



## The Value of Giving by Venerable Master Hsing Yun

In this world, the wealthy are those who give freely to others. The poor are those who covet only for themselves. Generally speaking, it is easier to provide for oneself than it is for others; however, if we do not till the land and sow the seeds, we will never reap the harvest. If we do not practice the virtue of giving, how can we obtain true wealth?

There are, however, two manners of giving. Positive giving is the most wonderful way to give, for it can ensure harmonious interpersonal relationships. A lovely smile, an encouraging word, genuine praise, a little charitable service, or simply giving our warm regards to others can not only beautify our lives, but also purify society. From the moment of birth to the moment of death, we are always on the receiving end of someone else's generosity. Our parents give us unconditional love and care; our teachers give us a chance to gain knowledge and achievements. All kinds of people in society provide us with conditions that are conducive to our daily survival. Now, we must take the time and ask ourselves, what have we done for others in return? What have we given to our families, friends, society, and the world?

Negative giving, on the other hand, is a common occurrence in society. There are people who give others worries, heartache, embarrassment, and create obstacles without realizing the universal truths in "what goes around comes around" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Even if we engage in positive giving, there are different levels of positive giving that we can offer. To give money or material possessions is the easiest to accomplish; to give praise or offer caring words is a virtue of higher attainment. But to give the teachings of the Buddha is the greatest gift of all. The giver will acquire unsurpassed merit, while the receiver will gain truth, confidence, courage, peace, and ultimate freedom.

To give unconditionally is the highest virtue and yet the most difficult to achieve. Since it is the only form of true giving, we must strive for it wholeheartedly by cultivating the habit of giving without any expectation or return. We must learn to give from our hearts. In our lives, others have created many favorable conditions for us, and we must return their kindness with the same zealousness. For the only way to bring the value of giving into full effect is to establish good conditions and affinities among the world's people and societies. By giving to others, we not only express our gratitude and appreciation, we also plant the seeds of fruition.





# Dharma Africa

Saturday 2 August 2008,  
at Nan Hua Temple - Bronkhorstspuit



The initial gathering of two of South Africa's Buddhist groups to celebrate Africa Day on 25 May 2008 prompted a process to try and have more regular meetings. It was also agreed to endeavour to have a greater representation at the next meeting. To this extend Nan Hua Temple agreed to host such a gathering, and thus more than twice the initial number of people got together to meet and share. Far more significant than the greater number of 46 participants was the fact that now eight different Buddhist groups were in attendance, including some individuals whom I affectionately named Friends of Buddhism, as they were not representative of any individual or specific group or centre, and who mainly listened and participated in sharing ideas and experiences.

The main purpose for this occasion was to have the various centres introduce themselves and their main activities. Hopefully this would begin a process of greater and better communication with one another. In addition to also share ideas and approaches in getting people interested in, and involved with, the Dharma, and hopefully with time, to eventually create a Buddhist Forum for South(ern) Africa.

Each of the groups was given an opportunity to do a ten minute presentation of their origin, their structure and main practices, as well as current activities and future plans. Particularly refreshing was to see that there was generally great focus on benefiting others, as well as trying to change how people lived their lives. Also apparent was that there was considerable scope for greater cooperation in the future, as well as potential for initiating new joint projects.

During the delicious vegetarian lunch offered by the temple participants had the opportunity to interact on a more informal level, as well as catching up with old friends and those whom one had met before. It also enabled sharing on a more personal level, and to exchange ideas and get greater understanding about the different practices and concepts adhered to by each individual group.

After lunch there was discussion about the way forward and exploring whether individual groups and centres would like to have these encounters on a more regular basis -- perhaps quarterly. And also addressing ways of getting a more structured process formalised, especially in terms of intercommunication and cooperation. Different aspects were considered, as well as how best one could bring this about, most likely beginning with a common website, or at the very least a homepage from where surfers would be redirected to the various individual sites.

Eventually consensus was reached on creating an initial list of contacts to be distributed among participants, as well as circulating a set of questions for consideration. The various aspects of those questions would then be further discussed and considered at a follow-up meeting to take place on the day when Nan Hua Temple celebrated its annual Festival of Light and Peace, this year being on Saturday 27 September 2008.

