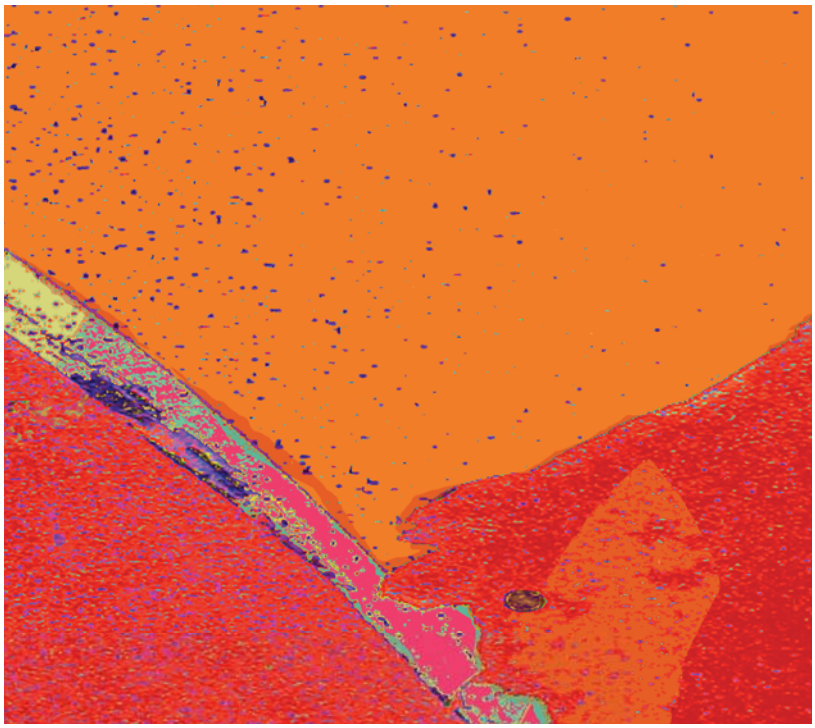


***RIGHTVIEW:***
Dharma in Practice

**VOLUME ONE, NUMBER ONE**

**Master Ji Ru, Founder,** Editor-in-Chief
**Xian Yang,** Editor
**Carol Corey,** Layout and Artwork
unless noted

RIGHTVIEW is published 2-4 times annually at no cost to the subscriber by the Mid-America Buddhist Association.

Subscribe at no cost at
www.maba-usa.org
We welcome letters and comments.

**COVER ART: Luohan, Chinese, Liao Dynasty (907-1125) to Jin Dynasty (1115-1234). Earthenware with three-color lead glaze, 40x31x26 inches (101.60x78.74x66.0 cm). The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. Purchase: Nelson Trust, 3-6.**
**Photograph by E. G. Schempf.**

# RIGHTVIEW

Dharma in Practice

**Summer 2006**

## Contents



# NOTES
## ON THE FIRST ISSUE FROM RIGHTVIEW'S FOUNDER, MASTER JI RU

**There are Chinese Buddhists in America,** and Shin Buddhists, and Tientai Buddhists, and Japanese Zen Buddhists and Soto Zen Buddhists, Nicherin Shoshu and Soka Gakkai Buddhists; there are Tibetan Buddhists and Korean Buddhists and Vietnamese Buddhists, and Thai Buddhists, and Sri Lankan Buddhists, and Indian Buddhists; there are Theravada Buddhists and Vipassana Buddhists; there are Mahayana Buddhists and new Mahayana Buddhists; there are all shapes and colors of Buddhists in America; there are Asian and Asian-American Buddhists, African and African-American Buddhists; there are Jewish Buddhists, Feminist Buddhists and Queer Buddhists, and those that define themselves somewhat strictly as Socially Engaged Buddhists.

Each of these sects, sets and subsets, and each of their Monasteries, Associations, Temples and Buddhist Centers is confronting the issue of how best to propagate the Buddhadharma, and which Buddhadharma. They are also deciding how strictly or loosely to follow their lineages, where there are lineages and transmissions to follow; and in which language or languages; and with which rituals, rites and traditions. Each is trying to define and express itself in an American way without losing its way.

Buddhists in America are exploring their cultural and trans-cultural options in the face of America's enthusiasm for practice, in the face of America's pluralistic view of this "new" and seemingly exotic religion. Still in its infancy, American Buddhism has been eclectic and idiosyncratic, at times cultish and self-conscious. But the one great thread that runs through American Buddhism is its dramatically unselfconscious optimism. This optimism relies on the belief that through spiritual understanding and practice (primarily of morally upright conduct and meditation), America's Buddhists can transform themselves and their world into beings and communities that share the ideals of the Buddhadharma.

Without the rigidity of centuries and in many cases millennia of cultural overlays on the original teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, we now have the opportunity to wipe the Dharma clean and to return it to the original intentions and aspirations of Great Buddhist elders, teachers and guides, back to the Pure View of the Buddha himself and of his earliest adepts, from the great

disciples like Ananda and Sariputra during the Buddha's lifetime to Venerable Jizang in the seventh century, to Venerable Tai Xu and Venerable Master Yin Shun in the twentieth century.

We now have the opportunity to explore across cultural and sectarian boundaries, across geographic and linguistic borders, and to continue the search for the Right View, Right Knowledge, and Right Liberation. In fact, we have an obligation not to let this opportunity pass, not to let our attachments to the limitations of past beliefs and understanding, to its customs and costumes, stand in the way of developing an American Buddhism that is authentic and pure. We must recognize as we do this, however, that the process is inherently flawed, for even if we succeed in separating out the Right and Pure Dharma from the multi-national and multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian beliefs, rites, and rituals that surround it, we will be initiating a new overlay—righteous and well intentioned as it may be-- that will start the process again.

It is with caution and optimism that we embark on this process in **RIGHTVIEW**, published by the **Mid-America Buddhist Association** (MABA) in Augusta, Missouri. We are looking to the core teachings, to the unadulterated Dharma that will lead us all to peace and freedom. And we are looking to present them, in all their diversity and with unapologetic openness, in this magazine.

In this, our first issue, we begin with the most fundamental of all teachings, **A Life of the Buddha.** This attempt at a myth-free legend-less life of the Buddha is told from an historical and philosophical perspective, exploring the Buddha's life in terms of its relationship to the beliefs and events that shaped the Buddha's view of the world and determined his teachings.

The origins of the **Heart Sutra** in the Pali Canon are skillfully presented by Santikaro, founder of Liberation Park in Oak Park, Illinois.

There is a review of Bhikkhu Bodhi's book, **In The Words of the Buddha,** a book which we believe will inspire generations to seek out or return to the Pali Canon and the right teachings and traditions of the Elders.

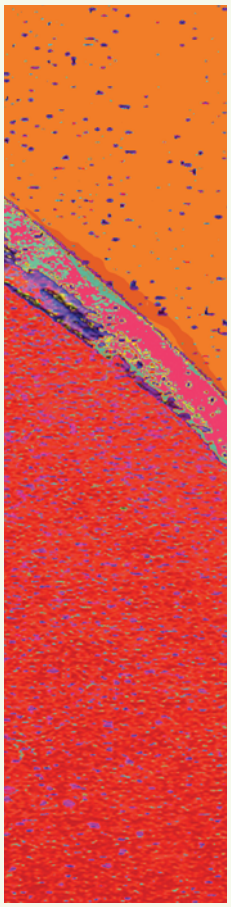
There is the first of a regular feature, **Dharma in the Moment**, which presents short teachings and which in this issue includes a poem by the late Soto Zen Master, Zenshin Philip Whalen, as well as some quips that might warrant a laugh and a moment or two of reflection.

We are honored to have a feature by **Master Jen-Chen** introducing the Buddhist perspective on time.

James Hicklin authors the column, **Inside Out Pactice**. Hicklin, who is currently serving a life sentence without parole at a maximum security correctional facility in Missouri, has taken his Bodhisattva vows in the Tibetan tradition. He practices on both a personal and a socially-conscious and socially-engaged level as though his head were on fire. And it is with that right diligence that he explores the commonality of us all, from the inside out.

The majority of articles and features are meant to be accessible to serious beginners and intermediate practitioners, although there will be at least one article in each issue for the more advanced student of Buddhism.

There is an article by the Sri Lankan scholar monk, **Bhikkhu T. Seelananda,** on the use of metta practice to enhance our mindfulness and the application of this practice to the relief of stress and depression. Use it to introduce first-time meditators to the cushion, or for mindfulness training, or for practicing with the omnipresent stress of daily life.



# DANA

In compliance with the Buddha's teaching that the Dharma be given freely, there is no charge to subscribe. If you can, however, make an offering to cover the costs of producing the magazine, we would be deeply appreciative. Wholeheartedly giving (Dana) to spread the Dharma is a great source of merit and brings immeasurable and long lasting benefit to all beings.

