



# NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER

Celebrating Chinese New Year on 14 Feb 2010 Sunday (page 2-3)

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## Horse and Donkey

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

N a n H u a | Dharma Talks

You ride on a horse, while I ride on a donkey.  
 Look like you are better off than me!  
 Turning around, I see a man pushing his cart.  
 Some are better off than me,  
 But there are others less fortunate than myself!

In this world, we should not compare ourselves with other people. If we do, we will be constantly frustrated. We should not be too calculating also. People who are overly calculating are constantly in a tug of war with others and can never find peace.

“You ride on a horse, while I ride on a donkey.” You can always find someone better off than yourself. You drive an import while I drive a domestic car. You drive a car while I only ride a motorcycle. You ride a motorcycle while I only ride a bike. But, “Turning around, I see a man pushing his cart.” There are lots of people who do not even own a bicycle and they have to walk. We need to understand that although there are others more fortunate than ourselves, there are also many who are less fortunate. We need to be content with our own situation and not always expecting more. If we must compare, we should not compare ourselves in the areas of wealth, fame, and luxury. Instead, we should compare in the areas of ethics, abilities, knowledge and forgiveness. We should better ourselves in these areas.

The verse above tells us to be content with our own situation. Let me tell you of a verse mocking people who are never content with themselves:

At first, I work hard for two meals, then it is for nice clothing

Now that I have nice clothing, I long for a beautiful wife

Now that I have a beautiful wife, I want a nice carriage

Now that I have a fleet of nice carriages, I want a fertile farm

Now that I have many acres of fertile land, I want a government title to impress others I do not want to start at the bottom of the ladder, not even in the middle

When I am at the top rung, I want to be the emperor for a while

When I am the emperor and everything is going well, I long to live forever

There is no end to my wants, until-the day I die with reluctance.

You can tell from this poem that there is no end to our wants and cravings. One's happiness does not hinge on how much money one has or what title one carries. Sometimes, money can bring you headaches and impressive positions can bring you more worries. We should not be selfish. We should not only take, but also give. Someone who only knows how to take, without giving, will never be happy.





Vibrant Spanish Dancers



Golden Wishing Tree



Virtue Brings Prosperity

# Thousands Packed the Temple to Celebrate the Arrival of the Year of the Tiger

14<sup>nd</sup> Feb 2010



Martial Arts Demo

Nan Hua Temple greeted the Lunar New Year with raucous celebrations where thousands of both Chinese and local South Africans geared up to welcome the Year of the Tiger on Sunday 14th February 2010.

The celebration began with the Lunar New Year Light Offering Dharma Function attended by six hundred people packed into the Main Temple. The Abbot of Nan Hua Temple, Venerable Hui-Fang, spoke about "Awe-inspiring virtue brings vast ocean of prosperity" to encourage the attendees to create good causes and conditions in the year of Tiger to welcome the year of opportunity and overcome any challenges in our way.

In the Abbot's prayer, "At the beginning of this new year, we ask the compassionate Buddha to grant us faith and blessing: may every word we say be compassionate, kind and encouraging; may every action we take may be beneficial to the community and of assistance to the country; may we bring happiness to people, peace on earth and universal rejoicing."

At the courtyard of the Main Temple, the roar of firecrackers marked the start of the colourful Dragon and Lion Dance which, according to Chinese tradition, is meant to ward off evil spirits and bring good fortune and prosperity to everybody.

Food plays a vital part in most of the festivities and the Chinese New Year is no exception with over 80 vegetarian foods and gift stalls setup along the corridors at the Main Temple Complex. These festivities remind Chinese people living in South Africa of the New Year markets in the Far East.



Traditions of Chinese New Year Celebrations



The Abbot's Speech



Candles for Prayers



MC's in Action.

