplayed) and more on the practical means of transcending suffering. Agnosticism fails in this because it gives one no place to stand. Skeptical doubt is listed as a hindrance, and compared to wandering in the desert without a map. More could be said on this topic, which is not unimportant, but to return to our main theme - having discussed the two polar false views, we must now turn to the Buddhist middle position.

We have seen that the primary metaphysical axiom of Buddhism is that things arise according to causes and conditions and not otherwise. I do not know if it is possible to establish this point with absolute philosophical rigor or not. It does seem to me to be intuitively true and I do not know of any unimpeachable counter-examples. (I have already said that so-called quantum randomness does not qualify since that is not a statement of fact but just one possible interpretation of the data. Again, I would like to defer this point until we get to the topic of Mind.)

It is a trivial observation to say that the universe is mostly lawful, that is, subject to cause and effect. This is why science is possible at all. Two atoms of hydrogen joined to one atom of oxygen always make water and never gold or silicon. However, the Buddhist principle goes much further than this and makes the strong claim that everything arises according to causes. There is no random arising, nor random cessation.

WE HAVE SEEN THAT THE PRIMARY METAPHYSICAL AXIOM OF BUDDHISM IS THAT THINGS ARISE ACCORDING TO CAUSES AND CONDITIONS, AND NOT OTHERWISE.

Consider a universe where this were not so. There would be a fundamental underlying meaninglessness and on the human level, a final hopelessness. Since Buddhism is a practical philosophy, and also a hopeful one, it cannot take its basis on such a view of the universe. We need to start our inquiry somewhere, and this point needs to be taken as axiomatic for the rest of my argument to make sense. If you cannot follow me this far, the rest of what I have to say will not be convincing.

Another way of saying this is to restate the First Noble Truth and its associated task. The Buddha said this existence is marked with suffering (dukkha) and that we should, and can, understand it. He would not have given us the charge to understand it (dukkha being in the last analysis all conditioned reality) if it were not understandable; if he had himself not understood it. Moreover, it could not be understood if it were random or arbitrary. So again, the whole teaching turns on this single point.

Now it is necessary to make another longish digression, to establish what Buddhism says about the nature of Mind, before we can apply this axiomatic rule of causation.

The nature of Mind is of course a central concern of Buddhism. Many of the texts and traditions can seem very mystical or cryptic, but if we turn to a very early attempt at intellectual rigor, the Abhidhamma, we can get some clear principles established to work with. Abhidhamma is a collection of texts from a very early phase of Buddhist thought. Traditionally the core passages, the *matika*, are attributed to the Buddha himself. Modern scholarship casts doubt on this tradition, but no one disputes that the Abhidhamma is very ancient. In structure and method they are very precise and internally consistent texts which classify the elements of body and mind and their relationships.

The Abhidhamma recognizes four basic categories of reality: *Rupa, Citta, Cetasika* and *Nibbana*. That is, in English, body or physical matter, mind *per se* or consciousness, concomitant mental factors arising with consciousness like thought or memory, etc., and finally *sui generis* (literally: of its own kind/ genus; an idea that cannot be included in a wider concept), *Nibbana* (nirvana) the unconditioned, a special class outside the rest.

Leaving the last aside for now, it is important to understand that each of the other three can be considered as ontologically primitive categories. That is to say, each has it is own irreducible reality. Consciousness for example can be explained neither in terms of matter nor vice-versa. The elements of each class may act upon each other in some circumstances. If it is cold in the room where I am sitting, the physical reality may be one causal factor in my mental feeling of distress. Nevertheless, for that feeling to exist at all cannot be explained solely in physical terms.

This position may require some justification. These days one of the dominant paradigms is the computational model of mind. This maintains that mind is a secondary phenomenon derived from purely physical processes in the brain. This model has strong appeal because as a culture we are so fascinated by our own creation, the electronic computer, and the way it can appear to mimic many mental functions.

Thick books have been written on both sides of this debate, which shows no sign of going away. Personally, I believe it can be refuted by a few moments of honest introspection. Consider the simple fact of "knowing." Not the process of knowing any *thing* in particular, but the raw fact of just knowing in and of itself. All our perceptions and imaginations can be analyzed into a process of sense organ, nerves and neurons but they all end up at this irreducible pristine simplicity. There is something at the end of the chain that "just knows." This immediate knowing, consciousness *per se*, is so simple, immediate and uncompounded that it cannot be explained in terms of any algorithm (step by step process).

This last is of critical importance. If consciousness were a result of physical processes, we should be able (at least in theory) to explicate it step by step. It would need to be algorithmic. This is especially and obviously true for any computational model of mind. Any computational process can, in theory, be reduced to a series of simple and linear programming

A moment of consciousness, like everything else, cannot arise without causes, cannot arise just randomly.

commands (the concept of the Turing machine). There is simply no way to program something that is in itself immediate and perfectly simple. Consciousness does not make sense unless it is considered *sui generis*.

This way of understanding Mind should not be confused with what western philosophy calls "substance dualism" or the "ghost in the machine." That is the eternalist soul view all dressed up for polite company. It is also, paradoxically, a sort of materialism. It assumes that there must be some "stuff" to comprise mind. Buddhism emphatically denies this. Mind is void.

We are trapped here by our own linguistic limitations. We are forced to use nouns like "mind" and "consciousness" to talk about this at all. However, nouns subtly imply some thing. Mind is not a thing at all. It would be better to use verbs like "knowing" exclusively if that did not trip us up in hopeless circumlocutions. Better, as the Buddha advised, to use the conventions of speech, but not to be fooled thereby.

So, Mind, in the Buddhist understanding, is a separate irreducible class separate from body (and from mental concomitants but we need not digress that far from the main line of argument). It is, however, causally arisen and conditioned. In other words, subject to cause and effect like everything else. It is also, most of the time, intimately bound up with a physical body, which can act as one of the causal factors. Fill the bloodstream with alcohol and the conscious mind is dulled and bewildered because its physical correlate is not functioning normally. Likewise, mind can be a causal factor on body, and every time I move my limbs I demonstrate this.

One of the principal themes of Abhidhamma is an analysis of how specific mind-moments succeed each other in a causal chain. This is an application of the Buddhist law of impermanence, or the momentary nature of reality. Each moment consciousness arises to take an object. The process then repeats again and again *ad infinitum* in very specific patterns, which constitute the processes of perception and thought.

Now, each individual mind-moment of consciousness has a network of causes. It does not arise randomly. These can include the physical condition of the body, external sense data or internal mental concomitants. It always includes as a necessary cause the previous moment of consciousness. For example, I am watching an LCD screen as I type this. I may watch the screen for many subsequent moments, the previous moments and their objects conditioning the next arising consciousness to alight on the same or an adjacent object.

Mind then is momentary, unitary, void, and subject to causes and conditions. A moment of consciousness, like everything else, cannot arise without causes, cannot arise just randomly. This would violate the axiomatic rule of dependent arising. It would also constitute a case of creation *ex nihilo*, which is an extreme example of the arbitrary principle we have rejected.

This brings us to the very important topic of rebirth. It is sometimes seen as a contradiction that Buddhism teaches void nature (no-self) and yet maintains rebirth as a reality. If you have followed my argument so far, the next step is to establish that rebirth is a necessary consequence of the principle of causality.

This is because the first moment of consciousness arising in a being in the womb also cannot be a creation *ex nihilo.* It must arise from prior causes, which must include a previous moment of consciousness. The seeming paradox that there is rebirth but nothing is reborn arises from a misconception about this very life. Nothing in fact continues from moment to moment in the course of an ordinary day. It is just a causally connected series of mind-moments arising to various objects.

What occurs at death is different only in that the physical base, the body, is no longer functional so the mind seeking an object is forced to re-arise elsewhere, with a new form as determined by its karma.

Dependent Origination describes how this process occurs in some detail. This is a list of twelve *nidanas* or stations, which demonstrate the specific playing out of the universal law of cause and effect in the case of sentient beings. It is said to be a description of "how this whole mass of suffering comes to be."

This is the basis of the Second Noble Truth, that desire is the cause of "this whole mass of suffering."

The first station listed (for purposes of discussion only, the process is cyclic and there is no "first cause" in Buddhism) is ignorance. Because the mind is ignorant of higher reality, it takes action in the world, which is karmic formation, the second stage.

It is worthwhile at this point to say something about karma. (*Kamma* in Pali). Karma in Buddhism means "volitional action." It is best understood at the level of mind-moments. Each moment the unenlightened mind makes choices, volitional determinations, which subtly upset the balance of the universe. This balance must be righted, so the mind at some later time experiences sense-impressions from the world according to its karma.

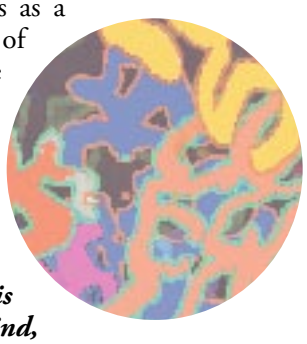
Put crudely, if one does good deeds one receives happy results, and if one does bad deeds one receives unhappy results. This is the law of karma expressed on a macro level. It is just this formulation that is commonly understood when most people talk about karma. If we stop there, it invites the criticism from skeptics that no mechanism is specified and the whole thing seems a hopelessly mystical basis for ethics.

However, if we analyze what is happening at the micro-level of mind-moments then karma makes sense as a close analog to the conservation laws in the physical realm. The law of conservation of momentum, for instance, determines that momentum is always conserved and if it is affected in one part of a closed system, another part will compensate. This is seen in the behavior of billiard balls for instance. If one ball equally strikes two others, each travels away with one-half of the momentum of the initial ball. The universe has a strong disposition to seek balance, every negative always finds a compensating positive.

We have already seen that Mind must be considered as a separate category, separate from but inter-reactive with body. If that is true, then there is no reason why it should not be subject to laws analogous to the physical, but within its own realm. This is karma. It plays out as real results in the physical world because the realms of mind and matter do inter-react.

This action of resultant karma taking the form of physical phenomena is also difficult for skeptics to accept. However, the idea that matter is always primary is nothing but an unfounded assumption. From a purely experiential perspective, it is in fact absurd. Mind is in actuality the only thing we can ever know directly. Everything else, including our own bodies, is mediated through the sense organs and the perception and consciousness factors of the mMnd. To assume that that which is only indirectly known must be primary to that which is immediately known is a strange prejudice indeed.

To get back to our summary of how rebirth works according to Dependent Origination: with these karmic formations as a conditioning factor, consciousness arises. In the special case of rebirth-linking, it arises in the womb or other vessel (such as an egg in the case of some lower animals) appropriate to it. This happens as a strict, logical necessity given the nature of mind and karma outlined above. The mind has assumed a karmic debt and this must be fulfilled or the iron law of cause and effect is violated. The universe must continue to seek to balance itself.



Karma is not the only conditioning factor. The force of desire, which is always present in the unenlightened mind, is another. This is the basis of the Second Noble Truth, that desire is the cause of "this whole mass of suffering." It is also explained more fully in the later stations of Dependent Origination**.** *(Contact to feeling to craving to clinging to becoming to birth).*

This force of desire can be directly observed in the mind during insight (Vipassana) meditation. It can be seen for oneself that at each moment the mind seeks an object. There is an inherent greediness for objects in the unenlightened mind, this can be said to be the primal addiction.

At death, the mind still seeks an object, but to fulfill this desire the old vehicle is no longer useful so it must arise elsewhere.

In brief, driven by karma and desire the mind seeks a new form. The newly arisen consciousness in a womb thus has antecedents. It did not, indeed could not, arise without such prior causal factors.

To believe that each birth is a newly created consciousness is only possible if we introduce arbitrary factors like a creator God.

An important caveat needs to be added here. Remember that we should not be fooled by the use of nouns into thinking of consciousness as a "thing." Specifically, we should not imagine that there is anything at all which transmigrates. The Buddha was quite emphatic in denying this. Rebirth is best thought of as "consciousness arising again to like conditions." The Milindapanha compares it to an echo, neither the same nor different from the original voice.