**We welcome your thoughts, ideas, comments and suggestions.**
**Please e-mail them to**
rightview@maba-usa.org

*May the Dharma light your path to peace and freedom.*

See back inside cover for information on how to support the efforts of Rightview

# Getting from there to here...

In the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534 C.E.), criminals and slaves were assigned to the monasteries to do odd work, providing the monastic economy with an opportunity to be of great benefit to those otherwise deemed outcasts, thus playing a leadership role in what today would be seen as Prison Dharma, but in a wider socio-cultural perspective, it afforded Buddhists the opportunity to participate directly and indirectly in building social and economic stability in China.

In the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties, Buddhism flourished in China; Chinese Buddhists engaged themselves in welfare activities, temples were involved in outreach practices, a significant amount of which involved the establishment and management of their Inexhaustible Treasury. The Inexhaustible Treasury was divided into three parts. One part was designated for social service projects, such as the operation of orphanages and the providing of food and services for those suffering from hunger and poverty.

Monks and nuns were able to lead a life of self-reliance and were able to contribute significantly to the welfare of society without becoming entrapped or entrenched in politics, a potentially dangerous arena for Buddhists in the first millennium.

The Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) Dynasties saw a significant decline in Chinese Buddhism. Zhu Yuan-zhang, the First Emperor of the Ming dynasty, placed strict regulations on Buddhism. Monks were confined to living and practicing in temples high in the mountains, and while he allowed monks to travel, they were forbidden from entering cities or villages. Chinese Buddhism rapidly declined as a result of the emperor's policy of separating monks from lay Buddhists and the general population. This situation worsened during the Qing dynasty. By then, monks were meditating in the mountains in virtual isolation, depending on the very limited donations of local lay supporters. Their primary social function was to perform funeral services. Consequently, Buddhism was criticized for its insignificant contribution to the welfare of society and was seen as a funeral religion, a criticism of validity and significance that continues in some Asian countries to this very day. The late Qing Court, in its attempt to make China militarily stronger, decreed that 70% of the nation's Buddhist Temples were to be used for educational purposes. This lead to the seizure Buddhist lands and property, furthering the decline of Buddhism. This wholesale usurping of Buddhist monastic properties throughout China produced conditions that led to further isolation and an overall laxity in Buddhist monastic practice.

Tai Xu was one of the key reformers at this time when the very existence of Buddhism was at stake. In 1904, he left his home and eventually found his way to a small temple where he subsequently joined the monastic order.

His goals were to have Buddhists engaged in the service of the people, to guide them and bring them benefit, and to

One of Tai Xu's disciples, Venerable Yin Shun, went on to become the most respected and influential Chinese Buddhist intellectual of the twentieth century. He authored more than 50 books.

One of Venerable Grand Master Yin Shun's seminal works in English, **The Way To Buddhahood,** can be ordered at **www.maba-usa.org**

change Buddhism's orientation from the almost exclusive practice of funeral services. In essence, Tai Xu was advocating a return to the principles of Mahayana Buddhism, to the Bodhisattva ideal.

Tai Xu has been dubbed the "Martin Luther" of China's Buddhist reformation. He played a key role in the renaissance of Chinese Buddhism, but in spite of all his efforts, he failed in his life-long endeavors. Conservatism and internal protectionism within the Buddhist community made change nearly impossible, no matter how appropriate conditions for it seemed to the great scholar and intellectual monks like Tai Xu.

In the coming decades, the Communist Revolution would sound the death knoll for Buddism in China. Nonetheless, after Tai Xu's death in 1947, his influence spread far and wide.

Following in this tradition, or lineage, Master Ji Ru was a student of the Venerable Grand Master Yin Shun and his dharma heir, Ven. Master Jen-Chun. Master Jen-Chun is the founder of the Yin Shun Foundation, dedicated to translating the works of his Teacher so that Right Dharma can be brought to the people. It is the mission of Master Ji Ru to promote a Right View of the dharma as American Buddhism develops its identity.

*From There to Here, our first issue.*

# A Life of the Buddha

*xian yang*

## A Myth-free and Legend-less Biography

Myths and legends, stories, similes and metaphors have been so inextricably linked to the life of the Buddha that attempts at distinguishing actual historical events from these myths and legends to produce a factual life of Buddha is all but impossible. What we can do, however, is attempt to separate out the obvious and probably historical facts and to present them in the context of the development of the Buddha's ideas, then to explore the role of these myths and legends in amplifying the Buddha's teachings.

Siddhartha Gotama, who upon attaining enlightenment would become known as the Buddha, was born in 5th century BC (generally accepted dates for his life are 566-486 BC). His father was King Suddhodana, a political and social traditionalist and ruler of Shakya, a small kingdom in the foothills of the Himalayas in what is present-day Nepal. India at this time, twenty-five hundred years ago, was comprised of many small kingdoms, some of which were ruled separately, others of which were ruled jointly by several royal families. Shakya was one of those which was ruled jointly as a divinely inspired hereditary oligarchy.

The Crown Prince's mother, Maya, is believed to have died shortly after Siddhartha's birth. Her younger sister, Pajapati Gotami, in conformity with the social and cultural norms at this time, became the royal consort. She apparently accepted this role wholeheartedly, acting as a deeply loving mother to the Prince and wife to the King.

As next in line for the throne, Siddhartha was raised with all the luxuries of royal life and received an education denied to the vast majority of Shakya's citizens. Shakya as a nation was deeply entrenched in the hereditary caste-ridden Brahmin social structure: Brahma was the creator god, Brahmins, the priestly class, were the highest class (born out of the mouth of Brahma), next down the ladder were the ksatriyas, the ruling and warrior class (born from Brahma's flanks); the vaisyas, the farmers, craftsmen, and tradesmen, and the sudras, the serfs, respectively hung on the two lower rungs (both being born out of the feet of Brahma). Only the Brahmins and the ksatriyas received an education, and even within those castes it was rare for women to receive an education.

Siddhartha was educated at the Palace in the full spectrum of academic disciplines that one would expect for a Crown Prince twenty-five hundred years ago.

Traditional learning for someone of Siddhartha's rank would have included a serious study of the Vedas, the sacred texts used by the Brahmins, and the six ancillary sciences: phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metrics, and astronomy, as well as music, horsemanship, military tactics, and the martial arts. His studies would have included philosophy and formal logic, an area in which he excelled and which he used extensively in his teachings, and, of course, a serious foundation in meditation, which later in life would serve as the basic tool he used to reach enlightenment.

Quite early in his life, Siddhartha seems to have come into conflict with his father. King Suddhodana, being aware of Siddhartha's concerns about social and moral issues, had chosen to confine Siddhartha's education to the palace, hoping he would be able to prevent Siddhartha from being exposed to developing heterodox ideas, especially in the states adjacent Shakya. As a result, Suddhodana was optimistic that Siddhartha would follow in his father's footsteps as the next King. Siddhartha's mentor, and the person ultimately responsible for his education, was the hermit sage Asita, who provided the Prince with the best tutors and education. Part of that education encouraged the already inquisitive young Siddhartha to question the status quo, to think critically and to be naturally reflective. India was, at this time, in a process of social and political upheaval with esoteric and unorthodox ideas and practices developing amongst the learned and the spiritual, and with largely agrarian states developing into new socio-economic structures with cities housing a working class and a bourgeoisie.

Siddhartha's facile mind, combined with his exemplary education, natural curiosity, and deep social conscience, led him in the direction of the heterodox, which his father had feared but was unable to stop. Even as a young student, Siddhartha expressed insightful criticisms of the Vedas, of the Vedic rites and rituals, and the exploitation of the lower castes by the Brahmins. He seriously scrutinized and criticized the social and political structure as a whole. His detailed analysis of moral, philosophic, spiritual, and social conventions, as well as his beliefs about the nature and function of language, which are detailed in the Pali Canon, clearly came from his educational background and studies, and did not, as myths would have us belief, suddenly appear at the moment of Siddhartha's awakening.

To tell someone with such a deeply critical and questioning mind as Siddhartha's that the Vedas were divinely revealed texts meant to be under the control of the Brahmins and that the Upanishads, which elaborated on the Vedas, were the culmination of human understanding, was to invite rebellion. Many of the major thinkers, ascetics and Brahmins alike, had already rebelled against the traditional dogmas and beliefs of the time; the Buddha would be the last and most lasting of the major thinkers of his age to join the rebellion.