To celebrate the spirit of cultural diversity during the Chinese New Year, the Temple was proud to present a multi-cultural show in the Nan Hua Guest House featuring talents such as Spanish Dance, Indian Dance, Scottish Pipe Band, New Age Hip-Hop, Martial Art and African Drum. The 3-hours show enthused the audience with a festive, fun and invigorating mix of cultural experience.

Various arts and traditional cultural celebrations were presented to the public, such as Chinese tea ceremonies, lantern painting, paper cutting, calligraphy, acupuncture and the traditional golden wishing tree.

Other highlights of the celebration included the all-new exhibition on the glamorous traditional Chinese clothing and other items with beautiful hand embroidery. Embroidery is an ancient form of Chinese handicraft. It involves the decoration of a piece of fabric with a needle and coloured thread, as well as other materials such as metal strips, pearls, beads and sequence can also be incorporated. These elegant and beautiful fabrics are created from mere basic stitches performed with a single needle. Embroidery has played an important role in the cultural development of ancient China.

The festival reflects the energy and vibrancy of the Buddhist and Chinese community. "It is our intention to promote racial diversity and encourage harmony with different communities in our rainbow country," says Venerable Hui-Fang.



"Open Wide"

## NAN HUA TEMPLE & BLIA TOGETHER COOK AND DISTRIBUTE CONGEE

23<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010

Offerings on Buddha's Enlightenment Day



Distributing the rice porridge



BLIA Members dishing out congee

On 23 January 2010 Nan Hua Temple and BLIA celebrated Buddha's Enlightenment Day at Bu Jue Temple, Eastern China Mall and at China Mall in Johannesburg, where they handed out cups of congee (a type of Asian rice porridge) and held a book exhibition. They cooked a total of 34 big pots of congee which resulted in five thousand cups of rice porridge that were given to the community for creating good affinities. At the same time more than three thousand English/Chinese Buddhist books were also donated to the general public. The congee was distributed to shop owners and their staff in Chinatown in Cyrildene, Eastern City China Mall, Asia Mall, Kang Ning Old Age Home, Africachina Town, Baijia Mall, Hong Kong City, Wenzhou City, India City, China Mart, and the Hongma Mall.

The event and Dharma function at Eastern China Mall was presided over by the Abbot, Ven. Hui Fang. At China Mall it was led by the world Deputy Secretary general of BLIA Ven. Yi Chun. Eight monastics from Nan Hua Temple and

sixty volunteers organized by BLIA attended the event. Xu Zhang Bin and Wu Shao Kang were responsible for AfricaChina town and Eastern China town respectively. They both provided exhibition space and logistical support. BLIA Johannesburg Chapter Chairman, Ms Ping De Man led volunteers to cook and distribute porridge and books. BLIA Pretoria Chapter Chairman Jiang Zheng Guo brought nine members from Pretoria to Johannesburg to this event. The South African Member of Parliament Ms Chen Qian Hui, the head of the overseas Chinese newspaper Mr Lin Qing Qin, Johannesburg office Consul General's wife Mrs Fang and her friends also participated in the cooking and distribution of the congee.

As this event was taking place, monastics were explaining to people the story behind Buddha's Enlightenment Day and BLIA members were handing out congee and books, simultaneously inviting people to Nan Hua Temple on 14 February 2010 to pay homage to the Buddha and to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

## SUTRA TRANSCRIPTION BY THE SA BLIA YAD

10<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010

On 10 January 2010, the 'Million Sutras in the Buddha's body' event was attended by forty members of YAD, BLIA (Young Adult Division) with their leader Li Ya Ping. The event was also attended by the Temple Manager Ven. Hui Xing and the guiding master for YAD in South Africa, Ven. Jue Kai.

Before beginning the transcription of the sutras, Ven. Hui Xing led all in chanting the Heart Sutra and they then started transcribing with a devoted mind. Most of the YAD members were born in South Africa. Although they can speak Chinese, their writing and reading level is at kindergarten level, so it is understandable how difficult it was for them to transcribe the sutra. They took almost two hours to complete it, using unfamiliar writing brushes, until the tendons in their hands became numb! After finish-

ing, they read a prayer by Grand Master Hsing Yun for those who transcribe the Sutras and dedicated blessings to society for harmony and world peace. These transcribed sutras will be sent to Fo Guang Shan in Taiwan, to be put in a statue of the Buddha, which will be in the new Buddha's Memorial Hall.