Once the discussions were concluded all participants, but especially those who had not previously been to visit at the temple, were free to take part in a guided tour of the temple facilities.

By Peter G Just



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## CHAN'S STORY

### *Like Cow Dung*

by Venerable Master Hsing Yun

Su Dongpo of the Song Dynasty went to Jinshan Temple to practice meditation and contemplate Chan with Chan Master Foyin. Su Dongpo felt his body and mind flowing freely, so he asked the Chan Master, "Chan Master! When you look at my manner of sitting, what do you think?"

"Very dignified, like a Buddha!"

Hearing this, Su Dongpo was very pleased. Chan Master Foyin then asked Su Dongpo, "Scholar! When you look at my sitting posture, what do you think?"

Su Dongpo, never passing up an opportunity to mock the Chan Master, immediately replied, "Like a pile of cow dung!"

Hearing this, Chan Master Foyin was also very delighted! When the Chan Master was compared to cow dung and surprisingly could not respond, Su Dongpo thought to himself that he had triumphed over Chan Master Foyin. Therefore, he told whomever he came across, "I won today!"

When the news reached the ears of his little sister, Su Xiaomei, she asked, "Older brother! How, exactly, did you defeat the Chan Master?" Su Dongpo was beside himself with joy. In high spirits, he related the facts one more time. Su Xiaomei's natural gifts surpassed that of others and she was of uncommon brilliance. After listening to Su Dongpo's self-satisfied narration, she sternly said, "Older brother, you lost! The Chan Master's mind is like the Buddha's. Therefore, he saw you as a Buddha. But your mind is like cow dung. Therefore, you saw the Chan Master as cow dung!"

Su Dongpo was dumbstruck. Just then, he realized his own Chan attainment was not as good as that of Chan Master Foyin.

*Chan is not knowledge; it is awakening to one's nature. Chan is not clever debate; it is spiritual wisdom. Do not think that the exchanges of Chan masters are always sharp. Sometimes, they are silent and do not speak. They do not communicate through spoken language and written words, yet they have the same earsplitting Dharma sounds.*







# Donation

Wednesday 16th July 2008,  
at Bronkhorstspuit Sports Center

On the 16th July, Nan Hua Temple organized a winter donation at the Bronkhorstspuit Sports Center. The beneficiaries are the residents of the Kungwini Old Age Home. The donation consisted of 600 blankets and 20 wheelchairs, of which majority was donated by Nan Hua Temple Advisor Mr. Ching Nan Huang.

We were honored to have Mayor M. Maila as the master of ceremony; we also invited Mentor of Nan Hua Temple Venerable Yi-Chun, Advisor Mr. Ching Nan Huang, Mrs. Du Mann Ying as well as Director Hsu and Deputy Director Liu of the Johannesburg Taiwanese Liaison Office. Other members that participated include reporters and representatives from the Old Age Home. A total of 500 people attend this heartwarming event.

Mayor Maila expressed his gratitude towards Nan Hua Temple for spreading Buddhism as well as love to the needy. Mayor Maila also invited the Temple to the Christmas Charity event, as these old age homes and orphanages often need daily necessities donated to them.

Director Hsu being a guest speaker, spoke about Mayor's insight as well as his help with coordinating the safety issues for the event. Without the help of Kungwini municipality, the event would not have been as smooth as it was.

The 3 hour long event ended with a grateful and happy atmosphere created by the members of the municipality and residents from the Old Age Home.





# Learning Experiences of ABS Students

African Buddhist Seminary



by Ben Chan ( From Malawi )

As the saying goes "it needs a lots of patience for someone to learn something in life" for a person like me who comes from a different religious background it has been a big challenge understanding what Buddhism is all about, but because I like to learning different things I chose to find ways to learn the dharma. With this resolve cause and conditions arose, and I had the chance to come to the African Buddhist Seminary. My expectations were totally different from what I first envisioned and initially this change in lifestyle was one of the greatest challenges for me, but with patience I learnt to deal with all the difficulties I faced.

