

Ven. Hui-Fang, abbot of Nan Hua Temple, leads a Head Shaving Ceremony (5 April)

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Provide Others with Good Causes and Conditions By Grand Master Hsing Yun



In this world, there are many worthwhile goals, such as being a law-abiding person and giving, benefiting, and serving others. However, among all these good deeds, none is more important than giving others good causes and conditions.

Giving good causes and conditions is simply helping others in any possible way. If you water the plants in your garden, they flourish beautifully. If you offer grain to birds, they sing wonderfully. If you give encouragement to students or praise teachers, then you provide them with good causes and conditions. You may help promote a good product, or you may help others make achievements in their careers. Sometimes a look of encouragement can boost the morale of others. Taking joy in the accomplishments of others and not obstructing them in their endeavors are all simple means of giving good causes and conditions.

There are many actions one can perform to give others good causes and conditions. Parents and children, or co-workers and friends, can give each other good causes and conditions. Before Buddha entered into parinirvana, he said, "The sentient beings that have connections with me, I have liberated, and for those who have no connections with me, I have already planted the causes and conditions for them to be liberated."

According to Buddhist history, Chan Master Huineng embarked on his path of cultivation and eventually became the patriarch of Chan because of ten taels of gold he received from An Daocheng. In the case of Chan Master Linji, he went to learn from Chan Master Gaoan after be-

ing prompted by Chan Master Huangbo to do so. He gained enlightenment, resulting in the proliferation of disciples of the Linji Chan School worldwide. Because of the induction of his brother, Asanga, Vasubandhu converted to the practice of Mahayana Buddhism and became the sastra master of a thousand treatises.

With only a few words, some may provide others with the causes and conditions to enter into the Way, or through a written recommendation they may help others to earn a place in history. On his visit to Venerable Master Dadian, the renowned scholar Han Yu of the Tang Dynasty entered into the gate of Dharma upon hearing the Master's attendant say, "First convert by concentration, then liberate by wisdom."

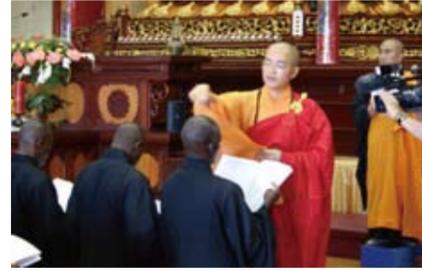
Throughout history, many great leaders have realized their potential because of the good causes and conditions others gave them. Entrepreneurs have garnered the support and help of the skillful and talented people instrumental to their own success, because they provided them with causes and conditions and the opportunity to actualize their potential. When it is not harmful to oneself and is beneficial to others, we should provide others with more opportunities and thus good causes and conditions. It is through building ties and relationships in this way that we are paving the way to our own success, for in giving others benefits, we are also benefiting ourselves. So, why don't we become more generous?

Emperor Liang Repentance and Head Shaving Ceremony

1-5 April 2009



Emperor Liang Repentance



Ven. Hui Fang leads a Head Shaving Ceremony



Ven. Yi Chun Dharma Talk

Twice a year Nan Hua Temple holds a very special Dharma function called Emperor Liang Repentance. This year the function took place from Wednesday 1 April 2009 to Sunday, 5 April 2009.

The function started on the Wednesday evening with a Purification Ceremony of the whole Temple. The reason for this is to prepare everyone mentally and also to cleanse the atmosphere in the Temple so that it is conducive to this event. Devotees come from all over South Africa to participate and the Temple comes alive with the happy sounds of friends meeting and exchanging all the latest news.

After the Purification Ceremony the reading of ten scrolls begins. Each reading takes approximately an hour and a half, and there are a different offering made at the beginning of each reading. These offerings are intended to awaken a mind of generosity in the participants, and a willingness to look clearly at their own shortcomings, with the intention of striving to correct these shortcomings in the future.