One element of his Vedic studies would have included lessons in the importance of Vedic sacrifices, and it is as a descriptor of Vedic sacrifices that Siddhartha would have encountered the concept of karma. The Vedic tradition employed the term karman, from the Sanskrit root /kr ("to do"), to describe the "doing" of the sacrificial rituals, rituals that had become extraordinarily complex so as to justify the position of the Brahmin priests. Siddhartha would later modify the concept into a law of moral causation based on intention and develop it so comprehensively and with such integrity that it is considered a prerequisite for Buddhist practice today.

As Siddhartha became more and more aware of the moral and social injustice and disharmony in the society around him,

he became more and more determined to leave the householder's life and search for answers.

While this was not a common event, it was not unheard of for a ksatriya to become a renunciate. For Siddhartha, leaving home meant leaving not only his father and stepmother, but also his wife, Yasodhara, and their son, Rahula. Being a traditional wife, Yasodhara would have understood that she needed to support her husband in his ideological quest. Further, it would have been completely out of character for Siddhartha to have left home without first notifying, and in all likelihood even securing some form of tacit approval (or at least resignation) from his father, stepmother, and wife, as we are led to believe in so many of the myths around this event.

Immediately after leaving home Siddhartha moved south where he became a follower of two leading contemplatives of the time, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. Under their guidance he learned advanced meditation techniques and was able to reach deep states of Samadhi and finally to attain the deepest state, which would later become known as the thirty-first plane of existence in the formless realm, of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. But these meditative states went so deep into the mind that they prevented awareness and insight from developing, and without awareness and insight into the nature of things it was impossible to address the fundamental questions about human existence that Siddhartha was seeking to answer.

Siddhartha was not looking to discover or meld with some theoretical, permanent or eternal substance; nor with god, the aim of some in the heterodoxy; nor was he satisfied to live in a state of deep mental non-perception; nor was he interested in pursuing a purely materialistic solution to the problems he saw in the world around him by, as the materialists believed, reducing all phenomena to their material components which, again, were assumed to be eternal and permanent. Instead, he was trying to answer the most fundamental questions of mankind as they related to morality, social justice, and personal responsibility. These were, ironically, exactly the same questions that were being asked by the counterculture of America in the 1950's and 1960's, which in part accounts for the great surge in interest in and practice of Buddhism in America today.

Having left his meditation masters, Siddhartha next joined a band of five ascetics who were practicing self-mortification. For six years he practiced severe forms of self-mortification in the hope of gaining knowledge and freedom, imagining that sacrifice and pain in the present would lead to harmony and happiness in the future. His long periods of fasting and self-mortification (an example of dedicated self-mortification from this time which illustrates the commitment of these ascetics, though we have no evidence that it was practiced by Siddhartha, was to hold one's arm up in the air for so long that it lost circulation and atrophied) had brought him to the verge of death; his body was reduced to a mere skeleton with skin hanging over it. Asceticism had not proven to Siddhartha that it was the way to attain freedom, but rather appeared to be a false path to deliverance, so he abandoned it and his fellow ascetics.

After regaining his strength, he settled himself into a quiet place on the banks of the Neranjara River in Gaya. Seated under a ficus tree (which would later become known as the Bodhi tree, *ficus religiosa*, or the Tree of Enlightenment) Siddhartha reverted to his former yogic meditation training, remembering that he had to maintain a level of awareness in order to develop insight. With his extraordinary determination and effort he was now able to attain the stage in which he could see clearly the arising and ceasing of all phenomena, finally reaching enlightenment.

This naturally led him into a state of deep reflection. Supported by his awareness

and unencumbered by presuppositions of permanent or eternal substances or beings, he was able to see the conditioned nature of all phenomena that would later be defined and refined into the concepts of dukkha and dependent origination. From there, we can assume, he moved into reflection on the psychological nature of human action, focusing on discovering the motives and intentionality that lead to unwholesome consequences, such as greed and anger. Without seeking some ultimate or eternalist perspective, and without seeking some form of nihilistic non-existence, he was able to use his awareness to look at the human condition for its pragmatic rather than its absolutist value. This led to his ultimate awakening wherein he was able to see the human predicament and the way out of it, and which he would soon state to his former ascetic friends as the Four Noble Truths. This was the Middle Path, based on wisdom, restraint, and moral rectitude.

THE BUDDHA'S PARINIRVANA, HIS DEATH, AND ITS TALES ARE MEANT TO ILLUSTRATE THAT EVERYTHING IS CONDITIONED, EVERYTHING IS IMPERMANENT, EVEN FOR THE BUDDHA, AND THAT THERE IS NO "SELF", NO SOUL.

After careful consideration, fully realizing the difficulty there would be in accepting his new ideas as well as the potential impact these ideas might have on the socio-political structures of his day, Buddha decided to begin his teaching career. To do so, he sought out a sympathetic ear in the five ascetics with whom he had formerly practiced. They quickly understood the significance of the Buddha's doctrine and gave up self-mortification, becoming the first five followers of the Buddha.

The Buddha's teaching career was confined to the Ganges plain, in part it would seem through choice, but also because, as the Order increased in numbers and the Buddha developed a large personal following (a Sangha), traveling significant distances was almost impossible because of the logistics involved. His followers, though, were sent off to spread the doctrine in more distant lands. The earliest followers of the Buddha were all men, which was in line with the tradition of the times, in which female participation in spiritual practice was extremely rare.

The Buddha's teachings, however, injected a spirit of tolerance and critical reflection into Indian life, resulting in the erosion of the social, political, and religious conventions of the Brahman tradition. The first tradition to weaken under the influence of Buddhism was that of the caste-system. Not only did the Buddha preach against the caste system itself, but he also opened the doors of his ever-growing Order to any person who sought to follow the Path, regardless of his caste. The Buddha was more cautious, though, in deciding to admit women into the Order because of the potential impact this might have on the social order as well as the Buddhist Order.

The Buddha had been greatly criticized for taking men who had abandoned their families into the Order; admitting women into the order would only increase this criticism and outside pressure on the Sangha. Nonetheless, when the proper foundation had been laid and the conditions were right, the Buddha began admitting women into the Order. This was the second major Brahmin tradition to be emphatically confronted as unjust and to be significantly challenged through Right Action.

As the Sangha grew, and as word of the Buddha's fame and teachings grew and spread, life for the Buddha himself became progressively more strenuous. As he approached the age of eighty, he realized his life was coming to an end. He instructed his followers not worship him after his death, not to elevate him into the status of a savior, but to follow the doctrine as their only guide. The Buddha traveled north in his final days, probably with the intention of returning to his homeland, but his health failed and he died in Kusinara, near the border of Kosala, a neighboring country to his home state of Shakya.

Traditionally, the life of the Buddha is divided into five parts: his birth; his

renunciation; his enlightenment; his teaching career, and his Parinirvana (death). Depending on whose version you read, these parts are given different weights and are presented from different perspectives-- each of the five parts being embroidered with specific cultural biases and folklore, as well as the personal biases of the writers.

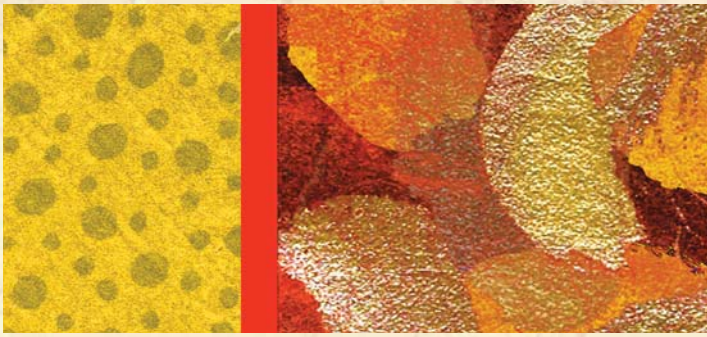
As with any great spiritual teacher, retrospectively his birth becomes a celebrated event. To accomplish this for Siddhartha, myths and legends were developed to predict his birth, to delineate as special kind of birth, and to define his cosmic role as a Buddha and his importance and his future as a spiritual leader. The many myths and legends around Siddhartha's birth range from simply to fancifully detailed descriptions, even to phantasmagorical happenings in and around the time of the event. Ultimately these writings invite Buddhists to celebrate, revel, and take refuge in the Buddha's life, to value his presence on this planet and their relationship to him. The Renunciation, with its incumbent myths and legends, teaches us about values, about the importance of values in our lives, about the effort that is needed to live a life true to one's values, and it suggests that following the Middle Path is more important than wealth and social status, and even what our family might think of us.

