

NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER



ABS Students 7 day meditation group retreat photo (Page 4-5)

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Ridding Ourselves of Stress

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

In this modern world, people are constantly saying, "Life is too stressful!" Why are people so stressed out? How can we rid ourselves of stress? Students feel stressed because of heavy schoolwork; parents feel stressed because they have too many chores and family obligations; policemen feel stressed because they have too much work; and workers feel stressed and are unhappy because their work hours are too long.

Stress—it is the same for everyone, regardless of age. We all feel the impact of stress in our daily lives. Tenants cannot afford to pay rent at the end of the month. Parents think their children do not listen to them and feel pressured by the task of raising them. Husbands and wives are suspicious of one another, skeptical of their relationships as well as the faithfulness of their partners. They experience stress in marriage. Grocers are challenged by business competition, and street-sweepers are repulsed by filthiness every morning they go to work.

Actually many things around us contribute to stress in our daily lives; for instance, stress from disappointments, obstacles, poverty, our jobs, ailments, relationships, and even death. Stress is everywhere. There are even sources of stress inside us; for example, stress from feeling emptiness, jealousy, depression, hatred, ignorance, evil thoughts, and vengeance. Taken together, the stresses of everyday life seem insurmountable.

However, stress does not only result from negative matters. Good things in life can also be stressful, such as stress from possessions, beauty, power, gratitude, success, and so forth. The seemingly endless universe is limited, but stress is truly limitless. Some people are overwhelmed by stress and yield to physical fatigue, poor motivation, suicidal tendencies, or mental confusion. If you would like to rid yourself of stress, the following are some recom-

mendations:

1. Enhance your knowledge and wisdom by observing and learning from what happens around you. By gaining further knowledge and deepening your understanding, you can reduce stress.
2. Be optimistic, cheerful, and carefree! Open your heart as wide as the ocean, so you can embrace the universe. Be optimistic about everything and do not overburden yourself, and you will eventually alleviate stress.
3. Develop the ability to let go. Like a piece of luggage, carry it only when you need it. However, when you do not need it, put it away and let go. Do not compare or calculate, and you will eventually dissipate stress.
4. Befriend stress. Be willing to accept stress as a part of you and a part of life. Why bother fighting it?
5. Make use of every opportunity to rest and go with the flow. When you do not ask for stress or resent it, stress will eventually disappear.
6. Place more emphasis on enhancing patience, compassion, and wisdom by cultivating the self. Let us train ourselves to challenge and take on stress. Then, it will eventually be dispelled.

Every Buddhist should cultivate concentration, wisdom, right thoughts, and good reasoning. There is a Chinese saying, "When enemy troops invade, the commanding generals resist; when floods come, the earth will counter." So, where is stress?





Report of WINTER donations

1. Date: 23rd May 2009 – Plot 45 Cullinan 200 beneficiaries
2. Date: 24th May 2009 – Zithobeni 300 beneficiaries
3. Date: 30th May 2009 – L&J (Doornenkloof –East) 500 beneficiaries
4. Date: 31st May 2009 – Bapsfontein 380 beneficiaries
5. Date: 06th June 2009 – Bapsfontein 120 beneficiaries



Plot 45 Cullinan

A severe winter, bad living conditions and poverty are creating a very difficult situation for the many underprivileged of South Africa. The government is trying hard to assist, but limited resources are hindering efforts of social welfare to all South Africans. Flu and coughs are common diseases affecting many during the winter, but these diseases are an added burden to families with children, orphans and the underprivileged.

In recognition of the role played by the private sector to enhance government efforts, Nan Hua Temple continues to support the government with a Poverty Alienation programme.



L&J (Doornenkloof –East)



Plot 45 Cullinan

In consultation with various stakeholders, BLIA and donors from different parts of South Africa, Nan Hua temple has managed to distribute food (rice, cooking oil, sugar, salt) and clothing parcels to 1500 beneficiaries around the Metsweding district and Mpumalanga province.

The community we visited was comprised of senior citizens, who cannot access government grants due to their lack of identity documents, the disabled, orphans, underprivileged and those infected with HIV/AIDS.



L&J (Doornenkloof –East)

Teachers from schools we donated to told a sad story about children who have to take-on adult responsibilities when their parents perished with the aids pandemic.