One of the young members, named Wu Jia Wei, expressed her feelings of joy to be able to be part of the new Buddha's Memorial Hall. Even though she is not familiar with the Chinese language she tried her best. For Xu Wei Hao who doesn't know any Chinese, this was the first time she had used brushes for writing. Though she was nervous throughout she kept it up and finished.

The event was sponsored by Ven. Hui Bo.



Prayer to Dedicate Blessings



Earnest Sutra Transcription

## WHEELCHAIR DONATION BY BLIA NEWCASTLE CHAPTER

29<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010

On 29 January 2010, Nan Hua Temple Abbot, Ven. Hui Fang together with Ven. Yi An, (Supervisor of the Newcastle Meditation Center), led the BLIA Newcastle Chairman Zhang Shun Kuan and Newcastle City Councilor Liu Quan Yi with some kind-hearted ladies to go to Vumanisabelo special school to donate wheelchairs. During the ceremony twenty wheelchairs were donated to children with disabilities. These were made immediately available for them thus solving their longstanding difficulties with mobility.

Ven. Hui Fang addressed the teachers and pupils at the school. He firstly introduced the donor, BLIA, by explaining it as an organization that has more than two million members around the world with branches on five continents. He emphasized that it is a selfless and dedicated Buddhist Organization that upholds Grand Master Hsing Yun's four mottos of giving, caring for the multitudes and helping people resolve their difficulties and worries. He encouraged the children

to see their disabilities with normal eyes. He explained that although it might bring inconveniences in life, providing they kept a compassionate and clear mind, they would be able to create a beautiful future.

The Principal was very moved by this and said, "Thank you so much BLIA for sending us such a precious gift. This is what the children need and it is a very valuable and precious gift. I hope that BLIA will germinate, grow and disseminate to every place where people need love".

The students then performed a traditional African concert, filled with singing and dancing. Everyone's face was wreathed in joyous smiles, as they were moved by the vibrant performance. This was followed by a full lunch, prepared by the school, to express their gratitude to the BLIA members.

All in all it was a ceremony where seeds of love and compassion from Fo Guang people were planted.



Happy Wheelchair Recipients



Distinctive BLIA Wheelchairs

## TEMPLE VISIT BY BEIJING SURVEY GROUP

18<sup>st</sup> Jan 2010

On 18 January 2010, Beijing's Religious Affairs Deputy Chief, Mr Ji Wen Yuan, Director of Religious Affairs Department Hou Xiao Ming, Beijing's Guang Hua Temple Abbot Ven. Yi Xue and others visited Nan Hua Temple. They received a warm welcome from the temple monastics led by Ven. Yi Chun. The aim of the trip was for the Beijing's Deputy Chief of Religious Affairs, Mr Ji to understand the religious policy in South Africa, the circumstances of Buddhist propagation in South Africa, its influence in society, its relationship with the local communities and religious exchange in the communities.

They were led to the Main Temple by the monastics to pay homage to the Buddha and then to tour the temple complex and admire the adornments in traditional African style. The delegation then went on to the guest house for lunch and a briefing.

The temple briefing was done by Ven. Yi Chun who explained the four objectives which are; monastic education, devotee education, community education and charity, including the concrete achievements of BLIA SA in the local communities.

During his address, the deputy Chief Mr Ji said, "after arriving at Nan Hua Temple I was so impressed and moved by the buildings and never thought after the briefing that I would have a more positive understanding of the spirit of Buddhism entering the world".

