

NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER

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To see all sentient beings with compassionate eyes. Merits accumulate, immeasurable as the fathomless ocean.

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THE STRENGTH OF SELF-CONTROL

N a n H u a | Dharma Talks

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

We should have strength, but it does not mean we use it to punch or intimidate others. The greatest strength comes from within, for it is the strength of self-control and self-management. The following are some keys to self-control:

1. Do not be so biased as to confuse right with wrong. The ancients despised slanderers, coining the saying: "Slanderers ruin scholars" from the innumerable incidents of righteous scholars framed through slander. If we only believe what we hear and not use our eyes to observe, it will be easy for us to be deceived by the crooked. Many scams and hoaxes that exploit the biases of people appear in the media. This is why Buddhism stresses right belief in the Noble Eightfold Path, which comes from discerning the truth in what we hear by being mindful, non-judgmental, and thorough as listeners, for only then are we assured of making progress on the clear and correct track.

2. Do not act so impulsively as to be unstable. It is easy for us to indulge in our emotions by following our changing moods with little or no regard for circumstances. Some people do not rejoice or mourn with others when they should. In fact, their self-indulgence only reflects a lack of self-control and self-management. The Buddha taught his disciples "Not to get shot by the second arrow," meaning not creating more unwholesome karma from our ignorance and delusion because it will cause us even more suffering.

The Art of War by Sunzi says, "A commander-in-chief cannot mobilize troops out of rage; a general cannot wage a war out of anger." Sunzi's attitude is wise and reasonable because if a battle is fought in anger, the strategy will probably be wrong and will result in a loss of too many lives. Therefore, we should never act on the impulse of anger.

3. Do not be so arrogant as to denigrate others. Some people consider themselves persuasive, capable, and resourceful, so they are arrogant and enjoy showing off their skills. However, they fail to realize that by being self-righteous and conceited, they are actually exposing their shortcomings. They forget the saying "heaven will not speak of its height nor earth its depth." The depth of "magnanimity" is profound indeed.

4. Do not be so ignorant as to envy the ability of others. Some incapable people are jealous of the capabilities of others. Consequently, they obstruct others from accomplishing things that they themselves cannot do. When they fail to make gains, they do not want others to benefit either. Such mentality lacks self-knowledge. Because of their jealousy of others' talents, they fail to learn from the experience of others and thus cannot gain anything themselves.

There are many examples in Chinese history where jealousy ended in tragedy. The great Legalist philosophers Hanfei and Li Si both fell victim to their mutual envy. On the other hand, Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai was generous in praising the work of his contemporaries and in so doing became a legend in history. These are indeed worthy lessons for future generations.

Confucianism teaches, "Self-control through reviving the rites." The strength of self-control leads to harmonious and peaceful exchanges in human relationships. We should therefore be mindful of our obstructive tendencies in nurturing self-control.



Emperor Liang Repentance Dharma Function 28th Oct -1 Nov 2009

Twice a year Nan Hua Temple holds a very special Dharma function called Emperor Liang Repentance.

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

Titled the Emperor Liang Jeweled Repentance, the repentance records and details the reasons behind his wife's transformation, providing 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.

This year the function took place from Wednesday 28 October 2009 to Sunday 1 November 2009. It started on a Wednesday evening with a Purification Ceremony for the whole Temple. The reason for this is to prepare everyone mentally and also to ensure that the atmosphere in the Temple is conducive to this event.

After the Purification Ceremony the reading of ten scrolls begins. Each reading takes approximately an hour and a half and there is a different offering made at the beginning of each reading. These offerings are intended to arise 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, food, 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 Ven. Hui Fang (Abbot of Nan Hua Temple), Ven. Hui Xing (Temple Manager) and Ven. Yichun, explaining in more detail the teachings chanted through the course of the day.