The areas we visited were Bapsfontein in Ekurhuleni municipality (500 beneficiaries), Zithobeni in Kungwini municipality (300 beneficiaries), L&J Squatter camp in Doornenkloof-East boarder of Kungwini and Tshwane Municipality (500 beneficiaries) and Plot 45 – Cullinan in Denokeng Tsa Tsemame municipality (200 beneficiaries).



Zithobeni

We thank all donors for making the 2009 winter donation a great success. We thank all organizations that played a vital role in ensuring we received a warm welcome. We extend our gratitude to the South African Police Services and the Commissioner of Police in Gauteng Province, Mr Naidoo for their support. We are pleased to confirm that there were no incidents during the donation process.



Bapsfontein



Zithobeni

Lastly our heart felt appreciation is directed to Venerable Yi Chun, Abbot Venerable Hui Fang and Nan Hua Temple Manager Venerable Hui Xin for their support and effort that made these donations possible. We also thank Ven. Jue Kai, Ven Yi Kwan and the ABS Students who participated tirelessly, preparing and managing the entire project.



Bapsfontein



Bloemfontein



China City



Drakensberg



Ladybrand

Bathing the Buddha Ceremony in South Africa

The Nan Hua Buddhist Temple together with the BLIA chapters in Africa held ten Bathing the Buddha Ceremonies in various shopping centres. This series of events started from the second of May at Nan Hua Temple, Drakensberg Kwa-Zulu Natal, Bloemfontein, Lesotho, Ladybrand and Cape Town's meditation centres. More than 5000 people participated in these events, including the representatives from the South African government and Chinese officials.

In his prayer on the Buddha's Birthday, Venerable Hui-Fang, abbot of Nan Hua Temple, "We pray and hope that your virtue brightens the world. Please allow our speech to corresponds with yours and delight in saying wonderful and kind words; Please allow our vision to correspond with yours and clearly see and understand the suffering of all beings; Please allow our actions to correspond to yours by being willing to help fellow mankind; Please allow our thoughts to correspond to yours and concentrate on benefiting all beings."

The abbot would also like to express his thankfulness and appreciation to all BLIA members for their active participation and cooperation from the various shopping centres.



African Trade Centre



Bruma Oriental Plaza

Wheelchair Donation at the Warmbad Rusoord Maatskappy



21st May 2009

On the winter morning of the 21st of May, the abbot of Nan Hua Buddhist Temple, Ven. Hui Fang, led the temple's Outreach Department, together with the sponsors and devotees to Warmbad Rusoord Maatskappy, an old-age home situated some 200 km away from the Temple. Here, five wheel chairs donated by the sponsor Julia Ye were handed over.

During the donation ceremony, the manageress of the Home, Anne expressed her gratitude to Nan Hua Temple and BLIA for solving the long existing problem of insufficient wheel chairs.

With wheel chairs, the physically handicapped elderly will be able to enjoy the sunshine and chat with the others in the garden instead of staying alone in their rooms. Abbot Ven. Hui Fang indicated that this wheel chair donation was just a beginning and he hoped that in the future the temple would be able to continue these donations. He also expressed the wish that from this wheel chair donation, the people from South Africa and the rest of the world will be able to know Buddhism's spirit of compassion.



World Environmental Day 5th June 2009

By Abby Nyakunga

The Grand Master Hsing-Yun once said, "Among all the occupations in the world we are deeply thankful for our sanitation workers. They arise daily earlier than the sun itself and their job is to battle with dirt and refuse. Their task is to bring cleanliness to people."

Friday 5th June marked the World Environment Day that was established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference to create awareness for Human Environment.

Kungwini local municipality in corroboration with Nan Hua temple celebrated this day through CLEANING CAMPAIGN in Bronkhorstspuit town. Many NGO's operating around Kungwini municipality respectively and actively attend the event, Bronkhorstspuit Youth Against Aids (BYAA), Rural Development Centre of Zithobeni as well as Lovelife organization from Zithobeni to name just a few.