The ten offerings made are incense, flowers, light, water, fruit, tea, biscuits, ornaments, Buddhist teachings, and clothing. Three scrolls are read each day, one in the morning, the second in the afternoon and the final reading takes place at night. Each evening there is a Dharma teaching given to the participants by one of the Masters, explaining in more detail the teachings chanted through the course of the day.

SA BLIA YAD:

Admin Group Training Camp 3-5 April 2009



Anny Lee, the chairperson of SA BLIA YAD, held a training camp with its admin group at the Nan Hua Temple. The purpose of this camp was to discuss

major events that will be happening in this coming year.

In order to let other talented youth members understand more about the group, we especially invited different

During the early morning service, (which begins at 06h00) it is customary to read a portion of the Flower Garland Sutra, containing the 10 Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. These ten vows are to :

1. Worship and respect all Buddhas
2. Praise the "Thus Come Ones"
3. Make abundant offerings
4. Repent misdeeds and hindrances
5. Rejoice at other's merits and virtues
6. Request the Buddha to turn the Dharma Wheel
7. Request the Buddha to remain in the world
8. Follow the teachings of the Buddha at all times
9. Accommodate and benefit all sentient beings
10. Transfer merits and virtues universally

On 5 April, Nan Hua Temple held the annual Head Shaving Ceremony for 17 new first year students. the Head Shaving Ceremony is one of the first step in becoming a monastic. The ceremony was lead by Ven. Hui Fang on behalf of Grand Master Hsin Yun.

The 17 new first year students come from countries like South Africa, Malawi, Congo, Swaziland and Tanzania. These students have choosen to come here for a period of three years to do Buddhist Studies and to live a monastic way of life.

After these 3 years they have a wonderful apportunity to further studies in Taiwan, in the hope of becoming their monks, and if they choose not to, then they can return to their homes, or work at the temple.

masters and lecturers to teach different leadership skills and philosophy that are required when working in a non-profit organisation.

Youth today should consider their future, be aware of the circumstances around them, and use every second of their time to live in the present, because it is pointless to live in the past or in the future. This is what Nan Hua Master Hui-Xing expressed.

During the camp the BLIA youth also participated in the Liang Huang Jeweled Repentance Dharma Function that is also held at the temple. During this Repentance service, young and old can repent mistakes that they have made during the past year.

Buddhism in a Cell - Verbatim Comments from Present Inmates.

My New Beginning

My name is Daniel Ramushaba, and I am serving 13 years imprisonment at ODI Corrections Centre since 1998.

I became a Buddhist in 2007 and my reason why I developed an interest in Buddhism is that I manage to control my anger which I used to have, by meditation. Before I became a Buddhist follower, I was a Zion Christian Church (ZCC) follower and

found that Buddhism is more real and practical.

I took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha on 3 December 2008. This was a wonderful experience of my life. The refuge and precept ceremony really gave me more confidence and commitment to my practice. I would like to thank Mr. Peter Just for making it all possible, not forgetting Ven. Master Hui-xing, Ven. Hui-liao and Mr. Zando Bakari.

Daniel Ramushaba – ODI Prison – March 2009

Buddhism Behind Bars

There are those who believe that this world was made for them, so they can do whatever they want with it, without any care for others. Buddhism teaches that we should respect our environment. We should respect the right of others to exist. This is why Buddhism is classified under three paths, that is Sila (morality), Samadhi (mental culture [concentration]) and Panna (wisdom). If we are moral, we will learn to live as harmless and gentle human beings. In order for us to be able to do that, we must develop our mind by meditation (Samadhi). Once our mind is developed we gain wisdom (Panna).

My name is written at the end of this article. I am serving 27 years in ODI Prison. I took refuge and precepts for the first time on 5 May 2005 in Zonderwater Maximum Prison, and renewed my vows on 3 December 2008 in ODI Prison. I am also

a Buddhist group leader in our centre.

