

NanHua

Monthly NEWSLETTER

Nan Hua Temple's Childrens Talent Camp (Page5)

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THE MIND OF A PRACTITIONER

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.

2010 BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY DHARMA FUNCTIONS AT DIFFERENT CHINA MALLS



Visitors Bathing the Buddha at a China Mall.



Devotees & BLIA members wait their turn.



Joint celebrations were held at Bujue temple in JHB.

There were simultaneous Bathing the Buddha's Dharma Functions from 21-23 May 2010 at different China Malls in Johannesburg and at Nan Hua Main Temple . Here, the ceremony began in the early morning of 21 May 2010 and carried on for three days over the weekend. It gave ample opportunity for visitors and devotees to offer incense before the statue of the baby Buddha, submit silent prayers and extend good wishes, all under the supervision and explanation from the officiating monastics.

Also at this time, BLIA Johannesburg and Pretoria together with the assistance from different China Malls collectively celebrated Buddha's birthday. The three China malls were the Africa China Mall, Eastern Mall and China Town. The services were presided over by the Abbot Venerable Hui Fang, the Temple Manager Venerable Hui Xing and Ven. Yi Chuen respectively. More than 1200 people bathed the Buddha.

In their address, the venerables pointed out that all sentient beings have wisdom, merit and an appearance like that of the Buddha. Provided one is willing to practice self cultivation by relying on the Dharma, one can attain Buddhahood. The aim of bathing the Buddha is to purify the three karmas of action, speech and thoughts. This means that one has always to remind oneself to say good words, do good things and keep a good mind. The next step is to enjoy respect between oneself and others, to encourage one's family to be in harmony, to foster harmony in the community and peace in the world. Everyone applauded and agreed that the three good exercises should become an inspirational slogan of the world. Sister Ye Zhu Li of China Town said, " I wish that every year the Dharma service of bathing the Buddha should be held at the China Malls, not only for us to receive the illumination of Buddha's light but also so that our business' may prosper."

At Bujue Temple in Johannesburg, joint celebrations and Dharma Functions of Buddha's birthday, Mothers Day and BLIA Day were held, which were attended by sixty people. Everyone one was filled with Dharma joy. Nan Hua Temple Abbot Venerable Hui Fang led the chanting service. Among the VIPs were the new Ambassador, Liu Qing Lei of the Taiwan Liaison Office, Deputy Ambassador Xu Huai Cong, BLIA Johannesburg Chapter President, Ping De Man and other Chinese people from overseas. After the service, the Abbot, Venerable Hui Fang led the VIPs and the crowd to bath the Buddha. Afterwards, sisters of BLIA were alongside giving devotees traditional Buddha's Birthday pastries.

Lastly, Venerable Hui Bo and Venerable Hui Xiang led BLIA members to different shops in the area to distribute the Buddha's Birthday pastries wishing people health, peace and prosperity.

This is a tradition, whereby after every Dharma Function, people will get what the host has prepared which is a Buddha's Birthday pastry. Inside the pastry there is a small packet which has been stamped with the three good exercises, to remind people that they are expected to keep a good mind, speak good words, do good things, purify their minds and live together harmoniously in society.

BATHING THE BUDDHA AT CAPETOWN MEDITATION CENTER



Buddha's Birthday Prayer being read by Devotees



Director Du addressing the Cape Town Devotees after the Dharma Service.

'Happy Buddha's Birthday! Best Wishes to all Monastics!'

On 16 May 2010 early in the morning devotees and members of Cape Town Meditation Center began the annual ceremony of Bathing the Buddha. The well decorated pavilion for bathing the Buddha, the spotless environment, long noodles symbolizing longevity, offerings and a vegetarian lunch were all prepared by members of Cape Town BLIA's Chapter.

Nan Hua Temple Abbot, Venerable Hui Fang, was asked to lead the service which more than ninety people attended. Among them were the Taipei Liaison Office Cape Town branch Director Du Shen Guan, elder Shuai Su Zu and secretary Zhang, who were together with the congregation. After a dignified and respectful Dharma service a prayer on the Buddha's birthday by Grand Master Hsing Yun, was read. Then Director Du was asked to give a speech. He said that he hoped BLIA members will practise compassion, kindness, joy and equanimity by doing more charity and helping local government to take care of those poor citizens who are in need of support. He added that the Liaison Office will support and assist BLIA with all charity and cultural events so that through their compassion and strength they will earn respect from the local government and the people.