I promised earlier to return to the question of the supposed randomness of quantum mechanics. The strongest case for this would seem to be in the description of reality as "probability functions." For example, we cannot predict exactly the location of an electron, only describe mathematically its probability sphere. When an observation is made, however, the electron does have a specific location, somewhere in the sphere according to its probabilities.

Better, as the Buddha advised, to use the conventions of speech, but not to be fooled thereby.

To make up a grossly simplified example, say the electron could be at location A or location B with 50% probability for each. When we make an observation, it "collapses" to either A or B and this seems to be utterly random.

However, this leaves out the factor of Mind as a separate causal entity in the universe. The observation is in fact the application of Mind into the system and it is this insertion that forces the electron to have a definite location ("to make up its mind").

This contribution of Mind to the equation has severely disturbed the scientists, most of whom are physicalists. To avoid allowing for what seems to be the simplest explanation, they have been forced either to resort to the arbitrary application of blind chance or to seek explanations that are even more fanciful. Most scientists have however shared an aversion to the idea of randomness. The best known attempt to avoid allowing Mind a causative role and at the same time preserving causality has been the "Many Worlds" hypothesis. This says that the electron appears at both A and B in separate universes! This hypothesis has been great for spawning science fiction yarns but is mind-bogglingly inelegant compared to just allowing Mind its rightful place.

It could be noted in passing that this role of the observer (Mind) in collapsing the probabilities could also be the underlying mechanism for karma unfolding in the world. It might be that the universe exists as a wealth of variously probable potentials, and that these only actualize when mind alights on one or the other according to its desire and its karma.

Some other outstanding problems in science might possibly be solved if Mind is accepted as a separate causal reality. The initial broken symmetry, mentioned above, might be the effect of the cumulative karma of beings from a previous universe.

To get somewhat speculative, I think Mind might have a very deep structural role in the entire unfolding of form in the world. Mind, driven by desire, is always seeking objects and physical forms to access those objects from. It might have a powerful creative role in manifesting the whole physical reality.

The creationists have mounted a concerted effort to find flaws in the dominant paradigm of evolution. While much of what they produce is nonsensical, they do raise some strong issues. Existing evolutionary theory maintains that organisms evolve by small random mutations, which are then selected for by competition for survival. This works very well for things like the giraffe's neck. The giraffe with the longer neck will find more leaves and have a better chance to leave offspring. However, it does not explain very well how complex organs like the eye could arise in the first place. Each inter-connected part of the eye needs to be adapted exactly to every other part. A random mutation could only improve vision if all connected parts (rod, optic nerve, lens etc. etc.) mutated together, in harmony.

The reality of the Unconditioned is what makes Buddhism more than a secular philosophy

Random mutation does not do it as a complete explanation. However, where the creationists miss the boat is that the fossil record does clearly indicate that organisms evolve over time. Evolution is an established fact, but the accepted mechanism is not sufficient in all details. Here again, a positive role for Mind as an underlying creative force could be another causal factor contributing to a complete explanation.

This might work through the unfolding of embryonic form. This is another huge gap in scientific understanding. The maverick biologist Rupert Sheldrake points this out brilliantly in his *New Science of Life* and in other books. We now know quite a lot about DNA and its functioning, but as Sheldrake points out, the only DNA mechanism demonstrated by scientists is protein synthesis. DNA appears to be a recipe book for making proteins. No coding has ever been found to explain how these proteins combine to make more complex structures like cells or organs in the developing embryo. In fact, the case has been made stronger since Sheldrake first wrote by the discovery that the majority of DNA sequences are pure "junk," the equivalent of "yada yada" repeated hundreds of times. There simply isn't room in the DNA to specify a complete blueprint for a complex organism!

Sheldrake proposes something called "Morphogenetic Fields" as the repositories of this information. These fields are non-local, i.e., not located in space. They change with time in feedback loops with the physical forms and they determine the unfolding of form in the embryo. This sounds a lot like Mind, which is also non-physical so not locatable in space, can interact with material form and is constantly changing.

These examples should suffice to show that a metaphysics that accords Mind a separate category has the potential to be a more powerful explanatory model than a metaphysics that seeks to reduce everything to matter. It does so, what is more, while avoiding the arbitrariness of a "First Cause" or of reliance on blind chance, which is no explanation whatsoever. Far from being mystical, it is grounded on observable reality. Vipassana is in fact experimental spiritual science.

This essay would not be complete without briefly referring to the fourth category specified in Abhidhamma, the Nibbana element. This is the *summum bonum* of Buddhism of course, and it is said to be the Unconditioned element. It is the one factor in the system that is outside the law of causality. Nevertheless, even here there is a strong consistency. This element it should be noted is neither cause nor effect. It is completely other than this reality. This means that it is not in any way an arbitrary factor inserted into the system to close explanatory gaps. This is in contrast to the God of the Christian theologians, which is said to be a "causeless cause."

The reality of the Unconditioned is what makes Buddhism more than a secular philosophy. The other three categories deal with First Noble Truth, this whole mass of suffering. They can be known. Taken by themselves, they can serve as an explanatory framework for this world we experience, including the primary fact that we do experience it at all. However, Nibbana gives us the potential of accessing that which is not this. It is Third Noble Truth, the end of this whole mass of suffering.

Ajahn Punnadhammo was born in Toronto in 1955. After graduating from college, he discovered Buddhism and began studying and practicing under the guidance of Kema Ananda at what was then the Arrow River Community Center. In 1990 he went to Thailand where, in 1992, he received higher ordination in the lineage of Ajahn Chah. Today he resides at the Arrow River Forest Hermitage near Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

SKILLFUL MEANS

Xianyang Carl Jerome explains that this important teaching of the Buddha, also known as UPAYA, is essential for developing one's spiritual practice, and could be seen as the *only* teaching of the Buddha.

Any good teacher uses a variety of teaching techniques and methods, and the Buddha was no different. In fact, if you look at his teaching methodology, it would almost seem that he had studied twentieth century adult education theory and instructional design. He used a wide range of instructional strategies, some behavioral, some cognitive, and he frequently relied on scaffolding principles, creating a teaching that was just slightly too difficult for the student and so required a cognitive stretch, which he aided with a scaffold. His teachings were "learner centered." In the Pali Canon, the learners are identified in the first sentence or two of every sutra, which can help us understand the how-to of the teaching. And critically important, the Buddha always seemed to be aware of the unique cognitive structures from which his students' learning would arise.

The Buddha realized, probably intuitively, but perhaps from his own training at the hands of Asita as well, that there would be a need to constant adaption, modification, modulation, and restatement of his teachings if those with diverse abilities, needs and karmic bents were to hear the Buddhdharma. And he would have been comfortable with this because in fact he was just applying the dharma to teaching the dharma.

So sometimes the Buddha simplified a teaching. Sometimes abbreviated a teaching. Sometimes explained by way of simile or metaphor or parable or analogy. Sometimes he focused on a particular aspect of the teaching. Sometimes he would focus a broad teaching very narrowly, tailoring it to his audience. Often he would invite students to teach each other in peer learning situations. These were all skillful means for leading a student or disciple down the Path to ultimate Truth.

Buddhism, it would seem, has two forms of skillful means. The small "s" skilful means and the big "S" Skillful means.

The small “s” skillful means is what we do on an individual or small group level, adjusting a presentation to make it most clearly understood: the similes, metaphors, word games, and progressive teaching strategies that start with the simple and move to the more complex.

The big “S” Skillful means indicates that everything in Buddhism is a skillful means. The Four Noble Truths are a Skillful means, meant only to get us to the other shore, where there are no skillful or unskillful anythings–on the other shore, the shore of tranquility/nirvana. The vast Mahayana cosmology of Vasubandhu is nothing more than a Skillful means.

There is another big “S” perspective on skillful means offered by John Schroeder (*Skillful Means: The Heart of Buddhist Compassion*), who is critical of those who are inclined toward metaphysical analysis without the context of *praxis,* without *application of the principles*. He suggests that Buddhism is best understood as a philosophy of practice--or a *metapraxis*--and that terms such as “emptiness,” “non-self,” and “nirvana” refer less to metaphysical principles than to skillful teachings that help people cultivate compassion and mindfulness.

Today, skillful means is often misunderstood and misused. It is usually the excuse given for the dangerous practice of secularizing the dharma, of denying the dharma’s moral and spiritual underpinnings. Teaching meditation to improve day-trading, for example, would not be a skillful means. Establishing a gay dharma or a black dharma or a women’s dharma, which strengthens the belief in the individual Self and in the collective Self, increasing dukkha rather than leading to its extinction, would not be a skillful means.

As we create new Buddhist norms for the 21st century, as we explore new teaching strategies for the developing Western Buddhism, may our choices be skillful and may they be deeply informed by the wisdom of the Buddhadharma.

SUICIDE

Yours, Mine, Duc's, and Channa's

This is the third of a four part series by **Xianyang Carl Jerome** *on Buddhist ethics designed to explore some of the implicit and explicit moral guidelines used to make ethical decisions in our lives. In the final article, in the next issue of Rightview, a basic framework for making ethical decisions will be extrapolated from the series.*
The previous two articles can be found in the Archives at www.RightviewOnline.org.

CHANNA

(This is another Channa, not Channa the charioteer who aided Siddhartha in leaving the palace to begin his spiritual journey. Following is how this Channa is described in two suttas of the Pali canon in which he is visited by Sariputra.

Channa is in the final stages of a terminal illness: he complains of intense pain in the head and stomach and body. His head pain is like having one's head split open with a sharp sword; his stomach pain is compared to having one's belly carved up by a sharp knife, in the way a butcher might cut up an ox's belly. His body pain is like being roasted over a pit of hot coals.

After describing his condition, Channa declares "I shall use the knife, friend Sariputra, I have no desire to live." On hearing this Sariputra's immediate response is to try to persuade Channa not to kill himself. Channa responds by explaining that his act will be blameless: "Sariputra, I will use the knife and not be reborn." Sariputra seems unconvinced and so goes to the Buddha after leaving his friend Channa. The Buddha says that indeed the act will be blameless and wonders why Sariputra doesn't understand this. Probably, I would suggest, for the same reason it is unclear to us!
A blameless killing?

Thich Quang Duc is pictured here on June 11, 1963 protesting against anti-Buddhist policies by the American-backed South Vietnamese government.

Thich Nhat Hanh explains how he views the ethics of this suicide and why Thich Quang Duc's self-immolation was not, from Thich Nhat Hanh's perspecticve, a suicide, which would be contrary to Buddhist teachings:

"Suicide is an act of self-destruction, having as causes the following: (1) lack of courage to live and to cope with difficulties; (2) defeat by life and loss of all hope; and (3) desire for nonexistence. The monk who burns himself [to death] has lost neither courage nor hope; nor does he desire nonexistence. On the contrary, he is very courageous and hopeful and aspires for something good in the future. He does not think that he is destroying himself; he believes in the good fruition of his act of self-sacrifice for the sake of others…."

It would seem to this author, as it appeared to Sariputra, that there is an air of desperation in one who commits suicide, whether it is Channa or Duc or our neighbor down the street. Further, it would seem, suicide always involves a selfish desire for change—sometimes internal, sometimes external, usually both, and this is where the ethical guidelines become complicated. The act of committing suicide is itself as big an issue as the motivation. Misconstruing the act as a heroic gesture doesn't change the act, or the moral issues attached to it.

On the surface, it would seem that the Pali Canon is telling us that it was okay for Channa to kill himself, but not for you and me to kill ourselves. That's because, as the commentaries are quick to point out, Channa had finished his spiritual work; he had cut off all desire and so was not motivated by delusion, by greed or by anger/hatred/aversion, whereas us ordinary folks would commit suicide without completing our spiritual journey and we would be motivated by our delusions. This is a big stretch, even for the commentators, who have done some intellectual contortions to make Channa's suicide seem acceptable. They argue that being an arhat he would not be able to commit suicide, that his enlightenment occurs at the moment he slits his throat. Thus he can commit the act and not be reborn. A stretch!

One's place on one's spiritual journey is meaningful in Buddhist morality, but it doesn't necessarily, in and of itself, provide a complete picture of the ethical framework to be considered around suicide. There's also our motivation—wholesome or unwholesome—and there's the act itself and its outcome, as well as many unique situational factors and conditions.