Ultimately these myths are suggesting that what is best is to follow our true nature. Next is the Buddha's enlightenment. The stories around this event illustrate that we can attain happiness without an external god or savior, without wealth, without self-mortification or torturing ourselves, be it mentally or physically, though serious effort may be needed. They also illustrate the importance of self-reliance and critical thinking. Here myths and legends, and exaggerations and embellishments, are used to enhance the value of the teachings or to pinpoint the specific importance of a teaching in the reader's mind. More important, for example, than whether or not one thousand followers truly became arahats upon hearing a single Dharma talk from the Buddha is that we are being told through this literary device that this is a very significant point. The Buddha's Parinirvana, his death, and its tales are meant to illustrate that everything is conditioned, everything is impermanent, even for the Buddha, and that there is no "self," no soul.

In the Western tradition, where myths and legends are often promulgated as factual, literal teachings, it is important for us to recognize that throughout history some of the most profound ideas and spiritual insights (from the Vedas and the Upanishads through the Greek epic poems to the Star Wars mythology of today) have been expressed through myths because the impact of this literary form seems to resonate on an intensely heartfelt and intuitive level in a way that an historical narrative does not.

Whether or not we believe literally in any or all of these "stories" is a personal decision and should be based on, as the Buddha taught, our own experience. What was critically important to the Buddha, and what ultimately is important to us, as Buddhists in America today, is not whether we believe these myths literally, but that we understand the essence of the teachings behind them and that we use them to find and follow the doctrine, the Buddhadharma, which starts with Right View.

*May we be aware of the Dharma, with ever-decreasing attachment to that awareness, until we each reach our Parinirvana.*

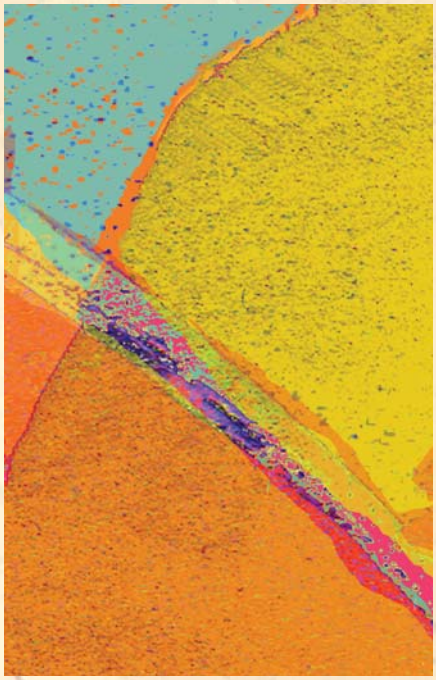


## *References and texts for further reading:*

**For young adults:**
*Introductory Buddhism Studies* by Miao Qin (published for free distribution by Hwa Tsang Monastery, Inc., Australia);
*A Pictorial Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha* by Gunapayuta (published for free distribution by The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation);
*The Buddha and His Dhamma* by Bhikkhu Bodhi (published for free distribution by The Buddhist Association of the United States)

**For intermediate practitioners :**
*The Way of Siddhartha, A Life of the Buddha* by David and Indrani Kalupahana (published by Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha, Sri Lanka);
*The Life of Buddha* by Bhikkhu Nyanamoli (published by BPD Pariyatti Editions, Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka);
*Buddha* by Karen Armstrong (published by Penguin)

**For advanced studies and reading:**
*Numerical Discourses of the Buddha, An Anthology of Suttas from the Anguttara Nikaya*, translated and edited by Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi (published by Altamira Press, 1999);
*The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* by E. J. Thomas (published by the Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka);
*A History of Buddhist Philosophy, Continuities and Discontinuities* by David J. Kalupahana (published by the University of Hawaii Press);
*Basic Buddhist Concepts* by Kogen Mizuno (published by Kosei Publishing Company, Japan);
*An Introduction to the Philosophy of Nagarjuna* by Musashi Tachikawa (published by Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, India).



The great way is not difficult
for those who have no preferences.

When love and hate are both absent,
everything becomes clear and
undisguised.

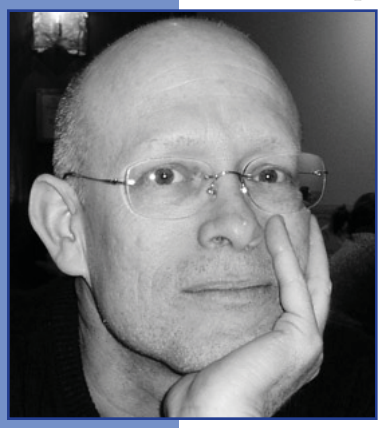
Make the smallest distinction, however,
and heaven and earth are set
infinitely apart.

*Verses from Trust in Mind,*
*Translated by Robert B. Clarke*

NOTE: References and articles on this important Ch'an enlightenment poem will be found in future issues.

# EARLY BUDDHISM AND THE HEART SUTRA

BY SANTIKARO



The Buddha never used terms like 'Mahāyāna' and 'Theravāda.' These developed much later out of the inevitable concocting of cultures, time, and polemics. Could it be that their usefulness is past, especially in the melting pot of America?

My primary spiritual reference is 'Early Buddhism,' by which I mean the Buddha-Dhamma recorded in the Pali suttas, especially when sifted according to principles found within those very suttas.[1] I accept that I am a 'Theravāda Buddhist' with a tinge of reluctance. This is because much of Theravāda Buddhism seems more committed to the commentary system and its lynchpin, the Visuddhimagga, compiled a thousand years after the Buddha's Parinibbāna. I prefer the original stuff. Further, I flatly reject the pejorative term 'Hinayāna' when applied to an entire school of Buddhism.[2] Following my teacher, I aspire to 'Buddhayāna' and take the Pali suttas as the primary starting point for discovering it.

My affection for the Pali suttas is not at the expense of so-called 'Mahāyāna sutras.' In fact, I find Buddhayāna there as well. Often, I discover vibrant echoes of the Pali suttas in classic Mahāyāna texts such as Shantideva's Bodhicaryāvatāra and Hui Neng's Platform Sutra. In many cases, Mahāyāna sutras contain direct copies and paraphrases of Pali texts. To illustrate this, and to highlight the convergence of core Buddhism or Buddhayāna, I offer a detailed look at the Heart Sutra.

The Heart Sutra is probably the most widely know and studied of the Mahāyāna sutras thanks to its concise brevity and profundity. It wonderfully recasts core teachings from the Pali suttas within a Mahāyāna frame story involving the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. Mahāyāna students may be shocked to learn that the Dhamma of their beloved Heart Sutra is largely recast Hinayāna, ur, Pali Buddhism. That, however, may very well be the case. Please bear with me.

I will demonstrate the simple facts, without any argument, using a simple method. I will juxtapose the main sections of the Heart Sutra with Pali passages that sometimes say the same things and other times come pretty close.[3] You can do the rest.

'Mahāyānists,' please be careful. There is a tendency to assume that the Pali teachings don't express the full Buddha-Dhamma. Please set aside that assumption and read the Pali suttas as they are written (here in translation). And 'Theravadins, please don't think the Heart Sutra is merely a later and spurious concoction. Give these important texts honest inquiry, rather than be shackled by old prejudices and polemics:

> The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, while moving in the deep course of wisdom's perfection, shed light on the five skandas and found them essentially empty. Through this realization, he overcame all suffering.

- In essence, suffering boils down to the five clinging aggregates (upādānakkhandha).[4]
- Ananda, because it is empty of self and what belongs to self, it is said, 'empty is the world.' And what is empty of self and what belongs to self? The eye is empty of self and

what belongs to self. Forms are empty of self and what belongs to self. Eye-consciousness is empty of self and what belongs to self. Eye-contact is empty of self and what belongs to self. Whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition — whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant — that too is empty of self and what belongs to self. [Repeated for ears, nose, tongue, and body.] The mind is empty of self and what belongs to self. Mental phenomena are empty of self and what belongs to self. Mind-consciousness is empty of self and what belongs to self. Mind-contact is empty of self and what belongs to self. Whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition — whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant — that too is empty of self and what belongs to self.[5]

Listen, Sariputra, form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is not other than emptiness. Emptiness is not other than form. The same is true of feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.

Ó One understands: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on sensual effluent are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on existential effluent are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on ignorant effluent are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six sense media dependent upon this body and conditioned by life.' One understands: 'This field of perception is empty of sensual effluent; this field of perception is empty of existential effluent; this field of perception is empty of ignorant effluent. There is present merely this non-emptiness, namely, that connected with the six sense media dependent upon this body and conditioned by life.' Thus, one regards it as empty of what is not there, but as to what remains there one understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.' This is the genuine, undistorted, pure descent into emptiness, supreme and unsurpassed.[6]

Ó Any recluses or priests who speak of freedom from being as coming about through being: we say of all of those recluses and priests that they have not been liberated from all forms of being. Further, any recluses or priests who speak of freedom from being as coming about through non-being: we say of all of those recluses and priests that they have not been liberated from all forms of being.[7]

Hear Sariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness. They are neither produced nor destroyed, neither defiled nor immaculate, neither increasing nor decreasing.

