

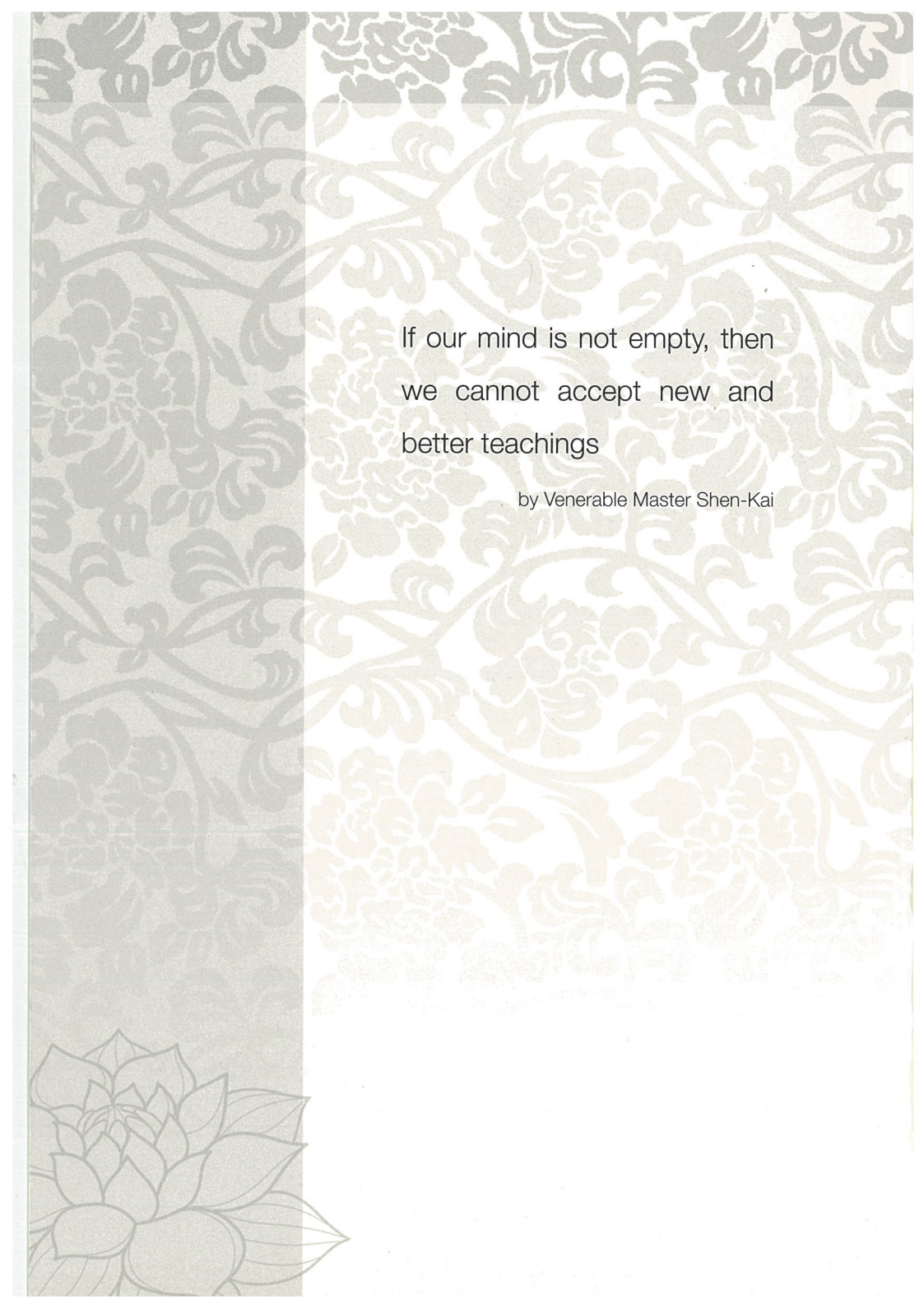


# *Journey to Bliss*



A collection of articles by Ven. Master Shen Kai and the disciples





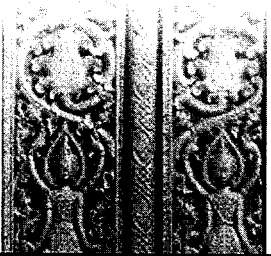
If our mind is not empty, then  
we cannot accept new and  
better teachings

by Venerable Master Shen-Kai



Blissful culture

*Journey  
to  
Bliss*



A collection of articles by  
Ven. Master Shen Kai and the  
disciples

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Auddhism. man beings have different experiences or levels of learning and practising Buddhism; however, their ultimate objective is the same, which is to pursue bliss and enlightenment to the truth of life. The Five Vehicles of Buddhism expounded by Buddha are meant for sentient beings. Various conditions lead people to quest for the Dharma teachings. Some of these conditions arise because of love, emotion, suffering, illness, etc., but all conditions lead to the same objective, the end of suffering, the achievement of inner liberation and the attainment of enlightenment. Jen Chen disciples have discovered the benefits of the Dharma teachings and believe that everyone shares their desire for a journey towards a blissful life.

This book is a collection of articles written by Venerable Master Shen-Kai and his disciples before and during the year 1995. Articles written by other Buddhists also wishing to share the blissful joy of learning awareness and wisdom and reap the fruits of practicing Buddhism.

May the brightness of Dharma and the fragrance of our ethics and morality permeate across the whole world!

# Biography of Venerable Master Shen-Kai

**Venerable Master Shen-Kai** was born in 1918 in Kui-Zhou, China. In his early years, he studied many religions, but he was greatly inspired by what the Buddha taught, therefore, he decided to carry on Buddha's teaching and became a monk. He felt it pitiable that the original spirit of Buddha's teachings had been largely misinterpreted over the years, such that it was not possible for the broad masses to apply Buddhism in their daily lives and benefit from it. He dedicated his life to continue the teachings of Sakyamuni Buddha, actively promote Jen Chen Buddhism, and advance the bliss of humanity.

Venerable Master Shen-Kai vows to return life after life to be the "Street cleaner" of this Saha world, to purify the human mind and cleanse this world. In his effort to uphold the morality and dignity of humanity, he travelled widely to deliver Dharma talks in many

countries, and presented Buddhism in a manner that is easy to understand and practise. He illustrates that the principles of Jen Chen Buddhism are compatible with the natural capacities of humanity and also fulfill the needs of the modern times, and how these should be applied to our daily life so that we can purify our mind, and create a bright and blissful life.

The Venerable founded several publishing organizations, magazine publishers, cultural and educational foundations, cultural centers in Taiwan, Singapore, Australia, and United States. He hoped that from reading books more people are able to understand the Buddha's teachings and to purify their minds by practising the Dharma in their daily lives.

Venerable Shen-Kai departed from this world on August 4, 1996 in California, USA. He left many books on the teachings of Jen Chen Buddhism for humanity, dozens of Jen Chen Buddhism promotion missions, and many disciples, both members of Sangha and lay-Buddhists, to continue promoting a Bliss Culture for humanity around the world.

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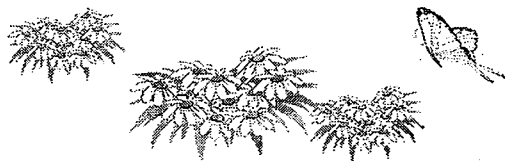


## Learning Buddhism Starts with Taking Refuge

How to be a Buddhist?  
How does one start?

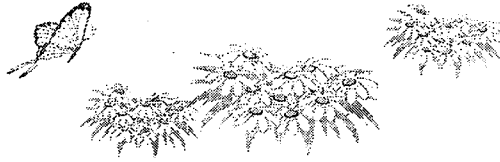
It is a simple matter to be a Buddhist, yet it is also not easy. A verse from the Buddhist sutra reads: "Avoid all evil; do all that is good and purify one's mind. This is the teaching of all Buddhas." One may ask about the difference between Buddhism and Christianity, or indeed other religions. The majority of us have the concept that all religions are the same; they all teach us to be good.

Indeed, most religions do teach to avoid all evil and to do all that is good, however; purifying one's mind is the underlying tenet of Buddhism. In general, other religions are still within the transmigration of the



six realms; the realm of heavenly beings; human beings, asura beings, animal beings, ghosts beings, hell beings, and within the three fiery planes of existence - (1) the world of sensuous desire, (2) the world of forms, and (3) the world of formlessness. In these ways, Buddhism is different from all other religions.

