



NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER

Saturday, 29th Nov 2008. Nan Hua Temple donated 60 wheelchairs to the needy community in Mpumalanga.

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Where is Justice?

By Grand Master Hsing Yun



Where is justice in nature when only the fittest survive? Where is justice in society when the wealthiest and the most powerful have all the advantages? In this world, it seems natural for the strongest to exert undue power over the weakest. It is no surprise that the rich oppress the poor, the smart ridicule the dumb, the old bully the young, and the healthy insult the disabled. Where do we find justice in all of this?

Nowadays, it seems like our lives are full of confusion and contradictions. There is no longer a sharp contrast between black and white, or right and wrong. Instead, there are gray areas where there is no definite or absolute definition of rightness or fairness. So many judgments are passed on the basis of appearance or family background. If a person comes from a good family, his or her stock immediately rises; if a person comes from the ghetto, his or her stock immediately falls. Since we see the world through an hour-glass, where do we expect to find justice?

The situation is even worse in politics, where every decision is based on personal interests or needs. It is common practice for politicians to forego public welfare in the interest of big corporations. We do not need to look any further than a candidate's campaign finances, of which most of the money is made up of funds from big companies and special interest groups. Therefore, a promise to the voters is just an empty promise, a ploy to gain election or re-election. When a promise goes unfulfilled, how many times have we seen elected officials making excuses, or placing the blame on others? Do we honestly think that there is justice in politics or government?

Where is justice when money and power and fame and

fortune are deciding factors in society? Where is justice when the wealthy can push their way through everything, while the poor must suffer indignity? Where is justice when cheating is allowed and honesty is punished? Where is justice when selfishness is praised and lending a helping hand is ridiculed? Where is justice when the weak are bullied and the aggressors are feared? Where is justice in this world of inequality?

Someone once said, "Unreasonableness cannot win over reason, rationality cannot take precedence over law, legality cannot defeat power, and nothing is more superior than universal truth." What is the universal truth that reigns over everything else? It is the law of karma, based on the principle of causation. No matter who or what you are in life, no one can escape karma or death, for the law of cause and effect applies equally to every living being. According to the Buddha's teachings, karma or volitional activity bears fruit in accordance with whether one's actions have been wholesome or not. It is a natural process, unsupervised and undisturbed by any supernatural power or force. By increasing our credit balance of good deeds, we alone have the ability to modify the course of karma.

Therefore, it is imperative that everyone understands how karma works, for true justice resides in karma. Neither money nor power can alter the course of karma; neither fame nor fortune can change the result of karma. A doer of bad deeds will always reap the fruit of retribution, while a doer of wholesome deeds will always reap the fruit of goodness. In the end, no one is exempt from the universal truth of karma and causation.

A New Chapter for Humanistic Buddhism in Congo

Having learnt and practiced Buddhism for the past three years, Sunday 9th November 2008 has been a very special and joyous day for the 200 Congolese Buddhist followers who took part at the ceremony of Taking Refuge in the Triple Gem and became true Buddhist disciples. Ven. Hui-Fang, Abbot of Nan Hua Buddhist Temple, and Ven. Hui-Xiang, Principal of African Buddhist Seminary, travelled from South Africa to witness and conduct the first-ever Buddhist Refuge Taking Ceremony in the Republic of Congo.

Ven. Hui-Ran, Manager of the Fo Guang Shan Congo-Brazzaville Buddhist Centre, along with Mr Bitsindou Fefey and a few other local volunteers welcomed the arrival of Ven. Hui-Fang and Ven. Hui-Xiang at the airport and assisted them to check-in at the local Catholic Seminary. The staying at the Catholic Missionary has provided them with a better understanding of the local education and religious activities.

Since October the town of Pointe Noire along the east coast of Atlantic Ocean has seen the arrival of its annual rainfall, while many worried whether the ceremony would need to be postponed as much of it takes place outdoors, fortunately the weather cleared up nicely on the day. Dressed in their black Dharma robes echoed by the chanting of the Buddha's name, Ven. Hui-Fang led all participants to confess and repent the karma from past wrongdoings such as disrespect to others, indulging in the pleasures of easy living, ignorance, delusion, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and false speech. Everyone has also vowed that from now on, they will beautify life with compassion, purify society with joyous giving and tolerate everything with respect.