The First Precept asserts that there is something fundamentally wrong with killing, something intrinsically unwholesome about killing, in particular a person, even if that person is oneself. Regardless of one's motivation and place on the spiritual path, regardless of whether we call it suicide or murder, regardless of whether or not we label it courageous or heroic, killing leaves deep karmic scars, karmic scars so deep that they cannot be overlooked or deemed acceptable. And these scars are inherent in the act as well as in its results.

In the case of Duc's self-immolation, for example, the suicide and the disturbing photograph of it taken by Associated Press photographer Malcolm

Browne caused deep and far-reaching scars, from the Oval Office halfway around the world, where a copy of the picture rested prominently on President Kennedy's desk, and to those there who witnessed the event. David Halberstam, who was covering

the war for the *New York Times* when he witnessed Duc's immolation, wrote: "I was to see that sight again, but once was enough. Flames were coming from a human being; his body was slowly withering and shriveling up, his head blackening and charring. In the air was the smell of burning flesh; human beings burn surprisingly quickly. Behind me I could hear the sobbing of the Vietnamese who were now gathering. I was too shocked to cry, too confused to take notes or ask questions, too bewildered to even think.... As he burned he never moved a muscle, never uttered a sound, his outward composure in sharp contrast to the wailing people around him."

In the case of Channa, while the Buddha doesn't blame him for committing suicide, he doesn't condone it either, and he doesn't find ways of reframing and renaming it to make it seem other than what it is—a killing. In situations where the extenuating circumstances seem to indicate some significant level of "appropriateness" to a suicide, as one might suggest here for both Channa and Duc, then acceptance, without censure or approval, may be the middle path Buddhists can take, ethically speaking.

The motivation, deliberation and intention which precedes a suicide -- everything down to the act of picking up the knife or lighting the match, needs to be considered before we make moral pronouncements about a suicide. This is not an easy thing to do. Further, the underlying objection to suicide, it seems to me, has very little to do with the emotional state of the person committing suicide, but instead it is the intrinsic nature of the act that renders it morally flawed.

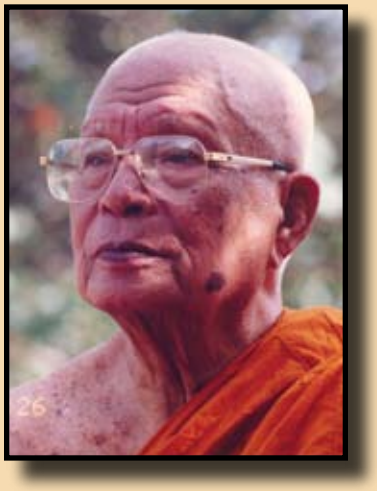
Suicide is incompatible with Buddhist teachings. And not just because it is prescribed in the First Precept, but also because choosing death, instead of life, believing that it is the solution to one's suffering, means one has fundamentally misunderstood the First Noble Truth, and the Third. The First Noble Truth teaches that death is the problem, not the solution. The Third Noble Truth teaches that extinction is possible, but not through death. Rebirth here does not seem to be the issue. But if rebirth is a consideration for you, then one must consider that one's last act is one of the strongest karmic propellants of one into the next life.

Restraint and compassion, informed by practice and wisdom, are the best tools we have in the face of extreme suffering. When they are under-developed or insufficient, as in the case of Duc who had only been a monk for three months, suicides arise. When suicides do arise, our ethical response, I believe, should be to apply these same qualities of restraint and compassion to the situation, accepting the killing without condoning or condemning it, and with an unconditional willingness to help mitigate the suffering that arises from it.

TRANSLATIONS

A Rightview Quarterly Feature of Original Translations

DOING ALL KINDS OF WORK WITH AN EMPTY MIND



A previously untranslated Dharma talk by Ajahn Buddhadasa, translated by Santikaro with editing assistance from Jo Marie Thompson

We have spoken of emptiness metaphorically as a special kind of power or force that can look in any direction. We spoke of a certain hermit with fiery eyes. In whatever direction he looked, with his fiery eyes popping out, everything would be burnt to a crisp, completely cleared. I'd like to use this as a metaphor for understanding emptiness.

The language of legend and myth always has deeper meanings. The power of a fire that can incinerate everything in all directions can never compare with the power of emptiness. Fire is an ordinary material thing that burns up only material stuff, creating merely material vacancy. It can't burn anything mental or spiritual.

Here we're speaking of matters relating to consciousness, so something able to incinerate or destroy everything must include mental matters. This power is the emptiness that is void of all feelings and thoughts of "me" and "mine," of ego, which are mental phenomena. That hermit's special power can be used to harm others, but to harm others for one's own benefit is fundamentally selfish. In our case, as we aspire to unselfishness, to destroying all selfishness, we don't seek any particular benefits from anyone. This distinction is of tremendous importance.

"Doing any kind of work with hopes of getting something in return is a matter of *me* and *mine* that we are so familiar with we don't even notice it."

Don't Assume Clinging is Always Present

Wanting what's good for ourselves, generally considering only ourselves, makes it impossible for us to understand emptiness. To study emptiness for selfish purposes, for building up our egos, for the sake of "me" and "mine," makes genuine understanding impossible. Unable to understand it, there's no way to practice it, because we fail to see that unselfishness is essential for the sake of not having any self.

Merely seeking for our own personal benefit, there will be little understanding when studying or hearing about emptiness. It will sound contradictory and confusing. For example, there's the often-raised objection, "If there is no selfishness, then who will do any work? What will motivate people to work?" Ordinarily, the ability to observe goes no further than this. When such obstacles confront us, even such superficial ones, interest wanes. We give up trying to understand emptiness and toss it away, throwing out the baby with the bath water.

We may also object, "without clinging, there are no hopes and needs." That might seem theoretically correct, but it's a misunderstanding. This is because the meanings of words like 'desire,' 'hope,' and 'wishes,' are ambiguous, as is so often the case with language.

We tend to assume that we are always thick with defilement, that clinging is continuously occurring. Should anyone say "do your work without clinging," it's considered crazy or ridiculous. To understand this matter, we must review the fact that this heart-mind is regularly empty of clinging. Such emptiness is the mind's foundation. Clinging only arises occasionally and temporarily.

To practice, when we're doing anything important, we're careful to prevent clinging from arising. As soon as we're absentminded, it's born again. If we're careless, clinging arises. But here, in a place dedicated to study-practice, we ought not to be absentminded because there's enough time to consider and reflect, and therefore there is no excuse for being careless. Whenever we think of doing something, it's not just some emotional reaction. There's time to think, consider, and prepare oneself. Therefore, please follow the principle that this heart is fundamentally free from clinging. It's more skilful to employ this awareness of "free mind," even for those who still believe that they have defilements and that they are clinging to something or another all the time.

Work Must Be Practice

Work is an important problem for most of us, because we work to live. We can say our life has value because of work. This makes it a most important issue for us. Consequently, I like to focus on work as a crucial issue. Here's a verse I asked the publishers to print on the back covers of our monastery's *Looking Within* series:

Do work of all kinds with
an empty heart,
Offer the fruits of work to voidness,
Eat the food of voidness
as the saints do,
Die to one's self from the very
beginning.

The tricky part of this verse is the phrase "empty heart." This is something we've spoken of many times, and in great detail, so you can read about it on your own [See ***Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree,*** Wisdom Publications, 1994]. What's most important, what you must understand completely, is that these words have their own special meaning. They are not the ordinary language of people who've never studied or reflected deeply on these matters.

"Nature creates us well enough for what's needed."

Consider it "Dhamma language" that requires special explanation.

The phrase "empty heart" (or "free mind") does not mean, in the way that many would assume, the kind of heart or mind that doesn't think at all, like the kind of person who lacks intelligence. If mind is empty in the sense of not thinking at all, it's not really different than sleeping. In that case, one couldn't do anything useful. Further, there's the case of "faking" emptiness. If one fakes it, or just puts on a show, then it's what we call "delinquent" or "criminal" emptiness. If one just fakes emptiness without understanding it and merely seeks some personal benefit, such as avoiding responsibility, we call it "criminally empty mind."

Here, there's a specifically Buddhist meaning that specifies a heart-mind void of all kinds of thoughts and feelings connected with any meaning of *me* or *mine.* Those thoughts and feelings, which are concerned and connected with *me* and *mine* are extensive. These need to be observed, studied, and understood. If we don't know such things, we'll never understand emptiness. We ought to be industrious in trying to discriminate among the many thoughts and feelings that happen every day: which of them are empty — that is, empty of any sense of *me* and *mine* — and which are not empty.

The easier, most practical way to put it is that any thinking and feeling that is mixed up with greed, hatred, and delusion, are neither free nor empty. If there's no admixture of greed, hatred, and delusion, then the heart is empty and free. 'Empty thinking' has no selfish feeling, and is not about or for one's self. There is just pure, untainted awareness and intelligence, whether with or without thought.

Two Kinds of Intelligence

It's difficult to teach how to discriminate pure intelligence from intelligence which is enslaved to craving and defilement. Nevertheless, you need to observe this for yourselves and not just believe me. In other words, observe this difference in your own thoughts and feelings. You can also observe this in others who are skillful thinkers, observers, and investigators. Nowadays, as society blindly worships scientists, experts, and authorities, why don't we consider some scientists and the science they research?

For example, we've all read about Darwin, who studied biology and the evolution of life. He obviously needed to use time to contemplate these matters deeply, just as sages and hermits do. He would observe animals carefully. He would lean on his cane in order to focus deeply, like a statue, until squirrels and birds would land on him. Consider the depths of such thinking, and how profound and penetrating that would be. Is it possible that his contemplation was mixed up with any meaning of *me* or *mine*?

Darwin forgot everything. He forgot himself, his name, where he was. He forgot how he felt, what he would get out of all this, and what his other duties were. He forgot everything and his mind was completely buried in nature. It's as if he disappeared and there was just nature. All meaning of *self*, of *me*, of *mine*, was gone. His mind became completely natural. He was able to contemplate nature most profoundly, according to its actual properties. Thus, he was able to penetrate to nature's secrets and see the aspect of natural truth he discovered. This is one example of working with mind free of me and mine.

Einstein is another example. He's widely considered the leading genius of his time for the way he was able to use his mind. Everyone knows what he discovered, which required a deep, penetrating mind able to investigate nature and be one with it. In such contemplation there's no room for the least sliver of *I*, of *me*, of *self*, of self-interest, of benefiting or losing, or any such thing.

No matter whether one is a thinker, a researcher, or an experimental scientist, each must work with an empty mind. If the least hint of ego sneaks in, things fall apart immediately.

Whenever a sense of me and mine gets mixed in, it's impossible to be aware, to think, to contemplate anything deeply. Instead, one thinks of success and failure, personal benefit, status, honor, profit, and the like. This thinking with me and mine is anxious and restless. When it occurs, whatever one is doing fails. Egoistic thinking always confuses and messes things up by getting in the way of the concentration needed to look deeply into the secrets of nature.

Natural Duty for Its Own Sake

The *me* and the *you* need not play a part anymore, leaving only one's natural duty and doing that duty for duty's sake. Thus, one can work with an empty mind — free of *me* and *mine*, of profit and loss, of success and failure — a mind most sharp, profound, and penetrating. Such a mind is just like having eyes of fire that instantly incinerate whatever one sets them upon. The empty mind sees through everything, just like the magical hermit we mentioned at the beginning.

IF THERE'S NO ADMIXTURE OF GREED, HATRED AND DELUSION, THEN THE HEART IS EMPTY AND FREE.

Nowadays, most people work with minds abashed and nervous. In general, whatever is being done we lack confidence and don't pay proper attention. We're worrying about whether we'll be successful or not, how much we'll be paid, and who will pay us. Our thoughts are concerned mainly with *me* and *mine*, which creates intense pressure and stress for us all the time. This is busy mind, which is the opposite of free and empty. Busy mind has trouble thinking things through, is unorganized, and confuses things.

Doing any kind of work with hopes of getting something in return is a matter of *me* and *mine* that we are so familiar with we don't even notice it.