How to be a Buddhist? First of all, we need to understand that Buddhists are categorized into those who believe in the Buddha and those who learn from the Buddha. Those who believe in the Buddha are "believers of Buddhism". This category is further subdivided into those who believe blindly, that is, being superstitious, and those who exercise wisdom in their beliefs. Learning Buddhism is different. In learning Buddhism, we correct our inappropriate conduct and our bad habits. We carry out religious duties and promote the Dharma for the good of all sentient beings. We follow the Buddha in his cultivation of pure deeds



and practices of the Truth. This is learning Buddhism.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)



## Taking refuge in the Three Treasures

"Treasures" are things that are precious, referring to those things that are rare and priceless. Many people dignify themselves with jewelry as a symbol of their splendor. In reality, the nobility of a person is not reflected by ornaments worn on the body, but instead is reflected by the purity and the virtue of his mind.

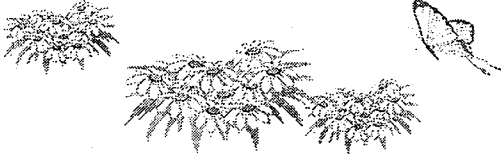
A truly virtuous and beautiful life is attainable only through the teachings of the Buddha to correct the self-serving and evil habits as a result of all the evils committed in the past, while rebuilding a new life based on doing all that is good. It is in this way that we begin the bright prospects of a new life, one that is fulfilling, soothing, carefree, peaceful and happy.

The Dharma is taught by all Buddhas of the past,



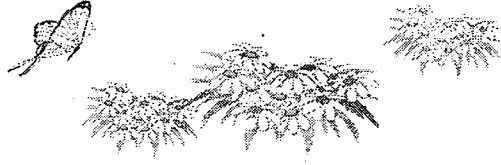
present and future. If not for the sublime and wonderful teachings of the Buddhas, all sentient beings will never be able to receive the benefits of the Dharma. If not for the selfless efforts of the great Bodhisattvas and Sangha of the past, present and future in shouldering the responsibility of spreading the Dharma and continuing the Wisdom Life of Buddha, it would not be possible for the Dharma to remain in this world for long. The "Buddha" who is capable of expounding on the Dharma; the "Dharma" that is expounded by the Buddha; and the "Sangha", the community of monks and nuns spreading the Dharma, definitely cannot be bought with money. Therefore, they are called treasures. Thus, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha are called the Three Treasures.

It is only when we believe and have faith in the Three Treasures that we can receive the support and merits of the Three Treasures. A proverb says "Faith



is the origin of all merits and nourishes all virtuous roots". Since we have faith in the Three Treasures, we should take refuge in them. "Taking Refuge" is a ceremony in learning Buddhism. A student has to enroll in a school, sit for examinations and take the lessons before being called a student. It is the same with Taking Refuge.

Taking Refuge is only the beginning of learning Buddhism. Figuratively speaking, it is like entering the door of Buddhism. It also means transforming the darkness of confusion into the brightness of enlightenment, distancing from the ignorance of sentient beings and entering into the illumination of the Buddha. It is departing from the suffering sea of sentient beings for the Buddha's blissful land. The compassionate light of the Buddha shines in all directions and is unceasingly helping and guiding all sentient beings to the correct path.



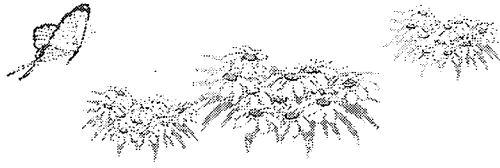
However, we unenlightened beings are just like ignorant children oblivious of the dangers of the deep water or the traffic around them. We are ignorant of the horror of going astray and we continue to play with danger despite the worried calls of our mothers. It is only when we slip and land in trouble, having suffered many hardships that we think of the kindness of our mothers. We begin to feel remorseful and want to return to the comfort and security of our ever-forgiving mothers. Only then do we realize that true safety resides within our mothers' love and compassion and that from now on we need to remember their admonitions.

Because unenlightened sentient beings have lost their innate Buddha nature they are immersed in an endless sea of suffering for aeons of countless lives. They transmigrate ceaselessly in the six realms of ex-



istence experiencing all kinds of suffering and bitterness in life, not knowing how to liberate themselves from those miseries. When presented with the opportunity to receive the compassion and blessings of the Three Treasures and having realized the reality of suffering and life, sentient beings earnestly take refuge and board the compassionate voyage of the Three Treasures. They receive and practice the teachings of the Buddha and thus eradicate the hindrances from their negative karma committed in the past. They build a new beginning in life and break away forever from the suffering of the six realms of existence. They diligently emulate the Bodhisattva's conduct and vow to widely practice the great path of enlightenment, seek salvation and benefits for themselves and for others, perfect themselves in conduct and ultimately attain Buddhahood. By relying on the compassion and loving-kindness of the Three Treasures, the above benefits can be derived.

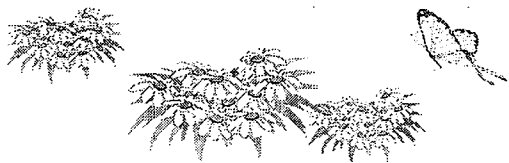




Thus, with the merits of the Three Treasures to truly dignify our conduct and mind, the fragrance of morality will naturally permeate far and wide and our futures will be immensely bright! Only in this way is there true dignity. In this way, humanity will soon be awakened to the Truth, turning back towards the shore of enlightenment to take refuge in the Three Treasures. By observing and practicing the Buddha's teachings a new life that is happy and fulfilling can be built. Only then is it possible to create a peaceful and blissful world here on earth.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)

Three Treasures: Triratna, also referred to as Triple Gems, The Three Precious Ones - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.



*Taking Refuge is only the beginning of learning Buddhism... It also means transforming darkness into brightness, distancing from the ignorance of sentient beings and entering into the brightness of the Buddha...*



## The Culture of Buddhism is the Voice of Bliss

### What is Human Bliss Culture?

What is Human Bliss Culture? We should ask the question in reverse: "What is Human 'Un-Bliss' Culture?" Since there is bliss culture, it follows that there is 'un-bliss' culture. The world today has many teachings, including those that teach people to commit evil. Let us think this over. If it is a fact that all humanity originally had bliss, why has that bliss diminished? It is because we human beings destroy our bliss by not observing the rules and the precepts, which are the principles that create bliss in our life, if only we were to follow them.

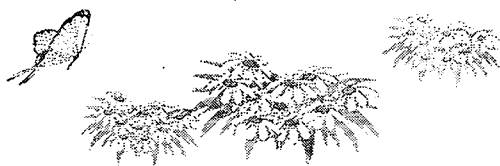
To use a simple illustration, it is like placing a tea-cup at the center of the table. It is very safe and beyond the reach of young children. If we place the cup



along the edge of table, then it becomes vulnerable to falling and breaking. If the cup falls from the table and breaks, we loose the cup and are forced to spend the money to replace it. This is the result of not knowing or not following the simple rule of safety. When a child places the teacup at the edge of the table, the mother will quickly exhort him to move it to the center. Adults understand the need to put the teacup at the center of the table, but young children do not.

We can understand from the teaching of the above example that putting the cup at the center of the table is a "precept" which we should always observe and practice.

The regulations about what can or cannot be done are precepts. In fact, everyone needs to observe precepts and conduct themselves as good citizens. A good citizen needs to abide by the laws and in doing



so they observe the precepts. Therefore, Jen Chen Buddhism refers to precepts as a means of 'safeguarding blessings'. This means safeguarding our blessings, which are the results of our virtuous deeds, committed in the past. This is analogous to putting the teacup in the proper place. In fact, all of the Dharma Doors\* taught by Buddhism are a Voice of Bliss. The Voice of Bliss is spoken by Buddha for us. All the teachings of Buddha are meant for us, human beings, to attain the highest order of bliss. If everyone comes to learn Buddhism, cultivate and achieve pure Nirvana, then of course that would be the highest, fullest, most complete and ultimate bliss. Because of learning Buddhism, life becomes peaceful and blissful. Therefore, the culture of Buddhism is called the "Bliss Culture."