I would like to thank Mr. Peter Just, Ven. Hui-xing, Ven. Hui-liao, and Mr. Zando Bakari for travelling 125km to our prison in Mabopane to perform a refuge and precepts ceremony to myself and fellow inmates. Although there were some delays at the prison gates, with their patience and perseverance the ceremony was a success. It was the very first time to occur in ODI Prison. I also would like to send my special thanks to Mr. Peter Just who endures all the strain of always travelling a long distance to come and visit our Buddhist group in the centre and for the Dharma talks and meditation lessons he gives us.

My Buddhist practice and all the support I always get from the temple through Mr. Peter Just always make my prison life quite manageable. Nammo Amitofo!!!

Armstrong Lupuwana – ODI Prison – March 2009

Ignorance the Most Dangerous Cause

I have been controlled by the dark most of part of my life. And I have never wanted to accept my mistakes. Always trying to blame other people for my own faults. All these mistakes and transgressions were mainly due to ignorance. Ignorance is the most dangerous sickness which a man can have.

I know that there are the three evils which rule the world (i.e. Greed, Lust and Jealousy) they are sole outcome of the term ignorance. All these things begin when whole or partly we experience the rise and fall of phenomena. If we are mindful of the rise and fall of phenomena we would not have any problem about knowing the basic rules of inter-relationships with other sentient and inanimate beings.

Because if we know that when there is a little bit of dissatisfaction (it is not I alone who is not satisfied) and when I see a beautiful woman and envy her (it is not I alone who feel that way about her). And when my friend achieves and I so not achieve (I

should understand that he have accumulate merits because of good cultivations in previous or present lifetimes.

So ignorance can make us loose whatever we have internally and externally. So ignorance is the root, grasping is the stem, and greed, lust and jealousy are the sprout of the cause (ignorance).

Thanks to the mindfulness of the Buddha we no longer run to the gate whenever they say food is coming.

Thank to the mindfulness of the Buddha we no longer run to the streets whenever they say there is a beautiful woman across the street.

Thanks to the mindfulness of the Buddha we no longer get offended or degraded whenever someone else achieves.

Letter from Ji Luen

(took refuge at Modderbee Prison Dec 2008)

Roots of Propagating Buddhism in Africa

By Abby Nyakunga

The introduction of Buddhism to our children is the most effective way of spreading Buddhism in Africa. Buddhism could not have flourished so well in Tibet, China and Thailand without each generation passing Buddha's teaching's to the next generation. In so doing, Nan Hua Temple, established the Sunday School Buddhist teachings on in 2003, so that the children from the nearby townships can have an opportunity of learning more

about this new religion in Africa. It also helps them to recognize their own talents, improves their English language and helps them to develop more discipline in life. All of this being knowledge which otherwise they would not have learnt from school.

A few children who would like to continue to develop themselves with us are sharing their experiences below.



Bongani Malele (14) from Rethabiseng; I enjoying being part of the Sunday school. We learn about Buddha and things we must do and things we should do to our parents and others. We go to places and play soccer. I love most hearing about going to Taiwan like our other friends who got an opportunity to go there in 2006. I would love to be a monk and live at the temple.

Thuli (13), From Zithobeni; I love sports and in Sunday school we have an opportunity to show our talents in netball, singing, jiving, presenting poems and acting. Buddha's life was not an easy one. He suffered before he achieved Buddhahood. Hence, we also must work hard to achieve what we want in our life, that is my lesson from Buddhism. I would like to be journalist.



Mpumi Masombuka (13), From Zithobeni; I would like first to thank Abby for teaching us things that we didn't know before. We learn how to behave, how to make right decisions and to be humble. Life is not good out there if you don't go to school, so we need to work hard in school. I would love to be a doctor and help many people.

Siyabonga Cele (14), From Zithobeni; My experience of Sunday school is learning to be honest. If for example we are making a noise in the class and Abby asks who was making noise, we should be able to own up and not point fingers at each other. It is important to know that if you did something wrong you must accept that it was wrong and apologize. I would love to become a Businessman, have lots of money and help people who are suffering.