Ó This world, Kaccāna, for the most part depends upon a duality — upon the notion of existence and the notion of nonexistence. However, for one who sees the origin of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of nonexistence in regard to the world. And for one who sees the cessation of the world as it really is with correct wisdom, there is no notion of existence in regard to the world.[8]

Ó Questioned by the Brahmin Jāṇussoṇi, the Tathāgatha responds: 'All exists' is one extreme. 'All does not exist' is the second extreme. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgatha teaches the Dhamma by the middle: 'With ignorance as condition, concoctions; … [and so on through the classic links of dependent co-origination].[9]

Therefore in emptiness there is neither

form, nor feelings, nor perceptions, nor mental formations, nor consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no mind-object; no realms of elements (from eyes to mind consciousness); no interdependent origins and no cessation of them (from ignorance to death and decay); no suffering, no origin of suffering, no end of suffering, and no path; no understanding and no attainment.

Ó Responding to Māra, the Tempter, the personification of defilement, the Buddha says: 'The eye is yours, Evil One, forms are yours, eye-contact and its base of consciousness is yours; but, Evil One, where there is no eye, no forms, no eye-contact and its base of consciousness — there is no place for you there, Evil One. The ear … nose … tongue … body … mind is yours, Evil One, mental phenomena are yours, mind-contact and its base of consciousness is yours; but, Evil One, where there is no mind, no mental phenomena, no mind -contact and its base of consciousness — there is no place for you there, Evil One.[10]

Ó To the wanderer Bāhiya, the Buddha explains: When seeing forms merely see, when hearing sounds merely hear, when experiencing things merely experience, and when cognizing phenomena merely cognize, then you will not be. When you are not, then you will not be stuck 'in that.' When you are not stuck 'in that,' then you will be neither here in this world nor beyond in another world nor in between. Just this is the end of suffering.[11]

Ó This "experiencable thing" exists, in which there is no soil, no water, no fire, no wind; which is not the experience of limitless space, nor the experience of limitless consciousness, nor the experience of nothingness, nor the experience which is neither perception nor non-perception; which is not this world, not another world, not the moon nor the sun. Concerning this "thing," we do not speak of coming, nor of going, nor of stopping, nor of passing away, nor of being born; it does not stand, it does not proceed, and it is not a sense object (perch for consciousness). This exactly is the end of dukkha.[12]

Because there is no attainment, the bodhisattvas, grounded in the perfection of wisdom, find no obstacles for their minds. Having no obstacles, they overcome fear, liberating themselves forever from illusion, and realizing perfect nirvana. All Buddhas in the past, present, and future, thanks to this perfection of wisdom, arrive at full, right, and universal awakening.

Ó All Buddhas of the past, those yet to awaken,
and the Buddha who dispels the sorrow of people today;
All of those Buddhas without exception honor the Dhamma,
So they have done, are doing, and will always do,
Simply because that is the nature of all Buddhas.[13]

Ó One who has left behind all action,
Shaking off the dirt of former deeds,
Not longing, immovable, serene,
Has no need to talk of it to people.[14]

Ó Whenever one has abandoned ignorance and true knowledge arises, through the fading away of ignorance and through its replacement by true knowledge, that practitioner doesn't concoct the concoctor of goodness, doesn't concoct the concoctor of badness, and doesn't concoct the concoctor of neutrality. When he doesn't concoct and doesn't create, he doesn't cling to anything in the world. When free of clinging, there is no fear or surprise. When free of surprise, one naturally cools thoroughly.[15]

Ó This is peace, this is sublime, namely, the nature which is the calming of all concocting, the tossing away of all

attachments, the destruction of desire, the fading away of clinging, the quenching of dukkha, Nibbāna.[16]

Therefore, one should know that perfect understanding is the highest mantra, the unequaled mantra, the destroyer of suffering, the incorruptible truth. A mantra of prajñaparamita should therefore be proclaimed. This is the mantra:

Ó The Brahmin student Mogharaja asked the Buddha, "How should one view the world so that the King of Death will not see one?"
The Buddha replied: Be ever mindful removing one's sense of 'self,' and always see the world as empty. You will have found a way beyond death in this way. Look at the world like this and the King of Death will not see you.[17]

There you have it. Draw your own conclusions.
Of course, Early Buddhism isn't going to set Avalokitesvara above the Venerable Sariputta, so that preface need not be discussed here, it's polemical character notwithstanding. And the concluding mantra is not typical of Early Buddhism, either. With the exception of these two framing pieces, the core Dhamma messages of the Heart Sutra are in harmony with some of the more profound teachings of Early (or Pali, or Nikāya) Buddhism.[18]
Here, I have not intended to suggest or argue that the Pali texts are direct sources for the Heart Sutra, nor, conversely, that the Heart Sutra is completely independent of Pali sources. I doubt either position could be proven. Rather, what matters is that they are in a high level of congruence. Such congruence is the hallmark of Buddhayāna.
Finally, let's drop the Mahāyāna and Theravāda polemics, as well as Vajrayāna, Zen, Lotus Sutra, and other prideful or narrow biases. Such arrogance, defensiveness, and delusion does not serve Dhamma and the way of liberation. In fact, such attitudes tarnish the path for us all. Let us join each other in Buddhayāna.
We aspire to the way of Buddhayāna, originally taught by the Buddha, admirably preserved in Pali suttas, and echoed in the riches of Mahāyāna. Not limitable by any particular formulation, we dedicate ourselves to the harmonization of the noble eightfold and bodhisatta paths.

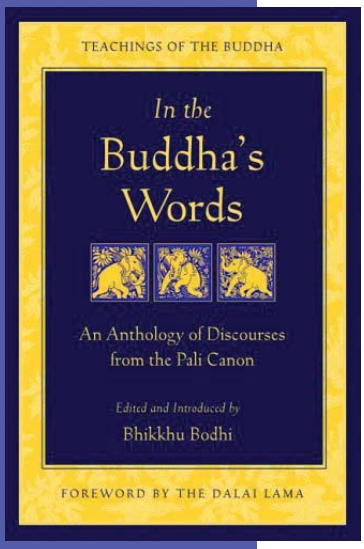
***Gate gate, paragate, parasamgate, Bodhi Svaha.***

## NOTES

**Translations are adapted from those of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu,other Thai translations, and the following English translations.**

CDB = The Connected Discourses f the Buddha, tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Wisdom Publications, Boston).
MDB = The Middle Length Discourses f the Buddha, tr. Bhikkhu Nyanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Wisdom Publications, Boston).
NDB = The Numerical Discourses f the Buddha, tr. Nyanaponika Thera and Bhikkhu Bodhi (Vistaar Publications, New Dehli).
Udāna = The Udāna: Inspired Utterances of the Buddha, tr. John Ireland (Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy).
Sn = Sutta-Nipāta, tr. H Saddhatissa (Curzon Press, London)

[1] A guide to reading the Pali suttas this way is in preparation.
[2] I find it more useful for describing an attitude or state of mind found among practitioners within all the schools of Buddhism.
[3] If readers know of better Pali parallels than those offered here, please let me know via santi@liberationpark.org.
[4] Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, 'The Turning of the Dhamma Wheel Sutta' (the Buddha's first), S.v.421, CDB p.1844.
[5] Suñña Sutta, S.iv.54, CDB p. 1163.
[6] Cūlasuññata Sutta, M.iii.108, MDB p. 969f. "Effluents" or "fermentations" (āsava) build up and ferment in the unconscious depths of mind though familiarity with various forms of defilement and then flow out into and dominate conscious mind and behavior.
[7] Loka Sutta, Udāna 33 (Chapter 3, Sutta 10) p. 50.
[8] Kaccayanagotta Sutta, S.ii.16, CDB p. 544.
[9] Jāṇussoṇi Sutta, S.ii.76, CDB p. 584.
[10] Kassaka Sutta, S.i.114, CDB p. 208.
[11] Bāhiya Sutta, Udāna 8 (Chapter 1, Sutta 10) p. 20.
[12] Paṭhamanibbānapaṭisamyutta Sutta, Udāna 80 (Chapter 8, Sutta 1) p. 108.
[13] Gārava Sutta, S.i. 306, CDB p. 235.
[14] Kammavipākaja Sutta, Udāna 20 (Chapter 3, Sutta 1) p. 35.
[15] Parivīmansanasutta, S.ii.82, CDB p. 587-8.
[16] Jhāna Sutta, A.ix.36, NDB p. 235.
[17] Mogharaja-manava-puccha (Sn.V.15)
[18] Ajahn Buddhadāsa also called it "Pristine Buddhism," meaning the original Buddha-Dhamma before unawakened beings messed around with it.