After the briefing Ven. Yi Chun presented him with a calligraphy painting by Grand Master, called 'Awe inspiring virtue and ocean of wisdom' and gave SA cultural cups to all the guests, on behalf of the temple. Lastly they all went to the museum to view the Chinese Embroidery Exhibition, thus concluding their visit.



Presentation to Ven. Yi Xue



Visiting the Main Temple.

## LOVE AND HATE By Grand Master Hsing Yun

Wen-tao, a roving monk, had long admired Ch'an Master Hui-hstin. Therefore, he went to the trouble of traveling a long distance over mountains and rivers to meet the Master. When he arrived at the cave where Hui-hstin lived, he said, "Master, I've always venerated you for your virtue. Therefore, I made this special trip so that I may be close to you and attend to your needs. Master, please be compassionate and reveal the Truth to me."

Since it was already late, Hui-hsiin said to him, "The day is waning. Please stay here for the night."

When Wen-tao woke up the next morning, Master Hui-hsiin had already prepared breakfast. They were about to eat when they realized that there were no extra bowls and chopsticks for Wen-tao. Without thinking, Hui-hstin picked up a human skull from outside the cave, filled it with porridge and passed it to Wen-tao. When the latter

hesitated to take it, the Master said, "Your mind doesn't want to seek enlightenment. I don't think that you have come here for the Dharma. If you react to situations with erroneous feelings of love and hate or cleanliness and filthiness, how can you attain enlightenment?"

***Good or evil, gain or loss, right or wrong, clean or dirty; this is the world as perceived by those who are attached to discriminating knowledge. Wen-tao approached situations with thoughts of love and hate, and thus, he refused to accept the porridge that Master Hui-hsiin had handed him. Naturally, he was berated for lacking the true intention of becoming enlightened.***

## DOES A DOG HAVE THE BUDDHA-NATURE?

Chao-chou Ts'ung-shen was a very humorous Ch'an master and enjoyed the reputation of being "Chao-chou the ancient Buddha." Once he was asked, "What is Chao-chou?"

He replied, "It is the gate in each of the four directions—north, south, east, and west." This answer had a double meaning. If the questioner had the town Chao-chou in mind, the reference to the four gates of the four city walls would be the best answer to the question. If he was really being asked to describe himself, the four gates would symbolize his Buddhist style, which was vivacious, free, and easy, with openings in all directions for easy access.

On another occasion, a novice monk asked him, "Does a dog have the Buddha-nature?"

Without thinking, Chao-chou replied, "No."

The novice was not convinced, "All beings, up to Buddhas and down to mole crickets and ants, have the Buddha-nature. Why doesn't a dog have it?"

"Because it has 'karma-consciousness,'" replied the Master.

However, when another novice asked him whether a dog had the Buddha-nature, he answered, "Yes."

## WHO KNOWS YOU?

A nun once asked Ch'an Master Lung-t'an, "How should I cultivate myself so that I may be reborn as a male in my next life?"

"How long have you been a nun?" asked Lung-t'an.

"This question concerns my past," replied the nun. "What has it got to do with my future? I just want to know if I'll be able to be reborn as a male someday."

"What are you now?" Lung-t'an asked.

Surprised, the nun asked, "I'm a female. Can't you see that?"

"You're a female, but who can see that?" the Master replied.

After hearing this, the nun began to realize the error underlying her question.

***The difference between male and female is superficial. Since the Buddha-nature within all beings is the same, there is no real difference between male and female. Because many of us are misled by the different appearance of gender, we fail to recognize our identical Buddhature. Also, this nature cannot be seen. It can only be realized through self-cultivation and personal experience.***

This novice was not convinced either, arguing, "If it does, why did it come into this world in the dog's vile skin bag?"

Chao-chou explained, "It chose to do so."