Bryton Mahlangu (11), From Zithobeni; I was so upset because I was not in the previous newsletter, while all my friends were there. But I'm happy now. I have learnt that sometimes you need to wait for good things to happen, hence, I'm here now. My experience in Sunday school is wonderful. We learn lots of things, more specially to be good kids and behave at home and school. Most of my friends from Duzuza run away from Sunday school but,

Thoko Meyers From Zithobeni; Even though I have only joined Sunday school for about a month now, I feel so good to be here. The songs that we compose and performances we do have increased my ability to fight the fear of being in front of people. I feel more confident in myself. I would like to visit the temple and learn more about Buddha. My wish is to become a super model and raise money to help orphans. Amitofo!



Sanele Mahlangu (12) From Zithobeni; I don't have much to say, but I enjoy playing soccer and the opportunity of coming to Sunday school is nice. I want to be a soldier when grow up.

Aletta Nkosi (14) from Zithobeni; the story about life of the Buddha is very good, it helps me understand different people with different beliefs. Being in Sunday school has taught me how to respect everybody because we are all equal. I wish to become a doctor one day and help people to cure their diseases.



Learning Experiences of ABS Students

By Ben You

African Buddhist Seminary



NO EGO

The society we are living in today has many conflicts, some of which arise due to our attachment to "self" and material things. Due to "I" and "mine" we develop selfishness and arrogance which brings intolerance to our society. We are reluctant to change our views and we force others to accept ours and if they don't, then war can break out. We create different worries and suffering for our selves because we want everything to be ours, and people get angry easily if they are shouted at, or criticized by others. But if we can look into ourselves and see where this "I" and "mine" come from, we will see that they come out of greed, ignorance and selfishness.

Originally when we were born we had neither name nor anything in our hands. We came to this world empty handed, and we will go out the same way. So why are we fighting because of "I" and "mine"? We fight for things which without "self", we could not fight for. For example, if we see a girl having a relationship with others we don't really mind, but if the same girl becomes our girlfriend and then goes around with other guys, then we both worry and angry. So we can see that at the beginning this situation was none of our business, but because it became "mine" then everything change. From the concept of cause and condition we see that nothing exists independently, nor forever. Even our body is made up of different causes and conditions, and one day it too will disappear. So why get attached to 'self'? Our body demands a lot of things and in order to satisfy it we attract worries and suffering. But in reality this body will never become contented and it will only give us problems. So what we can do to this body is to practice towards liberation, which will stop all kinds of worries and suffering.

From the concept of impermanence there is nothing that is ours forever. All things that exist are just like illusions, they are not real and consequently there is nothing of ours in this world. So there is no need to get attached to "mine". We should just enjoy using our property, but not become attached to them. Originally there was nothing called "I" and "mine", but because of our deluded mind, we created these things for our "self" and in the end they give us lots of worries and suffering. But if we can understand our real nature, we can eradicate all worries and fears.

GIVING

The merit of giving is not only highly praised in Buddhism, but also in other religions, as it benefits both the donor and the recipient. The act of giving is one of the ways of accumulating merit, and it brings joy to both the donor and the recipient. Although giving is very vital in our lives, we need to have Right View before we do our charity to avoid impure giving.

We ordinary beings mostly misunderstand the appropriate way of giving. Before we do our action of giving, there are a few things we need to bear in mind, in order to perform real charity. Real giving is performed without any expectation of any reward in return. This means that a person must not give in order to receive convenience when somebody seeks our help, nor because of fear or seeking fame, like when people give generously in front of a big crowd. One should be willing to give without being forced to do so and expect no reward in return. If a person expects any reward after giving, that means one is not practicing giving, but bartering.

We should give out of compassion and kindness, when we realize that someone else is in need of help and we are in a position to help. We should express joy in every act of giving, and we should neither be attached to the item given nor to the recipient. The items given should correspond with the need of the recipient. Never give something because you dislike it or it's shelf life has expired. The merit attained with this kind of giving is minimal. The act of giving will also help us to create good affinities with others, and reduces our selfish and strong attachment to our possessions, which might lead to greed.