The dharma teaches that everyone creates his or her world, implying that our mind creates our world and shapes our destiny. So it has been a good experience for me to understand the teachings and to learn how to control my self in various circumstances. Being a short tempered person I had to find ways to control my temper, but realizing this quality only made me more angry and consequently I created many problems for myself. I needed to understand the concept of impermanence and realize that the anger does not last, it comes and goes, it is only temporary and that whatever situation I experience has the same temporary nature.

I have learnt a lot from Buddhism and can now even differentiate my past from my present life.



by Ben Dun ( From Malawi )

The Buddha expounded the dharma in order to liberate sentient beings from the bonds of samsara. Some of the concepts taught by the Buddha were the manifestation of gratitude, impermanence, the concept of cause and condition and the concept of compassion.

The day-to-day use of these concepts can improve both our spiritual practice and our day to day living. The concept of gratitude, teaches us to appreciate and revere others work, and encourages the manifestation of filial piety toward our parents and all other beings. Through the contemplation of gratitude, one will see the importance of others and our gratitude towards others will flourish.

Impermanence and cause and conditions are interlinked since everything that comes about due to causes and conditions arises and ceases and is not lasting.

Most of us think that everything we see, hear and experience in our day to day life are permanent things so we get attached and cannot let go of our desires causing us tremendous suffering but this is purely because of our ignorant. The Buddha realized this and taught the concept of impermanence to show us that the things we cling to and can't let go of are all impermanent and that they at one time or another are going to cease; even the world we live in is going to disintegrate because its existence is also dependant on causes and conditions. Through the contemplation of impermanence, one is able to let go of desires and attachment to the illusory world allowing one to able to cultivate the spiritual path that will lead to enlightenment of which the final goal is attaining Buddha-hood and cutting the bonds of samsara.



# FEEDBACK

## Beginner's Meditation Retreat 9-10 Aug 2008



### By Casper Forner

The meditation retreat in the Nan Hua Temple was for me an excellent opportunity to refresh my knowledge and ability in meditation and practical meditating exercises. I was able to strengthen my abilities and moreover to learn many new and inspiring facts and abilities during the retreat. By Casper Forner, Germany



### By Wendy Rogers

Attending a retreat at the Nan Hua Temple has been an epiphany within my life. I had very little idea of what to expect, but felt a calling to give this experience a try and am so grateful that I did. The simplicity of the experience has a beauty that I cannot explain and will not try to explain, however, the inner food that my soul has received will change me as a person. I intend incorporating what I learned at the Temple into my life and will most definitely be attending again to encourage the growth and serenity which I felt during my stay.



### By Suzanne

I recently attended the Beginners retreat and I must say it was an absolutely wonderful experience. The program is structured in such a way that you are always looking forward to the next session, be it a meditation, yoga or a walk to the Zen garden. I would recommend this retreat for anyone- whether to escape from their fast paced lives for a weekend or are searching for lasting inner peace.

Next Retreat 11-12 Oct 2008

## Newsletter

### By Zanele Guqaza

Thank you very much for the updates coming through your newsletter.

And thank you for the month's teaching by Master Hsing Yun.

It appears that To Not Have is inspired by the truth of impermanence; Change is Constant. I like the examples chosen to elaborate on this truth, and they are relevant to our contemporary lives. When I was reading the one about love, I couldn't help but remember that "it is the love perceived by beings that changes to become good or bad, however, Love the source has no good or bad, yes it changes because that is natural, yet to me it can only be progressive. I choose the words progressive or non-progressive because these words have helped "I" to understand the choices that I make and their true impact. Thence leaving me questioning the existence of good and bad?



# information



## Festival of Light and Peace 27 Sep 2008

Nan Hua Temple will once again present the annual Festival of Light & Peace on Saturday, 27 September 2008 where anyone and everyone can come and explore what the holistic community has to offer.

This is the seventh annual Light & Peace Ceremony which will bring together different religious representatives who will join us and pray for the peace and well-being of South Africa and the world.

The annual ceremony is also a great opportunity to fulfill our responsibility to promote cultural and racial tolerance as well as benevolence and coexistence in our diverse community and we need your participation.

Join us at the Light & Peace Ceremony and play your part to help create a rewarding experience for all.