When we set ourselves to work, even the most simple everyday chores, we must work with a void heart without any *me* or *mine*, without any *us* or *them*. There's just mindfulness, clarity, and wisdom. Then our labor will gather itself appropriately. Our strength is used wisely with a mind that is neither scattered nor sloppy, even in ordinary housework like dusting and mopping. This way there won't be any headaches for us and others, and the work no longer has the meaning of work; it becomes something pleasurable, like a hobby.

The trick of working with an empty mind is making our work enjoyable. When working with a busy mind, work is suffering. So by now you should understand that there are just these two ways of working: with an empty or void mind and with a busy mind. Working with an empty mind is difficult for ordinary people whose hearts are no longer fit. We were born with all the capacity we need but have lost it through improper training. This is why there are so few geniuses. It's not that nature stipulates some fixed rule that geniuses are rare. It's mainly humanity's own failure.

Nature creates us well enough for what's needed. It's we who create our own messes. We build characters that are neglectful, sloppy, and selfish, thinking only of *me* and *mine*, thinking only of deliciousness and pleasures. In the end our minds lack the strength of samadhi (mental concentration and stability). Without the necessary samadhi, there's no sharp, penetrating wisdom. Thus, it's so hard to find people like Einstein and Darwin. Such people are rare, and when they do turn up, they mainly explore material things. It would be wonderful if Einstein, Darwin, and others like them were to consider spiritual matters.

Now, to focus our attention upon the subject of quenching suffering. ***We've been born to end suffering.*** Consequently, we must turn all our hopes, desires, and interests toward spiritual matters, in ways that everyone can follow, so that nobody need suffer.

As we aspire to unselfishness, to destroying all selfishness, we don't seek any particular benefits from anyone. This distinction is of tremendous importance.

Pure Joyful Work

When it's time to put our hands to work, we must think it through from the beginning and fix our intention with certainty. Just go to work with empty mind, enjoy it, and don't wish for anything beyond the power of one's intelligence. Don't take on duties beyond one's own ability. Let one's ability develop first, then expand one's responsibilities appropriately.

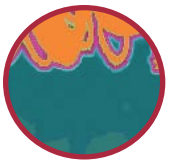
The most important question and challenge is simply to work with an empty mind, with pure intention, and then to expand on that by offering all the results to voidness and eating the food of voidness.

Returning to the verse, the second and third lines merely explain the first line. If we understand the first line and can practice it, the second and third lines won't be any problem.

Once you're practiced in observing the difference between empty mind and busy mind, it's easy. The simple choice is between mindful, wise working and working with craving, egoism, and defilement.

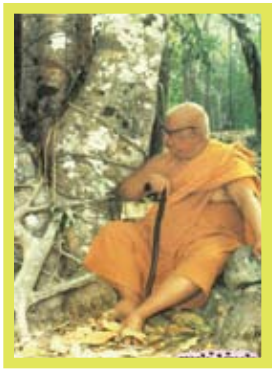
What we're talking about has been discussed many times, has been memorized and repeated over and over again. Why is it that so few people benefit from it? Because most don't reach the level of "working mindfully with wisdom," which requires intelligence that is true and pure. The intelligence and wisdom we refer to is that which naturally exists in a heart void of *me* and *mine*.When *me* and *mine* arise in the mind, wisdom changes into something deceptive, clever, and cunning for the sake of *me* and *mine*. This is the kind of intelligence the world seeks and rewards – the wisdom of the market – which is nothing but cunning for the sake of *me* and *mine*, which deceives and tricks continually. Our world doesn't respect pure and honest wisdom.

To have the fiery eye that sees all things as void, without any craving, clinging, or suffering, requires the knowledge that is wise enough to see even work as empty, so that it's no longer seen as work. Destroy all the meaning of the word 'work,' and it becomes enjoyable play. One will be at ease and comfortable in such work. The boss won't have any headaches, nor will your spouse. Your employees won't be stressed out, nor will the people who serve you in stores and restaurants. This is the special meaning of my verse: ***One ought to do all kinds of work with an empty mind.***



Please reflect on this carefully, so that you have the special, secret kind of power like the hermit who can burn up all obstacles and foes with just a wink of the eye.

"Whenever a sense of me and mine gets mixed in, it's impossible to be aware, to think, to comtemplate anything deeply."



AJAHN BUDDHADASA

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (Servant of the Buddha) went forth as a bhikkhu in 1926, at the age of twenty. After a few years of study in Bangkok, which convinced him "purity is not to be found in the big city," he was inspired to live intimately with nature in order to investigate the Buddha-Dhamma more directly, and so he established Suan Mokkhabalarama (The Grove of the Power of Liberation) in 1932. At that time, it was the only forest Dhamma Center and one of the few places dedicated to Vipassana meditation in Southern Thailand. Word of Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, his work, and Suan Mokkh are described as "one of the most influential events of Buddhist history in Siam."

Ajahn Buddhadasa worked painstakingly to establish and explain the correct and essential principles of what he called "pristine Buddhism," that is, Buddhism before it was buried under commentaries, ritualism, clerical politics, and the like. Progressive elements in Thai society, especially the young, were inspired by his teaching and selfless example. He provided the link between the scriptural tradition and engaged Buddhist practice today. Ajahn Buddhadasa died in 1993, two days before his eightieth birthday.

SANTIKARO

Santikaro is the founder and lead teacher at Liberation Park, a modern American expression of Buddhist practice, study, and social responsibility near Norwalk, Wisconsin. Santikaro established Liberation Park after extensive experience living and training in Thailand, which began when he served in the Peace Corps from 1981-1985; then from 1985-2003, he lived and trained as a Buddhist monk at Suan Mokkha forest monastery in Southern Thailand. There, he was abbot of Suan Atammayatarama and translated and edited Ajahn Buddhadasa's ***Mindfulness with Breathing****, and* ***Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree,*** *as well as other books.*

For more information about Santikaro, please go to ***www. liberationpark.org***

SUTRA STUDIES

THE ARROW

The Sallatha Sutta

--SN XXXVI

Translated by Thanissaro ***Bhikkhu***

In this sutra, the first arrow (the pain-is-inevitable arrow) represents the universal pain of the human condition. The second arrow (the suffering-is-optional arrow) represents self-inflicted suffering resulting from our resistance and reactivity.

Study and practice questions may be found at the end of the sutra.

"Monks, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. A well-instructed disciple of the noble ones also feels feelings of pleasure, feelings of pain, feelings of neither-pleasure-nor-pain. So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person?"

"For us, lord, the teachings have the Blessed One as their root, their guide, and their arbitrator. It would be good if the Blessed One himself would explicate the meaning of this statement. Having heard it from the Blessed One, the monks will remember it."

“In that case, monks, listen and pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, “When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical and mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pains of two arrows. In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical and mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is resistant. Any resistance-obsession with regard to that painful feeling obsesses him. Touched by that painful feeling, he delights in sensual pleasure. Why is that? Because the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person does not discern any escape from painful feeling aside from sensual pleasure. As he is delighting in sensual pleasure, any passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him. He does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling. As he does not discern the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, or escape from that feeling, then any ignorance-obsession with regard to that feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain obsesses him.

Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it as though joined with it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it as though joined with it. This is called an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person joined with birth, aging, and death; with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is joined, I tell you, with suffering and stress.

“Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. So he feels one pain: physical, but not mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot him with another one, so that he would feel the pain of only one arrow. In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his breast or become distraught. He feels one pain: physical, but not mental.

“As he is touched by that painful feeling, he is not resistant. No resistance-obsession with regard to that painful feeling obsesses him. Touched by that painful feeling, he does not delight in sensual pleasure. Why is that? Because the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones discerns an escape from painful feeling aside from sensual pleasure. As he is not delighting in sensual pleasure, no passion-obsession with regard to that feeling of pleasure obsesses him.

He discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling. As he discerns the origination, passing away, allure, drawback, and escape from that feeling, no ignorance-obsession with regard to that feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain obsesses him.

“Sensing a feeling of pleasure, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of pain, he senses it disjoined from it. Sensing a feeling of neither-pleasure-nor-pain, he senses it disjoined from it. This is called a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones disjoined from birth, aging, and death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs. He is disjoined, I tell you, from suffering and stress.

“This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person.”

The discerning person, learned,
doesn't sense a (mental) feeling of pleasure or pain:
This is the difference in skillfulness
between the sage and the run-of-the-mill person.

For a learned person
who has fathomed the Dhamma,
clearly seeing this world and the next,
desirable things don't charm the mind,
undesirable ones bring no resistance.

His acceptance and rejection
are scattered,
gone to their end,
do not exist.

Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,
he discerns rightly,
has gone, beyond becoming, to the
Further Shore.

STUDY PRACTICE AND QUESTIONS

1. Zen Teacher Zoketsu Norman Fischer concluded a talk on this sutra by saying that it shows how all of Buddhism can be summed up in four words: "Don't make it worse!"

Do you agree that Buddhism is this simple?

How could you put that succinct view of Buddhism into practice in your everyday life?

Do you know of another "sound bite" that sums up all of Buddhism?

2. In this sutra, the Buddha explains the distinction between pain and our suffering from pain. Being afflicted, lacking deep awareness, we have physical and mental pain. The first arrow, the physical, is unavoidable. But we can avoid the second arrow, the mental anguish we inflict upon ourselves in response to pain.

What are the traditional Buddhist tools for avoiding the second arrow?

How could this understanding increase your compassion and wisdom?

3. Discuss this sutra in terms of increasing each of the following in your practice:

- *Virtue*
- *Faith*
- *Precepts*
- *Meditation*
- *Wisdom*
- *Right Emancipation*

4. While this sutra is obviously meant to be understood on an individual or personal level, what might it possibly mean if it were taken as a broader parable or metaphor?

5. How would you use the lesson in this sutra to benefit others in a parenting situation? in a caregiver situation? in a "socially engaged" situation?

6. Comment on this sutra in terms of your understanding of its connection to the five skandhas.

7. How would you integrate this sutra's teachings with your understanding of Dependent Origination?

THE SANGHA:
FRUITS OF THE DHARMA

By Xianyang Carl Jerome

Externally, as we explore new ways of establishing and defining clerical and monastic institutions in America, understanding clearly how the Sangha forms and practices becomes increasingly important. Internally, as new challenges are faced in America for our Buddhist nuns and monks, it is increasingly important that we support them in their developing and evolving practices.

I take refuge in the Buddha
I take refuge in the Dharma
I take refuge in the Sangha

Nuns and monks are members of an exclusive community–what Zen poet Philip Whalen jokingly called "monk-ydom." And monk-ydom, as Whalen explained, holds "a very powerful draw" for those seeking a deep spiritual practice–a draw for those wishing to become clergy as well as a draw for those seeking to deepen their lay practices, for monastics are the symbol of the fruits of practice.

Since the day of the Buddha, when the monastic community of women and men was developed to spread the Dharma, practitioners from all walks of life who have wanted to dedicate their lives, in the most unconditional and exclusive way possible, have studied and practiced inside convents and monasteries, without the distractions of a "worldly" life, without the distractions of family and career. They have been recognized by their appearance, respected for their renunciation, for their special status as monastics, and they have been given an honorific, which in the case of Chinese monastics is the last name Shi, indicating that they are a member of the Buddha's family, and the Shakya family mission.

Becoming a member of this group requires transmission, a scared and defining characteristic of Buddhist nuns and monks that holds special import for us today as transmission lineages are being revived and renewed, such as the Sri Lankan Bhukkini Order, which was dormant from the 11th century until its revival in 1996.



Transmission of teaching authority is what ensures the preservation of the Dharma. Classicly, nuns and monks are, in a sense, spiritual caregivers who have dedicated their lives, in the most undistracted way possible–without family or worldly career and the inherent concerns and responsibilities of those roles, to preserving and spreading the teachings. Nuns and monks are caregivers for all sentient beings, not only in the Mahayana tradition, but in the Theravada and Vajryana traditions as well; they are critical to the preservation

Regardless of how they practice or where they practice, how accessible or inaccessible they are, nuns and monks are a symbol of such strength and power in Buddhism that its promulgation would seem almost a necessity.

of an authentic and genuine Buddhadharma, a role that is ensured through their practice and through the transmission of their lineages. For those whose karma calls them to a life of benefit for others, this is often seen as the highest possibility and is seen as carrying the weight and authority of nearly 3000 years of history with it.