***In this well-known kung-an, Chao-chou gave two different answers to the same question, because "having" and "not having" possess the same implication for Ch'an masters. They are two aspects of one thing and therefore should not be separated, nor should they be defined as two different words. The Heart Sutra<sup>3</sup> states: "Those who realize the immaterial, universal reality behind all phenomena would become bodhisattvas."***

***A considerable effort is required in distinguishing "having" from "not having" because the difference is impossible to explain through words. It is just like a mute person having a dream; he or she cannot tell others about it. Only when one is free from worldly desires and passions will one be able to understand the relationship.***

***Unilluminated people hold that a contradiction always exists between "having" and "not having," right and wrong, or good and evil. For this reason, they cannot find the Path to behold their own Buddha-nature. "Does a dog have the Buddha-nature?" This nature cannot be described in terms of "having" or "not having" in the first place. Since Chao-chou was asked such a question, he had no other alternative but to give the affirmative and negative answers.***

# Learning Experiences of ABS Students

(African Buddhist Seminary)

about Meditation .....



## Ben Yi

Meditation to me is more than a generalized view of people who sit cross-legged in isolation, trying to conquer their minds. As far as my practice is concerned, meditation is every moment that I live and that I can grasp with conscious awareness. As humans, especially in an urban environment, we spend most of our lives day dreaming. We are always chasing the future or reminiscing about the past. Most people give their minds away to television, movies, conversations, books, newspapers, etc, and hardly focus on the real self, observing the rising and falling of thoughts, the manifestations and diminishing of feelings and a lot of chemistry that happens on the inside.

Ironically, although most people hardly deal with their inner world, everything on the outside begins on the inside! So my practice is all about spending more time on the inside before reacting to the outside. Keeping the mind in the present moment is the most difficult thing I have ever encountered. The Buddha's method of Vipassana (breath) meditation, I have found to be the most powerful method of bringing the mind into focus in the present moment. By simply observing my breath in everything I do, (most preferably when I am quiet), I get to live in the 'real-present'. When I am consciously aware of what's happening in my body, mind and spirit, everything falls into the right place, with a clear perspective. One day I hope to retreat to the forest in order to grow more in this practice.



## Ben Lai

This year, experiences and miracles have happened inside me. When I am bound by anger, greed or other problems, through meditation's focusing, I observe why I gave room to them. Then

I think about how I can transform them into happiness or great achievements. We usually see things not as they are, but when we use meditation's concentration, the original nature of our obstacles can be viewed and lightened.



## Ben Shang

As I practice meditation 13 times per week, meditation is helping me to deal with all the delusions in my life. When I practice meditation, I train my mind to bring happiness and peace within. In fact real peace appears when the mind is free from defilements.

This shows that external objects do not provide peace. During meditation I have learnt much; like how to let go of everything, especially pain in the body and how to be detached from worldly things. Meditation has given me a strong belief in the dharma of impermanent of phenomena, and lastly I have learnt about happiness.



## Ben Jue

Since I started practicing meditation last year, I've seen a big difference. There are many advantages and purposes of meditation, but the basic purpose is to be clear and mindful of the present moment. I have realized that the most important time in one's life is the present moment, and that is why in meditation we concentrate on counting our breath. A question might be asked, why the present moment, not the past or the future? It is because the past has already gone and you cannot change anything and the future hasn't yet arrived.

Therefore the present moment is most important time in our lives because you still have the power to change. Such facts of life are easy observed and understood when one's mind is at peace in meditation. So let us try to be mindful of each moment in our lives and I guarantee that we will understand that there is no better time to be happy than now.



## Ben Zang

I have received many benefits from meditation. The first one most obviously, is having the opportunity here at ABS of twice daily meditation sessions. The second benefit concerns my friend, whose speech is often angry towards me. At first this was difficult to overcome, but since I started practicing meditation with the 7days meditation retreat and daily meditation, I find that I can overcome this problem. I use the method of showing him a heart of compassion and using loving speech towards him. It also helps me to reduce desire.

When my mind is wandering around, I tell myself to concentrate, to focus my mind and start concentrating on the breath. Day by day I am trying to solve my problems through meditation. I also receive great benefits from the Dharma which Venerable Hui Sang gives us. Now I have a strong mind in my everyday life.