If you want to have a stall in the Festival please contact with Siphon on 013 9310009.

## Emperor Liang Repentance 22-26 Oct 2008

The emperor is probably best known for being one of the co-authors of a major scripture in Chinese Buddhism. A major Buddhist repentance service is named after the emperor. Titled the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance (梁皇寶懺), the repentance records and details the reasons behind his wife's transformation, examples of people affected by karma, stories about people receiving retribution, and what one can do to prevent it. The repentance also involves prostrations to a number of Buddhas.



Historically, Emperor Liang initiated this ceremony approximately 1500 years ago. His wife, Chi Hui, died at age of thirty after leading a life marked by jealousy and anger. After her death, she turned into a giant snake and purgatory. She came to recognize that she needed prayers from the sangha to expiate her sins and release her soul from the lower realms. Through great generosity, Emperor Liang requested Ch'an Master Bao Zhi and other high monastics to write ten chapters of the repentance. As a result of performing this ceremony, his wife was indeed released from her suffering.



## Beginner's Meditation Retreats 2008

September No Retreat    October 11-12  
November 8-9    December 13-14

## Temple Tour

Date	Group	From	Number
02/08/08	Middleburg beauty pageant	Middleburg	55
02/08/08	Dharma Africa	All Provinces in South Africa	30
12/08/08	Tshwane University of Technology	Pretoria	32
12/08/08	Pretoria University	All over African Countries	24
13/08/08	The Continuity Club	Johannesburg	22
16/08/08	Round the Table	Johannesburg	15



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# VIEWPOINT

## What I have learned from Buddhism



By Ben Wen  
( from Tanzania )

I joined the African Buddhist Seminary in 1999 to study Buddhism through an intensive monastic training course. Coming from Tanzania I found this very challenging, the first six months was very confusing and I struggled with my mind.

Buddhism contradicts the way I was brought up. The concept of reincarnation was very difficult to comprehend. I was brought up to believe that the life one has is the only one and after death one goes to either heaven or hell depending on one's blessings. Going to hell or heaven is God's decision. This contradicted Buddhism where heaven and hell are not the only destinations and that one can still become an animal, hungry ghost or asura and live in many different realms of existence.

It was also difficult to comprehend that anything one faces at present is the result of one's choice in the past regardless of being aware of it or not.

Another challenging issue was vegetarianism. I grew up believing that animals existed for us to enjoy their meat. I believed in abstaining from killing human beings but not animals.

Another challenging issue especially in the seminary was to learn Buddhism through strict monastic training. Of course learning Buddhism itself was not a big problem but becoming a Buddhist monk was a great challenge. I felt I was completely abandoning my faith and becoming a priest of another religion. A war raged in my mind.

Lastly I realized that my biggest problem was making COMPARISONS. This was my biggest challenge. Anything that was not similar to what I believed before I automatically judged to be wrong. It turned out to be a matter of just letting go of comparing and accepting what Buddhism teaches without judging all the time, whether it was true or not or right or wrong.

Apart from these challenges I encountered during the course, I still learned a lot from Buddhism. It taught me about freedom and showed me that I am the master of myself. I am who I am because of my choices and therefore there is no one else to blame. Whatever happens is because of my choices regardless of whether I am aware of it or not. If I make a choice, I must be prepared to accept the consequences. Though this is difficult for me to put into practice I feel much better being aware of it.

Another lesson I learned is that one should not criticize a religion or faith or lifestyle without having a very clear understanding of its values. This eradicates ignorance. I used to criticize other religions because I was ignorant. So learning Buddhism made me respect other religions. Do not judge a faith if you don't have a very clear understanding of it. I can now embrace most world religions with this positive perception.

Another lesson is that I learned to respect sentient beings in all their forms. This instills compassion. It is clear to me that every sentient being deserves to live and its life should therefore be respected. I no longer accept the killing or slaughtering of animals. When I see an animal being killed, I really imagine the pain they must be going through and it makes me feel very sad.

I also learned that by helping others we help ourselves. My good deeds are rewarded with merit and blessings and not the person I am helping. This has helped me to overcome pride and arrogance and not to undermine others.