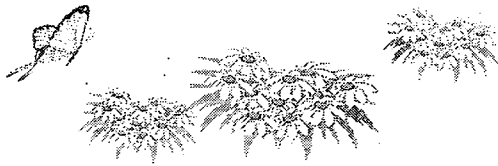
In many countries, particularly in Europe and America, people generally understand what Bliss Culture is, but what they do not necessarily understand is



what Buddhist Culture is. For this reason, we might as well refer to Buddhist Culture as Bliss Culture. The sutras expounded by Sakyamuni Buddha are the standard for Bliss Culture, and when promoted in this manner, all of humanity will be able to pursue the principles that bring bliss as expounded by the Buddha.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)

*All humanity originally has bliss... (but) we human beings destroy our bliss by not observing the rules and the precepts.*



## The culture of Buddhism is Human Bliss Culture

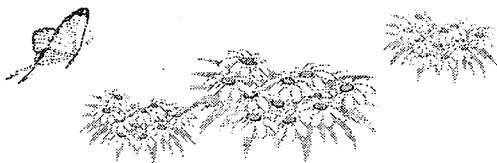
The title of your Dharma talk is Human Bliss Culture; why then when you answer questions from the audience you did not mention Human Bliss Culture at all? Many of my friends here and I would like to know what is Human Bliss Culture.

It is because the bliss culture that you have in mind and what I have in mind are different. The bliss culture that you have in mind may be how to prosper with great wealth and fortune or how to have a good wife in order for the family to have bliss. In this manner, the definition of bliss is too narrow! We need to know that the culture of Buddhism is the real bliss culture. If everybody is able to attain the ultimate Nirvana, then that is indeed the real bliss culture.



The purpose of our learning Buddhism is to distance from suffering and attain happiness. Many people think that to distance from suffering and attain happiness means going to the Western Pure Land. In fact, it is not only this. When we distance from suffering and attain happiness, we have to instantaneously distance from suffering, instantaneously attain happiness and liberation. Some people may be suspicious; how can liberation be attained so easily? In fact, it is very simple. If someone scolds you, and you apologize to him, then that is a small liberation. If someone hits you, and you retaliate; an eye for an eye, then isn't that very miserable? What happens if that results in loss of life? Even though you are rude to me, I will still apologize very politely to you. Isn't that being liberated? This is Jen Chen Buddhism's teaching of liberation. If whilst alive, we cannot even attain small liberation like this, then what more to say of liberation after





death? In the course of our daily life, if we are liberated at every moment, then in time to come, we will be able to attain the great liberation. Please think it over, isn't this very blissful? This is but to use a small matter to illustrate the path of liberation. If we are able to understand more of the Buddha's Dharma and apply them in our life, family, society, country, and to the extent of the entire humanity of the world, then isn't this a great bliss culture? Therefore, we say that the culture of Buddhism is Human Bliss Culture.

(by Ven. Master Shen-Kai)

*The purpose of our learning Buddhism is to distance from suffering and attain happiness.*

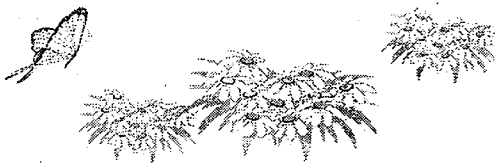


## Learning and Practising Buddhism is the Beginning of Bliss

In this complex society, how should human beings cultivate in order to achieve bliss?

How should human beings cultivate to achieve happiness and bliss? The scope of this question is too wide for us to deliberate. We have to phrase the question in reverse: what is the cause of human beings' lack of happiness and bliss? To answer the question simply, it is due to our unkind thoughts.

Our mind is ever changing. Whether we ascend to heaven or descend to hell, is dependent on our actions, which are created by our mind. Virtuous thoughts beget virtuous responses. When our thoughts



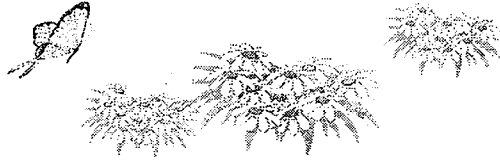
turn evil, we will invariably face misery and misfortunes. Karma is created by our thoughts, words and deeds. The arising of our mind is translated into either actions or words. Foolish actions are preceded by foolish thoughts arising in our minds, and these result in suffering. Virtuous thoughts precede noble deeds and these shall reap joyous experiences. If whatever we do, we do them for our own benefit, out of selfish and egotistic reasons, or to suit our delusory habits, thinking that is the way to pursue bliss and happiness, then in the end the exact opposite will happen. We put the blame on others, we are not aware that this is the result of our own ignorance and foolishness. If we do not awake to this reality, we will forever be unable to distance ourselves from suffering and attain happiness.

To cultivate is to get rid of our bad conduct and habits. Our conduct is manifested in our physical actions, speech and thoughts. If we often have wild



thoughts, then we have to cultivate mental purity; if our words often harm others, then we have to cultivate purity in our speech; if we are always getting into fights, then we should cultivate purity in our physical actions.

Some people have the notion that cultivation is a matter only for monks and nuns. In fact, cultivation is for all humanity; all humans need to cultivate. So long as our conduct is poor, we need to cultivate. Just like a vehicle that has broken down, it needs to be repaired so it can be driven again. There are also others who think that cultivation means meditating in high mountains, and praying to Buddha. This is not true. We need to cultivate pure actions amidst our activities. What is most important is to get rid of our habits. Just like one who respects others shall receive respect himself; one who uses harsh words shall receive harsh words himself; one who hurt others shall be hurt him-

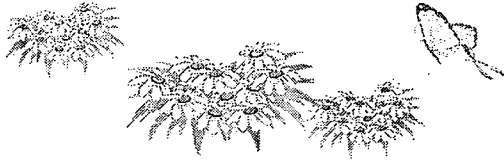


self", if we treat others with respect, others accord us with the same respect. It is in this way that our bliss begins.

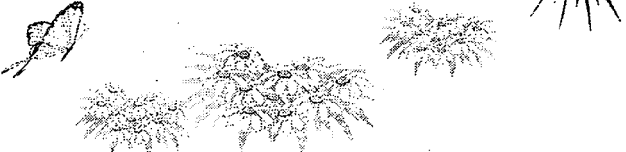
One attribute of human beings is ignorance, the consequence of which leads to our misfortunes. If all human beings are able to learn and practice Buddhism, unfold our wisdom, use our wisdom to deal with others, practice the Bodhisattva Path, are truly selfless and benefit the world at large in whatever we do, then surely we will be able to achieve bliss and happiness.

Thus, learning and practicing Buddhism will enable every family, even large masses of people, the society and all the inhabitants of this world to achieve bliss.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)



*To cultivate is to get rid of our bad conduct and habits... If we often have wild thoughts, then we have to cultivate mental purity; if our words often harm others, then we have to cultivate purity in our speech; if we are always getting into fights, then we should cultivate purity in our physical actions... we need to cultivate amidst our activities... it is in this way that bliss begins.*



## Enlightenment is the reason to practise Buddhism

### Why practise Buddhism?

Why do we practice Buddhism? Buddha means supreme Awareness and perfect Enlightenment. Buddha is an Awakened one who enlighten oneself as well as others with Buddhism. Having attained the highest level of enlightenment, one becomes a Buddha. All sentient beings are blinded by ignorance, confusion, worries and sufferings. It is only through the practice of Buddhism that we can liberate ourselves from these suffering and worries, attain real happiness and bliss.

Sakyamuni Buddha is the teacher of our Saha world. There are also many Buddhas in countless worlds in the cosmos. Sakyamuni Buddha lived in



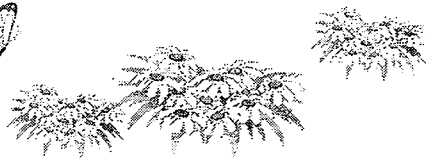
this world for 81 years, of which he spent 49 years expounding over 300 discourses on the Dharma. Of the Dharma which he expounded, the Humanity Vehicle Buddhism or Jen Chen Buddhism (phonetically translated from Mandarin is most relevant and most suitable for humanity).

There are five vehicles of Buddhism, namely:

1. Humanity Vehicle Buddhism
2. Deva Vehicle Buddhism
3. Sravaka Vehicle Buddhism
4. Pratyeka Buddha Vehicle Buddhism, and
5. Bodhisattva Vehicle Buddhism.

The Buddhism that we are promoting is the orthodox Dharma that Sakyamuni Buddha has expounded to humanity, that is the Humanity Vehicle Buddhism or Jen Chen Buddhism. Because all Bud-





dhas manifest in the human forms to attain Buddha-  
hood, and we are all human beings, we therefore teach  
humanity Jen Chen Buddhism.