Nan Hua Temple encouraged all its members to fully participate in the event, Computer students from our Dark City Center in Ekangala came in numbers, together with students from the African Buddhist Seminary, and staff members at the Nan Hua Temple. The aim of this campaign is to

- 1: Empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development through caring environment.
 - 2: Promote an understanding that communities are depending on environment for their existence so as the environment.
- We thank everyone for your participation, we believe your small action of caring of environment will make a big difference for our better and prosperous future.



Ben Ke My mind and body were well prepared for this retreat. The time passed so quickly I felt like it was a 3 day retreat. I saw it as an opportunity to see how far my daily practice had progressed. The 1st day to the 4th day was very smooth. I could sit comfortably for almost all sessions in a day. I would concentrate on breathing for half an hour, then I

would recite Buddha's name. My mind was tranquil and at peace. During the two last days, the last few minutes of each session I struggled with my pain which was intensive. However I kept on sitting and I could succeed and see the light.



Ben You Having undergone this retreat three times before, I am pleased to see some improvement, in that I was not feeling as much pain in my legs as before. The methods that were taught during this retreat were easy to understand, though difficult to practice, but still I tried my best. At the beginning of every session I followed the methods

for concentration though soon my mind was scattered and to pull it back was difficult. Being silent throughout the retreat also helped me to calm down my mind. I am very grateful to all those who made this retreat possible and wonderful.



Ben Dun In the recent seven day meditation retreat I experienced improvement in many aspects of my meditation, including my focus and concentration by using the methods of observing breath and reciting the Buddha's name. By using the concept of letting go, I overcome the discomforts of long sitting sessions. This retreat has also given me

a strong belief in the dharma of impermanence of phenomena. By observing the pain I saw that the pain itself was a rising and ceasing phenomenon which shows temporality of matter. I hope that I will progress more in pursuing the tranquility of meditation.



Ben Chan During the retreat I learnt much, like how to let go of everything especially the pain in the body. The master taught us that we have to learn four things and one of them was "letting go". Once we are meditating and we start feeling pain, we have to observe where did the pain come from and know that it is temporary, so we should let go of

it. I realized that everything arises due to causes and conditions and won't last forever and as a result is impermanent. And lastly I learnt that happiness comes from within oneself and we create happiness through our thoughts.



Ben Zhen This was the first time that I spent such a long time in meditation. I experienced two main problems: physical discomfort due to sitting in the half-lotus posture and a wandering mind due to insufficient concentration. I also fasted one day into my practice, at first adding to the discomfort but later greatly increasing my resolve to finish the

retreat. After the seven days I noticed improvements: greater patience, better understanding of the nature of impermanence and an improved ability to concentrate. I also appreciated the silence we were required to keep. I will definitely attend again, and recommend the retreats to anyone serious about meditation.



Ben Shang Our first day of meditation was tough. But I immediately enrolled for seven days retreat. Master Hui Fang introduced the four methods of what to do when you meditate, which is to focus on concentration, relaxation, energy and focusing. After two days I was fine and no longer felt too much pain. My mind was scattered but this retreat made

me feel relieved when thinking about this and that. This retreat has also shown me how meditation is a powerful tool not only for resting the busy mind, but also for gaining insight into problems that are not often easy to acknowledge.



ABS students

African Buddhist Seminary

11st-18th april 2009



Ben Dong My mind was very prepared for this retreat and so it was successful for me. I chose the counting of breath as my method. This time I was able to concentrate on my breath for most of the sessions. Bearing that in mind I saw some improvement and also in my sitting. Now, when I felt pain, I knew that it was temporary. Through meditation I

have learned patience, hard work and persistence which I was lacking before. Silence is good for me because I believe that it establishes self-discipline. At the end of the retreat my mind seems very fresh and calm.



Ben Ao This time the retreat was great, I had time to concentrate in what ever I was doing, and it is like this because this whole week my mind was at peace. From the first day, I was in a position to focus in each movement and I could do them properly because I was so mindful.

I also had enough time to recall what I have been doing for the past days and see whether I was right or wrong and to find ways to improve my self.



Ben Su This retreat has helped remind me to deal with all the delusion happening in my everyday life. When practicing meditation, we train the mind to bring happiness and peace within. Real peace appears when mind is free from defilements. This shows that external objects do not provide peace.