Another very profound and elaborate chanting service took place on Sunday afternoon, this being The Thrice Yearning Ceremony which was originally compiled by Venerable Master Chung Fung, an imperial teacher in the Yuan dynasty. The ceremony is based on the Amitabha Sutra and on Buddha-name chanting.

The Thrice Yearning Ceremony covers the three aspects of the Pure Land school—Faith, Vows, and Practice. In the First Section, the practitioner works on building faith in the Pure Land School and on Buddha Amitabha. In the Second Section, practitioners are urged to make unwavering vows to be reborn in Pure Land. In the Third Section practitioners are urged to practice diligently and to be mindful of Buddha Amitabha.



Ven. Hui Fang with Offering of Incense.



Devotees chanting the story.



Repentance is important.



A lot to think about!



Proud Graduates with their sponsors.

Computer Graduation Ceremony 29th Oct 2009

We are proud to announce that the 1st computer intake from Dark City-Ekangala has successfully completed their studies. Their colorful graduation event was held at the Nan Hua temple and was hosted by the sponsor, Venerable Hui Fang, the Temple's Director. The students were very happy to receive their certificates and emotions ran high, as for some of them this was the 1st certificate they had ever received in their life, never having done matric or having any other opportunity for further studies. They thanked the temple for everything it has done for them and their community in general. They promised to be on our side in fighting ignorance, shortage of skills, poverty and unemployment.



Wheelchairs for the Old Age Home.



Mr Schutte, happy in his new wheelchair.

Wheelchairs - A Gift of Love

9th Oct 2009

Two wonderful wheelchair donations took place this month, both sponsored by Nan Hua Temple.

It came to the attention of the Abbot, Ven. Hui Fang that the elderly people at the old age and frail care home run by Warmbath Rusoord Maatskappy, had insufficient funds to finance wheelchairs and walking aids for their residents. They have just enough money to live on each month.

After careful deliberation, it was decided to donate 10 wheelchairs and 5 walkers to the home.

On the 9th October 2009, the Manager of the Old Age Home brought his small truck to the temple to receive this donation from Ven. Jue Kai, who represented the Temple.

The second donation took place on the same day, when Ven. Hui Bo, representing the Temple, donated a wheelchair to a very grateful Mr. Bernard Schutte. Mr Schutte (64 years old) had to have his right leg amputated some time ago. The wheelchair will now allow him a much greater freedom, than he has experienced up to now.

Prison Report 1

From Behind Bars - Zonderwater

Buddha is very important for human beings, as he helps us to learn how to forgive. Many of the problems in the world arise because of a lack of forgiveness. Each of us has to develop from what we are. We don't have to spend our time complaining, being angry, greedy, full of attachment, ignorance and criticising members of the community. Rather we should learn how to let go of our particular views and give them the space to develop.

So, even though we live in a community of different religions and people, we should allow each person the space of their mind. We should forgive each other for the things we do wrong. Inevitably, living in a community with other beings means that there are going to be misunderstandings and conflict, but we should work with that and with ourselves, rather than trying to make the community fit what we would like it to be.

I took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha on 4 June 2008. This was a wonderful experience in my life. The refuge and precept ceremony gave me more confidence and commitment to my practice. I would like to thank the Temple for making it all possible, not forgetting Mr. Richard Fairbrother.

Letter from Lulama Nonkelela
Zonderwater Medium A Correctional Centre

Prison Report 2

From Behind Bars - Zonderwater

I started to be a Buddhist in 2007 without Taking Refuge. I then took refuge on 9 June 2009.

I have learned about the five precepts and how to overcome problems. I have been taught how to meditate, which in turn teaches you how to reduce stress.

When I first came to Buddhism I met Richard Fairbrother. When I joined the new Beginners course, I also met Mrs. Wendy Toner. The Beginners Course taught me about thought and mindfulness. I am in prison, but when I am with the Dharma group I feel free and happy because it's like I'm with my parents. When I meditate I feel comfortable and calm in my life. The person who used to come to our group was Mr. Richard Fairbrother, but since he is no longer available, Mr Peter Just kindly visits us.