(by Ven. Master Shen-Kai)

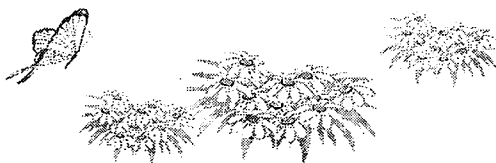


## Awakening to supreme and perfect wisdom

How should we apply Buddhism in our daily life in order to attain bliss and happiness?

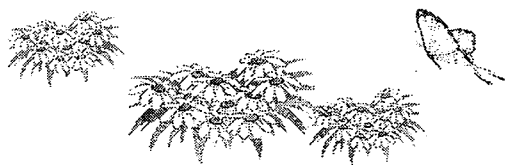
The answer to this question is exactly the objective of promoting Jen Chen Buddhism. The word "Buddha" means enlightenment. Jen Chen Buddhism seeks to enable every human being to become enlightened. This is the objective of Buddhism. Many people in this world go about hastily and hazily in life without knowing the reason for living. When we are able to understand the principle of enlightenment and emerge from the shadow of ignorance, our lives will be in accord with the Dharma.

This indeed a broad subject. Take common domestic issues as an example: What happens when a



husband comes home in a bad mood, and for no apparent reason begins to nag at his wife? At this moment, his wife must be understanding and try to view the matter from a positive perspective. You need to understand the reason for his foul mood. It could be because his superior at work told him off or he had had encountered a bad day. We need to fully understand the situation. Jumping to conclusion and reacting with anger and hatred do not help. It could even be that he is not feeling well. One can diffuse the situation easily; offer him a cup of tea, extend your consolation, let him have a good rest. Soon all is well again.

When we are learning and practising Buddhism, we cannot afford to have a foolish or ignorant conduct. We need to have wisdom in order to become enlightened. How do we develop our wisdom? Take another example: you are in a room and the lights



suddenly went out. You are left in pitch darkness; you cannot see a thing. You stretch your hands to feel your way. When you touch someone, you may jump with fright, not knowing who or what you have touched. If at this moment, someone switches on the lights, you can see clearly instantaneously and you realize that it is your friend whom you have touched; you are no longer ignorant. This is analogous to wisdom. When a person has wisdom and uses wisdom as taught by Buddha to deal with any situation whether at home or at work, life will be fulfilling, blissful and happy.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)

*When we are able to understand the principle of enlightenment and emerge from the shadow of ignorance, our lives will be in accord with the Dharma.*



## LEARNING BUDDHISM NEEDS RIGHT KNOWLEDGE AND VIEWS

May I ask what right views one must possess to learn Buddhism and how one can attain the right knowledge and views?

"Buddha" means, "perfect awareness". Learning Buddhism is to eradicate self-serving and evil habits, unfold one's wisdom, seek liberation, cultivate the Bodhisattva Path and eventually attain the Supreme Buddhahood. Thus, we need to have the correct concept. If one practices according to what is said, and advances steadily, this is having the right knowledge and right views. If one worships blindly and does not understand what Buddhism is, what the Dharma is, and even believes in heterodox doctrines, this is being superstitious and is not what Buddhists pursue.



What is "Awareness"? Awareness means having a purified mind. Even if a speck of dust flies by, the mind is so pure that we know about it. This is Awareness. The Buddha is one with great Awareness. For example, when a flower blossoms in another planet, or indeed in any of the Buddha-world\*, Buddha can see it extremely clearly, as the flower is blossoming right in the middle of his palm. In fact, learning Buddhism is very simple, so that people find it hard to believe and even harder to practice.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)

*\*Buddha-world: Mt Sumeru and its seven surrounding continents, eight seas and ring of iron mountains form a small world; 1000 of small worlds form a small chiliocosmos; 1000 of these small chiliocosmos form a medium chiliocosmos; 1000 of these form a great chiliocosmos, which thus consists of 1,000,000,000 small worlds.*



## LIFE AND BUDDHISM

### How to apply Buddhism in our lives?

"Being with Buddha," means applying Buddhism in our daily lives. For instance, generally people like to be complimented, so whenever we are we should abstain from being offensive. We should not do things or utter words that others dislike, for example, scolding or criticizing others, and the use of crude or vulgar language. Instead, we should be ever ready to compliment, console, comfort and encourage others whenever the situation demands.

Being with Buddha, the expression of Buddha is always one of contentment, peace and serenity, therefore, our expression is one of peace and joy. Buddha does not gossip, hence we do not gossip, and will only say what is necessary and appropriate. This is very

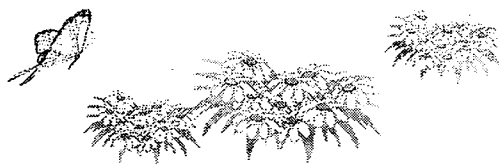


important. As long as we maintain a pure and blissful mind, we are always with all Buddhas. Sentient beings like Buddhas, therefore they will also like us when we are with Buddha.

When we understand and practice the above, we are applying Buddhism and making Buddhism applicable to our daily lives.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)





## TO BE AN AUTHENTIC BUDDHIST

### How to become an authentic Buddhist?

To be an authentic Buddhist, firstly, one has to take refuge in the Three Treasures - the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. After taking refuge, one has to learn and practice the Dharma, understand the Law of Cause and Effect, and stop being superstitious. In addition, one should observe the Five Precepts, perform the Ten Virtuous Deeds, learn and practice Buddhism, eradicate undesirable habits, seek liberation, unfold one's wisdom and follow the Bodhisattva Path. This is the way to be a righteous Buddhist.

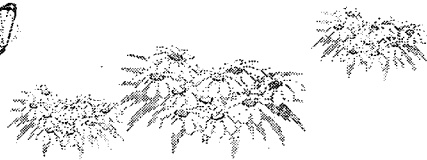
(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)



## THERE IS BRIGHTNESS IN TAKING REFUGE

Are there any advantages in taking refuge ?

There are many, many advantages in taking refuge. If you were to ask somebody about the advantages of going to university, he will tell you about the many advantages; you can become an engineer or a doctor after graduating from the university. There is an enormous amount of knowledge, principles and theories which one would be able to understand when one goes to university. It is the same with taking refuge. The many things, which we do not understand before, become clear to us when we unfold our wisdom after taking refuge to learn Buddhism. Being without wisdom is like in the night, the room is dark and we do not know how many people are in it. With



wisdom, it is like turning on the light; with one look we know what is in the room and how many people are there. Turning on the light is analogous to the brightness in our mind. With brightness, we can understand many things. These are the advantages of taking refuge, learning Buddhism and developing our wisdom.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)

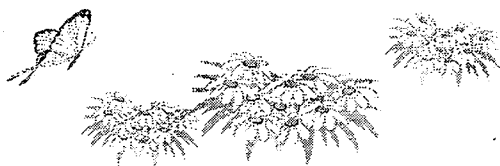


## TAKING REFUGE AND LEARNING BUDDHISM

Does one absolutely need to take refuge in order to learn Buddhism?

Certainly. Just like a student, one needs to register in a school before commencing lessons. Being a Buddhist, one needs to take refuge and form a cause with the Three Treasures - the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Nowadays, many people learn Buddhism, but the majority is either superstitious or lacking in the correct concept. This is because they did not take refuge, and do not follow what the Buddha taught. To be an authentic Buddhist, one needs to take the following steps; take refuge, observe the precepts, and follow the Buddha's teachings to cultivate virtuous and wise conducts.

(by Venerable Master Shen-Kai)



## JOURNEY TO BLISS

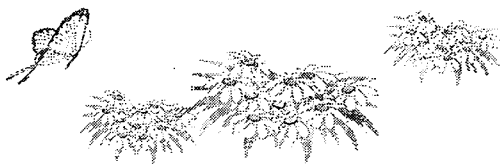
Friends often wonder why I chose Buddhism. To answer simply, it is because I need to know the reason for my existence and the meaning to it. Buddhism provided the answers.