We can give material things such as food, money, clothes, and so on, to those people who are in need of these things. This does not mean that giving concerns only material things; one can also donate knowledge, skill, time, and effort, to different projects that benefit others. Keeping a smile on our face, and forgiving others, is also part of giving joy to people. We have to develop a generous hand in order to bring joy to all living beings in our society.

Beginner's Meditation Retreat 2009

Jun 13-14 • Jul 11-12 • Aug 8-9 • Oct 10-11 • Nov 7-8 • Dec 12-13

Intermediate Meditation Retreat 2009

Jun 20-21 • Oct 17-18

Meditation helps you:

- * increase positive states of mind
- * reduce stress and anxiety
- * experience greater contentment and well-being
- * improve concentration
- * develop better relationships and,
- * maintain greater physical health



My yearning for the Buddhist teachings By ISABEL OSBURN

I have always admired famous and rich people like actor Richard Gere who gave up womanising and bad drinking habits, when he became a practising

Buddhist. His transformation was amazing.

So deciding to completely cut myself off from the daily stresses of my life and to book myself in for a stay at the Nan Hua Temple on my own in silent retreat for a week was no small decision.

Joining the Beginners Retreat taught us that you can also meditate while walking or listening to music. So you don't only have to sit to meditate, you can incorporate it in many aspects of ones' life – even while sitting in a traffic jam. Meditating will be better than sitting and fuming at the traffic hold-up. And you will end up feeling a lot calmer and happier when you arrive at your destination.

At the end of my stay, having spent hours meditating and contemplating, I felt calmer and much more in control of my destiny. The lessons we were taught about not hurting any living thing, or judging and criticising one another, are valuable because I don't think we are even aware of what we are doing and saying to one another at times.

I can honestly say that my experience here was amazing, and that I have learnt a lot. When I go back home and to my work life, I'm determined to change my lifestyle and incorporate time for meditation. Striving to be a better person, living a purer life, and to reach ultimate awareness, will be on top of my agenda.

The Buddhist Monks and staff at the Temple were so kind, friendly, and helpful. Even with the language barrier, you could feel the love and warmth emanating from their souls.

My next mission is to join the Intermediate Meditation Retreat.
Nan Hua Temple 28 March 2009



My stay at the Chan Lin By Vuyani Sondlo

I first heard about Nan Hua Temple about five or six years ago from a friend who had seen a Sunday morning TV program that featured a story about the Nan Hua Temple. She was so impressed and wished she could go and check it out for herself.

However, as she was based faraway in Cape Town it was not possible, and so she suggested that I go and see what it was all about.

At the time I had been meditating, or trying to meditate, for a while, but without a clear structure or even the know-how. The little that I "knew" was from a few books I had browsed through.

So one Sunday I went to Nan Hua Temple. As I was driving from Johannesburg to Bronkhorstspuit I kept thinking "where am I going and what am I hoping to achieve from this trip? I'm not even Buddhist! But still I went and when I got there I was welcomed by a big "party". It was the opening of the Main Temple and I believe also the Chinese New Year. As you can imagine it was packed with people from all over and I must say the feeling was good, the festivities were great, and the food was amazing. Since then I have been driving there whenever I have time - not for any particular reason other than curiosity, as well as just needing a drive out of the city. I have even attended a few Sunday services and listened to the chanting.

It wasn't until July 2008 that I joined a seven-day retreat. By this time I had grown a bit in my understanding and practice of meditation. I had been to India and so on, but I was still frustrated with my practice. Anyway, to cut a long story short, the retreat was hard and beautiful at the same time. The masters guided us along, and we were taught Anapanasatti (Breath Mindfulness). I must say the benefits from this were immense for me!

During and after the retreat I adopted this as my main meditation practice, and I have been and still am trying to practice as best and consistently as I can. Later in the year I became ill. I was having terrible headaches that would not go away, even when I took painkillers. I also was losing the use of limbs on my right side. This was not good! It was scary as I was working on a project at the time and I needed both my brain and my limbs. I would wake up in the middle of the night and meditate, and then the headaches would subside for a while and I would get to sleep for two or three hours. But I would be woken up by a headache again and I would do the same thing again, and so on and so on, until the morning.