In the function, Ven. Hui-Fang 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."

The Abbot has also expressed his thankfulness to Ven. Hui-Ran for his dedication and commitment to bring Humanistic Buddhism to the local community and help realize the Grand Master Hsing Yun's (Founder of the Fo Guang Shan Buddhist Order) motto "Localization of Buddhism".

On the next day, Ven. Hui-Fang and Ven. Hui-Xiang each gave a Dharma Talk on the "Four Noble Truths" and "The Importance of Positive Karma" respectively, with the help of simultaneous interpretation by Ven. Hui-Ran into French, for the many who attended the Talks.

We pray to the compassionate Buddha to guide his disciples in Congo in understanding cause and effect, and karmic retribution; in exalting loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity; in respectively upholding the ten wholesome conducts(1) and carrying out the six paramitas(2).

May we all seek and realize supreme Enlightenment.

(1) Ten wholesome conducts: Indicates no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no false speech, no duplicity, no harsh words, no flattery, no greed, no hatred (or anger) and no ignorance.

(2) Six paramitas: Also known as "six perfections". The six perfections include the perfection of giving charity, upholding precepts, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and wisdom.



From left : Ven. Hui-Ran, Ven. Hui-Fang, Ven. Hui-Xiang



Listening to the Dharma Talk attentively



Ven. Hui-Fang leading the ceremony



Buddhist followers participating at the Ceremony of Refuge Taking in the Triple Gem



Sharing prayers with the local community



Visiting Mayor of Pointe Noire



Ven Yi Chun handing a certificate to a computer graduate.



Graduation day at Nan Hua Temple for students from Ekangala.

Graduation day for computer graduates at Ekangala-Dark city 11Nov2008

The community of Ekangala-Dark city together with Mandromsobo combined school were happy to join the computer graduation celebration held at Nan Hua Temple. The event marked this successful initiative sponsored by Nan Hua Temple since 2005. This being our second intake in Ekangala-Dark city, we have also had several other intakes in places like Zithobeni and Kwa-sokhulumi. Here is some feedback from graduates :



By Bongani Thabo Mabena

To the students who willingly attended computer classes, I want to point out that life is what happen to us while we're busy making other plans. Enjoy the breakthroughs in your life. They are not for everyone in this world, but for people who know exactly where they are going.

Breakthroughs are for people who don't entertain negative reports from negative people. 'IMPOSSIBLE' in actual fact, says I'M POSSIBLE, If you try by all means to reach your goals and have vision, everything is possible in life. To the Nan Hua temple and the Outreach Dept. team thanks, for what you did for us, you are the best.



By Cynthia Mthimunye

The first thing I would like to say to my class mates, it that it was my pleasure to work with you guys.

I want to encourage the young guys by saying don't give up, life is too short. Everything that you do, do it with confidence. In the end you are the one who will enjoy the benefits.

To my lovely teacher, thank you for your patience, it was very hard for me to use a computer in the beginning. Learning how to type, to use MS word, Powerpoint and Excel was hard, but in the end we made it because of you. How can I forget the kind man that is Abby. Nan Hua temple, thank you very much for sponsoring us, without you I should have been the same Cynthia, without computer skills, but now you have opened up many wonderful opportunities to better myself in life. You are the best investment of Metsweding District.



By Nompumelelo E. Skhosana

I would like to thank the Nan Hua temple for giving me a chance to study this Basic Computer Course. It is amazing to me, because it is a greatest gift I have ever received in my life.

To our lovely Facilitator Florance Mnguni, with effort you have made a big impact on my daily life, and I acknowledge that. Your perseverance and faith towards us was wonderful. You have given us knowledge and wisdom which can not be taken away from us. We will be able to apply our knowledge of computer in different ways. I'm proud because I can type, calculate and do presentations using the computer. To Abby, Executive Director, Ven Hui Fang and whole team at the temple, here is my thank you. Because of you my world is happy, a place I love to be in. I'm filled with laughter, all because of knowledge you have given me.