I would like to thank Grand Master Hsing Yun and the temple and colleagues. I will continue to be a Buddhist even outside prison. I'm still learning but I want to gain more wisdom in Buddhism. Namó Shakyamuni Buddha.

Yours sincerely, Xi Ting

Sipho Molatihegi
Zonderwater Medium A Correctional Centre



ABS students

African Buddhist Seminary

7 Day Meditation Retreat

19th-25th Nov 2009

Feedback



Ben Zhao The best aspect of this retreat was that I managed to understand how to handle time. Most people fail to understand that time really runs fast. The only problem is that they put too much concentration on time, instead of on the present situation and this makes time seem to go slowly. This can only be dealt with by being mindful, while improving in what one is doing, no matter how long it takes. This theme echoes throughout each of the melodies that compose the path to freedom. It removes the pain that usually arises because of not accepting that an event will not end, whether one wants it to or not, until it finishes its course. By understanding this concept, I found myself feeling better on this retreat than ever before.



Ben Ke This retreat was not as difficult as previous ones, being my 4th 7 day meditation retreat since I joined the Seminary. My mind and body was well prepared. The entire retreat was smooth. During sitting sessions I could fold my legs into Burmese meditation posture for all the sessions, which is a great improvement. Morning and evening Dharma talks were beneficial. I learned different kinds of concepts and ways to practice. Impermanence, body impurity, gratitude, etc, all these gave me direction and equipped my mind with a great knowledge. Also interesting were the Zen stories during the evening Dharma talk.



Ben Jue This retreat came at the right time for me, because I was having a lot of worries, so it was difficult for me to concentrate at first and to count the breath. However I later realised that there is no problem without a solution and during walking meditation, I used the faster inner circuit to enable me to feel the breath. After using this method I was able to concentrate for a while on observing the breath. On the other hand I had pains in my legs, which is normal. However I achieved better perseverance while feeling pain and I didn't give up counting my breath.



Ben Ru It was a better retreat than the first one I did, because this time I was not feeling much pain as before and was able to sit for 30 minutes and to concentrate on one thing. In this retreat I have also benefited from the teachings of Ven. Hui Sang and Ven. Hui Fang. Observing the impurities of the body helped me to reduce desire for being attached to the affairs of this world, because I realized that it doesn't matter how much time or money we spend, it will remain unclean. The concept of impermanence has helped me to have patience in any situation, good or bad, because I know that it will all pass.



Ben Shi This was my second meditation retreat and this was the very best of the best. I don't think there will be another that I will enjoy like I enjoyed this one. You may ask if I didn't feel any pain? My answer is that everything that you do has its difficulties. The Master always reminded us to focus on breathing which helped me attain tranquility. Being quiet for a whole week I think, helps the mind to be calm.



Ben Jie For me, meditation is my daily food. The seven days where we focused on disciplining the mind in order to achieve a stable state of awareness was in itself a mind-blowing experience. Every aspect of the retreat had been designed so that we could concentrate on our mind. Observing the silence was very pleasant for me. I improved in the letting-go of the pain of the body, patience, diligence and determination. I worked hard to be aware of my breathing and to recite the Buddha's name. While meditating I experienced the meaning of pain. This is because we suffer if we are alive and we are always going to suffer - but we need to observe this and understand the causes and conditions of our suffering.



Ben Da For me, the seven days meditation retreat was not easy for the 1st three days. I felt a lot of pain during this time and my mind was very scattered. But I tried to focus on counting the breath which enabled me to let go of the pain. The method which helped me a lot is to count "one" when I breath in and count "two" when I breath out. After these three days, my meditation became very smooth, as I was able to focus on breathing and now I am able to control my mind to concentrate on one point. Meditation teaches us that in life we need to face suffering and then we can obtain the benefits of letting the suffering go. This must be done in order to benefit in the future.