For those who want to practice, and to practice deeply, the appeal of a life of uninterrupted practice, a monastic life, is indeed very powerful. Far more powerful, as Whalen understood intuitively from his own practice as a Zen priest, than was that of a Buddhist cleric with a "householder's" life (which is not to diminish the important of non-monastic Buddhists who fulfill important roles in making the Dharma available and in preserving it under conditions where monasticism is not possible or appropriate, either because of current or historical conditions).

As Buddhism in America evolves in this century and this country, the clerical and monastic institutions of Buddhism will modulate and evolve. This is natural, as the Buddhdharma teaches us.

Understanding clearly both the purpose and function of monastics and monasticism, however, can help us to understand what is worth preserving in our newly developing institutions, what is worth modifying, and what is worth developing anew.

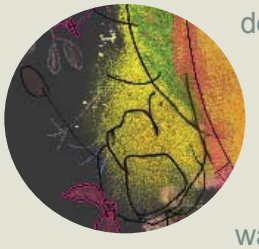
Regardless of how they practice or where they practice, how accessible or inaccessible they are, nuns and monks are a symbol of such strength and power in Buddhism that's its promulgation would seem almost a necessity. Nuns and monks are, in the here and now, the visible fruits of what is ultimately attainable through Buddhist practice. Nuns and monks today are using the tools of the electronic and digital world to make the authentic teachings of the Buddha available to all beings, and that process needs to be watched closely if the dharma is to evolve and not devolve into sectarianism, secularism, and inauthenticity.

The Buddha designed his monastic institution of Axial Age India as a society within a society, as a new ethical institution and way of life based on equality and the selflessness of wisdom and lovingkindness. He meant it to represent the potential of Buddhism to effect social change through example and practice. The convent and the monastery suggest, on a collective level, the outcomes of Buddhist practice on a societal level. Seeing this, the Buddha hoped, would inspire the warring kings of the Indian subcontinent to consider the alternative of the Buddhdharma. Today, faced with even greater threats of extinction through destruction of the eco-system and potential nuclear annihilation, nuns and monks around the world are working toward this same goal, in many of the same ways—through their practices and through making the Dharma as widely available as possible.

Robert Thurman promotes and preserves the dharma through his work at Tibet House and Columbia University. In 1997 Time Magazine chose him as one of its 25 most influential Americans. In an essay on his website, www.bobthurman.com, he wrote:

The Buddha lived in a time when the combination of tribalistic sacrificialism and incipient imperialistic urbanization was initiating a cycle of violence that has continued up to its present outer limits in the nuclear age. He was the first to teach that "hatred will not cease by hatred; it can only cease by love." He clearly understood that you cannot effectively oppose evil by becoming evil. To stand up to evil with evil is to surrender to evil. Only by overwhelming evil with good is evil conquered. The enemy can only be defeated by love, violence only by non-violence.

So Buddha abandoned all sides of the many conflicts of the day. He became a mendicant, abandoning the upper class identity. He entered a spiritual family, abandoning his racial and national identity. He became propertyless, abandoning the competition for wealth and all identity of ownership. He became viewless, abandoning all ideological identity, and all fanatical dogmatisms. He became selfless, abandoning all personal clamor for recognition. He became lifeless, abandoning all violent claims to air, food, water, and other valuable resources.Thus abandoning all ordinary roles, he created a new role, that of the bhikshu mendicant or monk, the person who lives in the world but not of the world, who connects himself and therefore others to a transcendent reality that puts the demands of relative reality into a better perspective.



He set an Example, gave a Teaching, and founded a Community based on self-conquest through self-transcendence. These three spread throughout the world, reflecting in the lives of numerous successful leaders, holy persons, and beneficial sages.

The human community has thrived and grown ever more powerful, in spite of its recurring habit of irrational mutual violence and destruction that have brought it again and again to the brink of extinction. It now stands at its most obvious crisis ever. And it is clearer than ever that the value of self-conquest through self-transcendence, of violence-conquest through non-violence, is not at all unrealistic idealism, but indispensable to life itself.

It is to the example of our nuns and monks and the extraordinary discipline of their practices that we look for the Buddhadharma. It is to our nuns and monks, who represent the taming of hatred and violence in our lives and in the institutions of the world, that we look now for guidance. It is in them that we see the practical potential for a Pureland. It is in the Sangha that we take refuge.

Embrace Tiger, Return to Mountain

Writer JODY WILSON discovers there is nothing like the diagnosis of a potentially terminal illness to focus the mind.

Consciousness is a slippery slope, especially when you're wired into a heart monitor, wearing an oxygen mask, dealing with a drain inserted in your pleural cavity and arguing with your husband about using the on-demand intravenous morphine drip.

"I'm fine," I insist inanely, hoping to be heard through the oxygen mask. Translation: "I am terrified that if I use the morphine and go to sleep, I will die. I will die in a drugged stupor, unconscious, without realization. I will die a bad death, without courage or hope. Please don't let me die that way."

"You've got to get some rest," Bob replies with the same steely-eyed reasonability he's been facing me down with for hours. Translation: "You will not die today. Let go with trust. There's no need to struggle now. You need to sleep so you can live. Please live."

My sons aren't constrained to treat me as an equal or take me seriously and if they can hear the subtext, they choose to ignore it. They jam my headphones on my head, crank up "Abbey Road" and take turns hitting the morphine button every 15 minutes. It's fun to turn Mom on.

It's less than 24 hours after undergoing a partial left lung lobectomy. The inferior lobe contained a malignant tumor the size of a tangerine. A couple of dodgy looking lymph nodes in the media steinum were also excised and the surgeon was "pretty sure" he got them all. The diagnosis is non-small cell lung cancer, 3-A on the scale of cancer nightmares. The worst is four. The five year

survival rate is 15% — eight out of ten people will die of the disease within five years. But, if I am one of the statistical two that survive, the odds of my dying of any type of cancer come back in line with the general population or 2 in 1000.

I will say right now that I am culpable. I smoked my first cigarette when I was 15 and my last two months before I was diagnosed. I quit nine times, once for 18 months. And I knew I was a first-class risk; in 1980 I had a fast-growing malignant tumor removed from under my left arm. I am responsible for my own actions, not the tobacco companies, and I suffer the consequences. Karma is, inexorably, karma. All of our actions cause suffering, some more than others. Why do people repeatedly act against their own self-interests? How can you/I/he/she/they drink/smoke/drug/eat/sleep/shop/fill in the blank to excess when all the evidence, especially the evidence of our direct experience, informs us that our behavior is harming ourselves and others? All my ancient twisted karma, stemming from greed, anger and ignorance, arising from body, speech and mind, I now fully repent. No one escapes.

I was not practicing Zen when I was diagnosed. I was, however, an experienced practitioner of the Zen of Reading All the Books about Zen and, I modestly admit, a pretty adept spiritual materialist. I began this practice at age twelve, just a year after *Dharma Bums* was published. At twenty four I read *Be Here Now*, and later that decade *The Three Pillars of Ze*n and *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.* At thirty, I discovered Alan Watts. At forty, Carl Jung and Joseph Campbell.

By 2000, I had visited Milarepa's cave in Tibet, acquired a leaf from the cutting of "the" Bodhi tree at Wat Pho in Bangkok, and had spent the night at Lumbini. I'd attended a workshop at the Toronto Zen Centre and had returned to that Centre to sit at other times. But the vibes weren't welcoming and the energy at the Toronto Zen Centre in 1992 was unsettling. I didn't stay. I had taken teachings from the Dalai Lama; hugged strangers at Unity churches; chanted at the Vedantist Society; "OM-ed" with a number of celebrity lamas and mamas; danced ecstatically at New Moon rituals, attended New Age "healings" and had otherwise been stumbling down The Road to Inner Peace for some time. At fifty three, spiritual seeking had become my life and although I thought I was working hard to find a "place to worship," as I described it, I've come to understand that all my "seeking" was the main obstacle to my finding. But there's nothing like the diagnosis of a potentially terminal illness to focus the mind. I didn't know it, but the seeking was pretty much over and the hard work had not yet begun.

On the third morning after surgery, the sun rose and threw its rays into my east facing hospital room. A nurse was with me, silently and patiently untangling the web of cords, tubes and wires from all the various drips, monitors and drains that ensnared me. As the light in the room deepened, every idea I had about religion, every fierce wish for total faith in a personal God, every cherished idea concerning the nature of things and all of my closely reasoned analysis of existence and being, dissolved. An Ojibwa saying quoted by Joko Beck — "Sometimes I go about in pity for myself, and all the while a great wind is bearing me across the sky" — rose like the sun in my newly minted mind. I spoke these words out loud. The nurse turned to me and smiled. "I thought you were asleep," he said gently. "Not anymore." He held my hand while I wept. His presence was witness, his silence a balm. The experience was completely full, completely empty. I was discharged the next day, 48 hours before anyone had expected, borne by a great wind across an empty sky.

It's well documented that people with cancer or other serious illnesses who cultivate and maintain a positive attitude live longer and have a better quality of life than those who don't. This point of view is pervasive at every level of the experience. All hospital personnel from the head of surgery to the parking lot attendant encourage it. Support groups provide step-by-step instructions on how to achieve it. Family members and friends insist on it.

Emotions and thoughts are chemical. Negative thoughts weaken us. Positive thoughts and feelings strengthen and heal us. The goal is to "stop every

WHO REALLY KNOWS WHAT'S GOOD, WHAT'S BAD?

negative thought and action in your environment whether you think it, say it, or are in the field of someone else who says or does something and replace it with a positive thought," according to one source. "Positive affirmations can shrink tumors," claims another. "You are the commander of YOUR body! Take charge and command your cells to be healthy. You do not have to accept and enable what's happening to them. You may command the cells in your body that are here to serve your Soul!"

Hallelujah! I could think my way out of this! I longed to believe that I was essentially in control and had ultimate power over the events that were coming downstream, including the very real possibility of a horrible death from a wasting disease. It would be a dream come true to force this nightmare into something I could manage and control. I wanted to wring it dry of every hint of uncertainty, ambivalence and ambiguity. Who doesn't yearn for a future that is solid all the way through? Like baloney, no matter where you cut, it is the same, a completely consistent and predictable physical, emotional and mental package. No surprises.

But the Great Matter had whupped me upside the head good and proper. I now knew, without a doubt, that I was not enthroned, solitary and omnipotent, at the center of the universe. If we are ever the "captains of our fates and the masters of our souls" it is only under the most limited conditions — relegated to our selections between pink or blue, whole or skim, Coke or Pepsi. The notion that we have the power to command our cells to heal as if they were a pack of bad dogs is the seductive danger of New Age spirituality. It tempts us with a fantasy of unparalleled personal power, encourages us to use that power for our own self-interest, and ultimately affirms our unalienable right to get our own way. It's true, isn't it? What we call "positive" thinking is always in accord with our ego preferences — an abundance of wealth, health and happiness — while "negative" thinking always describes our aversions — financial insecurity, ill health and (the ultimate aversion) — death. That we can know what is ultimately good and ultimately bad and drive our lives towards the good and away from the bad is essentially ego inflation, a fantasy of God-like power. Besides, who really knows what's good, what's bad?

In ancient China, there was a poor farmer whose only valuable possession was a horse. One day, the horse ran away. A neighbor rushed over to commiserate. "That's terrible! What a tragedy, a real misfortune." The farmer answered, "Who knows what's good, what's bad?" The next day, the horse returned, leading a herd of wild horses into his corral. The neighbor hurried over to compliment the farmer on this unexpected windfall and his stunning good luck. "You're a rich man now! What a great thing for you and your family!" The farmer answered, "Who knows what's good, what's bad?" The next day, the farmer's only son, attempting to tame one of the wild horses, was thrown and broke his leg. The neighbor ran to comfort the farmer. "A disaster, certainly. Who will help you bring in the crops? Terrible!" The farmer answered, "Who knows what's good, what's bad?" The next day, the army marched through the village, conscripting all able-bodied youths, but the farmer's son was not taken because he had a broken leg. So the neighbor...