# In the Buddha's Words by Bhikkhu Bodhi

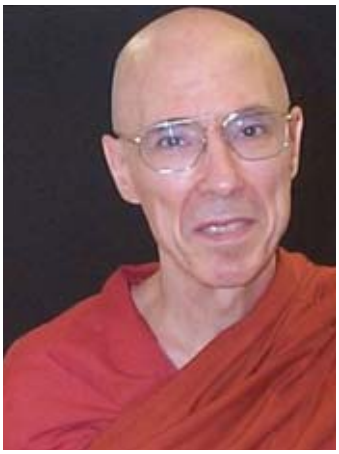
The Buddha's teachings, as presented in the Pali canon, are like thousands of squares on a giant Rubik's cube. Each square represents an aspect of the Dharma, each is meant to guide us to a life with less and less suffering until ultimately we reach liberation and end suffering completely. The Buddha answered questions, gave guidelines, presented concepts: all meant to bring us to peace and harmony, to joy and loving kindness, to freedom and liberation.

He was not presenting a fully developed philosophy with a clear and systematic structure. Rather, the Buddha presented his teachings in ways that made it easy to understand for those who sought his guidance. Like any great teacher, the Buddha often taught the same idea or concept over and over in different ways so that those listening understood what he was saying.

Bhikkhu Bodhi, the renowned scholar monk who has translated or edited virtually the entire Pali canon into modern, readable English, compiled this collection of sutras with an eye toward presenting them in a systematic way that allows the reader not only to see a framework that underpins the Buddha's teaching, but also to grasp the incredible spectrum of thought that is presented in the Pali canon.

In the Buddha's Words, An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon has ten chapters, each with an insightful introduction and a handful of sutras, many newly translated, edited and condensed to make them more manageable for the non-scholar. The book begins with a rich explanatory General Introduction that alone would be worth the purchase of the book.

The excerpts below, in which we see the world condition as the Buddha himself saw it, illustrate how readable and accessible this anthology had made the teachings to those interested in exploring the Pali Canon—be they novices or stream-enterers.



## The Origin of Conflict

AN 2 iv; I 66
Translated by Bhikku Bodhi
abridged and edited by Xian Yang

The Brahmin Aramadanda approached the Venerable Mahakaccana and asked him: "Why is it that khattiyas fight with khattiyas, brahmins with Brahmins, and householders with householders?"

Mahakaccana answered: "It is because of attachment to sensual pleasures, adherence to sensual pleasures, fixation on sensual pleasures, holding firmly to sensual pleasures that khattiyas fight with khattiyas, Brahmins with Brahmins, and householders with householders."

"Then why is it," the Brahmin continued, "that ascetics fight with ascetics?"
"It is because of attachment to views, adherence to views, fixation on views, addiction to views, obsession with views, holding firmly to views that ascetics fight with ascetics."

# The Dark Chain of Causation

DN 15, Mahanidana Sutta; II.58
Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi

"Thus, Ananda, in dependence upon feeling there is craving; in dependences upon craving there is pursuit, in dependence upon pursuit there is gain; in dependence upon gain there is decision-making; in dependence upon decision-making there is desire and lust; in dependence upon desire and lust there is attachment; in dependence upon attachment there is possessiveness; in dependence upon possessiveness there is niggardliness; in dependence upon niggardliness there is defensiveness; and because of defensiveness, various evil unwholesome things originate—the taking up of clubs and weapons, conflicts, quarrels, and disputes, insults, slander, and falsehood."

Feeling leads to craving

Craving leads to pursuit

Pursuit leads to gain

Gain leads to decision-making

Decision-making leads to desire and lust

Desire and lust leads to attachment

Attachment leads to possessiveness

Possessiveness leads to niggardliness

Niggardliness leads to defensiveness

Because of defensiveness,

various unwholesome things originate:

the taking up of weapons, conflicts, quarrels,

disputes, insults, slander,

and falsehoods.

# Why Do Beings Live In Hate?

DN 21: Sakkapanha Sutta; II
Translated by Bhikku Bodhi
abridged and edited by Xian Yang

Sakka, ruler of the devas, asked the Blessed One: "Beings wish to live without hate, harming, hostility, or enmity; they wish to live in peace. Yet they live in hate, harming one another, hostile, and as enemies. By what fetters are they bound that they live in such a way?"

The Blessed One answered: "Ruler of the devas, it is the bonds of envy and niggardliness that bind beings so that, although they wish to live with hate, hostility, or enmity, and to live in peace, yet they live in hate, harming one another, hostile, and as enemies."

The Sakka, having expressed his appreciation, asked another question: "But Sir, what gives rise to envy and niggardliness, what is their origin, how are they born, how do they arise? When what is present do they arise, and when what is absent do they not arise?"

"Envy and niggardliness, ruler of the devas, arise from liking and disliking; this is their origin, this is how they are born, how they arise. When these are present, they arise, when these are absent, they do not arise."

"But, Sir, what gives rise to liking and disliking?"

"They arise from desire.

"And what gives rise to desire?"

"Desire arises from thinking."

"But, Sir, what gives rise to thinking?"

"Thinking arises from elaborated perceptions and notions*. When elaborated perceptions and notions are present, thinking arises. When elaborated perceptions and notions are absent, thinking does not arise."

**These are ideas that have become infected by subjective biases, elaborated by the tendencies to craving, conceit, and distorted views.*

Envy and niggardliness arise from liking and disliking
Liking and disliking arise from desire
Desire arises from thinking
Thinking arises from elaborated perceptions and notions.

# The Right Concept of Time

Master Jen-Chun

Time flows through past, present, and future;
the Buddha illustrated cause-and-effect with three periods;
Resolve to remove, build, create, and develop in daily life;
Utilize time well, make progress, and open anew.

From *The Way To Buddhahood*
*by Venerable Master Yin-Shun*

When talking about the Buddha Dharma, we first need to establish a concept of time. Most people do not take sufficient account of time, but the Buddha taught that time, as the basis for the principle of cause-and-effect, is of prime importance for understanding human existence.

The first line of the verse says: "Time flows through past, present, and future." The Buddha taught that time is continuous, that the past, the present, and the future are connected into a seamless flow. No matter how far back we go, there is still a past beyond that past; the past goes so far back you cannot find a beginning. So, from a long, long time ago, sentient beings have been transmigrating in the cycle of life and death.

On the other side of the present moment lies the future. The future continues so far ahead that there is no end in sight. There is always a future beyond the future. If we compare the past and the future, we can say that the past is without beginning, the future without end. It is the present that links the past and the future, and it is in the present that our life unfolds.

Ordinary people do not understand how cause-and-effect operates in the present. Why? Because they do not understand that the present is the result of causes from the past. Likewise, all the actions that we perform in this present life in turn function as new causes, which will produce effects we reap in the future. Most people choose to ignore this fact. They do not want to study or discuss what happened in the past, and to them the future is blank and meaningless. They care only about the present.

Under these circumstances, most people only want to indulge in the pleasures of life, always looking for comfort and enjoyment. Such material indulgence is a trap that leads to progressively more affliction, hardship, and suffering. When one perceives life through distorted lenses and builds one's activities upon false values, one will never be able to make progress, for one is trapped by one's false views.

The reason the Buddha spoke about the interconnectedness of past, present and future was to demonstrate the operation of the law of causality in the past and future. By understanding this, you will not perceive your lives as being isolated or independent of everything else. Your views will gradually open up, and you will not feel pessimistic or trapped by your current limitations.

By taking into account the backward and forward extensions of time, when things go well in your life you will not be carried away by joy, for you understand that your fortune is the result of good causes you planted in the past. When things go badly, you will not be regretful since you will realize your problems stem from a lack of good causes in the past.

It is critically important, now, with conditions in the world as they are, that we say to yourselves: "Now that I have learned the Buddha Dharma, I am responsible for taking what I have learned, building up a clear conception of the law of cause-and- effect, and teaching it to others." We must teach others not to over-indulge themselves in times of success, and not to be discouraged or depressed in times of difficulty. Rather, to use difficult times as an opportunity to enhance our practice and the human spirit.

***Excerpt from a series of lectures by Venerable Master Jen-Chun on the basic concepts that anyone learning Buddhism should have.***

# Inside Out Practice

*James Hicklin*

JAMES HICKLIN, AGE 26, RESIDES IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON IN THE MIDWEST. HE IS SERVING A LIFE SENTENCE WITHOUT PAROLE. WE ASKED HIM WHAT IT'S LIKE TO PRACTICE BUDDHISM IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY PRISON.