By Nontobeko Mathibela-Ekangala

I would like to greet you in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ, I'm here to give thanks to the temple.

I would like to say thank you from the bottom of my heart, you know when a person says 'thank you' the words sound very easy don't they? But in actual fact these words are very deep words, if there is such a statement. Mum Florance, thank you for being patient with us, at times we gave you a headache but you never complained not even once, and may the good Lord of Mercy give you the strength and may He bless you Mightily. Abby, thank you for taking a chance with us. I hope we made you proud. I would like to extend my special thanks to the Director, Manager, mentor and entire Nan Hua temple staff who have been involved one way or another in this project.



Chan's Story

Extinguish the Fire in One's Mind By Grand Master Hsing Yun

There was a general who had spent many years fighting on the battlefield and had grown tired of war. He made a special trip to see Chan Master Dahui Zonggao to request to become a monk. He said to Zonggao, "Chan Master, I have already seen through this world. Please Chan Master, compassionately take me in to become a monk. Let me be your disciple!"

Zanggao said, "You have a family and you have very strong secular habits. You still cannot become a monk. Give it some time and we'll talk about it later."

The general replied, "Chan Master! I can let go of everything now. My wife, my children, my family are all not a problem. Please tonsure me immediately."

Zanggao responded, "Give it some time and we'll talk about it later."

The general could do nothing.

One day, he rose very early and went to the temple to pay homage to the Buddha. Chan Master Dahui Zonggao said as soon as he saw him, "General, why have you come here so early to pay respect to the Buddha?"

The general, who was learning how to use Chan gathas, said, "In order to extinguish the fire in the mind, Get up early to pay homage to the Buddha."

Then Chan Master jokingly also used a gatha to respond:

Getting up so early in the morning,
Not afraid your wife is being unfaithful?

Hearing this, the general became extremely angry and cursed, "You old monster! Your words are too hurtful!"

Chan Master Dahui Zonggao laughed heartily and said, "With just a gentle fanning, The fire of your nature again burns. Such an irascible temperament, How can this be considered letting go?"

Let go! Let go! Just because you say you have let go does not mean you are able to let go: "When talking, it seems like we are enlightened; when facing conditions, delusions arise. "Likewise, habits are not changed just because we say are able change them: "The rivers and mountains are easy to change; habitual tendencies are difficult to get rid of. " May I advise those who wish to study the Way and become monastics: Do not, because of a moment of impulse, become the laughingstock of others.

This is an extract from the book Chan Heart, Chan Art, which can be purchased from the Curio Shop at Nan Hua Temple.



Beginner's Meditation Retreat 8-9 November 2008

Reflections

< Nirvan Sookay >



The retreat was well paced and refreshing. Instruction was well presented, in good format and easy assimilated. Techniques learned were practical. Philosophy presented simply, at the appropriate level suitable for beginners. Staff / coordinators were

approachable, helpful and supportive.

The surroundings and environment were calm, pleasant and tidy. Facilities, meals and organisation were good.

An overall personally enriching experience, at good value, in a pleasant setting.

< Prishani Sookay >



The beginner's meditation was great! The master who taught the meditation class was very good. The class was not rushed and the techniques were simple to follow. I found results, just practising the meditation during that period that I was

at the retreat! I was calmer, able to sleep better and more relaxed.

< Richard Bentley >

What a wonderful weekend - I must say that the weekend was an absolute joy - the facilities that you have available are great, the organisers and reception crew were fantastic and the translation by the interpreter all weekend was a labour of devotion even though I think both your masters were quite able to speak perfectly good English!!

Having always been fortunate enough to be able to meditate, feel energy in others, prana feel, chakra check and various other spiritual activities, I have been searching for my way ahead for some time in my life. As one gets older, this becomes more important and certainly this year has been the start of a search of where to go next. I have traveled extensively, passionately love the East - and many things that I saw at Nanhua that are so symbolic of the China that I hold so dearly remind me of my time spent, mostly in the north of China.