. . . well, you know the rest.

People with serious illnesses can become prisoners of positivism, captives of the either/or, good/bad, positive/negative, mind states. I knew I didn't want either/or. I hadn't for some time. Now I was finding both/and to be unsatisfactory . What I was discovering was that the imperative is not to be positive, the imperative is to be present.

I was optimistic about the outcome, including — not in spite of — the very real possibility that I would die from this disease within five years. And while it is preferable and pleasant for us and the people

around us for to be positive in these circumstances, in the end both Pollyanna and Scrooge are equally crippled.

My optimism was coming from a different place, a knowing that, regardless of my own particular and personal outcome, everything was, is now and will essentially be okay. A few years later under different circumstances, Sensei told me that Roshi Kapleau often said: "Don't worry. You can't fall out of the universe." That is a near perfect expression of the knowing that I experienced. The optimism that sprung from this energy is what enabled me to be present for this experience, not from "positive" thinking.

When I took my *Jukai* Precepts Ceremony, I wrote this:

Bad thought.
Good thought.
Just thought. No thought
Ah!

But that was later. In the six months between diagnosis and the post surgery, post chemotherapy, post radiation benchmark CT scan, my job, as everyone kept reminding me, was to "beat this thing."

The language of cancer (or any serious illness) is the language of war. We attack cancer and conquer it. We are urged to be strong in the fight against cancer. We are told that early detection is the best defense. There are cancer battle plans, aggressive strategies to kill cancer and an entire library of books with variations on the title, "Fight Cancer and Win." An individual's experience with the disease is often described as a "last stand" or "a desperate struggle." Certain foods and supplements are described as "cancer-fighting;" nutrition, exercise and alternative therapies are "weapons." There are victims and survivors. Survivors are courageous and brave. Some, like Lance Armstrong, are heroes. Some, like Dana Reeves, are martyrs.

The military vocabulary drove me nuts. I am a dove politically, non-violent socially and non-aggressive by design and desire. But I'm not a pacifist. Even now, as a practicing Buddhist, I will fight to defend others. Under certain circumstances — like this one — I will also fight to defend myself. But how do you fight your own cells? What was there to fight? Maybe the cancer cells that survived the surgeon's knife (another weapon) were forming a fifth column in my body. Was I harboring the enemy? Or was I the enemy? Who fights? Who lives? Who dies? Now I see these questions as the seeds of koan practice. I was angry, disturbed and completely flummoxed (which, now that I think about it, was also my initial response to formal koan practice.)

My resistance ran so deep that I did something completely out of character. I dropped the struggle and shut up. I nodded and smiled. I learned to tune out the clichés and listen to my own heart and mind. When I did, I understood one simple fact. The ground is falling away under our feet — ALL of our feet, ALL of the ground, ALL of the time. This was the only thing I was sure of as I embarked on a 28- day cycle of radiation therapy and one course (two cycles, administered through six infusions) of a chemotherapy blend of Taxol and carboplatin or TaxolCarbo.

Taxol is, basically, a natural botanical, an extract from the bark of the Pacific yew tree (Taxus brevifolia). The problem with using natural Taxol as an anti-cancer treatment is that it is unconscionable environmentally and off the charts in terms of cost: it takes between three and ten 100-year-old trees to treat just one patient. But luckily the needles and twigs of the European yew tree (Taxus Baccata) were found to contain a close relative to Taxol. As the trees quickly replenish the needles, harvesting large quantities has little effect on the population of yew trees. A semi-synthetic version of Taxol, Paclitaxel, was introduced in 1995. Still wildly expensive, of course, but sustainable and relatively practical.

An infusion of a semi-synthetic botanical, like a

rare medicinal tea, perhaps, or a complex herbal cocktail, that doesn't sound so bad, right? In fact, I was feeling pretty good about it, despite the short list of side effects — hair loss, loss of appetite, nausea, painful bones and muscles, numbness and tingling of limbs were the manageable minimum to expect. More serious things like internal bleeding, respiratory and/or gastrointestinal problems, mouth sores, fever and bone marrow depression were distinct possibilities.

PAIN IS PHYSICAL. SUFFERING IS MENTAL.

The most fearsome item on this list of horrors is hair loss. Trust me. No woman who has ever faced chemotherapy will tell you otherwise. Remember the classic Jack Benny routine? Benny is held up at gunpoint. The robber says, "Your money or your life." Long and delicious pause. The robber repeats his demand. Benny says, "I'm thinking, I'm thinking."

"Your hair or your life," says the oncologist, metaphorically. And one hesitates! The idea that I would lose my hair — which, frankly, I never liked anyway, it being always thin and limp and full of cowlicks — opened a floodgate. My tantrum was worthy of any two- year-old. There was nothing to say.

I was inconsolable, my feelings of despair beyond words of comfort or reason. The next day, my husband shaved his head.

This singular act of compassion and loving kindness was and is the most marvelous thing anyone has ever done for me in this life, helping me immeasurably through what was to come. I began to catch a glimpse of what it might mean to simply hold up a flower, to simply see it, to simply smile. To be, fully and entirely, beyond words.

There are essential differences between pain and suffering. Pain is unavoidable — suffering is optional. Pain is what happens. Suffering is the story we tell ourselves about what's happening. Or has happened. Or might happen. Pain is physical. Suffering is mental. In the chemotherapy room of the Strauss Oncology Center at Weiss Hospital the already thin wall separating physical pain from mental suffering is permeable to the point of transparency. (And a mighty cheerful place it was, too.)

Forbearance is an old virtue that has a bad rap. Often linked with patience, forbearance is a level or two deeper. Patience is something one exercises while in line at the supermarket or in traffic. Forbearance is more like a willingness to absorb pain with as much good humor, courtesy and self-lessness as one can muster. In fact, one of its dictionary definitions is "long-suffering." The practice of forbearance is what made the experience of willingly poisoning oneself at regular intervals bearable, even enjoyable. Without exception, every single person I encountered was cheerful, helpful, hopeful, open-hearted and brave. It was a privilege to be there. I learned how to sit for hours in the presence of others on the same journey; uncomfortably pinioned to an intravenous drip, experiencing the benefits of stillness one moment, resistance to it the next, breathing through it all, trying not to watch the clock and struggling to be with what is. I often flash on this experience in the few moments after a formal round of sitting in the zendo when we all rise for *kinhin. (Slow walking meditation.)*

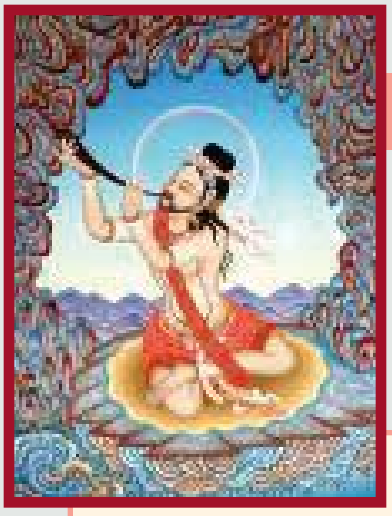
While chemotherapy had a group energy, radiation was a solitary experience. Perhaps because of that and because it meant a daily trip to the hospital, the worst of the two. It was here that I think I first faced the First Noble Truth. "Suffering, or unsatisfactoriness, is a condition of existence." Not just my existence. It is neutral. If we take it personally, we're doomed.

In January, 2001, I became a Buddhist. It happened during a regular appointment with the oncologist following the "benchmark" CT scan:

"There is a mass on your left lung. It's probably scar tissue, completely consistent with your experience."
"What?!"
"There is a mass on your left lung. We're pretty sure it's scar tissue."
"Pretty sure?! What does that mean?"
"Scar tissue looks like a mass on these scans."
"My tumor looked like a mass on the scan."
"Right."
"RIGHT???!!!!"
"Right."
"How do we know it's not a tumor?"
"We compare scans. If the mass is larger next time, it's probably a tumor. If it's the same it's probably scar tissue."

"You're kidding, right?"
"No, I'm not kidding. The mass could be either a tumor or scar tissue. We're pretty sure it's probably scar tissue."
"When will we be certain?"
"Never."

Jody Wilson *is a student of Sensei Sevan Ross at the Chicago Zen Center (chicagozen.org). She is cancer-free.*



LIFE OF NAROPA

by Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche
Translated by Chojor Radha, and edited by Tina Armond

The Karma Kayu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism traces its origins to Shakyamuni Buddha through Marpa the Great Translator, who traveled to India to bring authentic Buddhist teachings to Tibet. His teacher, Naropa, received the lineage transmission from Tilopa, and so on back to the Buddha himself.

NAROPA (1016-1100) WAS BORN A PRINCE IN INDIA. From the day of his birth, he was endowed with special qualities. As an infant, Naropa was so pleasant to behold that simply to gaze at him was to experience joy and a sense of happiness. Even in childhood, he possessed profound wisdom and a sense of lovingkindness and compassion for others.

The king, queen, and all the attendants agreed that the most appropriate place for such an extraordinary son of a noble family would be in a monastery. Just as precious jewels should not be kept in filthy water but placed on an immaculate shrine, it did not seem appropriate for Naropa to dwell in the midst of worldly people. His rightful place was to be among practitioners of the Dharma.

When he became old enough, Naropa was very pleased with the decision for him to go into a monastery–and so he happily went to study and get an education from the many great scholar monks of his time. Naropa's wisdom became so profound that he surpassed all of his teachers time and again in his understanding of the Dharma. He became one of the most famous and world-renowned scholars of his day, finally attending India's famous Nalanda University.

Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

It was the custom at that time for different traditions to debate each other, with the beliefs of the winner declared supreme. Hundreds of scholars of different traditions would come to Nalanda University to debate with Buddhist scholars. At that time, Nalanda had four gates, one at each of the cardinal directions. At each gate there were five hundred world-renowned scholars known as "gate keepers." Naropa became one of the scholars at the northern gate. In that capacity he debated daily with scholars of various schools, and each day he further proved himself to be one of the most learned among them all. Through these debates, he became very famous.

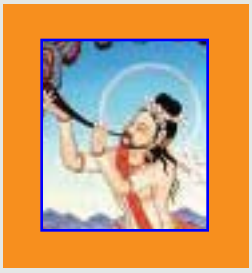
One day, as Naropa was sitting quietly in his room reading a Buddhist sutra text, a very fearful shadow fell upon the floor. He immediately looked up to see what it was. To his great surprise he saw a very ugly, wrinkled, old woman without a single tooth in her mouth standing in front of him. She was so old that she was not able to stand without the aid of a cane. She asked Naropa, "What are you reading?" Naropa replied, "I am studying the teachings of the Buddha." The old woman then asked, "Do you understand the teachings?" Without any hesitation Naropa replied, "I understand every single word of the teachings of the Buddha." This response elicited great joy and happiness in the old woman, and she laughed and giggled, and danced in an ecstatic manner. She said, "It is very fortunate for this earth that such a scholar as yourself exists!"

The ugly woman next asked Naropa, "You might understand the literal meaning of the teachings of the Buddha, but do you understand the inner and ultimate meaning of the teachings?" Since the old woman had displayed such great joy and happiness at his merely saying that he understood the literal meaning of the sutras, Naropa thought that she would be even more joyful if he said that yes, he understood the inner, essential meaning of the Dharma. So Naropa replied, "Yes." As he replied yes, the expression of the face of the ugly old woman turned from one of joy to one of sadness, and she fell to the floor and beat it with both her hands and cried, "To think that such a great scholar as you knows how to tell lies!" This embarrassed Naropa, who inquired," "Is there anyone who really understands the inner meaning of the Dharma?" The old woman replied, "Yes, my brother, Tilopa."

The instant that she uttered the name "Tilopa," devotion arose in the mind and heart of Naropa and tears came to his eyes. Naropa asked the old woman, "Where can I find this master? In which direction does he reside?" The old woman replied, "There is no particular direction for Tilopa or his residence. He could be anywhere. If your mind is filled with devotion and confidence, and you yearn to meet him, this is the right direction." Having spoken thus, the old woman, who was actually Vajrayogini, disappeared like a rainbow fading in the sky. Because his negative karma was not completely purified, Naropa was only able to see her as a very ugly, old woman. His mental stains prevented him from seeing her true form.