***If you were asked,*** "What's it like to practice Buddhism in a maximum security prison," you'd probably think, "What an odd question." I feel the same way. The difference between us is that I *am* practicing Buddhism in a maximum security prison, and I have been for five of the last ten years. That's how long I've been here, ten years. So why does it seem like an odd question to me when it applies perfectly to my life? Let me explain.

When I wake up in the morning, to the sound of a blaring horn that resembles a suped up alarm clock, I don't really want to get up yet. Six o'clock comes entirely too early in the morning. I have to get up, though. It's almost time for breakfast and work is right around the corner. I suppose it's the same for you; morning just coming too early.

Having arisen and washed my face, I lie back down and wait for breakfast. On my good days I go over my Bodhisattva Vows; on my bad days I grumble about how uncomfortable my bed is. Of course, I also grumble about my cell mate, with his annoying habits (it doesn't matter what the real or imagined habit is, at six o'clock in the morning all habits are annoying). I suppose it's like this for you, lying next to your husband or wife, waiting for your day to begin, mumbling to yourself about your partner's obnoxious snoring.

When I get to breakfast, I find that my mood comes with me. If I'm grumpy, then the food is terrible. If my mood was good, then the food is delicious. Of course, waiting in line for breakfast, regardless of my mood, always makes me impatient. So I get a few minutes, while waiting in line, to consider this dharma lesson. Like most dharma lessons, this one isn't any fun to learn. Nonetheless, I stand there and contemplate the karma that comes from impatience, and the way I promised to help all sentient beings (which I don't recall including anything about letting all those sentient beings in front of me in line).

Having acquired my tray, I sit at a table with either friends or strangers. The

designations aren't fixed; some days friends are strangers, and vice-versa--the way I imagine it for most couples. I bow my head and pray, making offerings of the first bite of my food to the Three Jewels. Sometimes the other people at the table are quiet and respectful of my prayer; sometimes they look at me with disdain. I suppose it's like that for you too. Sometimes people respect you for what you are doing or trying to do, and sometimes they don't.

Breakfast ends and the wait for work begins. Work is supposed to begin at 7:30 a.m., but there are a hundred things which can change that. Inevitably, I get another dharma lesson in patience at this time of the day. I sit there, waiting, impatiently, for everyone who must be in place to get to his or her place so I can go to work. I guess this is equivalent to rush hour.

Work, I love work. I am blessed with a good job, one that helps people and that challenges me. Of course, some days the challenges are so great that I end up stressed out. Some days everything goes smoothly, and I feel very happy and self-satisfied. Whichever way that it goes, I always end up liking my job too much. Not that this is apparent to me at the time I am working. I only become aware of this when I sit down on my cushion to meditate, late in the evening, and realize that all I can do is to think about work and ways to problem solve the challenges of the day. I guess you know what I am talking about.

Then is a lunch break, which inevitably leads to another lesson in patience. Again, I can't get back to work until all the people who have to be in their places for me to move are in their places. You know what I'm talking about, right? It's the lunchtime rush.

Work ends and Yoga begins (on some days). Man, is it hard to go from work to Yoga. It's necessary, though, if I am to stay healthy. Working through the asanas, feeling grumpy at my Yoga partner because he's going too fast or breathing too loud, or doing whatever it is he's doing...maybe it's my really not wanting to be doing yoga at that moment, though I am not going to admit it.

By the time Yoga is done, I will be glad I did it. Then, I will thank my Yoga partner with "namaste." Of course, that means I will get another dharma lesson, the one about the emptiness of labeling someone too this or too that.

Finally supper arrives, and then the evening. The evening is when I find time to read and study. Some days it's wonderful lam-rim studies. Some days it's computer manuals and programming books. Always it is either dharma or work, that's the division in my life.

Three or four hours pass, studies have gone well. I am usually pretty exhausted by now; but I know bedtime's not far off. Lockdown time comes and things finally settle down. The last sitting or standing count happens and we are free to do as we please. So, I set up my little altar and my wool blanket. My cellmate is kind and gets up on his bunk for the next hour. I pray, I prostrate, I settle in with my mala, and I undertake my mediation practice. It's 10:30 at night; kind of late to be starting a dharma practice, but that's the only time it's quiet around here, and the noise of the world seems to dictate when I meditate.

At different times there are meditation classes, Yoga classes, trauma and wellness classes. No matter what, though, the days are always filled with dharma lessons.

So you might be wondering why I said at the beginning that being asked what it's like to practice in a maximum security prison was such an odd question. It's odd because practicing Buddhism inside a prison is just like practicing on the outside.

"I LOVE WORK. I AM BLESSED WITH A GOOD JOB, ONE THAT HELPS PEOPLE, AND THAT CHALLENGES ME."

You might say, "Oh, but you are surrounded by murderers and rapists, won't they think you are weak if you talk about compassion and practice loving-kindness? Won't that put you in harm's way?" I ask you, "Where do you think all these people lived before they came to prison? That's right, in your neighborhood.'"

"But what about the guards, don't they pick on you and ridicule you? How can you develop bodhicitta in that kind of environment?" Oddly enough, guards are people too. And like other people in the world, they generally treat you the way you treat them. Certainly there are a few difficult ones, but that's only because they are suffering (like all of us). Besides, you don't learn patience from your friends; you learn it from those blessed bodhisattvas in disguise that irritate you to no end.

Ultimately, I am simply saying this. We are all practicing in a maximum security prison. It's called samsara.

# *Editor's Note:*

I asked James how he wanted his biographical description to read. He wrote: "My thoughts are that it is good to explain where I am (generally, not explicitly), why I am here, how long I will be here, and how long I have been in the Dharma. Some extra details, too, may be of benefit to others. For some, it is inspirational, as in the story of Angulimali (see right). For others it is a reminder of the power of the Dharma and Dharma practice. The details also show the commonness of all humans, which makes developing compassion easier."

I had met James on two occasions at the correctional facility where he resides. The intensity of his practice and depth of his understanding of the Buddhadharma were profound and moving. I knew none of the details of his life; I did not care why he was on the inside, and it would have been wrong speech for me to ask. So it was not until I received this first column from James that I learned the details of his life:

James continued: "I will tell you a bit about the things you haven't asked me. Use what you want of them; what you think will be beneficial. I am 26; I have been incarcerated since I was 16 years old. I was a junkie when I caught my case, strung out on methamphetamine and anything else I could get my hands on. I was introduced to Buddhism nearly six years ago; I took my vows as a Tibetan Buddhist five years ago."

He concluded with these words: "We are most fortunate. The Dharma is in our lives, our teachers have the patience to tolerate us, and we are involved in something profound. May we always work for the benefit of all beings."

# Angulimali

Ahimsaka was the son of a high-ranking Brahmin. He was sent off to school where he proved to be a bright, obedient, diligent, and of impeccable character.

His status as "teacher's pet" aroused jealousy in Ahimsaka's fellow students, who falsely accused him of having an affair with his teacher's wife. At first, his teacher did not believe the rumors, but the rumors continued so consistently and for so long that eventually Ahimsaka's teacher vowed to have revenge on his innocent student. His rage led him to maliciously tell Ahimsaka to kill a thousand human beings and to bring the right thumb of each to him as payment for his teachings. Ahimsaka was astonished to hear such a request from his teacher. He refused, and was banished from his teacher's house.

When his family learned why he had been expelled, they too banished him. Isolated, and overwhelmed with anger, fear, and stress, he snapped—obsessing about his teacher's request he ran into the forest where he began a killing spree. So that he could keep track of the number, he bound the thumbs into a garland, which he wore around his neck. He soon became known by those in the countryside as Angulimala (finger garland).

The Buddha went to the forest to talk to Angulimala. Upon seeing the solitary monk, Angulimala went after the Buddha for his final kill. Angulimala swung his knife at the monk, expecting an easy kill, but the monk moved back avoiding the knife.

*(continued on next page)*

No matter how close he got, or how quickly he swung the knife, the Buddha magically moved back, avoiding the blade. Angulimala became frustrated and screamed, “Stop, monk!” The Buddha replied, “I have stopped; you’re the one who hasn’t stopped.” Angulimala was confused and shouted, “What does that mean, that you’ve stopped and I haven’t?”

The Buddha said calmly, “ I can say that I’ve stopped because I’ve given up killing. I’ve given up hurting and harming. I’ve developed compassion and loving kindness toward all beings.” When Angulimala heard these words, he suddenly snapped back to reality. He realized that this monk was the Buddha himself, and that the Buddha had come to the forest out of compassion for him. Angulimala threw down his knife and asked the Blessed One if he could join the Order of Bhikkhus, to which he Buddha consented.