In January this year it got so bad that I had to be hospitalized. When I got out of hospital I decided to take some time off from work so I could recover. So I called Nan Hua Temple and explained my situation and said

Salty and Plain Have Flavor

An artist who became a Buddhist, Master Hongyi combined Buddhist practice and the artistic life, which allowed us to more clearly see his state of life. One day, the renowned educator, Mr. Xia Mianzun, came to pay him a visit. When they were eating, Mr. Xia saw him eating only one dish of pickled vegetables and could not help but say, "You don't think those pickled vegetables are too salty?"

Master Hongyi answered, "Salty has its own flavor!" Awhile later, after Master Hongyi had finished eating, he held a cup of boiled water in his hands. Furrowing his brow, Mr. Xia said, "No tea leaves? How can you drink that plain water everyday?"

Master Hongyi then smiled and said, "Although boiled water is plain, plain also has its own flavor."

Master Hongyi's "Salty has its own flavor, plain has its own flavor" is a saying that is very rich in the flavor of the Dharma and Chan. Master Hongyi applied the Dharma to his daily life, so there was no place in his life that did not have flavor. A towel that had been used for three years and was already torn he would say it could still be used. Staying at an inn with bedbugs crawling here and there-the guest complained, but he would say that there were only a few. It can be said that he truly understood the life of "feeling at ease under all conditions"

that I would like to come to do a retreat if there was one, but unfortunately at that time there was none. I was then told that I could come and do my own practice, and they would help me wherever possible. This was perfect for me as I needed a "better" environment than the city to practice in, especially being in the state I was in. But also very importantly, I needed that guidance and reassurance to say I was on the right path. This was psychologically important for me as I was very vulnerable at this point.

On arrival I was welcomed with open arms and hearts at Nan Hua, and I was told I could come and stay at the meditation center called Chan Lin. Master Hui-sang who is based at the Chan Lin (and happened to be one of the masters who was on the seven-day retreat I went to last July) explained to me that he would not always be available, as he would be busy with his own retreat, but his door was always open for me whenever I needed help with my practice.

So I went to Chan Lin and started practicing. Since meditation is not easy, and there can be so much confusion in ones' mind, I needed the master's help. So I would make appointments with him for discussions about my practice and progress, and he helped quite a lot, guiding me in the right direction and encouraging me to keep on practicing.

D r y i n g M u s h r o o m s

In Eihei Temple, there was a hunchbacked old Zen master in his eighties who was drying mushrooms under the hot sun. After the abbot, Zen Master Eihei Dogen, saw this he could not help but say, "Elder, you are so old. Why are you still exhausting yourself doing this kind of toilsome work? Please elder, you do not need to work so hard! I can find someone to do it for you!"

The old Zen Master responded without any hesitation, "Other people are not me."

Eihei Dogen said, "That's true! However, if you want to work, you don't need to pick the hottest time of the day."

The old Zen Master replied, "If I don't dry mushrooms on a sunny day, do you mean to say I should wait to dry them on a cloudy or rainy day?"

Zen Master Eihei Dogen was the head of the temple and guided everyone. But when he encountered this old Zen Master, he finally had to concede defeat.

In the Chan practitioners' life, no matter what the situation, they would not have someone else do the work, nor wait until tomorrow to do it. "Other people are not me" If I don't do it now, then when? are issues that contemporary people should contemplate.

As there was no retreat going on at Chan Lin and I was the only person staying there, apart from Master Hui-sang, I had to go for my meals to the main center. There I saw some familiar faces among the students, staff, and masters, whom I must say were always kind to me.

Then I bumped into Master Hui-fang who was the lead master of the seven-day retreat which I attended last year. He asked me what brought me "here", so I explained and he took an interest in my situation and also started giving me invaluable advice about my practice, and I appreciated that a lot.