Naropa requested leave from the Abbot of Nalanda University. He was a great favorite of the Abbot and scholars, and although they wanted very much for him to stay, he had made up his mind to leave and search for Tilopa.

With an intolerable yearning, Naropa went out in search of his master. He experienced extreme hunger and thirst and overexposure to the elements, but he did not allow any of these unbearable conditions to deter him in his search for Tilopa. The many unfavorable circumstances that he encountered have become known as the "Twelve Fearful Experiences of Naropa." Twelve times he encountered ferocious dogs, wild animals, poisonous snakes, terrifying women, and other adverse situations that hindered him on his path to meet his teacher and frightened him almost to death. Nevertheless, he would not turn back in his search for Tilopa. After each terrifying encounter he went forward, and each time he did this, he would hear an affirmation resounding from the sky that what he had just experienced was the manifestation of his guru.



After suffering the pain and hardships of passing through the "Twelve Fearful Experiences," Naropa found himself in a village. From out of the sky sounded

the words, “Not far from this village is the master whom you seek. You must have faith and confidence in him.” Filled with excitement, Naropa went to the outskirts of the village and asked everyone he saw if they knew a master called Tilopa. They all replied that they did not know a master called Tilopa, but there was a fisherman down by the river drying fish who was called by that name.

Naropa was surprised to hear that Tilopa was a fisherman but he immediately remembered that all his recent experiences had actually been manifestations of his guru, and he realized that if he had to meet his teacher in the form of a fisherman, it must be because of his impure mind. So without any doubt or hesitation, and with devotion and trust, he went down to the river to meet Tilopa. As he got closer, he could see Tilopa was transferring the consciousness of each fish to a pure realm with a snap of his fingers. Afterwards he would pick up each fish and bite off its head, discarding the head to one side, and placing the body to dry on the sand in preparation for taking it to market.

Naropa prostrated to Tilopa as a gesture of respect and asked to be accepted as his student. Tilopa scrutinized Naropa from head to toe three times and said, “No matter from what angle I look at you, you seem to be of a royal family. You look like royalty and speak like royalty, and yet you come here to be a student of a fisherman, one of a lowly caste. This is not at all proper.”

Tilopa was about to take his leave, but Naropa, out of desperation and devotion, clung to Tilopa without any shame or embarrassment and again requested him to be his teacher. Saying neither yes nor no to Naropa’s request, Tilopa walked away. Naropa tried to follow Tilopa, but although Tilopa appeared to be walking normally, and although Naropa was running, he was unable to catch up, no matter how fast he ran. Naropa could see the form of Tilopa in front of him, but he was unable to get closer. As this area in India was particularly hot and arid, it became very difficult for Naropa to keep running after Tilopa, and although he subjected himself to thirst, hunger, and fatigue, he was not able to catch up.

Eventually, Naropa saw Tilopa sitting on a very high cliff. He went over to him and prostrated, again requesting Tilopa to be his teacher. Tilopa responded by saying, “If you were really desperate and determined to learn about the teachings, you would obey my order to jump off this cliff without any hesitation because you would be able to understand how important it is

to follow the commands of your master." Naropa jumped off the high cliff and fell to the ground. All his bones and joints were broken into many, many pieces. Tilopa went down to Naropa and inquired, "Are you experiencing any pain?" Naropa replied, "The pain is killing me!" This is how Naropa got his name. ("Na" in Tibetan means "pain," "ro" means "killing" and "pa" makes the word a noun.)

Tilopa gently touched Naropa's body and all his broken bones joined together and were healed. After undergoing so much suffering, Naropa once again asked Tilopa to give him the profound teachings. Tilopa said, "You are not yet pure enough to be introduced to the nature of mind!" With a wrathful expression, Tilopa removed his slipper and slapped the face of Naropa so hard that Naropa fainted. When he regained consciousness, Naropa's mental state of realization was equal to that of his teacher.

Becoming very peaceful, Tilopa lovingly explained to Naropa why he had to be so very wrathful and subject him to so much suffering. He explained, "The fact that I led you into so many painful circumstances does not mean that I am a cruel person. Your negative karma could not be purified by your own effort alone. Only by your actually experiencing hardship could you purify the negative karma that prevented you from realizing the ultimate nature of buddhahood. Throughout all your experiences of hardship, you did not develop any doubts, hesitation, or wrong views, and you diligently obeyed all commands. In this way you were able finally to overcome the conflicting emotions and experience realization."

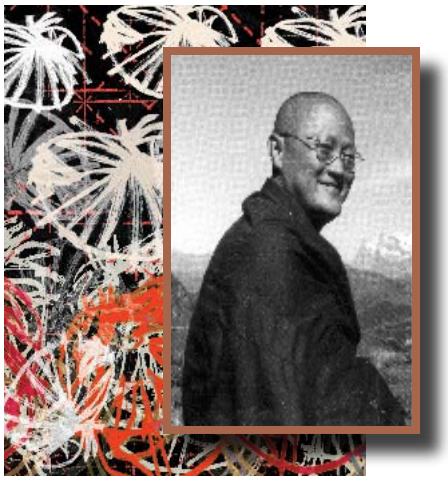
In case any of us might still be wondering if such harshness is really necessary to reach enlightenment, let us take the example of a vessel that is encrusted with rust. The rust on the metal container is so rough that trying to remove it with a soft cloth and gentle hand, we would not be able to remove any rust at all. The more effective way to remove the rust would be to find another very rough substance even rougher than the rust. If we rub the container with this, then the rust can be removed. Similarly, the negative karma obscuring the true nature of mind cannot be removed by softness or gentleness, nor can the achievement of realization occur if a teacher is overly kind.

Harshness is needed. If a teacher allows his students to be lazy and is too soft-hearted, the students will be unable to uncover and purify their mental stains. Harshness and roughness on the part of the teacher are sometimes essential.

After Naropa reached the stage of realization equal to his teacher, Tilopa assured him that they were inseparable. They had never been separate in the past, were not separate in the present, and would never be separate in the future.

Tilopa and Naropa became so famous throughout India that in the eyes of the people they were as familiar as the sun and the moon. Renowned for their realization, wisdom, and profound learning, Tilopa and Naropa turned the wheel of Dharma uncountable times in all directions.

Born in Eastern Tibet in 1924, ***Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche*** *is one of the great masters of the Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Rinpoche, who received most of his training and education in Tibet before the Chinese invasion, is highly accomplished in meditation, philosophy, and monastic arts. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, Rinpoche escaped to India. He served as abbot of Tashi Choling Monastery in Bhutan and then at Tilokpur Nunnery in Northern India. In 1976, the 16th Karmapa sent Rinpoche to the United States to serve as his chief representative in this country. Today Rinpoche is the abbot of Karma Triyana Dharmachakra Monastery in Woodstock, New York, and head of its affiliate centers throughout the United States:*
www.kagyu.org



DILEMMAS ALONG THE JOURNEY

In this article, Venerable Sujiva looks at some of the fundamental challenges of meditation practice and how to overcome them.

This is the first of two articles by the Burmese Meditation Master, Venerable Sujiva, on difficulties in meditation practice. The second article, on the Five Hindrances, will appear in Rightview Quarterly's next issue.

Why Complications Arise

Mindfulness is the awareness of things as they really are. If we are mindful, we will be very alert to the conditions within us and without, able to see whether they are profitable or otherwise, and capable of acting accordingly.

The practice of *VipassanaBhavana* (insight meditation) involves cultivating intense and uninterrupted mindfulness of the physical or mental process occurring in each moment. This concentrated awareness, when sufficiently powerful and rightly directed, is able to penetrate the thick veil of delusions, liberating one from defilements and suffering.

Why then, some meditators may ask, can complications arise? The answer is simple—one needs to be more mindful. Mindfulness is helpful everywhere, not only in "formal" meditation. Without mindfulness, you can expect challenges. The three categories of dilemmas commonly faced by meditators are:

1. Conflict of desires and values
2. Fears
3. Obstacles to Practice

1. CONFLICT

The most common dilemma is the conflict between material and spiritual aspirations. As the Dhammapada says:

One way indeed, is to worldly gains
One way indeed, is to Nibbana.

Intrinsically most Buddhists know that spiritual happiness is superior to purely material happiness. After all, spiritual happiness is the only thing that really counts in the end, but may seem far more difficult to attain than material happiness. Some people strive to attain both their spiritual and worldly aspirations only to find themselves in conflict. Others try to ignore one or the other altogether but still the problem is not solved. In the case of our spirituality, ignoring the cultivation of one's own innermost freedom can only end up leaving one in a less than desirable condition.

How does one maintain practice in face of conflict? A reply can be found in the Kalama Sutta which advises not merely to believe because of hearsay, rumors, traditions, scriptures, or the like, but rather to try practicing and watching, for with practice, faith will arise. So, maybe the best answer is: If you practice enough, things will become clear to you. This was frequently the answer I received from my teacher to many of my questions, and it is a reply that I often find most suitable to give to others.

Another conflict we must not fail to mention is the choice between compassion and wisdom. Some fear practicin *Vipassana Bhavana* because the attainment of the Path will mean that they will no longer be able to take on the Bodhisattva vow to be a Samma Sambuddha. Actually, both Paths are very noble; one is pragmatic, the other idealistic, and if you reach the brink of Nibbana where a choice might be made, the appropriate Path will be clear.

2. FEARS

Fear of the Unknown or of Imagined Threats

Some people may fear that meditation will somehow harm them, that it will "make them crazy." As a result of this fear, some people either stop meditating or won't even try it. This fear of the unknown can be explained by looking at two key reasons for its arising--wrong practice or serious psychological problems.

"Wrong" practice is wrong concentration, an absence of mindfulness. Absent of mindfulness, the mind will be unwholesome and you will end up increasing your greed, anger, and delusion. When angry, your anger will be, say, ten times amplified; likewise when you are greedy or deluded. A mind like this is unstable and becomes more so if the meditator continues to exercise wrong concentration. So, why does this happen?

It may be that the meditator started off on the wrong foot. People meditate for different reasons. If your motives are selfish, very likely you will end up more selfish and deluded. The aim of vipassana is to abandon the defilements (greed, anger, and delusion) through constant and uninterrupted mindfulness of mental and physical processes. If you meditate to become a millionaire or to communicate with unseen beings, I suggest you stop meditating.

SO, MAYBE THE BEST ANSWER IS: IF YOU PRACTICE ENOUGH THINGS WLL BECOME CLEAR TO YOU.

Attitude is another important factor to consider. Many people in this goal-oriented world are so hung-up on setting targets that they get terribly frustrated if things do not turn out according to their expectations. We must be especially mindful not to become obsessed with making progress.

Handling objects in the wrong waycan also causes difficulties. In the course of practice, the meditator may encounter unusual experiences that can be fearful or blissful (such as visual images, voices, or feelings). In vipassana, the meditator should mindfully take note of them then let them pass away. If they persist, the next step is to ignore them and watch another Vipassana object (such as the "rising" and "falling"). If the object (fearful or blissful) continues to be dominant, one is advised to get up and do some walking meditation.

The big problem here is that meditators can become obsessively fearful or attached to these phenomena causing them to recur again and again; thus intensifying that unwholesome state of mind. When this happens, one must ignore the object and note the mental state till it vanishes, otherwise wrong concentration will result.

If the unwanted objects are etremely powerful or persistent, it may be wise to stop meditation until you can get proper advice from a teacher.

Psychological problems

Deep within our mind lie hidden latent tendencies—both good and evil—that may be accumulations of not only this present life but also past lives. It is not unusual to find some very powerful ones surfacing in the course of one's meditation. In some of us (luckily not too many), the tendency to break down is stronger than in others. If you happen to be one of these people, be cautious in your meditation. Generally speaking, it is advisable to settle your worldly problems as best you can before undertaking a meditation practice. Meditation is not therapy or a substitute for therapy. In any case, one should inform one's teacher of any psychological problems.