## Ben Yuan

In human lives all that can be good and true and beneficial can be lived, but we need to know them. Then, putting them into practice is very simple.

When you make meditation your lifestyle, there is a great possibility of changing your whole outlook, since you have the opportunity of seeing deep inside yourself. This is the key that leads to a compassionate and grateful mind and also to deep understanding and acceptance of any situations as they are, not only for yourself but for all beings.

Now that I am practicing meditation regularly, there are great improvements which are leading to better changes in my life. I understand the importance of cherishing time and so I try to use each and every moment accordingly. By having this state of mind, there is deep concentration in everything I do, which results in success in life. It's never too late to put meditation into practice, and with meditation everything is possible.

# Buddhism Works for me

By Weldon Brighton

The majority of people and the world at large regard Buddhism as a religion. However for a minority of people, Buddhism is taken simply as a way of life, since it emphasizes personal experience through practice in our day to day life. As a matter of fact, I am one of those who regard Buddhism as a way of life, not just in simple terms of saying a way of life but actually in a way to live and perfect our lives.

I came across Buddhism in the late 90's when I was in high school. My brother was studying as a novice in a Buddhist seminary and he used to give me some Buddhist hand-outs and a variety of books explaining Buddhist ethics and what Buddhism is all about. When I read these texts, I found them very interesting and absorbing in the way human life and the truth of the universe were expressed. I realized the freedom of thought that one has over everything and this gave me the motivation and courage to dig out more on Buddhism. In the end I also found myself becoming a novice student in my quest to learn more about self and the way things are supposed to be and all about the true nature of the universe. I had this great feeling that I would find the answer to most of the unanswered questions and puzzles of sentient beings and the nature of the universe, that science and other religions have failed to explain or hadn't given me satisfactory answers.

Currently, I have been studying and reading books concerning Buddhism and now have my own personal experiences through practice and I have now realized that Buddhism has really changed me. It has nourished me with knowledge and some fragments of patience, gratitude, self control, the pangs of feeling shame, self reliance and the like. The teaching itself is really profound - simple to understand but difficult to put into practice, because we often ignore such things as they are experienced in our day to day life. For instance meditation, which is a practice of having focus/concentration on an object of observation, is something that can be realized in our day to day life, since one only needs to be aware of the present situation; from the way we eat, walk, talk, sit and each and every thing that we do, to having focus and awareness on each and every movement, including being aware of our thoughts, attitudes and all the sensations we feel.



For us ordinary beings, we tend to ignore such things that we feel are quite normal in the way we are used to doing them. It is by developing attachment that leads to craving that is the sole cause of our suffering. Buddhism puts emphasis on letting go, because our minds are set to function towards a great degree of wanting. This means that we are never satisfied and have to grasp more. But because we cannot be masters of everything, even our own bodies, we generally lose or don't obtain what we want and so we end up suffering. When we are able to let go and understand that all conditioned things have no intrinsic existence, we will be able to reduce our greed and suffering by developing a mind that is satisfied, a mind that is able to let go, a mind that is collected and focused, free from delusion.

As the saying goes, charity begins at home, so likewise we have to learn to understand ourselves first and then we will be able to understand others. First we should seek from within because everything we need lies within. The practice of meditation will also help to bring a good awareness of our own actions, since our actions are governed by our thoughts (mind). Being ardent and vigorous in our practice through observing precepts, doing charity work, helping without any expectation of receiving gain and overcoming our anger, ignorance, jealousy, pride and arrogance are some of the good actions that will improve our practice. These are also generally emphasized for a zealous cultivation of the perfection of the self, which ultimately is for the benefit of everyone.

Buddhism has that kind of freedom of thought and dogma that gives us the opportunity to broaden our knowledge and wisdom obtained through personal practice. These experiences improve the value of our lives, resulting in our being able to experience equanimity amongst all sentient beings without exception.

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