



# NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER

ABS Graduation Ceremony: 8th Dec.2009

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## THE MIND OF A PRACTITIONER

N a n H u a | Dharma Talks

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

There are many religions in the world today, and no matter what religion we follow, we all need to practice well. A practitioner must have the will and mind to do so, because if we are practitioners in name only, our religion would just be an empty label. What is the mind of a practitioner? The following are some definitions:

1. Adopt a non-discriminating mind of the Middle Way in dealing with human sentiments. In life, the love and emotions between people can be strong at times and weak at others. Sometimes, people treat us very well, showering us with endearments, while at other times, they are distant and cool. Tossed in between the warm and cold sentiments, some people will become anxious about where they stand. Therefore, they will be easily bound by emotions. If we can maintain the non-discriminating mind of the Middle Way, we will not be bothered by either the strong or weak emotions that others express.

2. Adopt a non-anxious mind of acceptance in dealing with the flux in life. Success and failure are inevitable in life. Some people rejoice when things are going well and brood when faced with setbacks. Their rejection of difficulties demonstrates that they do not have the strength to overcome hardship and worry. Moreover, they do not have the cultivation to handle success either. Therefore, they end up being tossed in the constant flux of life. If we have the non-anxious mind of acceptance in dealing with both success and failure, we will be like Maitreya Bodhisattva who puts everything that is both good and bad in his wondrous bag. What ease! Hence, if we want

to be as liberated and tranquil as this bodhisattva, we must have a mind of acceptance unaffected by changing circumstances.

3. Adopt a non-attached mind of equanimity in dealing with sorrow and joy. Ups and downs, sorrow and joy, are all realities of life. When we are neither devastated by sorrow nor indulgent in joy, our mind will rest in equanimity. If we are able to dissolve any positive or negative emotion, we would have attained the mind of a practitioner.

4. Adopt a non-calculating mind of fairness in dealing with gain and loss. Many people live each day calculating their gains and losses. They either dwell on how much money or property they have gained, or they think about how much others like or dislike them. They are tossed endlessly in the cycle of profit and loss, never knowing contentment. We should appreciate that what we have is not our possession, but commonly owned by all, and that not having is just as good as having. After all, "emptiness" is limitlessness and boundlessness, so not having can mean having more. By being able to be non-calculating and fair, we can be one with the Way.

Therefore, a practitioner must be able to deal with all positive and negative matters in life with a mind of the Middle Way, acceptance, equanimity, and fairness.



## 150 Devotees attended a “Million Heart Sutra Transcription” to be kept in the Statue of the Buddha

29<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009

Dharma Intention



Dharma Concentration



Dharma Focus



Dharma Joy

On 29 November 2009 Nan Hua Temple held a very special function, which translates directly from the Chinese as “a million sutras transcribing to be kept in the Buddha’s Stomach”. This is a very special event that happens only once in a thousand years. The Abbot, Ven. Hui Fang, led devotees from Johannesburg, Pretoria, Nan Hua Temple staff, African Buddhist Seminary students (who were 150 in total) altogether to transcribe the Heart Sutra. Ages ranged from the youngest person who was six years old to the oldest who was seventy six years old.

Before the transcription started, Ven. Yi Chun explained the origins of building the Buddha’s memorial hall (like the picture below which will be built at the headquarters in Fo Guang Shan Taiwan), the virtues and merits to be accrued from transcribing sutras and the causes and conditions of people attending such an event. Then the Ab-

bot led everyone in chanting the incense anthem. They then recited “Namo Ben Shi Shi Jia Mo Ni Fo’ (Shakyamuni Buddha) three times. This was followed by the Sutra chanting opening verse and then the transcription of the Heart Sutra started. Everyone at the scene was pious and focused on transcribing every character.

During the transcribing which went on for more than an hour, everyone’s face was full of Dharma joy and peaceful. The atmosphere was gentle and moving. Lastly the Abbot led them to read a prayer for those who do Sutra transcribing by Grand Master Hsing Yun.

After the event, everyone registered the sutras they had transcribed and took the Dharma joy back home to share with their friends.



Buddha Memorial Hall. One Million Heart Sutras in the Buddha. A thousand years in one moment; One moment in a thousand years. Become one of the million individuals who transcribe the Heart Sutra with a Sincere Mind. Your transcriptions will be collected and enshrined within the Buddha statue inside the Buddha Memorial Hall. With the merit gained from this, Let us pray for world peace, national prosperity, family happiness, and all wishes fulfilled.