What I found at Nanhua during the retreat was an oasis of beauty, peace and love being offered to anyone who came along to help themselves of what was on offer. I feel privileged to have spent the time that I did and can only admire those that have dedicated their lives to the monastery and to the propagation of Buddhism. The little insight I saw into Buddhism this weekend gave me a little more clarity into the minds of so many cultures in the South East Asia where so many people possess such serenity and beauty.

My personal gain was a weekend of unloading and destressing and it was interesting to develop more meditation techniques.

< Stacey Berkman >

The weekend retreat was a wonderful experience. It forced me to stop, think and take a breathe of fresh air and smell the roses. A relatively simple concept but one that we seldom take time to do in our busy lives and one that is so beneficial to our entire life experience. Since the retreat, I feel that I am better equipped to handle the day to day problems and stresses of life, I am able to remember to be present more often and that moments are fleeting and temporary, which I know will ultimately lead to prolonged moments of happiness and enjoyment. I am so grateful for the experience, learning to meditate, learning and experiencing a new culture, trying out something completely different was so refreshing and so uplifting.

Thank you to your whole team for the effort you put in to making the retreat a memorable, uplifting and amazing experience.

< Atasha Reddy >

The beginner's retreat for me was the start of a journey to greater self-awareness and a greater sense of responsibility for ones actions and words.

The principle of living from a Buddhist sense in that: concentrate on living, embrace your thoughts and don't dwell on things that you cannot change is something that we all need reminding off especially with our busy lifestyles. I will continue to practice meditation daily so that I can become better at this skill and so that I can also take time out to remind myself of life philosophies that are positive and fulfilling.

Learning Experiences of ABS Students

African Buddhist Seminary



Ben Su

I have been at the African Buddhist Seminary for a year and a half now. The first month was tough and

not what I imagined it would be. Coming from a Christian Family and not knowing much about Buddhism, my spiritual life was in turmoil and I lost my focus. I complained constantly without really understanding or asking myself why I had come to the African Buddhist Seminary in the first place. My problems became other people's problems especially my fellow students because I kept asking them what to do, never realising that we were all in the same boat. I was in conflict with my past reality and my new found Buddhist reality.

After spending two months at the seminary the battle ended and Dharma started to take root in my life helping me to change my bad ways and learn to develop new and more wholesome ones. I learnt that every human being needs to show appreciation, compassion, respect, acceptance and gratitude toward all beings regardless of their circumstances. By having and following these concepts I realised that all living beings are dependant upon each other and that we need to help and encourage one another.

Dharma has also taught me that no one can hurt me unless I allow them to do so. If you do good things other people will appreciate them but one who does evil will create bad Karma for himself or herself as well as for others. If you don't want something to happen to you, don't do it to others. I also learnt that progress comes by facing challenges. Some of the challenges we encounter in our lives are there to strengthen us so that we can proceed onto something better. Growth is often only possible because of the obstacles we are forced to overcome. Problems successfully overcome today lead to happiness tomorrow. This clearly explains what the Buddha meant when he said that 'everything resulting from the process of causes and conditions is impermanent, and therefore we should not become attached'.

Once we are attached, worries and frustrations arise in our mind. Whatever we want to do, we should first observe our need, if it is safe, if it will be effective and not create problems for us in the future. If any of these points are missing then we cannot come to a positive decision. The Dharma clearly indicates that Greed, ignorance and hatred are three poisons that cause us to do evil and should be eradicated. These concepts have helped me to have a clear understanding of eternal truth and have shown me ways to focus positively so that I will not let myself down in the future.

Where there is Dharma, there is a way but we need to practice and teach others, so that in the end we can all be liberated.



Ben Chan

As human beings, we expect a lot to be done for us, we do not consider what we can do for others or what others have done for us instead we take everything for granted. If

we really contemplate we will soon realise how little we actually do for others.

Taking the concept of accumulating merit or blessings into account we soon realise that no one else can make or create merit on our behalf, it is only accumulated through the process of helping all sentient beings. There is a saying, 'a hand that gives is more blessed than one that receives.' Developing a mind of giving and helping others was one of the biggest challenges I experienced while learning the dharma (Buddhism).