Fear of Pain and Physical Disability

Pain is an inevitable occurrence in meditation as in life. In meditation, we use pain to train our mind to become strong and unaffected, to penetrate into it's true nature of impermanence, suffering, non-self.

The new practitioner will have to face the usual beginner's aches that go away with just a little patience. Later, the pain may intensify owing to deepening concentration. After that, one may come to experience it's cessation. In more seasoned meditators, pain may actually be welcomed as a sharp object for the mind to hold on to, for building up concentration and mindfulness.

Fear also arises when one sees too much pain. This is comparable to the child who will not take medicine (although it is good for him/her) because it is bitter. More knowledge of the Dhamma can help to overcome this. Also, one can bear in mind the many joys and benefits derived from meditating. One can try to ignore the pain and watch other objects. Note the fear when it arises. If that does not work, frequent recollection of the Buddha will help overcome it.

Some people, while watching the pain, fear that they may suffer permanent disability or die. Either they have no actual physical ailments, or they do have them (such as degenerative disks or weak knees).

Without physical ailments

In such cases, pain will quickly disappear when one stops meditation. One must first note the intention before giving up. However, one should also try to note the fear until it goes away. The fear is actually groundless.

With physical ailments

In such cases, medical attention should be sought before coming for meditation to ensure that no physical harm will be caused by sitting. In vipassana, the pain and fear are first noted directly, but when that is not possible (because they are too strong or persistent), they have to be ignored (by watching another object) until the mindfulness and concentration are powerful enough to tackle them again. Many illnesses deemed chronic and incurable have been overcome through vipassana but it needs a lot of effort and willpower. Vipassana is certainly not to be viewed as a medical treatment.

3. COMMON OBSTACLES TO PRACTICE

No Suitable Practice Place

This is one of the weakest excuses for not practicing. If the place is noisy, "hearing" or "sound" can be your Vipassana object, and one can note "heat" or "cold" accordingly. Also, it is not very difficult to find another place if your first choice is "not perfect."

Not Enough Time

That inadequate time can be found for meditation because of other commitments seems a poor and illogical excuse. Surely time can be found (perhaps not quite as much as we'd like, I agree) if we really want to find it—early in the morning or before bed. We can practice mindfulness in our daily activities, being fully alert and composed whatever we are doing at that moment, whether driving, talking, walking, thinking, working, or playing. We can also cultivate other virtues with pure mindfulness, such as the ten perfections of generosity, restraint, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, lovingkindness, and equanimity.

Shortage of Teachers

There is a shortage of meditation teachers in America. It is perhaps more correct to say that there is a shortage of qualified meditation teachers. What qualifies a person as a meditation teacher?

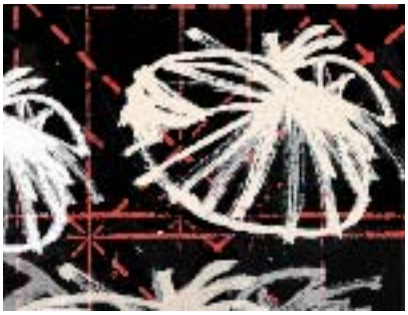
Undeniably, a meditation teacher should really know how to meditate and be competent and experienced in showing that way to others. In this context, knowing how to meditate means having had thorough practice and clear understanding, gained though personal experience, of the art of cultivating the mind. Restraint in a teacher is indicative of their qualifications as a result of their observance of the moral precepts. Tranquility should be evident, a non-restless and unruffled state of mind indicating that the defilements of greed, hatred, and delusion are weak.

As for being competent to show the way and able to teach effectively, this may be defined as having a truly compassionate heart and being endowed with sufficient knowledge of the Buddhist teachings as embodied in the Pali Canon and its commentaries. A qualified meditation teacher should be able to give precise instructions and timely encouragement so that meditators may progress quickly and securely along the path of purification.

Needless to say, effective communication between teacher and pupil is vital, as is the necessity for sincerity and openness, particularly on the part of the latter. It is also sensible, when possible, to choose a teacher whose temperament blends well with your own. It may be wise to be on the lookout for retreats where you can spend days in intensive meditation, and where you can get a good idea of what meditation is and how to do it. Preferably, initial instructions are given personally. After that, one may resort to regular correspondence as a means of communication in continuing one's practice.

Weak Concentration

Another common reason why some people give up vipassana meditation is the extremely restless nature of their minds. Instead of finding peace in the practice, they feel that they



THE MOST COMMON DILEMMA IS THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL ASPIRATIONS.

are only wasting their time and also suffering unnecessarily as a result of trying to meditate. Such persons should ask themselves:

Have I been keeping the precepts well? Have I been restrained in my daily activities? When strongly indulging in base actions, it is no wonder that the mind is distracted. Restraint, after all, is the foundation of concentration. The thorough practice of mindfulness in daily activities will lead to the ability to concentrate in meditation.

How many hours a day do I meditate? Do I do it everyday, seriously? You cannot expect much if you do not really try. If you have been practicing regularly, sincerely and enthusiastically, with a little patience you will have no problem concentrating your mind.

Have I obtained proper and complete instructions? Have I been having regular interviews, meeting with a teacher? Without proper instruction and follow up, it is hard to have your practice develop and grow. Usually it takes several, sometimes many, sessions with a teacher to gain the proper understanding of how to practice.

The Four Guardian Meditations

It is understandable that there are people with powerful defilements which makes them give up vipassana without even giving it a fair try. The four guardian meditations, when done just before meditation, can give support to those people who are very much in need of some peace and joy before taking up the more arduous task of vipassana.

The four guardian meditations are recommended prior to the practice of vipassana. The traditional Burmese recommendation is two minutes for each guardian (making it eight minutes in all) before a vipassana period.

The Guardian Meditations are:

1. *Buddhanussati* – recollection of one or more of the virtues of the Buddha (generates faith and energy)

2. *Mettabhavana* – radiating loving-kindness to one or more beings (overcomes ill will and dissatisfaction; instills amity)

3. *Asubha* – contemplation of loathsomeness of the body, e.g., the thirty-four parts separately (overcomes lust)

4. *Maranasati* – contemplation on death (overcomes fear of death and instills a sense of urgency)

Sustaining Practice

Another problem faced by vipassana meditators is the inability to maintain zealous practice or at least regular sessions, which is crucial for progress. Practice is the effort made. The effort is very much dependent on our faith and confidence. The proximate cause of faith has been defined as the objects that inspire faith. The Triple Gem is the traditional object of inspiration:

1. The Buddha—or symbols that represent the Teacher, e.g., images, footprint, Bodhi trees or leaves.

2. The Dhamma—which may be represented by the Wheel of the Law, books, or it may be the actual teachings or practice one has come across or undertaken.

3. The Sangha---the community of disciples.

It behooves us to be in constant communication--visually, verbally, and physically--with spiritual objects, activities and people; in particular, with those directly connected with our practice. They help lift us up when our spirits are low and our practice is waning, or when we find ourselves in a rut.

Another contemplation that will help us to develop energy in our practice is contemplation of the eight bases of urgency. These are birth, old age, sickness, death, suffering in the woeful worlds, the round of suffering as rooted in the past, the round of suffering as rooted in the future, and the round of suffering in the search for food in the present.

One who does these contemplations will definitely stir up energy for striving towards the end of suffering.

May you strive on zealously and never stall in your effort until you reach that final emancipation, Nibbana.

Venerable Sujiva, a Theravada monk since 1975, has devoted his life to teaching meditation in Asia, Europe, Australia, and North America. He has written several books on meditation, and on his two Buddhist "hobbies": the Abhidhamma and Buddhist poetry. He currently resides in the EC.

FROM OUR BOOKSHELVES

THREE BOOKS YOU SHOULD READ:
Books of Stories Reviewed by Katie Johnson

STONE SOUP

By John J. Muth
A Zen twist on this classic tale of a community which is tricked into generosity.

ZEN SHORTS

Stillwater, the giant Zen panda bear, shows three brothers the value of material goods, the boundaries of good and bad, and what frustration does when it's held inside.

THE THREE QUESTIONS

This retelling of Tolstoy's profound fable is ideal for kids who always want to know "why?" It inspires self-reflection about compassion and helpfulness.

Here are three books of stories by the same author. They all teach you lessons about how to be a better person. They are good stories that are fun to read and they all have really pretty pictures too (paintings by the same man who wrote the books), which is important because it makes the story more fun to read and helps you understand what's happening even if you're very small.

ZEN SHORTS is a book that is like three stories in one story. Three children, Addy, Michael, and Karl meet a panda bear who has come to live in their yard. The panda bear's name is Stillwater. He is very big and cute and wise. Stillwater tells them stories when they come out to play with him. The stories he tells are very old. "Uncle Ry and the Moon," and "A Heavy Load," have been passed on for centuries and I think they still should be because they teach you helpful things for your life, like letting go when things are over and giving gifts even when you don't get anything in return. The story, "The Farmer's Luck," is thousands of years old too and we need to keep telling it, because it says something very important. There's no such thing as luck and things are always changing. There is just what happens in life and you never know what's going to happen next. Knowing that could help you or me, because next time something goes wrong, you can know that it will not last for forever.

THE THREE QUESTIONS was written way back in the 1930's by a famous Russian writer named Leo Tolstoy. The author of this book is Jon Muth. He found the story in someone else's book and liked it so much he decided to tell it again in his own way. This story can help people know three important things in life; the right thing to do, the right time to do it, and who is the most important person. There's a boy named Nikolai and he wants to be a better person even though he's a very nice boy already. He keeps asking these questions of his friends but he only gets the answers when he stops asking things. He learns that being kind to everyone is one of the most important things about being alive. If you read this book it could help you learn how to be a better person too.

STONE SOUP is by Jon Muth too. It is about three monks who want to know what makes you happy. When they go to talk to some villagers, the villagers lock up their doors and windows. No one is very nice to each other. But when the monks make a campfire the people come out of their houses to help the monks make "Stone Soup," and they learn a big lesson about being generous. Reading this book can help you learn to give without getting anything in return but getting a reward in your own heart.

I recommend all three of these books to children and grownups.

Katie Johnson *is eight years old and in the third grade. Her favorite color is red but she really likes all colors best. She likes to go hiking with her Papa in Wisconsin. She has a lot of pets.*

MABA

The Mid-America Buddhist Association

MABA is a Chan Buddhist monastery located on 60-acres of secluded woodland about 45 minutes west of St. Louis, Missouri. It is MABA's mission to provide a practice environment for its members and supporters with a monastic community to propagate the Dharma.

The monastery includes a Meditation Hall with a library and communal dining and activity room. There is a Nun's residence built from the original 18th-century farmhouse on the land, a "Tea House" named Kong Hut which can be used for private retreats, a guest residence named "The Red Barn," a Guan Yin Pavilion sited just above the lake which serves as a reminder of the beauty we find in a life of compassion, and Dizang Memorial Hall, which was completed in 2006 to provide a final resting place under the watchful eye of a Buddhist monastic community

Through the guidance and leadership of its Abbot, Master Ji Ru, MABA has developed programs that include weekly meditation services and Dharma talks, as well as periodic study and meditation retreats. Retreats are led by Master Ji Ru or other world-renowned Teachers from all Buddhist traditions. There are also weekly classes in Buddhist studies as well as a summer program for youth. And for those wanting to do a private retreat, whether a weekend, a week, or more, MABA can provide accommodations and a practice environment.

We invite you to visit MABA and to subscribe to Rightview Quarterly. You can participate online in your practice at RightviewOnline.org.

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Dharma in the Moment

Featuring Zen Patriarch **BODHIDHARMA**

If you use your mind to study reality, you won't understand either your mind or reality.
If you study reality without using your mind, you'll understand both.

Using the mind to look for reality is delusion.
Not using the mind to look for reality is awareness.

To know that the mind is empty is to see the Buddha.

The mind that neither exists nor doesn't exist is called The Middle Way.

Who cares why he came from the West. The real question is when he left the emperor penniless and without a friend, What did Bodhidharma do?

--Anonymous

Bodhidharma was a monk from Southern India who journeyed to China in the 6th century. He is traditionally credited as the founder of Chan (Zen) Buddhism.

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