When the mind is firm there is no suffering No magic power is needed to train the mind, or rituals to cleanse the mind. Only meditation will do it. Once the mind is calm, liberation arises. This has enabled me to have full concentration on everything I am supposed to do.



Ben Zhao Let me start by emphasizing concentration because this wasn't easy to understand at first. Ven. Hui Fang talked much about this, teaching how to improve concentration. I began to realize that "meditation is a better way to concentration" which can also be referred to as "a passport to enter Pure Land". This is when I truly understood that if some-

body knows something then he knows it and if somebody doesn't know something then he doesn't know it and it is better to go and practice it. Regardless of whether you know it or not "Meditation is not something to pretend".



Ben Liao This is one of the great experiences I've ever had in my life though it was not easy during the first few sessions. However when Venerable Hui Shang introduced us to some of the methods that are used during meditation, I chose concentration on breathing. This changed the whole outlook from pain to concentration and soon I could manage to

bring my mind together, but not for more than 15 minutes. I am very grateful because it was the first time that I experienced my mind at such peace. Thank you to all the Masters for making this retreat part of our curriculum.

7 Day Meditation Retreat

FEEDBACK



Ben Lai Being my first time on a meditation retreat, the word 'seven' scared me mainly regarding how long we would be sitting. However, when I got into the meditation hall, things changed. I dedicated myself to this practice and ate only two meals per day in order to concentrate harder for the whole seven days. After the first day all was well and I

focused on my breathing. Sometimes when I lost my concentration, I would think of the vows I made during my Head Shaving Renunciation and repent to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas. I did not even know when the seventh day came.



Ben Yi Wow! The retreat was a thrilling experience filled with spirit of courage and diligence. Although this was not my first time in a meditation retreat, it was the most difficult of them all. My mind was more than ready, but my body was very rebellious. However, the goal remained clear, to gather the mind to a central point of single thought and observe

the breath. This helped me attain a feeling of serenity and inner peace. Despite the physical challenges of the stiffening body, every one seemed quite determined. In a nut shell, the retreat was a great success.



Ben Shi The first three days of this seven day meditation retreat were very difficult. I had pain when crossing my legs, but I was inspired by the Master and overcame the pain. I didn't know that meditating is trying to bring the scattered mind to rest and tranquility. The Master told us that to calm the mind you have to focus on the breath. This really

worked for me. I was able to concentrate and be patient, as the pains disappeared when I focused on my breathing. So the four days were smooth for me, as if I was used to meditation.



Ben Zeng This is my first time on a retreat and it helped me increase my positive state of mind, to be at ease and peace and allow the mind to become fixed at a point. So I faced both the intellect and clear mind of wisdom that meditation can bring. Meditation helped me to reduce stress and anxiety. I experienced greater contentment and well being.

I improved my concentration and developed better relationships and maintained greater physical health. I am very grateful to the Abbot Ven. Hui Fang, Ven. Hui Sang, Ven. Hui Liao for helping me during this time.



Ben Xin During first days of The 7 Day Silent Meditation Retreat my mind was like a wild fire and I kept moving on the cushion as soon as I felt any pain. But after hearing the Dharma talks on focusing and observing your pain by Ven. Hui Fang and Ven. Hui Sang, I thought I should give it a try.

I decided that I would sit in the half lotus position no matter how painful it was, for the duration of the sitting. Gradually my mind calmed down and I was able to focus on my breathing and observe pain that arose during the sitting.



Ben Jie I am very glad that I was able to attend the 7-day meditation retreat. It taught me how to practice sitting and walking meditation correctly and speak as few words as possible during sessions. According to the Master, retreatants should begin meditation by focusing on the breath and then pay attention to all other physical and mental phenomena

that arise. Every time the mind focuses on breathing it brings within a deeper insight of impermanence. I see meditation as a good path that I am always willing to practice, as it will give me wisdom and self-realization.



Ben Jue It's natural to be scared of doing something for the first time and this certainly applies to me. In the first place I was thinking that meditation is suffering and this negative thought was arising every time I started to meditate. As I was sitting for meditation I was facing much pain, which reduced after the master said you need to relax, accept and

focus mostly on the breath. Before the retreat was over, I was able to concentrate on breathing and sit for quite longer than before. Lastly I have also experienced the truth that no pain, means no gain.