Starting from the traditional idol and ancestral worshipping in my pre-teen days and later, to Christianity; my encounter with Buddhism did not come easy. By then, I was already thirty-one. It was like coming home once again. It was like finding what one has been searching for a long time. Up to that time, I did not have an inkling as to what Buddhism actually is. Yet, when I chanced upon the Venerable Master Shen-Kai, a Buddhist monk in his seventies, I had this great feeling of well being; of being re-united with a long lost friend. Throughout the two-hour conversation, I was overwhelmed by his great wisdom and compassion. It



was my first encounter with a Buddhist monk and I concluded that the common notions that Buddhism is a form of idol worshipping and is superstitious are simply not true. Critics of the religion could not have been more wrong. I had always wanted a religion that is based on wisdom and equality; that is scientific and can answer my questions on life. Buddhism is it. I became a Buddhist and took refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha under Venerable Master Shen-Kai's guidance on the following day.

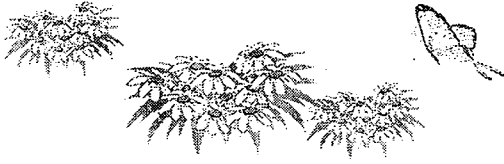
The Buddha taught me that all things and events are governed by the universal truth of cause and effect, or karma, which to me is most profound and logical. That, by our karma, we are caused to exist over and over again in various realms of life means we alone are responsible for our own well being and salvation. Good or bad, I realized that the reason for my existence is my karma. I am what I am today because of



what I have done yesterday, the days before, and the lives before. My actions today will decide on my future.

And the meaning to it? Ultimately it lies in being selfless, in being of service to others and in contributing to others' bliss and happiness. Material well being and the so called personal achievements are but incidental, for they do not have any real meaning. The absence of a Creator in the Buddha's teachings appealed to me since I have never been able to reconcile why some should be born more fortunate than others. We reap what we sow and there is equality.

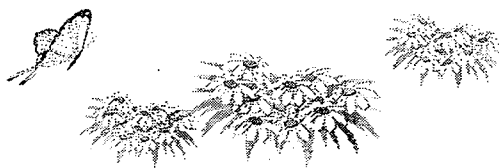
Like everybody else, I also seek happiness in life. I was to learn that true happiness does not exist until one realizes where suffering stems from. The Buddha taught that our suffering stems from the three poisons: greed, anger and ignorance. In contrast to the urge to



possess and accumulate, the Buddhist attitude is to practice detachment and generosity. Against anger and hatred, Buddhists practice patience and compassion; against ignorance or foolishness, with wisdom rather than emotion. One soon realizes that the happiness obtained through external sources is often short lived and that realization through a wholesome mental attitude remains with us.

Part of the frustration or suffering that we experienced in life is that the good things we long for do not seem to last. The Buddhist wisdom that all things, good or bad, do not last forever is profound. All things, including life, experience the four phases of formation, existence, decadence, and voidness. We do not live forever and indeed, the aging process being the moment we were conceived. The modern man is intelligent, but the law of impermanence that the Buddha expounded more than 2,500 years ago is still valid.





Thus the Buddhist attitude of detachment rather than attachment saves a lot of frustration and mental stress. There is wisdom in not pursuing a lost cause.

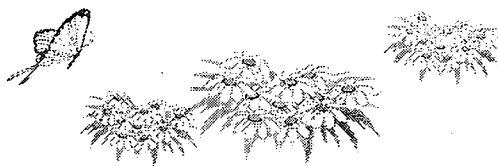
My encounter with Buddhism has been one of liberation. Liberation from the fear of the unknown on one hand, and from the stress and strain of the so called modern living on the other. Through Buddhism, I realized how much control and responsibility I hold over my life. More importantly, how much more I can contribute to others' lives. If life can be compared with a ball of entangled string, Buddhism is a way of life in which a few knots here and there are untied as we go along. It puts life in order. Practising Buddhists lead very happy and blissful lives.

During that first meeting with Venerable Master Shen-Kai in 1987, he told me that I had finally found what I had been searching for even before I spoke my



first word. He could not have been more right. I am grateful to him for showing me the way.

By Dr. Lim Thiam Beng

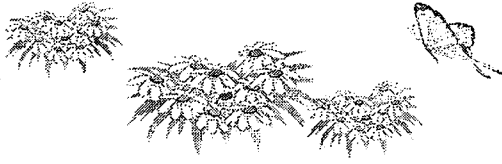


## Open Mindedness

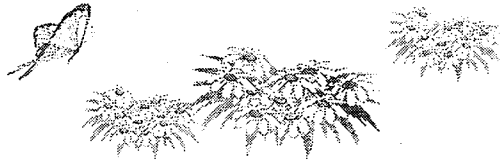
For me, Buddhism is a continuous process of discovering about myself and life as a whole; discovering how insignificant we are in this vast world of sentient beings; discovering that this insignificant being that is called "me" has immense capability to both create and destroy! Buddhism helps me get back to the basics and it boils down to the mind and how it is set.

Prior to Buddhism, I was shackled by a rigid mindset. I had to pay for my inflexibility with a lot of anxiety and stress. Conflicts arose frequently. They sapped a lot of my energy. Who did I put the blame on? Others, of course! How could there be bliss and happiness?

I discovered the self-defeating nature of a rigid, inflexible mindset. What if the mindset is wrong? The



entire prospect of a better well-being goes with it. As an example, I had this common misconception that I cannot afford to be too kind or else there will be no end to people wanting to take advantage of my kindness, or if I am too generous with my possessions, what little wealth I have will soon be depleted. In my old mindset, this is simple arithmetic and I had to be right. The truth is that things don't work this way. Discarding this mindset helps me experience why Buddhism advocates the practice of compassion and giving. The more we give, the more we have. We become rich in many different ways. Moreover, we subdue our greed. It is certainly not a one-for-one exchange for the returns are immense. I certainly did not become any poorer! It is the natural order of things. Simple arithmetic just isn't adequate to explain. Come to think of it now, I had spent so much energy on my defense mechanism that I led a miserable life.



With an open mind, I can now flow with whatever the situation might be. I don't shut others out with my own dogma. I learn to live with the environment rather than force or expect the environment to suit me. This allows a relaxed mind that is capable of handling any situation. There are less hiccups in life. My confidence grows and I now approach life with a "can do" or a positive attitude.

The teachings of Buddha makes life a wonderful experience. However, I feel that we can only experience it to the fullest when we learn to put things down and live with a more open mind.

By Lim Siew Tiong

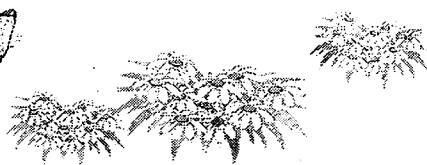


## More than just chanting

"It is like enrolling yourself in a school. You have to register yourself first. So is learning Buddhism. The first step is to take refuge in the three treasures: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha." These were the words of Venerable Shen-Kai which gave me the courage to take that important first step eight years ago.

Having spent 12 years in a Methodist school, Buddhism never crossed my mind even though I was brought up in a family where worshipping of traditional popular deities was the norm. I had, from young, dismissed such beliefs as mere superstition. I had misunderstood that those beliefs was Buddhism.

The first couple of years as a Buddhist was a struggle for me. I did not fully appreciate Buddhism. Are these chanting and ceremonies all there is to Bud-



dhism? There was a lot of internal strife. I did not become a Buddhist just to chant. Fortunately for me, my participation in the Dharma discussion sessions helped me realize that there was more, much more, to Buddhism than chanting and rituals. It has so much to do with living that I wondered how one could ever attain bliss and happiness that we all so dearly seek without really knowing Buddhism.

Buddhist teachings on being aware of our actions, to manifest compassion to others, to treat all things with detachment, the reality of impermanence, the natural law of cause and effect, the consequences of greed, anger and ignorance, the Noble Eight-fold Path, to name a few, are all about living a fulfilling life. When we live with these, it means we apply them wherever we are and in any situation. Simple and practical.

There is really no need to dwell on the profound



theories, unless one is a student of theology, to be really convinced that Buddhism is indeed a great religion, or philosophy. It is more important to put the teachings into practice. Many of us drive, but how many of us really know in detail how the engine and other mechanisms of a vehicle work? We get into the vehicle, turn on the ignition, start the engine and off we go. In the process of driving, it is inevitable that we learn about the complex machinery, but in the meantime, it ferries us to wherever we choose to go. It is practical. I may never be able to drive a car if I had spent all my time and energy trying to understand the slightest detail of how it works. Similarly, it would have been a pity if I had spent all my time and energy researching into Buddhism. I may end up as a "mechanic" of Buddhism without realizing what Buddhism is all about. Then, I would never be able to ferry myself to a life of bliss and happiness.