But Angulimala had no peace of mind; he was haunted by the memories of his past evil deeds—by the cries of his victims and the horror he had seen in the faces as he killed them. And, when he went on alms rounds, if he were recognized, he would often be beaten or stoned--sometimes returning to the monastery bruised, cut, or bleeding. The Buddha reminded him to have patience. “You have done away with evil and now practice only good. Be patient as the past karma of your evil ways is exhausted.”

Angulimala did, and, under the Buddha’s tutelage, became an arahat whose practice benefited all beings.

# Practicing for Relief of Stress and Depression

*Venerable T. Seelananda*

Today most people are not mindful in the present moment. They are always busy dreaming about their future or past. The results are stress and depression. Both stress and depression have more or less the same physical symptoms, but one should not take them to be exactly the same. Each has its own causes and effects.

There are many negative influences of stress and depression: distrust, rejection, and anger, for example, any of which can easily lead to health problems such as headaches, stomach diseases, rashes, insomnia, ulcers, high blood pressure, heart disease and strokes.

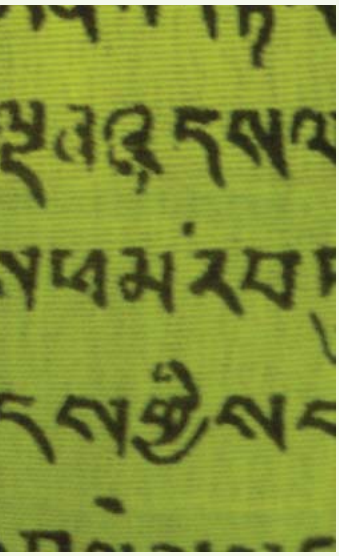
As long as people seek happiness and peace outside of themselves, instead of looking within themselves, they cannot overcome their stress, depression, or dissatisfaction.

According to the teachings of the Buddha, one has to find the causes of stress and depression (suffering). There is no single cause for something that happens in this world. There are clusters of causes, just as there are clusters of effects.

Right mindfulness is at the heart of the teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha's constant admonition to his disciples was to develop mindfulness in the present moment. This is the secret of happiness, and the avoidance of all sorts of discomfort, distress, stress and depression. As they practiced the teaching of the Buddha, being mindful in the present moment, followers of the Buddha developed a peaceful and happy life. They are compared to birds flying in the sky or to a drop of water on a lotus leaf.

## How to Interrupt, Change, and Eliminate Stress and Depression

First, one has to understand clearly that craving and attachment to material and immaterial things are the main roots of stress and depression. Dependent on craving, attachment arises. They are interdependent. We attach to things and strive to keep things as our own. But they are not ours. Everything is ever changing. In this world, there is nothing to be grasped as one's own. Because we are ignorant of the intrinsic nature of change we become upset with change, we try to prevent it, often becoming obsessed, angry, disappointed, disgusted, distressed, stressed, or depressed.



## How to Practice Meditation (Loving Friendliness) as a Means of Reducing Stress and Depression

**For your primary meditation, you may follow these guidelines:**

Sit comfortably—cross-legged on the floor, if possible—otherwise, as you wish.
Keep the upper part of the body erect.
Rest your hands on your lap (right hand in the left). Close your eyes gently.

The following are the actions of mind concentration.
Understand them clearly.

- Give the full attention to the top of your head and mentally observe this area well for about 3 minutes
- Observing the very top of your head, mentally say with clear understanding of the meaning of these words, "May I be well, happy, and peaceful." (Repeat these words three times)
- Then, observing each area of your head, from the hair at the crown to the area under your chin, mentally say, "May I be well, happy, and peaceful": (Repeat these words three times for each place you observe, slowly covering your entire head.)
- Now, from your neck to the tips of your toes, working gradually, systematically, patiently, and peacefully; observe each and every part of the body with a balanced mind--mentally repeating three times, "May I be well, happy, and peaceful." This is how you generate loving-friendliness in your body and mind.

As you have developed loving-friendliness within yourself with this meditation, you can now extend loving-friendliness to all beings in the world. Start to extend loving-friendliness to all beings in different directions. You have to extend the radiance of loving-friendliness towards all beings equally.

- First toward all beings in your front direction, extend radiant loving-friendliness by saying, "May all beings in my front direction be well, happy, and peaceful." (Repeat three times.)
- Now do the same, towards all beings in each direction and mentally say

(repeating three times):

May all beingss in my back direction be well, happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in my right direction be well, happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in my left direction be well,

happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in my upper direction be well, happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in my lower direction be well, happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in this world be well, happy, and peaceful.
May all beings in this universe be well, happy, and peaceful.
Finally say, "May all beingss be well… happy…and peaceful!" repeating it for some time.

Before concluding your meditation, give your full attention to the tip of your nose and observe the flowing of your breath, and understand how it touches at the rims of your nostrils for about 5-10 minutes; then join your palms together in front of your chest and say; saadhu! saadhu! saadhu! (Saadhu means excellent.) Now open your eyes and rise from the seat to continue your daily activities of life mindfully.

May all your right efforts be successful!

"YOU HAVE TO EXTEND THE RADIANCE OF LOVING-FRIENDLINESS TO ALL BEINGS IN THE DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS."

This article is an excerpt from ***The Buddha's Unique Path, Mindfulness of Breathing and The Establishment of Mindfulness*** by Bhikkhu T. Seelananda.

Copies of this book can be obtained at www.maba-usa.org.

# dharma in the moment

## HYMNUS AD PATREM SINENSIS

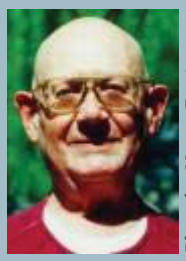


Photo by Nancy Davis

I praise those ancient Chinamen
Who left me a few words,
Usually a pointless joke or silly question
A line of poetry drunkenly scrawled on the margin of a quick splashed picture—bug, leaf
caricature of Teacher
on paper held together by little more than ink
& their own strength brushed momentarily over it
Their world and several others since
Gone to hell in a handbasket, they knew it—
Cheered as it whizzed by—
& conked out among the busted spring rain cherryblossum winejars
Happy to have saved us all.

*—Zen Master Philip Whalen*

***YOU DON'T HAVE TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU THINK.***

## Rebirth is a bad habit

*—Master Ji Ru*

Most people believe you are here and then you leave.
Buddhists believe you are not here and then you leave.
*—David Prowler, from a dharma talk at the Hartford Street Zen Center, San Francisco*

If Rene Descartes were a Buddhist, he might have said:
"I think, therefore I am not."

# contributors

***BHIKKHU BODHI*** is an American Buddhist monk. After completing his doctoral studies he traveled to Sri Lanka, where he received full ordination in 1973. Venerable Bodhi has many important publications to his credit, either as author, translator, or editor, including virtually the entire Pali Canon. Since July 2002 he has been living and teaching at Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.

***MASTER JEN-CHUN.*** For the past 20 years, Master Jen-Chun has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching with the goal of creating a pure form of Buddhism in the United States by emphasizing the study and practice of Dharma instead of ritual practices and ceremonies. Through Master Jen-Chun's influence, the Yin-Shun Foundation was created to translate Master Yin-Shun's works into English. He is the founder and spiritual leader of Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.

***MASTER JI RU.*** Born in Malaysia, Master Ji Ru was ordained as a Theravada monk 1980. He later studied Chinese Buddhism and ordained in that tradition under the great Buddhist Master Venerable Zhu Mo in 1986. Currently he is Abbot of Mid-America Buddhist Association in Augusta, Missouri, and its sister temple in Chicago, the International Buddhism Friendship Association. He lectures in universities and Buddhist monasteries and centers across the United States and in China.

***SANTIKARO.*** A graduate of the University of Illinois, Santikaro served in the Peace Corps in Thailand. He became a monk 1985 and remained in Thailand for many years, becoming his teacher, Ajarn Buddhadasa's primary English translator. He is currently the lay founding director of Liberation Park in Oak Park, Illionois.

***VENERABLE T. SEELANANDA*** was ordained at the age of 11. After completing his monastic training, he received higher ordination in 1984 as a Theravada monk in Sri Lanka. He holds numerous undergraduate and post-graduate degrees. Venerable Seelananda currently resides in Queens, N.Y., and teaches Buddhism and meditation across the United States.

***XIAN YANG*** is a lay student of Master Ji Ru. He received The Three Refuges in 1998 from Zen Master Philip Whalen in San Francisco and received his Bodhisattva Vows from Master Ji Ru in 2005. He currently resides at the Mid-America Buddhist Association in Missouri.

The Way is perfect like a great space,
Without lack, without excess.
Because of grasping and rejecting,
You cannot attain it.
Do not pursue conditioned existence;
Do not abide in acceptance of
emptiness.
In oneness and equality,
Confusion vanishes of itself.

***from the poem, "Faith in Mind"***
***translated by Master Sheng-Yen***