In his address, Venerable Hui Fang said, "When the Buddha was born in this world about 2600 years ago and said, "In the heavens and on earth I am supreme", his aim was not to show his arrogance. In fact he was making the following four points:

1. To let all sentient beings understand that everyone is a single entity and unique. All are respected, and no one can take the place of another. Therefore regardless of poverty or wealth, everyone has to have self-respect and dignity and we should never look down on or abandon ourselves.
2. Sentient beings possess wisdom, virtues and have an appearance like that of the Buddha. Provided they are willing to rely on the Dharma in their practice, everyone like the Buddha can attain Buddhahood. Therefore everyone has to affirm his or herself.
3. Everyone relies on the provision of others' material or spiritual resources for existence and to achieve the path of spiritual practice. This means that everyone in the world is directly or indirectly affected and likewise all our thoughts and conduct affect others. Therefore we have to purify/transform ourselves and benefit others so that we can create good/positive cycles.
4. Everyone possesses Buddha nature. With this equal position we have to let go of arrogance, enmity and loneliness and live together, so that we can create a harmonious and perfect world.

Cape Town BLIA chapter president Su Bao Quan thanked all members for their attendance, including Xiang Ji and friends. The event was concluded with everyone enjoying a delicious vegetarian meal.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY & BATHING THE BUDDHA IN LESOTHO



Many people attended this first-time event in Bloemfontein.



Beautiful flowers decorate the altar, where each person bathes the Buddha.

On 15 May 2010, the Buddha's birthday celebration was held for the first time in Lesotho. It was organized by Ms Zhen MiaoJue. There were roughly five hundred people who attended and so this was a very special event.

The event was held at the Maseru Club. Before the event began, Nan Hua Temple Manager, Venerable Hui Xing was asked to give a sermon on the meaning of the Buddhist 'Three Exercises, Four Harmonies and the Four Types of Giving'. He also spoke about merits and virtues of bathing the Buddha. Then the chanting and the Buddha's birthday celebrations started. The Altar where this took place was well decorated and dignified with fresh flowers. There were thirty young people who led the people to bathe the Buddha and make a vow in front of the statue of the small prince. After bathing the Buddha, everyone was given a Chinese pastry, inside of which was a note with the Three Exercises – these being to keep a good heart, say good words and do good things, additionally one should also purify the mind and so create an harmonious society.

Although the advance notice for this event was short, it attracted many people who came to bathe the Buddha. All participants were very happy and moved to take part in such a special ceremony.

Anyway _Dr Kent Keith

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered; Forgive them anyway.
 If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.
 If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; Succeed anyway.
 If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; Be honest and frank anyway.
 What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; Build anyway.
 If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.
 The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; Do good anyway.
 Give the world the best you have and it may just never be enough; Give the world the best you have anyway.
 You see, in the final analysis, it's all between you and God; It was never between you and them anyway.
 From Do It Anyway: The Handbook for Finding Personal Meaning and Deep Happiness in a Crazy World .

NAN HUA TEMPLE'S CHILDRENS TALENT CAMP



Happy & Excited Children at the start of the Camp.



Dedicated Teachers patiently show exactly how to make it.



Mastering the technical skills required!

On the 17th of June, nearly 50 children from all over South Africa came to attend the children's happy talent camp at Nan Hua Temple. The atmosphere was excited and busy with Ven. Hui Fang's encouragement. Included with the attendants were two volunteer brothers from Taiwan, Xu Hong Kuan and Lin Ji Ping from Nan Hua University and WuFeng Institute of Technology, who had come to assist with teaching the children.

The course that had been prepared for the children included teaching folk customs, skills involved in molding noodles to look like lions and birds and hanging mobiles of cloth babies. The Buddha's Light youth volunteers (BLIA) taught the children what they had learnt in their previous youth camps about folk dances and elder brother Xu Hong Kuan used the skills he learnt while in Beijing to give the children a more advanced class. His brother also taught the children group dances, encouraging the children to socially interact with each other and be friends. All of which they thoroughly enjoyed.