To learn how to give is one way of understanding the fundamentals of life especially when we focus on the concept of impermanence, because being attached to worldly goods and gains is painful and worrying and often very temporary. It is also difficult to give something away when we are attached to its value or blinded by greed. Buddhism also reminds us that giving doesn't always mean donating money but also time, kindness, compassion and energy.

As a practitioner this was another big challenge for me and at first it was tough but after realising the importance of giving, I had to train my mind and constantly focus on and practice the concept of giving and helping all sentient beings. During the time of the Buddha, the Buddha himself did not have material possessions or money to give away but rather words of wisdom and the encouragement to put his advice into practice.

It is easy when we see a successful person to start comparing, complaining and asking why it is them and not us but by working hard at our practice we too can have a successful and fulfilling life. The dharma says that, 'successful people don't give up for ever but those who give up attachments succeed for ever.'

for info about ABS Novice Recruitment go to www.nanhua.co.za

Information

REFUGE-TAKING CEREMONY IN THE TRIPLE GEM

Date : Thursday 1st January 2009
Venue : Fo Guang Shan Nan Hua Temple
Time : Registration : 9.30am to 10am
Ceremony : 10.30am
Buddhist Seminar : "How to become a Buddhist Follower –the Way to Buddhahood" : 1.30pm
For more information please see our website :www.nanhua.co.za

Introduction

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem constitutes the first lesson of a Buddhist follower. It represents confirmation of one's belief in Buddhist principles and one's dedication to Buddhist practice. It is therefore a formal indication of one's faith. Those who only express interest in Buddhism or merely pay respects by making offerings at the altar will not be considered as Buddhist followers if they have not taken refuge in the Triple Gem. This is similar to a student who will only be considered as a 'sit-in' if he has not been properly registered as a full time student at a school. Just as precious stones such as gold, silver and lapis lazuli are treasured gems of this world, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are treasures that pertain to the supramundane and the gems of true wisdom. To learn and practise Buddhism, the first step is to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.



Beginner's Meditation Retreat 2009

Jan 10-11 • Feb 7-8 • Mar 7-8
Apr 18-19 • May 16-17
Jun 13-14

Intermediate Meditation Retreat 2009

Mar 21-22 • Jun 20-21



2009 JAN 25 CHINESE NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

- Authentic Chinese & Eastern Cuisine
- Traditional Chinese Events
- Wide variety of Stalls selling exotic Eastern wares
- Entertainment for the Kids
- Chinese & African Cultural Performances
- Lovely things to buy, taste, see and Experience

Beginner's Meditation Retreat

Our popular flagship's beginner meditation retreat is designed for people who wish to learn to meditate and no previous experience is required. Meditation can be practiced by anyone, regardless of age or belief, who is in good mental and physical health.

We will show you the correct way to sit for meditation, do Tai Chi and simple yoga (specifically designed to aid sitting meditation) and, of course, meditate. If you wish to learn how to calm and tame your mind, acquiring the emotional and spiritual benefits of doing so, this retreat will help you.

The retreat begins on Saturday morning and continues through to Sunday lunch. You may stay on Sunday afternoon for a Temple tour if you wish. Included is instruction in basic Ch'an (Zen) meditation and relaxation exercises. We do walking, sitting and standing meditation as well as tea-drinking meditation. Sitting sessions last between 15 and 20 minutes. We sit with unsupported backs so one needs to have a healthy back.

NEWSLETTER SUPPORTED BY :

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Viewpoint

VIA NEGATIVA, SUNYAVADA AND CREATIVE VOID – THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED IN BUDDHISM, WORLD MYSTICISM & SCIENCE

by Ivan Frimmel

Why are you so unhappy?