Ben Ru It was my first time, so it was not easy especially the first 3 days. It was difficult to sit cross legged for each session and within 7 to 12 minutes the pain would start. The fourth day was much better and I was able to sit still for more than 20 minutes. Ven. Hui Fang solved my problem after he explained the method of counting the breath. Now

I have a clearer picture of how important meditation is. My message to people who still have a negative attitude about meditation is that they have to try practicing it and then they will enjoy its good fruits.



Ben Da As it was my first time for the 7 day Meditation retreat it was very hard. My legs were painful folded up and I couldn't concentrate on my breathing. The time went very slowly. My mind was scattered but I tried to focus on my breathing. Our Master explained clearly to us about ways we can use to concentrate during meditation. I tried all the

methods so that I can find the one to suit me. I found that the method of saying "one" when breathing in and saying "two" when breathing out helped me focus on one point.



Ben Che The seven days meditation retreat was difficult for me because it was the first time, so sitting with crossed legs for eight sitting sessions a day was very hard.

Another difficulty was the silence as I can't go for a long time without speaking. I had to adapt to quieting down the mind. I did it for short periods only as I couldn't keep it up. When the time came for walking meditation I felt very happy, because it relieved and relaxed my suffering body. In the end I can say that the retreat helped me improve the distractions of my mind.



Ben Zang This seven days meditation retreat was very tough for me, because this was my first time. During the first two days I was filled with pain in my legs. For the remaining five days I forced myself to endure the pain and I started to concentrate on my breathing. I used the method that Master Hui Fang taught us during the Dharma talk.

I am happy to say that this retreat helped me to bring my mind together and to focus on breathing in and out and also not talking. This also helped me to concentrate on my breathing.

Continues on Page 6



m e d i t a t i o n i n n a n h u a

By Alisha Belo

I would like to thank you and Nan Hua Temple for giving us the opportunity for being a part of the Beginners Retreat. I found it most enjoyable as well as informative. To put things into perspective for you, I am a Reiki Master, Karuna Reiki Master as well as a Lightarian Reiki Master, having done meditations for years, I still found that I had a lot to learn.

Even though I live my life as spiritually as I can, I found the techniques taught helped me to distress myself even further; and made me realise and appreciate an alternative method in exercising without finding it to be a chore. I am referring particularly to Tai Chi in this regard.

I think that the Beginners Retreat can be marketed as a de-stressing method package, especially to Corporates out there, as in today's life style one finds it particularly difficult to distress and focus on anything other than our over 'booked' lives.

By Zandra Belo

I attended the beginner's meditation retreat not knowing what to expect and was agreeably surprised. It opened up a whole new world for me, a world of inner peace and calm reflection. We all know how stress affects our body, meditation, however has the exact opposite effect calming it down, repairing it and preventing new damage. After meditation it feels as though an enormous weight has been lifted from your shoulders and your body feels so light and so completely at peace. Would I recommend this course, most definitely. If only more of us practised meditation we would have a much better world. See you at the next course.

I will never think of vegetarian food being boring and tasteless again. The food we were given was delicious. Just a thought – in the free time could you not give a course on preparing the nutritious and delicious food you served us?



By Paul Whittaker.

For me the retreat provides an environment of respected silence. I have been on a previous retreat almost two years ago, and I must say your facilitated retreat was more flexible and less rigid, which as a beginner, is welcoming. I quiet liked the light heartedness from the translator and interactions with the masters. You managed to put everyone at ease and fielded questions as and when which was a great help.

The garden is very beautiful, I definitely think that we could do a walking meditation outside (weather depending) at the garden.

We did a walking meditation in the temple last time, which was excellent. To experience Buddhism, I definitely think that you should take the group to the temple and experience what it is like to pay homage to the Buddha.

The food was excellent as usual. What I really enjoyed this time, was that you explained to the group what we were eating and gave me some personal food information which was much appreciated.

More information about Buddhism would be appreciated, history, day to day deities etc, could enhance ones experience. e.g. ten tips to live a successful meditative life.