I am convinced that Buddhism is the religion that can liberate all sentient beings and all through out own efforts.

By Tan Mui Hwan



## SCIENCE AND BUDDHISM

In my many years of practice following my qualification as a doctor, I faced many questions that I found could not be answered by science alone.

Science teaches that we inherit our genes from our parents. On the other hand, we do see that many differences exist between parents and their offspring, and similarly, amongst siblings. Those who have abnormal babies often questions why this is so. Sickness and accidents occur every day. I was frequently asked by patients stricken with cancer why it happened to them even though they led seemingly healthy life styles. Many a time questions like these cannot be explained adequately by the scientific knowledge that we possess.

Buddhism offers the explanation that these are



due to the negative karma which we have created either in our present or past lives, or both. The different blessings and merits which we acquired in our previous existence explain why people have different capacities. This is the universal law of cause and effect. We reap what we sow. Even in disasters or epidemics, where many people perished, some are miraculously spared through the blessings and merits that they have cultivated.

Although I was trained to treat others, I was not well equipped to handle my own problems in my continuing practice of medicine. The life of a doctor in this modern age is a stressful one. Many times I was troubled and greatly saddened by the sights of suffering or dying patients.

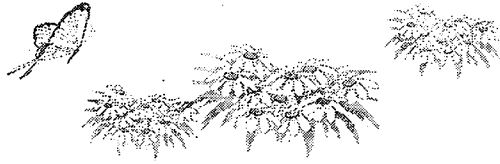
I was fortunate to chance upon Venerable Master Shen-Kai. We discussed the many issues in life as well



as those I was facing at that time. I was deeply impressed by his wisdom and knowledge, in particular the relevance of Buddhism to our daily life. He pointed out to me that many of our daily problems stem from greed, anger and ignorance. We can overcome these through learning and practising Buddhism, and maintaining a calm mind through meditation and chanting.

He also explained that all things experience the four phases of formation, existence, decadence and emptiness. In other words, they only exist momentarily due to the aggregation of causes and conditions. In our human lives, these four phases translate into birth, aging, sickness and eventually, death. All things being impermanent. We should practice liberation instead of being persistent in our worldly pursuits.

With this understanding, I now view life from a different perspective. My perceived problems are man-



ageable after all. In comparison with the past, I am a more forgiving and patient person. I am glad that I embraced Buddhism and aim for knowledge, in particular the relevance of Buddhism to our daily life. He pointed out to me that many of our daily problems stem from greed, anger and ignorance. We can overcome these through learning and practising Buddhism, and maintaining a calm mind through meditation and chanting. I am glad that I embraced Buddhism and aim to cultivate towards a blissful life.

By Dr. Lim Swee Lian



## Living in the knowing

In my younger days whenever I was asked about my religion, I always claimed to be a free-thinker. I felt uncomfortable to call myself a Buddhist because I was very concerned with my image. My impression of a Buddhist was one who worships the idols in the temples, makes offerings of food and flowers to the gods and deities, burns incense and joss papers and other meaningless practices. It appeared to me to be old-fashioned and superstitious. I had actually mistaken such practices as being Buddhist. How ignorant I was!

These days, having embraced Buddhism for about two years now, I am happy to call myself a Buddhist because being a Buddhist is one who lives "in the knowing". Knowing what is the Universal Truth of Reality and taking responsibility for ourselves. I do not



live in fear of a Religious Law which commands obedience and punishes people who do not have faith in that particular religion. This universal truth applies equally to everyone regardless of race or religion, for one who sows, reaps. The belief that one who has faith in a personal God upon death would be granted the privilege of going to heaven, otherwise be sent to hell, did not make sense to me. Actually, we are the ones who created heaven and hell in our mind.

What Buddhism appeals to me is the profundity of the teachings of the Buddha. It calls for understanding of the nature of things as they really are and the knowing of the conditions that give rise to them, rather than blindly believing in a personal God who created everything, including catastrophes and calamities! We learn to understand the nature of life, the causes of unhappiness or dissatisfaction. Living in the knowing, being aware and mindful of our speech, action and



thoughts. When things go wrong, we do not start to blame others for our problems and sufferings, but we investigate, reflect and check ourselves for the causes. For suffering or unhappiness or dissatisfaction or discontentment or misery, whatever we may call it, is a result of our worldly concern of attachment and aversion to material possession, ego, sensual pleasure, etc. due to our greed, conceit and ignorance, we created the causes of unhappiness. The Buddha taught us to see the cause of our unhappiness and the way to end it.

Being Buddhist means I am able to look within myself and accept the responsibility for the conditions of my life. It is the continuing of my journey within. A journey to find my true self, reflecting on my purpose in life, obtaining liberation from or at least reducing the endless series of problems and struggles that I face in life. I do this by checking on my motivations, letting





go, bit by bit, of my attachments and purifying my polluted mind. Everyone of us has the spiritual potential to do it without relying on somebody else or an external divinity. We are our own savior.

By Winnie Koh



## Endurance and magnanimity

I always consider myself fortunate to know Buddhism. It helps to open up a whole new perspective of life for me. To really understand and benefit from Buddhism, one has to apply what the Buddha taught in the course of one's daily life and in the process cultivate one's conduct.

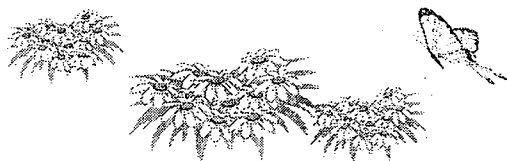
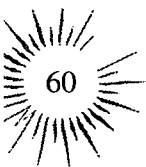
Endurance is virtue. But, many people mistake it for cowardice. The truth is that it takes a lot of courage and strength to endure. One must be able to dispel the fear of "being looked down upon" or considered to have "lost face" by others for not retaliating. One must be able to maintain a noble silence on the bad things and the generosity to praise the good things.

The highest level of endurance is of course non-endurance. That means not having to endure at all,



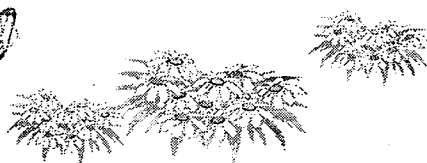
because with a purified mind, one already understands the causes and conditions that lead to whatever the matter may be. As a beginner, one must learn to be tolerant, even under insulting situations. It is a common experience that when we are tolerant for a moment and keep our impulse under control, we will be able to reduce big issues into small issues and small issues into non-issues. A proverb says, "Tolerate for a moment, the wind will stop and the waves subside. Retreat one step, and you will realize that the sea and sky is so immense." As time goes by, one gains the respect of others. Better still, anger does not arise in a purified mind and there is really nothing to endure.

Venerable Shen-Kai likens the highest level of endurance to good earth. It accepts anything thrown at it in silence. It does not complain that the skyscraper building is too heavy, neither does it complain that the animal waste smells. In fact, it transforms the latter into useful fertilizer for vegetation. In the same way,



endurance reverses the effects of negative karma into positive ones. Indeed, it is one of the highest attainments in learning Buddhism. Admit one's mistakes bravely. When wrongly accused, there is no need to get angry because the truth will soon prevail. According to Buddhism, what is real is more important than the apparent. A right thought and a kind mind accumulate blessings.

Our contacts with fellow human beings are boundless and so are our worldly concerns. Therefore, one needs to be magnanimous too. Magnanimity needs space. It needs "emptiness". Only when there is space can one be receptive to new ideas and new concepts, be these ours or someone else's. An empty space contains air, without which we cannot survive. Thus, emptiness is very essential to us. Emptiness is created only when one knows how to let go and be detached. Only when old thoughts are discarded will



there be room for the new and better ones. A perpetual state of emptiness means not getting attached to anything.

As I reminded myself constantly of these Buddhist teachings and put them into practice, I begin to notice that I am having more peaceful and happy times. I hope the day will come when there is nothing for me to endure anymore, even when I am trampled on like the good earth.

By Agnes Tan Hee Tiong



## A Diamond Craftsman

Buddhism, to me, is like a craftsman working on a rough, uncut diamond; honestly and diligently attempting to smoothen the rough surface and sharp edges, and I am both the craftsman and the uncut diamond. Of course, in the process, more corners and edges can also be created, but the challenge lies in the continuous effort to perfect it. It is therefore an ongoing task. Every defect needs to be worked on. Only then will it become a jewel that will be well received by others. It can also be likened to a mental policeman, constantly prompting me of my defilement and shortcomings, thus preventing me from getting into undue trouble and saving me the sufferings that must follow.