## Wheelchair Donation to The Cancer Association of SA

5<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009



On 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009 the Abbot Ven. Hui Fang, Sri Lankan Reverend Pannasekara together with Mr Ivan Frimmel drove to Witbank to represent the temple in

donating five wheelchairs and three walking sticks to the South Africa Cancer Association. Ms Ankenel who is the branch person in charge warmly accepted the donation.

The Cancer Association of South Africa is an NGO that was established in 1931 to care for South African cancer patients. In the past seventy eight years it has established forty five chapters across the world and has more than one hundred and twenty thousand volunteers and two hundred and sixty employees who work together against cancer. Despite this wonderful support, the promotion of the local chapter in South Africa faces many difficulties.

Ms Ankenel, through various communications, knew that Nan Hua Temple gives and assists with wheelchair donations. She accordingly contacted Mr Ivan Frimmel at the temple, in order to ascertain if their organization would qualify for a donation. After Ven. Hui Fang understood the predicaments and difficulties of the Chapter, he happily authorized the donation.

## The prayer for the HIV/AIDS victims

12<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2009



The community of Zithobeni came in droves to remember those affected and infected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Their acknowledgement of the existence of this problem in their community

and the negative impact it brings, resulted in their coming together to pray for the disease to go away. Different stakeholders were invited including Nan Hua temple, MEC for Health, a representative from Social Development, Standard Bank and many local NGO's operating around Zithobeni.

Addressing the gathering, Counselor Nchabeleng, insisted that young people should be the ones to be in the forefront of fighting the disease, by having a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle. The disease continues to affect many youngsters, who are a vital force in community development and the future of South Africa as a whole.

The MEC for Health emphasized the need for the community to work even harder to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. The government is increasing its budget in order to effectively support the community in fighting the disease and caring for those infected. He encouraged people to find out about their HIV status earlier and start taking medication in advance, in order to control the disease. He advised that HIV/AIDS is a manageable disease, so one should not feel bad to come forward for help.

The Social Development representative, Ms. Florah, re-

mind the individuals to take steps which would ensure health for all. If each person would work hard towards preventing the spread of the disease, then in the end, the pandemic will be managed. Insisting on trust in a relationship and avoiding multiple sexual partners is one certain way of preventing the pandemic from spreading.

BYAA (Bronkhorstspuit Youth Against HIV/AIDS) chairman, Ms Enther, thanked the community and all stakeholders who made themselves available for the event. The candle light ceremony that followed was an indication of our unconditional love to all who had already left us because of the disease. We will continue to remember them and perhaps one day we shall meet again.

### forthcoming

2009 Dec 31 New Year Eve Sky Lantern Offering & One Million Heart Sutras in the Buddha Program 22h00

2010 Jan 1 Triple Gem Refuge-Taking and Five Precepts Ceremony (Participants in Five Precepts please arrive before 16:00 on 31 Dec.)

2010 Feb 14 Chinese New Year Cultural Festival 10h00~16h00

# THE GREAT DAY OF GRADUATION

8<sup>th</sup> Dec 2009

The Proud Graduates of ABS-2009



Venerable Masters &amp; Prof. Kruger in attendance



Receiving the hard earned certificates from Ven. Hui Fang



Prof. Kruger gives encouragement for the future

December 8th 2009, marked the great Day of Graduation. There was an atmosphere of mixed emotions in the Coffee Shop at Nanhua temple. The final moment had come for the 7 African students who were graduating from the African Buddhist Seminary. The students, six from Malawi and one from Tanzania, first arrived in 2007 to study and practice Buddhism, as taught by the Fo Guang Shan order from Taiwan.

The calm, blissful expressions on the graduates' faces displayed their strength of character and leadership skills. Although most of the 1st years witnessing their graduation smiled encouragingly, a few were sulking because of having to finally part with their best monastic friends. Mr. Bakari Zando, as MC opened the graduation ceremony by first welcoming everyone, the venerable Masters, fellow monastic students, Nanhua temple devotees and outsiders attending the ceremony.

In his speech Venerable Master Hui Fang, (the director) emphasized the importance of giving. Prof. J. S. Kruger, (a teacher at the seminary) was the second speaker. In his speech he emphasized the following: "The world at the moment is in a troubled state. We know that it is dominated by extreme greed, selfishness and hatred. What the seminary is doing is vitally important in the healing of the world." Prof. Kruger expressed his wishes that they use everything they have learnt to make a difference in their respective communities.