Ben Yuan This 7 day retreat was a good one for me, as I knew from experience to be well prepared. Though I had some pain in my knees, I tried to use the concept of impermanence and letting go of the present moment, which made me concentrate on each and every moment of the retreat. I have improved a lot in concentration and I realise that you must let go of your feelings in order to grow.



Ben Dun Every time I attend meditation retreats, I experience a lot of changes within my mind and these changes are improvements. This has been my sixth 7day meditation retreat and it has been the one that I have felt to be the easiest. I achieved calmness by observing my breathing, impermanence and arising a mind of gratitude. These methods were

emphasized by our leading masters. Physical pains of the body were one of the challenges that I overcame readily by preparing to face the pain before the commencement of the retreat. Putting the power of awareness on the positive side of meditation helped to eradicate the obstacles of laziness and impatience that arise when concentrating on the negative aspects.



Ben Chan I had a wonderful experience during this retreat and learnt much, like the observation of impermanence, that the body is impure and the breath. From these practices I really liked and practiced the observing of impermanence. This made me realize that everything will pass and we should not be attached to things. Everything comes due to causes

and conditions and due to that they won't last.



Ben Liao This meditation retreat was not very different from the previous ones, but I can say that this one was more fruitful for me, especially because of the teachings from Master Hui Sang. In these teachings he concentrated on emptiness, impermanence, impurities of the body and

gratitude. This retreat has also helped me improve my concentration and patience.



Ben Ao This time the retreat was so smooth, I enjoyed it from beginning to end. Because of my previous experience of retreats that I had attended for the past two years, I was willing to calm down my mind and concentrate on counting breathing. As expected, I was so focused during the lunch and evening breaks that when I was reading some books, I could

understand clearly without forgetting. The time passed quickly in all the sessions and sometimes it was irritating when the bell was rung, indicating the end of the session.



Ben Su In this retreat I gained a lot. At the beginning of the retreat, I was under pressure due to pain, especially when I started sitting for the first session. But after some time, I adjusted to it, because of my previous meditation retreat experience. The concepts of impermanence, impurity and

causes and conditions have helped me focus on the true nature of all things. When pain arose in meditation, I immediately applied all these concepts. In the end, I acquired a peaceful and calm mind which helped me to focus and clearly see all the areas where I went wrong in my life. This will enable me to improve so that I can be of better benefit to all sentient beings.



Ben You This seven days meditation has been wonderful for me as I didn't expect it to go so well. Being my last retreat at the seminary and now almost a graduate, I was somehow afraid that it might be difficult to concentrate on the retreat. Although I encountered some loss of concentration (sometimes) and pain in the legs, nevertheless I benefited

from the tranquility of the mind and the knowledge gained from the dharma talks.



Ben Dong After this meditation retreat, I made some improvement especially during sitting sessions, because I was able to keep my legs folded for most of the time, even if I felt excessive pain! I can also say that I have now at last improved on my patience. Although it's really hard to truly

understand meditation, what I realize is that one needs to diligently practice and then one can see or receive incalculable benefits from it.



Ben Zang This was my second seven days meditation retreat and it was good for me because I prepared myself beforehand. I just focused on breathing and sometimes I focused on the impurity of the body. These two facts helped me to have good meditations and I improved in my sitting and being silent. Our leaders, Master Hui Sang and Master Hui Fang

encouraged us through dharma talks. When sometimes my legs were filled with pain, I would release them for a while and continue to focusing on my breathing and impurity of the body.



Ben Lai Being my second meditation retreat, I really prepared for it and the days passed quickly. Compared to the first one, I am able to see an improvement in myself and my concentration on the breath was longer than I ever imagined.



The Wondrous Application of Chan

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

Chan Master Sengai was out spreading the Dharma. On the way, he came across a husband and wife who were arguing.

The wife yelled, "What kind of husband are you?

You're not like a man at all!"