My greatest enemy is none other than myself.



This is because of self-ego and ignorance. Knowing Buddhism and likening it to a diamond craftsman or a mental policeman has helped me to be more aware of my thoughts and actions. It has helped me tremendously in seeing and understanding things better and clearer. Living becomes much lighter as compared to what it used to be. As an ongoing process, being mindful and vigilant is the order of the day. Understanding the Law of Cause and Effect also provide answers to many of my previously unanswered questions.

By Jessie Lim



## Looking Inside

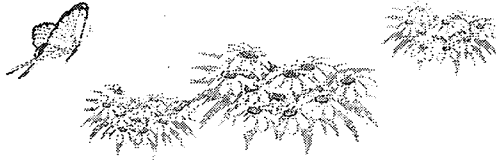
When we say we are Buddhists, it really means we want to learn and practice the teachings of the Buddha, emulate the Bodhisattvas and aspire to attain enlightenment. Indeed, Venerable Master Shen-Kai reminds us that the only purpose of learning and practicing Buddhism is to attain enlightenment and Buddhahood.

How to practice Buddhism? Again, Venerable Master Shen-Kai explains: emulate the compassion, patience, purity, loving kindness, liberation, selflessness and wisdom of the Buddhas.

For whatever others do unto us, and under any circumstance, we are not learning and practicing Buddhism if we:

- \* get angry with them





- \* loose our patience with them
- \* dislike them
- \* always think first of our self-interest
- \* attach to our views

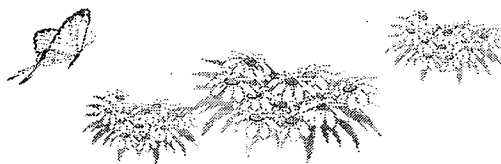
If we react in the above manner, then we have not learned and practiced enough. It is our fault, not theirs. After all, we are Buddhists aspiring to follow the Bodhisattva path. They may not be.

When things do not work out well, look inside us for an answer. When we look outside ourselves, we see all kinds of irrelevant things and mistake them for reality. We are only looking for someone else to put the blame on. It is always very easy to put the blame on others. It is difficult to admit our shortcomings. Yet, we must try, for real bliss is attained only when we are honest with ourselves and repent. When we loose our patience with others, it contradicts with our



reason for wanting to learn and practice Buddhism. Our teachers, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas do not teach us to react in this way. Such reactions defeat the very purpose of being a Buddhist. Perhaps, we should ask ourselves why we react in this manner and from whom did we learn this. The real challenge for a Buddhist is to sincerely measure oneself against the Buddha's teachings, not against others. Faulting others is easy, but it is not Buddhism.

By Linn Fo Ming



## A WAY OF LIFE

After I read the book "Taming the Monkey Mind", I felt the need to learn more about Buddhism. I concurred with the author's observation that our mind is like that of the monkey, unceasingly distracted by one thing after another. After all, spurred by an inquiring mind, my search for the answers to a host of questions had taken me through other religions: Who am I? Why am I here? Is there really a God?; Where is God when it hurts?; What happens to me after I die?...

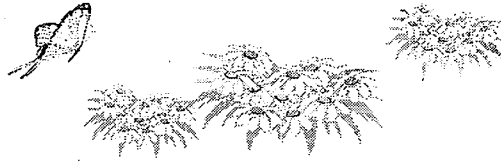
It was Christine Tan, a friend of my wife, who formally introduced us to Jen Chen Vihara where we met a Dharma teacher. She spoke to us about Jen Chen Buddhism. It was my first encounter with a Buddhist Nun and her patience, openness, kindness, boldness and confidence overwhelmed me. I was convinced that Buddhism is not a form of idol worshipping and is also



not superstitious. My understanding of this newfound religion was reinforced when I had the good fortune of attending a Dharma talk given by Venerable Master Shen-Kai.

What appeals to me most about Buddhism is its emphasis on the mind and potential once the mind is trained, developed and purified. Many religions teach us to do good and avoid doing evil. Buddhism, besides avoiding evil deeds, also teaches us to train, develop, and purify our minds. Our minds are the creators or sources of our experience. It was a great relief to discover that I do not have to look beyond myself for answers to my problems. I realized how much control and responsibility I hold over my life!

The freedom from dogma and finding the truth for oneself is also very appealing. Buddhism does not demand that anyone accept its teachings on trust. The



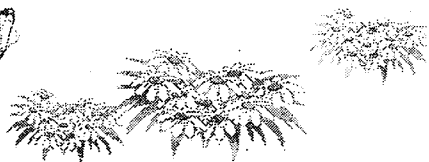
practitioner is instead invited to try them out, to experiment with them and to find the truth for himself. He must logically accord the same right to others and also respect them if they arrive at different conclusions. This is the basis of tolerance that the world acutely needs today. Buddhism respects our intelligence and does not demand blind faith - we are encouraged to reflect, examine, and realize. It is a religion where wisdom and awareness predominate. There is no compulsion.

Many other aspects of Buddhism appeal to me as well: The Four Noble Truths and The Eight-Fold Path; the emphasis on Wisdom through Right Understanding and Right Thought; Morality through Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood and Right Effort: Meditation through Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration; Compassion and Love for all forms of life. These teachings helped me to sort out my priorities,



resolve my conflict, and are useful in my daily life. I realize that my "monkey mind" needs to be tamed. I need to practice harder on my meditation.

I realize that Buddhism is worth pursuing. It offers a way of life that promises well being and salvation. Buddha's emphasis on self-reliance and encouragement for one to inquire, to investigate profoundly, and to learn from one's experience of life is comforting since it means that Buddhism is not dogmatic. One realizes one's doubt by himself, while the Dharma shows the way. The understanding of the universal truth of cause and effect, karma, and impermanence had cleared doubts on the meaning of existence, birth and death. There is a great relief when I realize that in time to come, the wall of ignorance will crumble and through earnest application of the Dharma in my daily life, I will be able to realize the full potential of my mind. I became a Buddhist and took refuge in the Buddha,



the Dharma and the Sangha under the guidance of  
Venerable Master Shen-Kai.

By Thomas Tay



## Put the Ego Down

We all seek happiness and bliss. We all hope to be free of sufferings. The good news is that we can actually have happiness and bliss. The bad news is that many of us do not know how to.

When we are on the road, we know when and how to avoid the oncoming traffic, lest we get hurt, simply because we could see them coming. Yet, when harm comes in other forms, we either fail or refuse to recognize them. Instead, we are often prepared to take them on. Because of this, happiness avoids us and we suffer. In other words, it is we who deprive ourselves of happiness. But, we never knew. We have a lot of control over our well being, yet we are ignorant about it.





Often we find it difficult to:

- \* accept the views of other people. An argument starts. We suffer.
- \* give way. A conflict erupts. We suffer.
- \* admit our mistakes. Resentment builds up. We suffer.
- \* revere others for their strength. We are envious. We suffer.

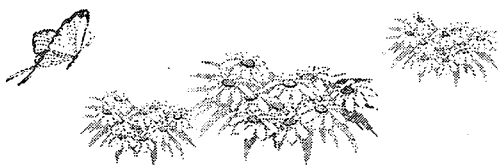
We can easily accept the views of others, give way, admit our wrongs and revere others. But the inner sentient being, the ego, says "no". For that, not only does it leave us bruised; it bruises others as well. In the end, we must realize that it is we who deprive ourselves of the happiness and bliss through our attachment to our ego. We have to make a decision - pride and ego, or happiness and bliss. Pointing an accusing finger at others or adopting a negative attitude will not bring us real happiness. It is not worth the suffering



we have to experience.

If we are wise enough not to stand in front of the oncoming vehicle, surely we have the wisdom to avoid oncoming suffering. Put the ego down, let it go and be liberated. Then, we are on our way to happiness and bliss.