This time, the children's camp was planned and managed by BLIA's youth group. They helped with the cooking and arrangements in the dining hall and cheerfully did all the washing up that was required.

A happy atmosphere prevailed throughout the camp, not only due to the excellent arrangements for both lessons and play, but also due to a sense of gratitude, as the children knew that they had their parents to thank, for allowing them to be there in the first place. On the last night, all participants, together with Ven. Hui Fang gathered in the Repentance Hall to read and chant Grand Master Hsing Yun's 'Prayer for Parents and Friends'. They were also encouraged to make a silent prayer for those in poor health and for all sentient beings to enjoy peace.

The last day of camp was devoted to a stage performance by the children, who demonstrated the traditional dances that they had learned. The audience, made up of their parents and the Venerables from the temple, thoroughly enjoyed their lively performance, applauding until their hands stung.

There was no doubt that the Children's Talent Camp for 2010 had been a great success.

Young Adults Divisional Camp at Nan Hua Temple



Learning a traditional Taiwanese Group Dance.



The Young Adults Art Camp - 2010 at Nan Hua Temple.

The song of Fo Guang Shan opened the 4 day Youth Art Camp, which was held from 12 to 15 July 2010. More than 50 young adults from Johannesburg, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, Durban and Newcastle attended. In the opening ceremony, Mr Hu, (the representative of the Taiwanese Government here in SA), expressed his good wishes for the success of the camp. The participants were encouraged to be grateful and to make the most of this opportunity, as they were fortunate enough to have 2 teachers from Taiwan, who would be sharing their knowledge of Chinese folk customs and skills.

The teachers who had been around the world on a teaching circuit, were now visiting South Africa. They would be instructing their students in the arts of Taiwanese folk dancing and traditional skills, including the beautiful Fan Dance and the vigorous Spear Dance. They would also show them how to sculpt noodles in human form and the art of paper folding and curving, all of which would allow these young people to obtain some understanding, experience and appreciation of Taiwan's deep cultural heritage.

There were also 2 teachers from the Nan Hua University, who shared their knowledge of sports with the students. As they were specialists in Social Sciences, they also provided a supportive environment whereby the students could nurture their own sense of accomplishment and joy in their experiences of life.

On the final day of the camp, a closing ceremony was held, where the young people exhibited on stage and in a display, the results of their learning. The students had all stayed up late the night before, putting the finishing touches to their noodle sculptures and folded paper decorations. These were most beautiful and attracted great admiration from the audience. One student had filmed all the activities at the camp and he, too, had stayed up late the night before in order to complete his edited version of the film, which was greatly enjoyed by all.

Despite all this activity, another late night awaited them, as they had to immediately start preparations for the Children's Talent Camp, which was due to start on the 17th. In this camp the former participants would now become teachers in their turn, passing on the knowledge they had recently acquired in their own camp.

WHO IS MORE IMPORTANT?

By Grand Master Hsing Yun

One day, a devotee went to the temple to pay homage to the Buddha. Afterward, he went to the reception hall for a rest. He had just sat down when he heard a young monk in charge of receiving guests tell the elderly Ch'an Master Wu-te, "Please bring some tea for our guest."

A few seconds later, the devotee heard the monk call out again, "Master, there is too much incense ash on the altar. Please wipe it away. ...don't forget to water the flowers ... don't forget to ask our guests to stay for lunch ..."

The devotee felt sorry for Wu-te and could not bear to see the young monk ordering the senior master around. He thus went up to Wu-te and asked, "Master, who is this young monk?"

"He's a disciple of mine," replied the Master proudly.

Hardly able to believe what he had just heard, the devotee asked, "But if he's your disciple, why doesn't he show any respect for you? Why does he tell you to do all these things?"

The Master answered gratefully, "I'm fortunate to have such a capable disciple. When devotees come to make offerings to the Buddha, he only asks me to serve them tea instead of speaking to them. He replaces incense and puts offerings on the altar everyday, while I just wipe off the dust. He only wants me to tell our guests to stay for meals; he doesn't ask me to cook or make tea. He arranges everything in the monastery, and he has saved me much hard work."