Venerable Master Hui Xiang, the former principal of the seminary, advised the graduates to have a kind, compassionate mind at all times. Finally Venerable Master Yi Chun commented upon

characteristics she had noticed in the seven graduates. She wished them success for their future and said they should always feel free to visit Nanhua temple.

Following the Master's speeches was a special Chinese anthem sung by the graduates. Then it was time for two of the 1st year representatives to express their words of farewell. Ben Yuan used a simile saying that: "Monastic life is like a competition. The ultimate trophy is graduation." He pointed out that when the graduates first arrived in 2007 there were twenty students, but today only seven had won the competition. He emphasized that winning the competition was not important. The most important part was how to use the fruits won.

Ben Jue used an analogy of seeds, saying that the graduates are the Dharma seeds that must be planted throughout Africa to help other sentient beings in need of the Dharma. He explained that he felt encouraged by the graduates and felt that it is possible for the first years to also stand the test of time, overcome their difficulties and graduate in the end.

His comments were followed with a stunning Tai Chi Chuan performance by Ben Yo, Ben Dun, and Ben Ao.

Later it was the final moment of confirmation when the seven graduates stood up at the front to be honored with their ABS Certificates by Venerable Master Hui Fang.

And then the exultant celebrations continued...

## Prison Report

From Behind Bars - Zonderwater

Thank you for making the monthly newsletter available to us at Zonderwater Prison, through our Spiritual Caregiver Peter G Just, who visit us on monthly basis.

I do appreciate your newsletter and some of its views. Thank you for a free gift. You are a foundation of a productive family unit because without your support and the Dharma sessions that we get from Peter Just and others from the temple, we are hopeless.

Since I joined the group in 2007, I have found meditating and chanting to be both enlightening and spiritually rewarding. My life at first was like a coffee without sugar and before being a member of the Dharma Group here at Zonderwater Prison, as I was always having a troubled mind because it was hard to accept my length sentence.

At this point I'm more focused and I have accepted that I'm

responsible with my incarceration based on my past wrong Karma. I also extend my big thank you to one of my inmates who introduced me to the group, Jin Wang, who is more of a brother to me now. He played a big role by giving me some Dharma books to read. Right now I'm in the middle of my journey and I'm about to reach my destination with no troubled mind because I'm not going back to my violent methods that got me to where I'm now as I was full of greed and no mercy. To my other inmates I say to you "one's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things."

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

Thabo Mvelase  
Zonderwater Medium A Correctional Centre



## Close the Door Properly

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

**T**here was a thief who made his way into a monastery at night hoping to steal something. However, after rummaging through chests and cabinets, he could not find anything valuable to steal. Having no choice, he was just about to leave when Chan Master Wuxiang, who had been sleeping on the bed, called out, "Hey, Friend! Since you are leaving, please close the door for me on your way out!"

The thief, who was at first taken aback, then promptly said, "So, this is how lazy you are. Even the door has to be closed by someone else. No wonder there isn't anything of value in your monastery."

Chan Master Wuxiang said, "You, my friend, have gone too far. Do you expect this old man to work hard every day to earn the

money to buy things for you to steal?"

The thief felt that, encountering such a monk, there really was not a thing he could do.

*It was not that the Chan Master did not have anything. What the Chan Master possessed was an inexhaustible treasure that others could not steal. People in the world only know how to accumulate.*

*People would die for wealth, and their minds are burdened by material things. Once you have money, even thieves will not leave you alone. This is not as good as possessing the boundless treasures of wisdom from your original nature. Who can steal it then?*

# ABS students

African Buddhist Seminary



**Ben Ke** Life at the African Buddhist Seminary is not easy, but neither is it tough. Tough and easy are mental formations, depending on your mind pattern. And mind pattern is a matter of choice. So, you can choose to make your situation easy and you can also choose to make it difficult. After arriving at the African Buddhist Seminary I chose to make the situation difficult. Hold on - I chose to make it difficult without understanding that I chose to make it difficult. And it was really difficult, from all perspectives; cultural to weather, food to classes, religious to clothes, daily schedule to concepts, etc, etc. Everything was new! I couldn't feel the difference between day 1 and day 2 or day 3. Everyday was the same as the very first day I arrived. Life went on like this for several months.

However, deep inside I knew what I wanted and I told myself not to give up. I kept on struggling with my new life, giving myself time to cope and get used to it. Slowly I started to understand and become reconciled with these new environments. I was eager to learn the Chinese language. It really kept me very busy with a lot of assignments. I was also very keen on reading and probing Buddhist concepts. In Buddhism classes I used to ask a lot of critical questions, challenging various Buddhist concepts. Some masters and teachers explained to me clearly, though others through their eyes told me I was blasphemous. But all had Buddhist compassion for my ignorance which was not an "official offence" at all. This influenced me a lot and is what built my Buddhist foundation and improved my perception and habits.