The husband retorted, "You curse! If you curse at me one more time, I'll beat you!"

The wife challenged, "I will curse at you. You're not like a man!"

At this time, after Chan Master Sengai had listened to them, he loudly called out to the people passing by, "Come over and see this! To see a bullfight, you have to buy a ticket. To see a cricket fight and a cockfight, you also have to buy tickets. Now there are people fighting, but you don't need to buy a ticket. Come and see!"

The husband and wife still continued arguing. Then the husband said, "If you say one more time that I'm not like a man, I'll kill you!"

The wife dared, "Kill me! Kill me! I still say you're not like a man!"

Sengai exclaimed, "How wonderful! Now, for the killing! Come quick and see!"

A passerby shouted, "Venerable! What are you yelling about? A husband and wife are quarreling what busi-

ness is it of yours?"

Sengai answered, "How is it none of my business? Didn't you hear that he is going to kill her? If someone is killed, they have to ask a monk to chant sutras. When sutras are chanted, won't I get a red envelope of money?"

The passerby said, "What nonsense! For a red envelope, you would wish for someone to be killed!" Sengai replied, "Wishing that no one dies is fine too! Then I'll just expound the Dharma."

At this time, even the bickering couple stopped fighting. At the same time, they both gathered around to listen to what Chan Master Sengai and the passerby were quarreling about.

Chan Master Sengai instructed the bickering couple, "No matter how thick the ice is, when the sun comes out, it will melt. No matter how cold the food is, when the firewood is lit, it will be cooked thoroughly. Since conditions bring you together as husband and wife, you need to be the sun that warms the other person, be the firewood that melts the other person. I hope you, husband and wife, will respect and love one another.

This is the way Chan Master Sengai ingeniously applied Chan.



2009 Fo Guang Shan Nan Hua Temple Triple Gem Refuge and Five Precepts Ceremony

- Objective :** Taking refuge in the Triple Gem is the foundation of practicing Buddhism, while receiving the Five Precepts and upholding the Ten Wholesome Deeds are the basics of all precepts.
- Through upholding the Three Refuges and the Five Precepts, we will receive the blessing of the Triple Gem, purify our body and mind, recognize our pure intrinsic nature, and discover the value of life.
- Qualification :** All lay men and women with the resolve to take refuge and/or receive the Five Precepts in becoming Buddhist followers.
- Date :** Friday 1 January 2010
Registration : 9.30am - 10am
Ceremony : 10.30am - 11am
- Seminar :** Thursday 31 December 2009, 7.30pm
All applying for Five Precepts are required to attend the seminar
- Place :** Nan Hua Temple
27 Nan Hua Road, Bronkhorstspuit, 1020
- To Apply :** Complete the application and email or fax to (013) 931 0013
www.nanhua.co.za
- Deadline :** 20 December 2009

The significance of Taking Refuge in Triple Gem

Taking refuge in the Triple Gem constitutes the first lesson of a Buddhist follower. It re-presents 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.

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Benefits of Buddhism

By Lesley Naidoo



I am a lay man working in a hostile environment, often seeing the frustration and cruelty in human nature, yet seeing a soft side of human beings at times. The reason for this, is the fact we are all in search of happiness, which is strange but true. We are happy if we do not associate with people we do not like. We are happy if we don't go to that uncle's home or do something that could be of value to all race groups in the world. Can one be happy and yet be cruel at the cross roads of one's life? The answer is yes, but it is a life never stable, never finding ultimate joy.

Buddha was and will always be a teacher. His teachings are the only practice that will lead us to happiness and nirvana. The answers are always present, like the wind gently or strongly blowing past you. It is in the light that shines from a great source of energy to the ground where an ant makes it determined journey, on the same land that we call home, or mother earth. Can we enjoy and share this freedom, just like the little ant that shares its home with us?