The devotee still was not sure if he understood the Master and asked suspiciously, "Who is more important here, senior monastics or novices?"

Master Wu-te answered, "Of course, the seniors, but the novices are useful as well."

Normally, devotees support and protect senior clergy rather than the younger ones. They make offerings to the former instead of the latter. In the minds of devotees, senior clergy are more important. These devotees fail to see that young novices may become great masters just as princes may become kings.

Master Wu-te did not underestimate his disciples. He was able to see this relationship from a different angle, and thus, he was content with the situation in his monastery. This reflects the concept of equality within Ch'an.

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STEALING A YAK

The parable goes that some villagers stole a yak and consumed its flesh. The owner of the animal followed its traces right up to the village, and after giving a description of it, he asked the villagers, "Is my yak here in your village?"

"We have no village," said the thieves.

"There is a pond in your village. Did you not eat the meat of my yak beside that pond?"

"There is no pond."

"Isn't there a tree beside the pond?"

"There is no tree."

"Wasn't it at the east of your village where you stole my yak?"

"There is no east."

"Wasn't it at noon-time when you stole my yak?"

"There is no noontime."

"Even if there were no village and no tree as you've said," retorted the yak owner, "how can you say there is no east and no noon-time in this world of ours? It's a blatant lie and is certainly incredible. Tell me now, did you steal my yak and consume its flesh?"

"Yes, we did," confessed the villagers at last.

In the same way, some violators of the Vinaya rules try to conceal their faults and do not make a confession of them. They consequently fall into the hells after death. The good deities can see with clairvoyance what mistakes one has committed, so one should not try to conceal them, just as the yak stealers should not have tried to conceal the theft they had committed.

As I Walk

By Andrianiaina Ranaivosoa

When I was younger I used to go to church for mass and Sunday school, taught by different elders who had a good knowledge of the Christian bible as well as basic Protestant beliefs. The class was very lively and pretty special, compared to that of normal school, and I thoroughly enjoyed every moment. Being the kid that I was, I did not question the purpose of the class or the meaning of the teachings, I just appreciated the dedicated efforts of the teachers and had a good time with my Sunday school friends. Rather naïve, perhaps but that was my first initiation into the world of spirituality.

Then in 2001, I was given an opportunity to join the African Buddhist Seminary to study Buddhism. But it was only the following year that I finally decided to take this opportunity. I joined the seminary and became a Buddhist novice monk for three years. At the beginning of my training, I felt as if I was taking a journey into uncharted territory. Almost everything was new. But despite everything, I immersed myself forcefully in Buddhist religious beliefs and practices as much as I could. It was a steep learning curve as a matter of fact. I dare not say that I managed to internalize the whole lot of what I had learnt. I was pretty far from that. However, I could say that a connection was built.

In the midst of my training, there was something puzzling me. It was a strange feeling of déjà-vu but I could not quite figure it out until a little later when I had read some books showing the similarities beyond forms between Buddhism and Christianity as a whole. I saw many of the teachings I learnt from my yesteryear's Sunday school coming back to me. Perhaps also, it is

because I like drawing a comparison between diverse concepts, which is for me a means to further understanding. This sort of discovery helped me, not only to bridge spiritual gaps between Buddhism and Christianity but also it allowed me to embrace these 2 different religious beliefs.



I actually do not prefer one religion to another. And I also have no sympathy with bigotry and ignorance which make transient, partial and puerile distinctions between one man's faith or form of faith and another's. I just pray to be delivered from narrow mindedness, partiality, exaggeration and bigotry.

Through the seminary training, I feel that I have benefited greatly from the practical point of view. So far though, I have been weakened by morbid worries, as well as my heart gradually becoming addicted to a heart poisoning anger. By cultivating the energy of mindfulness, I hopefully can heal my body and my mind, because mindfulness is healing and contains the energies of concentration, understanding, and compassion. Like before, it is not a piece of cake, as this quest requires dedication and a non-judgmental attitude. I, too, would like to see things through, with no objection and no judgments and above all keeping my sense of humor, since it is a strength beyond all measure.

In conclusion I would like to extend my gratitude to all the people who have contributed to my spiritual growth.

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