During my 3 years at ABS I learned a lot of very essential Buddhist concepts. Buddhism is practical and the concepts are not dogmatic or reliant on belief. You learn a concept, then you implement it in your daily life. If it is beneficial, you will sustain it in your life. However, if it is not beneficial, you are free to leave it and seek a better idea. Buddhism is cosmopolitan and universal. It does not bind you to one method or concept. Buddha knew that human beings differ in capabilities, intellect, etc and so he taught a number of methods to liberation.

As soon as I started to understand various Buddhist concepts, my life at ABS became easier. It was me who had decided to make it difficult and inflict this suffering on myself. I went through a lifetime of experience which is worth more than the 3 years of my studies at ABS. I learnt how to harmonize my life with nature; harmonize myself with others, using patience, gratitude etc. I came to realize that for most of the difficulties in our lives, we are the core source. A lack of observation and prudence leads our lives to external and internal conflicts. So in conclusion, I want to express my thanks to Nan Hua Temple for granting me this wonderful opportunity.



**Ben Ao** I have learnt a lot since arriving at ABS, but here I will just tackle the areas which I was very interested in and also are applicable in my daily life.

The first of these is the Chinese language. I am now able to speak the language and since it is spoken all over the world, I am happy that I have ability in one more international language, making me more marketable than before.

I have also gained something from the dharma I've learnt. For example;

Impermanence - this concept states that whatever arises due to causes and conditions does not have a self nature, so it is in the process of changing and one should not be attached to it. This is because whether it is good or bad, if you are attached to it, you will face suffering after sometime. Whenever I think about this concept I see the reality in it and this helps me not to be attached to worldly things because I know that one day they will all pass, they

## My three years experience

**Graduates reflections** 2007-2009



**Ben Dun** My three years course as a monastic has proved to be a great upliftment for me, as it has given me knowledge of all aspects of life and most importantly, spiritual practice. You do not know what the future holds, but whatever happens there can be no doubt that it is related to our present actions, as they are the causes and conditions of our future results. This applies regardless of whether the results appear in this life time or in the ones that follow.

It is impossible to change the world around you before you have changed your own conduct and way of thinking. The changes should start from within us, which in turn will help others learn from our behaviour. By removing our greed, anger and ignorance, we will be able to overcome our afflictions. By swallowing our pride, ego, hatred and arrogance we will live harmoniously with others.

The Buddha taught us about impermanence and by realizing this, we should avoid becoming attached to things because of their temporality. We should understand that when they cease to exist they will not influence us (including our bodies). In this way we will have no pain of loss, as we will know the true nature of all conditioned things.

Gratitude and appreciation are the roots of shame and remorse and a heart that feels remorse is one that is accepting and willing to make amendments and changes. Kindness and compassion should be the foundation of our hearts; for by treating ourselves with kindness, we will not have thoughts of harming others, but instead, of helping others. In this way we will eventually be able to manifest equanimity amongst all. May all sentient beings attain Buddhahood.

are in transit. Because of this my life is simple with fewer worries and frustrations.

Impurity - originally our bodies are not pure but we do not see this and so we think they are pure. Because of this we spend a lot of time, money, effort on our bodies and then we find that we are living a busy and tiresome life. Whenever I think about this concept, I tell myself that enough care is ok, but it shouldn't become excessive.

Gratitude - a mind of gratitude should always arise towards all beings, things and situations. When you have such a mind you are easily satisfied. This also helps one not to have a greedy mind. When you are satisfied and don't have a greedy mind, you are capable of staying away from the path of anger and hatred.

Patience - staying with different people from different countries is not an easy thing. Some of the people gave me problems everyday, but they did not succeed in upsetting me, because my mind was stable and full of patience.



**Ben Su** During my time of studying at ABS, I learnt many things which gave me courage and kept me going. This was the first time I went very far away from my family and it has been a good experience which has given me another opportunity of learning about the outside world. I now know that where ever you are, if you are friendly and share your smile with all sentient beings holding no grudges in your mind, life will be better. Some of the things I learnt are; Buddhism, Monastic Life Style and Chinese Culture, just to mention a few.