After eighteen days at Chan Lin I had to come back home and I must say I can feel and see the difference. As Master Hui-sang said to me when I was complaining to him about my practice, in that I was not feeling progress, he looked at me and said "so, what should you do now? ... Practice, practice, practice!"

So once again thank you to Nan Hua Temple, and I hope to have another opportunity to visit there soon.

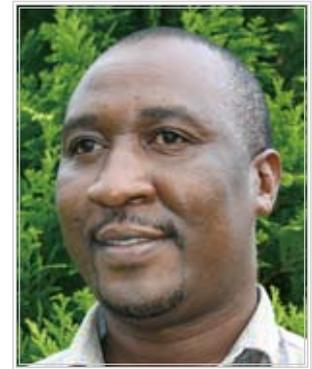
Vuyani Sondlo

31 March 2009, Johannesburg, South Africa

Viewpoint

My Journey of Spiritual Empowerment

By Abby B Nyakunga



Looking for spiritual belonging has enabled me to travel from Tanzania to South Africa, in pursuit of happiness. I grew up in Tanzania in a local family where my father was a Muslim, and all of his children should belong to the same religious background. So I inherited an Islamic background, and I went to an Islamic children's school where I learned a little bit of the Quran. As a child you don't question much about your religious background. Since everyone in the family is a Muslim there is no point of choosing another religion, and you wouldn't dare do that.

It was only after completing college that I started to think more about other religions and found myself interested in knowing more about what other religions, apart from Islam and Christianity, believe. I started to learn more about Buddhism, the Judaism and African religions. Since there was a terrible stigma if your family realized you were interested in another religion, I could not dare to speak about it to anyone, even to my very closest friends.

The opportunity came when I saw an article in one of the newspapers advertising an opportunity to study Buddhism in South Africa. I initially hesitated, and kept quiet for a week thinking about whether should I go for it or not. My dilemma was not to upset any of my family members. But this would be difficult as since I grew up I had always been taught that is no other true religion except Islam. How could I go against that? I decided to keep away from family members as much as possible. When my application to the African Buddhist College was accepted I had to lie to them, telling them that I'm just going to learn Chinese Language and Culture, and I'll be back within a year. I got the blessings from my mother and all my siblings, but in my mind I knew I was putting myself into permanent conflict with the family.

My life at the seminary was not smooth in the beginning. The discipline introduced to us was quite new, like being in bed by 22h00, and then waking up at 05h30 everyday, 365 days a year. It was not easy for me in the first four

months. But gradually I started getting used to the routine, and the conflict of interest about Islam and Buddhism started to diminish.

During the three years I spent at ABS (African Buddhist Seminary - 1999-2001), I managed to make peace with my family. At last I told them the truth and to my surprise, they understood. Buddhism has taught me so many lessons about life, but the most important I would like to share with you is individual freedom and choice. According to Buddhism you choose what you want to be, you have the freedom of accepting, or denying. What happens to you is as a result of your own actions, thoughts, and speech. When choosing what is right to say, do, or think, you reward yourself, while the opposite is also true. Some people might treat you badly, say bad things about you, and hope bad things should happen to you, but it is because of your own past relationship with those people. So when that happens you don't need to react negatively, because you will be strengthening that negative karma they brought to you. Instead I pray for them to be forgiven, and I wish them success.

Some of these forces might be very strong coming from your own supervisor or boss, and you can't change what has been already said about you. But Buddha teaches us that karma is a wheel that turns round and round, and no matter what happens to you today, if it is wrong, one day the perpetrators will pay -- so you don't need to worry!

Lastly, I wish to thank all the monks from Fo Kuang Shan who have passed their knowledge on to me, and our Grand Master Hsing Yun for his compassion in allowing the propagation of Buddhism in Africa. I also would like to thank all community members of Zithobeni, Rethabiseng, Ekangala and the entire Kungwini Stakeholders for their contribution towards spreading compassion, harmony and peace through Buddhism in Kungwini. May the blessings of the Buddha shine on your way through darkness, and may you emerge as a hero.

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