From page 4-5 (ABS Students 7 day meditation retreat feedback)



Ben Qing I enjoyed the mediation retreat because has taught me many things to practice. The first day was not easy for me, as I felt a lot of pain in my body. After three days I started to feel good. Then I tried to sit in half Lotus posture and now these three days gave me strength to sit for 45 minutes, closing my eyes and concentrating. I also had strength for

walking meditation. Still I need to practice more to improve my meditation. Finally I give my thanks to everyone who made it possible for me to attend the seven days meditation retreat.



Ben Yuan It was a good, tough experience, the seven days meditation retreat. I have gained a lot and also faced some difficulties. I started to use the method of 'let it go' which the master taught us. This helped me to bring back my scattered mind. In no time, my mind was at peace and I started to concentrate on things. During the last days I realized that

my concentration had improved and my mind was focusing on one thing at a time. I feel that I have improved and achieved a lot because it has helped me to change my life in many ways.

By Grand Master Hsing Yun



No Time to Feel Old

Chan Master Foguang's disciple Dazhi, having returned after twenty years of studying and traveling, was in the Dharma hall recounting to Chan Master Foguang his various experiences studying

outside the monastery. Chan Master Foguang listened carefully from beginning to end with a comforting and encouraging smile. At last, Dazhi asked, "Teacher! These past twenty years, how have you been?"

Chan Master Foguang said, "Very well! Very well! Teaching, lecturing, writing, and transcribing sutras-I drift along in the ocean of the Dharma every day. In the world, there is no life more joyful than this. Each day, I enjoy being so busy."

Dazhi said in caring tone, "Teacher, you should spend more time resting!"

Late into the night, Chan Master Foguang said to Dazhi, "Go rest! If you have something to say, we can talk about it later."

Early in the morning, in his sleep, Dazhi vaguely heard the intermittent sound of the wooden fish used in chanting coming from Chan Master Foguang's meditation room. During the day, Chan Master Foguang very patiently gave instruction and spoke the Dharma to the groups of devotees and disciples that came to pay respect to the Buddha. As soon as he returned to the meditation hall, if he was not reading and commenting on the reports of student monks, then he was preparing teaching material

for devotees. Each day, there were always things to keep him busy.

Finally, seeing a break in the conversation between Chan Master Foguang and the devotees, Dazhi seized the moment. He quickly asked Chan Master Foguang, "Teacher! In these twenty years we've been apart, your daily life is still so busy. How come you don't seem to be getting older?"

Chan Master Foguang said, "I don't have time to feel old." Later on, this saying, "No time to feel old," continued to echo in Dazhi's ears.

Of the people in the world, some are still very young, but their mind is in decline so they feel old. Some are already old, but their mind is vigorous so they still feel energetic. In old age, they are more robust.

"No time to feel old" actually means that there is no concept of being old in one's mind. As Confucius said, "He is a person who is so eager that he forgets to eat, so joyous that he forgets his worries, and is unaware of the approaching of old age." The Chan practitioner's view of life is also like this.

Once there was an old man whose hair was turning gray. When someone asked about his age, he replied that he was four years old. Everyone was surprised. He said, "For the past seventy years, I lived for myself! The selfish life had no meaning whatsoever. Only in these last four years did I understand how to serve society and people, which I feel is very meaningful. This is why I say I have lived four years."

Not having time to feel old is very good. Otherwise, being a four-year-old old man is also very meaningful.

Cutting Off Ears to Save the Pheasant

Chan Master Zhishun of the Tang Dynasty had always traveled far and wide to practice Chan. One day, while sitting in meditation in a mountain forest, he suddenly saw a hunter shoot a pheasant. The wounded pheasant fled to where the Chan Master was seated. The Chan Master used the sleeves of his robe to conceal this little creature that had narrowly escaped danger. Shortly after wards, the hunter ran up to the Chan Master and demanded the pheasant, "Please give me back that pheasant I shot!"

The Chan Master, with patience and infinite compassion, explained to the hunter, "It is also a living being. Spare it!"

"You should know, that pheasant could be a meal for me!" The hunter continued to pester the Chan Master. There was nothing the Chan Master could do, so he immediately picked up the knife he used for self-defense

when traveling, cut off his own ears, gave them to the greedy hunter, and said, "These two ears, are they enough to make up for your pheasant? You can take them to make your meal."

The hunter was really shocked and finally realized that hunting to kill is the height of cruelty.