In the beginning, it was a very big challenge for me to study Buddhism, as I grew up in a Christian family in which we believed that everything is due to God's creation. Buddhist teachings dwell on the concepts of impermanence, suffering, no attachments to worldly things, cause and condition and all that happens to us, (whether good or bad) being due to our own deeds not someone else. In the end, any action will bring its own retribution. At first, it was very difficult for me to accept all this, but as time went by, I was able to adapt to the teachings and understand everything without mental conflict.

I also learnt about the Monastic way of life. During the whole three year period of living as a monastic, we were trained to be very disciplined students. When we walked, we just concentrated on our walk and on nothing else and everybody had to be in line until we arrived at the destination. Eating was the same, with rules being strictly followed. There was no talking when taking any meal, only contemplation, as the mouth should be busy with the job of chewing food. Meditation also played an important role in calming down the scattered mind. From these practices I was able to learn patience and have a mind without complaint.

In addition I learnt Chinese Mandarin and Chinese Culture. We have been living together with the Chinese, sharing and experiencing all aspects of life, regardless of our race, because in Buddha nature, we are all the same. This has helped me to have a mind of appreciation and gratitude for whatever people do to us.



**Ben You** It has been a great experience for me to study for three years at the African Buddhist seminary. Being from a catholic background, it was difficult to adjust to life at the seminary during the early days. But as time went on, there were people who encouraged me not to give up and I became used to the life style.

During this time I have learnt a lot of things that might bring a positive impact to my life. Having studied the five precepts, I realise that all living beings have got the right to live and that they wish to have a good life as we do. I also realise that the things we don't wish to be done to us, we in turn, should not do them to others. These five precepts teach us how we can live morally upright and create good connections with all beings.

I also learnt that greed, anger and ignorance are the main causes of human misery. These three things, if not clearly observed will bring more suffering to our lives. We need to contemplate on gratitude so that we can be satisfied with what we have, and in so doing we will eradicate our greed. Likewise being compassionate will help us to defeat our anger. Understanding the truth about self and the universe will help us to eradicate our ignorance. Understanding the true nature of all things will help us not to become attached to things that arise from cause, condition and effect and we will act selflessly, since we understand that nothing exists on its own. Buddhism tells us that there is nothing in this world that can bring ultimate happiness to our lives, only our mind, which is pure, can bring ultimate happiness to our lives. There is no need to seek happiness from worldly things, because its joy is temporary and does not bring liberation. I have improved my abilities to be patient, tolerant and accepting and I hope these will help me in my life.



**Ben Chan** It was 2007 when I arrived at the African Buddhist seminary. The expectation that I had about the seminary was not realised when I arrived. But through different teachings and encouragement from friends and teachers, I understood that learning without an objective is useless, but learning with an objective brings power and courage. So I told myself that I needed to stick to my objective of coming to the seminary, in order to increase my learning.

As a result, I soon realised what is the main cause of all the suffering that we human beings experience; this being DESIRE. From my own experience, I knew that with 'desire' we create problems that we wouldn't have created otherwise. Most of the time we are hounded by this desire and it controls our lives. But because we don't want to let go, we continue to have difficulties in our daily lives.

The second thing that I learnt is that whatever we want to learn in life, we need to have patience to succeed. In the seminary I came across different challenges and life problems. In order to overcome these situations I had to tell myself that nothing exists for ever and everything and every moment is temporary. I used these words when I come across a problem and it really helped me a lot during my studies.

In brief I can say that during my three years at the African Buddhist seminary I have achieved a lot. Without giving up on learning, you can reach your goal without any problems. There is a saying; 'those who give up in life never succeed but those who succeed in life never give up.'



**Ben Dong** During the 3 years I have been here, I have learnt much which I will use for the rest of my life. Apart from the Chinese language and Computer skills, the most important thing I have learnt is the Buddha Dharma. Briefly, some aspects are the following:

**COMPASSION:** This including kindness and love. Compassion should not be reserved for human beings only, but applied to all sentient beings. When we fail to be kind to all living beings, it is the same as disturbing your own peace of mind.

**GRATITUDE MIND:** This is a rare virtue today, which taught me that for my own happiness, I should not expect to be appreciated for every act I do because, if I expect that, you are bound to experience disappointments and frustrations.

**TOLERANCE AND PATIENCE:** Tolerance helps us to avoid more problems; it also helps one to understand other people's worries. To avoid always criticizing, you have to be tolerant of others. Also, you have to develop patience, so that any destructive emotional energy within us, will not have the chance to surface, take control and direct us to commit evil.

**IMPERMANENCE:** Before, I didn't know that everything is as a result of causes and conditions; meaning it is impermanent and therefore one should not be attached to it.