*Because 99,9% of everything you think and everything you do
is for yourself and there isn't one.*

- From Ask the Awakened by Wei Wu Wei (Terrence Gray)



In most philosophical, spiritual, religious and mystical traditions (Oriental and Occidental) we find two distinct approaches to the realisation of the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, Truth, God, True Self, Brahman, Tao, Buddha Mind, Oneness, Enlightenment, Nirvana: the better-known Via Affirmativa - the Way of Affirmation - and the much less known, spoken about and travelled Via Negativa - the Way of Negation.

Some Vedic and Vedantic teachers and philosophers before and after Buddha used the Way of Negation (e.g. *Neti Neti* = Not This, Not This) as the best means to point to the Unknowable, Indescribable, Ultimate Reality, Self, Brahman... *Abhava* is a form of Yoga in which the Yogi sees himself as zero, nothing, void of all pride and vanity...

One of Buddha's most important teachings is about *anatta*: the negation of a permanent personal "self", ego or soul, as a permanent thing or entity (*anatta* = no *Atman* = no permanent self)... The Heart Sutra is a classical example of Buddha's profound teaching via negation, as well as Nagarjuna's *Madhyamaka*, *Sunyavada* and many other Buddhist teachings on Void (*Sunyata*). Most enlightened Taoist, Ch'an and Zen masters, past and present, have been teaching the Way of Negation as the supreme means to enlightenment, e.g. *Wu* (non-being), *Wu-hsin* (no-mind), *Wu-nien* (no-thought) and *Wu-wei* (non-acting)...

In medieval Christian mystical teachings of Meister Eckhart, St. John of the Cross & The Cloud of Unknowing, and more recently, in Bernadette Roberts' writings, etc, Christianity has the most eloquent exponents of the *Via Negativa* – all teaching union with God, Oneness, Wholeness, through self-negation... *Let thy Will be done, not mine...* Western and Eastern "nihilists", absolutist monist idealists, and other philosophers and mystics, including Sartre, Nishitani, Alan Watts, Ram Dass, Wei Wu Wei, Meher Baba, Osho, Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, Krishnamurti, Ramana Maharshi, Ramesh S. Balsekar, etc. all spoke and wrote much about the Way of Negation... For example, Jiddu Krishnamurti often asked his audiences: "Is it possible to live in this world and be nothing, to negate one's knowledge, to be empty of thought and of one's conditioning, of one's idea about one's 'self'?"

Even the modern science, influenced by some startling discoveries of quantum physics, is now confirming the insights of the Vedantic, Taoist, Buddhist and Christian mystics and philosophers about *sunyata*, voidness, emptiness... by finding out and pointing out that the substratum of all that exists, the cause of all that is manifest, of the so-called phenomenal world, lies hidden in the all-pervading, ever-present creative "empty" space, field of infinite possibilities, the so-called Zero-Point Energy, Creative Vacuum, Void... Sub-atomic particles are observed to pop-out of "nowhere" in a total vacuum of an acceleration chamber — and interact with the observer's mind, thus demonstrating beyond any doubt the essential Unity, Non-Duality, or Oneness, and the inseparable interconnectedness between the observer and the observed, subject and object, thinker and thought, inner and outer, energy and matter, phenomenon and noumenon, relative and absolute, This and That, One and Many, All and One, One and None...

Contrary to some people's belief, the Way of Negation is only "negative" — in the sense of being destructive — to that which is false and unreal. Since all genuine spiritual enlightenment & liberation must involve a total transformation, turning-around, metamorphosis, i.e. a sudden realization of the pre-conceptual non-dual Reality as the Reality of All Being, Here & Now, not just a gradual improvement and cultivation of one's personality —and since that can happen only through the destruction of all false notions and delusions we so proudly cherish about our "self", I, the Self, God, Universe, Reality— the *Via Negativa* and its iconoclastic "tough-love" approach is, paradoxically, the most positive, therapeutic and enlightening intellectual and practical means available to anyone seriously interested in such a transformation.

The *Via Negativa*, whether realized and practiced through one's meditation, contemplation, religion, philosophy, art, mysticism or science is (due to some fear, ignorance and misconceptions) still very seldom used and often avoided spiritual highway towards enlightenment, i.e. towards the realization of the essential Oneness of ALL THAT IS.