For the sake of saving and protecting living beings, one does not hesitate to sacrifice one's own body. The virtue of "For the sake of helping sentient beings attain liberation from suffering, do not seek tranquility and happiness for oneself" is precisely the concrete manifestation of the Chan Master's compassion. Chan practitioners do not avoid society nor do they distance themselves from people. The eager actions of Chan practitioners in forsaking self to save others can be seen in Chan Master Zhishun's cutting off his ears to save the pheasant.

Venerable Hui Ran's Story

Interview by Zando Bakari & Andriniaina Ranaivosoa



I arrived in South Africa in 1995, where I spent two and a half years studying the Chinese language and culture, as well as practicing Dharma as a novice monk. Soon after my graduation, I went to Taiwan to further my studies for five years. Whilst in Taiwan, I spent three years at the Fo Guang Shan seminary and at the end of this period I went to India for higher ordination as a full monk. The rest of the two years I dedicated to the meditation center, where I remained until I returned to the Congo in 2001. Since then I have been introducing the Dharma to my fellow Congolese.

The benefits that I have derived from knowing the Dharma, can be summed up as follows:

1. Knowing Myself
 2. Depleting arrogance
 3. Being patient: I used to push everything I did, because I did not have the patience to wait a long time for results. Later I realized that being impatient was not helpful in the sense that I gave less attention to detail. As a result I achieved only mediocre success.
 4. Lessening the power of anger: It goes without saying that anger does not solve any problems. It surely complicates things. As I now know how to deal with it using the Dharma, I can enjoy my interactions with others by keeping my mind aware of it always.
- Teaching Dharma to help devotees deal with their problems is my main goal. The teachings that I concentrate on are:

1. Taking refuge: Before Taking Refuge devotees should understand: "Who is the Buddha? Who is the Sangha? What is the Dharma?" The first Taking Refuge Ceremony in Congo took place in November 2008, when 200 Buddhist followers formally received The Triple Gem into their lives. This was done at a very moving ceremony, conducted by Ven. Hui Fang, the Abbot of Nan Hua Temple in South Africa, accompanied by Venerable Hui Xiang, who is the principal of the African Buddhist Seminary.

2. Five Precepts that laymen should observe are not to take life, not to take what is not given, not to engage in improper sexual conduct, not to lie, and not to drink intoxicants. This was emphasized by Ven. Hui Fang during the Taking Refuge Ceremony, when he led all the participants to confess and repent the karma from their past wrongdoings. This included actions such as disrespecting others, indulging in the pleasures of

easy living, ignorance, delusion, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and false speech.

3. Cause and effect: We often encounter difficulties because of our past wrongdoings. To be successful in improving our lives, we need to perform good deeds like encouraging good speech, being helpful to others, making sincere donations and spending time in meditation. Also included in the Taking Refuge Ceremony were vows made by the participants to beautify life with compassion, purify society with joyous giving and tolerate everything with respect. Ven. Hui Fang also encouraged everyone; "Be neither discouraged nor resentful when defeated or distressed; be able to reflect, be ashamed and repent when subject to criticism; strive and advance steadfastly when encountering an obstacle; be free from worries and suffering when you are anxious and in fear."

Recruiting novice students is also an important aspect of my bringing Humanistic Buddhism to the Congo. The new students that I have are generally referred from the devotees. I insist that they must stay at least a year with Venerable at the temple. Learning English is also compulsory as Congo-Brazzaville is a French speaking country.

It is regrettable to me that despite all the effort that I have made and continue to make to spread the Dharma in the Congo, Fo Guang Shan has still not built a formal temple. We are using a rented house as a temple. It is very moving to see Congolese Buddhist devotees who have just learned the Dharma, dedicating their money to pay for the rent, knowing also that most of them are from Christian and/or Muslim backgrounds. Congolese Buddhist devotees are also involved in giving food donations such as maize flour, oil, rice, sugar, toilet paper etc. to us, for onward donation to prisoners.

As a new religion in Congo-Brazzaville, Congolese Buddhist devotees team up with other religious groups in sustaining peace in the country.

I am very thankful to Fo Guang Shan Nan Hua Temple for all the support it gives me and the Congo in general.

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