**MEDITATION:** This is where one obtains real wisdom, from contemplating many things like the impurity of the body, observing the breath and many more. This results in calming down the mind, which helps to solve more problems during or after meditation.

**ONE CREATES HIS/ HER OWN DESTINY:** Following the teachings of the Buddha, I examined my own experiences and those of others, and then I realized that the unhappiness and suffering experienced today, are as a result of faults that were committed yesterday. Therefore you create your own destiny.

# Long walk into Buddhism

By Jacob Madisa

**M**y name is Jacob Madisa, born in Cullinan, Bronkhorstspuit. I am 63 years old. I was born in a Christian family and was originally Christian follower. I am married and have five children, my first wife passed away 1986, leaving me with four children. From then I stayed as a widow until 1998, when I decided to get married to my current wife. We had a Buddhist wedding at Nan Hua temple. I believe this was the first ever black African Buddhist wedding at Nan Hua Temple!

I have been to Thailand many times, and this is where I initially came across Buddhism. After sometime becoming involved in researching Buddhist philosophy I found myself being attracted to it all. I found many questions were perfectly answered. Due to my interest in Buddhism I had to look for a place where I can often learn and continue with my path in Buddhism. Some friends in Thailand told me there is a Buddhist temple in South Africa, but I had no idea where about this temple was found in my country. I had to drive around places asking people where to find the Buddhist Temple in South Africa. After some time one of my friends told me there was a building in Bronkhorstspuit which seems to be a religious place, but he was not aware if it was a Buddhist temple or not, so on 4th May 1994 I took a drive to Bronkhorstspuit to find out more about this place. I luckily drove straight into Cultura Park, and found the entrance to Nan Hua temple. At the reception I found a Chinese girl by the name of Alice, (Chinese Name Kai Ying). I asked her some questions about how do I join the temple. She treated me with a warm heart, saying that there was nothing required from me, and I could join the temple at any time I want. She insisted that I come the following weekend, because there was a Mother's Day celebration being held at Nan Hua temple. She gave me the Nan Hua Temple main events calendar, and welcomed me to join the temple. Guess what then! The following weekend was my first participation in Nan Hua Temple's events, taking it from there I never looked back. I got to know some other African Buddhists from the Congo, and one novice from Austria. Since I could not chant in Chinese, these friends helped me to make a Romanized chanting text that I have been carrying ever since then, right up to today and this is the one I use for Sunday services.

It has been fifteen years of learning, growing, changing and becoming a better person who knows the value of life. At Nan Hua Temple, everybody has been my teacher, starting from learning the contents of the five precepts. It has been a great transformation path, so now, when I look back, I feel very proud of myself and very grateful to

all people who have made this possible for me. Since I took refuge in to the Triple Gem and received the Five Precepts, I have felt strong in myself and in my will power, giving me courage that keeps me going. It has brought joy and light into my life. One of my transformation paths is my dharma name, (the name I was given the day I took refuge under Grand Master Hsing Yun,) Guang Ping, the meaning being level observation. I have learned to be an observing person rather than being taken in by circumstances, which causes suffering in humans' lives.



Not any that I can remember. People at Nan Hua Temple have been wonderful to me, providing accommodation and meals whenever I am here.

From my side, there are no difficulties, because this is the path I chose for myself and I believe there is nothing to hold me down. I have environment, I have will power, I am interested, and everything is just right for me, nothing is difficult. The only thing I can recall is the Chinese language. As we are learning and practicing Chinese Buddhism, Chinese language is something we have to accept, but in some situations it becomes an obstruction to non Chinese Buddhist practitioners. I wish I could learn Chinese, if this were possible in order to get rid of this obstacle in my practicing process.

From my point of view about Buddhism, it is not a religion where you are preached at and follow without understanding. You need to be very clear of the teachings of the Buddha and you devote yourself to them. The only thing I can say to Africans is that this is my own achievement from Buddhism, and this is my experience. I have achieved a lot mentally and physically, the teachings have been the food of my soul. There were moments when I blamed other people because of my suffering. Learning Buddhism has taught me that everything is one's own decision, you can decide to be happy or sad, because your life is your own creation. This is the guidance I use in my daily life, I am happy, why should I be sad while I can choose to be happy? Physically, when I started following Buddhism, was when I realized the importance of being vegetarian, and being vegetarian has transformed my body into a very healthy body, I do not drink, smoke e.t.c. At the age of sixty three I feel stronger than ever.

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