Buddha was a master, a leader and a teacher, yet he needed no reward nor did he want fame or fortune. He needed nothing because nothing was the most valuable part of his enlightened state. So, we need to practice from this present moment the art of the Buddha. This doesn't mean that we should give up all our material goods and return to the forest. It simply means that we should try to search and practice with utmost truth and eventually you will reach a point of great understanding. You will see that all around you is impermanent and you will understand that the chasing of materialism is pointless, in your ultimate search for truth and joy.

Buddha did not create a religion per se, he found a way of giving us direction to practice the art of living for the sake of no re-birth.

I have been born following a certain belief. However as I progress in my cycle of rebirth, I have analysed that which will in a journey come to a source of final Truth.

One doesn't need to be a Buddhist to practice the art of the Buddha. If you analyse his words for truth, greatness awaits you. Stories have been told for many years and are still being told. What we make of these stories is up to you, as are understanding the true values of who you are as an individual. Basically you carve your destiny just like an artist who draws with his own hands a beautiful picture of the sun rising over the ocean.

Buddhism is as much a practice, as it is a teaching. Buddha is everywhere. Buddha is within you. We have to seek the truth which is in us. Truth outlined very simply is to understand that all that is around us is only for now, it's impermanent, including what you see in the mirror in the morning.

Living the art is understanding that impermanence is there for us to be aware of. What is this impermanence? It is nothing but the truth beyond our imagination at present. We need to keep on tasting the fruits of this non dualism daily to experience the ultimate joy.

For example, every tree is a source of energy, providing us with valuable oxygen. Do we take them for granted? Do we give thanks to nature or do we give thanks to the person who has given us r20000 a month for cutting the trees down? Trees always stand firmly, even if the night is dark, windy and stormy. Yet when we wake up in the morning we see the tree in all its glory. This is how we can skilfully observe a tree. That tree needs no other resources except those it gets from the planet, so we should also strive to be as uncomplicated. Nature is Buddhism. People are naturally connected to the earth, both for her resources and for drawing energy.

Buddhism has taught me that all is one and one is all, towards a 'far but near land' in my mind.

By Barbara Parker



SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE

I recently read that 'Spiritual Intelligence', as opposed to emotional or cognitive intelligence, was an emerging prerequisite to managing a stress filled world.

Stress is of course unavoidable, and the point of stress reduction and stress management is not to eliminate stress from our lives entirely but to keep it in palatable proportions. Life is always going to be full of challenges and a life without some turmoil is not only impossible but is also undesirable.

After millennia of stress several tried and tested management techniques are at our disposal, introspection being one. Introspection requires self-observation and reporting of conscious inner thoughts, desires and sensations. It is a conscious mental and usually purposive process relying on thinking, reasoning, and examining one's own thoughts, feelings, and, in more spiritual cases, one's soul.

MEDITATION & INTROSPECTION

Meditation facilitates introspection, but for the uninitiated meditation is an elusive and indefinable practice. The rather technical technique of sitting still and quieting the mind has to be mastered before any fruits of introspection can be plucked. It's not for the faint hearted and it helps to have an introductory course to provide some pointers.

NANHUA TEMPLE

The Nanhua Temple is a fully functioning seminary which sets the Beginner among practicing monks and novices. The Beginner's Retreat is a well structured introductory weekend which guides the attendee through the fundamentals of meditation and the principles of introspection.

The stirring chanting in the morning and evening as well as beautiful incense filled shrines, green glazed clay roof tiles, granite, clay and bronze ornaments and statues, all evocative of the Far East, contribute to the atmosphere of serenity.

LIFETIME JOURNEY

Meditation and introspection are lifetime journeys and the first steps are motivated by an assortment of reasons. For those who stay the course the benefits are enormous and well worth the chasing and scrambling to capture the mind and emotions.

After several years of monthly retreats to the Nanhua temple – mostly as a nervous beginner, I find myself being able to glimpse beyond the walls of my thoughts and feel the garden of my existence. I tread more lightly through my life with this awareness. May you too.