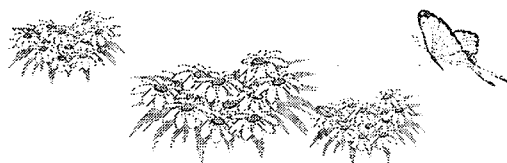
By Jue Zhao



## BLISS IS HERE

Connoisseurs of Chinese tea will tell you that a well-used, well-seasoned teapot will brew a better tea. However, it takes years of brewing to have a seasoned teapot. You might have heard of children innocently lifting the hen off its eggs every few hours to check if they have hatched. Similarly, they may uncover the soil every other day to see if the seeds that they sowed are sprouting. We sometimes wonder when the fruit tree we have planted is going to bear fruits or when is the plant going to flower. We marvel at the patience of the old woman in the fable who ground a bar of iron into an embroidery needle, or the old man who single-handedly "moved" a mountain to build a road. The fact is that all these do happen.

It is understandable that waiting for the condi-



tions to mature may be a long and, at times, frustrating process. Neither the pot nor the tea leaves are at fault; neither the hen nor the eggs are at fault; neither seeds nor the soil, neither the fruit nor the tree... As long as we continue to provide the correct conditions, that day will come. Gradually and silently, the pot becomes seasoned the eggs hatched, the seeds sprout, the tree bears fruits and the flowers bloom.

As long as we continue to brew the tea, the pot will season itself. We may not be able to witness the process, yet it is happening. It is the same with learning and practising Buddhism. We wonder when our wisdom will unfold, when will we find our Buddha-nature, our bliss and happiness, our liberation... etc. If we have set our mind right and provided the right conditions, our wisdom is unfolding right now. We are uncovering our Buddha-nature at this very moment, bliss, happiness and liberation are already here.



Have you provided the correct conditions?

By Lin Fo Ming



## A Simpler, Calmer and More Peaceful Life

I view Buddhism as more of a philosophy than a religion. I don't think it matters which, as long as man can benefit from it. I am one of those who has. The teaching to refrain from idol worshipping and superstition is very relevant to me. It taught me to counter fear of the unknown with wisdom through my own effort, rather than to rely on some legendary idols. Its greatest impact on my life is the realization that idol worshipping is an utter waste of time and money. Superstition breeds insecurity and ignorance. It brings misery and more misery. Life is stagnant, there is no progress.

Buddha's teachings of the Four Noble Truths and the three poisons of greed, anger or hatred and ignorance help me understand life much better. I learn to



give: give up, give way and give away. I feel happier being able to give.

Meditation helps me to maintain awareness of my mind. Awareness warns me against defilement and worrying unnecessarily. I feel more relaxed. I am awoken to the reality that nothing in this world is permanent, ultimately everything has to become void. I begin to detach and feel liberated from unnecessary clinging. It frees my mind like tons of burden being lifted off from my shoulders.

Buddhism has certainly made an impact on my life. I know I have much more to learn, but what little I know about Buddha's teachings has already helped me to live a simpler, calmer and more peaceful life. Indeed life for me has changed for the better. I am grateful to my friends who introduced my husband and me to Buddhism.

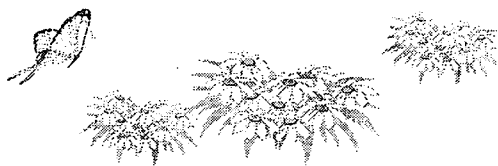


## CULTIVATE AND LET GO

My encounter with Buddhism began years ago, when my friend, Seow Tiong, and I chanced upon a book entitled "The Spiritualism and Uniqueness of Buddhism". From it I understood, or at least I thought I understood, Buddhism and its distinction from Taoism. It is a pity that I did not pursue it further than just reading books on Buddhism. I was simply contented that Buddhism was a very good philosophy.

It was not until last year, and with the encouragement of this same friend, that I decided to embrace Buddhism. Perhaps it was my previous misunderstanding that I first needed to be perfect and the fear of not being able to live up to expectations that deterred me from taking refuge earlier. Indeed, as Venerable Master Shen-Kai explained, taking refuge is just like returning to the guidance of the great teacher, the Bud-





dha, and enrolling in a school to start learning Buddhism. I began to understand that if I am faced with unhappiness and obstacles in life, I really should blame myself first for not having learned and practiced enough. I stopped grumbling and constantly reminded myself to practice what Buddha taught, and to emulate the Bodhisattva spirit.

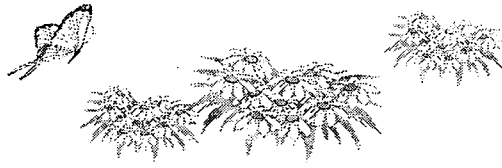
My understanding of Buddhism was reinforced recently when a Dharma teacher enroute to Australia stopped over in Singapore for a few days. She has excellent skills and humor in relating the Buddha's teachings to our daily life. I learned from her the joy of living with Buddhism and I would like to share this experience with you:

[One] Live naturally, not with 'self-freedom'. When we look forward to 'self-freedom', it means that we are self-centered. We want things to suit us and



our way. Those who do not comply with us make us unhappy. On the other hand, if we live naturally and with ease, our happiness will not be affected by the people or the environment around us. Whether it is a wooden bed or one which is soft and comfortable, makes no difference to us. We are free from attachments when our mind is clear, calm and free of delusions.

[Two] Let go. This does not mean being irresponsible. When we are faced with obstacles, we must know how to let go and put these obstacles aside temporarily. Otherwise we will find ourselves in an entangled mess, where even breathing becomes difficult. When we are able to let go and be forgiving, we maintain our peace of mind, eventually wisdom will prevail and we soon realize that the problems are not as huge as we perceived them to be. They become easily solvable. Letting go, as opposed to clinging on, also ap-



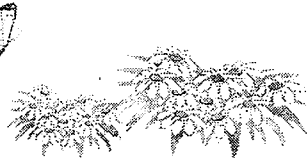
plies to status and wealth. We all need to learn to let go. Of course I still have much to learn, but I am already harvesting the fruits of my efforts in letting go, especially when I am faced with the many challenges at work.

[Three] Be humble and approachable. Just as nobody feels comfortable staring directly into a bright lamp without a lamp-shade, the same applies to our conduct. If we are conceited and a self-proclaimed genius in all fields, constantly boasting about our capability, it is only natural that others feel uncomfortable being with us. Some may even find us obnoxious and would rather avoid us. On the other hand, if despite all our knowledge and capabilities, we remain humble and approachable, we are like a bright lamp with a beautiful lamp-shade. Others treasure us as they do a bright light, and at the same time they feel comfortable and take pleasure in our company.



I feel that I have done myself a big favor, for after embracing Buddhism and taking refuge, life for me is filled with hope as I strive for a happy and peaceful life.

By Agnes Tan



## BEING "LESS NORMAL" BUT NORMAL

Some 18 years ago, I met a political science student at college. He was telling me something about Buddhism but I was not interested then. All I can remember is that retribution awaits the doer of bad deeds. Now I understand this is what the Law of Karma tells us.

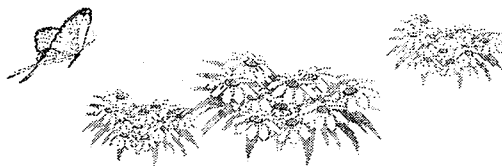
In 1991, my husband Roger and I attended a Dharma talk by an Australian monk. He clarified most of popular superstitions and misunderstanding we had about Buddhism. To my mind, if an Australian, somebody from a culture totally different from mine can accept Buddhism to the extent of becoming a monk, that religion must really be marvelous. The teachings must be very profound for a Westerner not only to be-



lieve in but also to become a Buddhist monk. However, my pursuit of this religious path did not take off then.

It was only in August 1993, after attending a Dharma talk on mediation by a Dharma teacher at the Jen Chen Buddhism Blissful Culture Center in Singapore that my interest in Buddhism really started. Since then I have not stopped searching. Searching for what? I don't know! Perhaps searching for my true self, peace and happiness.

According to a British psychologist Guy Claxton, "Buddhism offers a practical way for normal healthy people to become more healthy and less normal. Buddhism is really a deep do-it-yourself kit of ideas and practices for changing in the directions most people would like; more openness, less defensiveness, more tolerance, less irritation, more ease, less worry, more



generosity, less selfishness, more naturalness, less self-consciousness; more equanimity, less frustration. At the heart of Buddhism we find a Buddhism that is very much of the heart. Its subject matter is the day-to-day business of feelings, relationships and self-respect. Its aim is to enable you to look at yourself in the mirror with absolute honesty and feel at peace with whom-ever you see.

This passage sums up what I have learned in Buddhism thus far. We always think we have to do what everyone else is doing in order to be normal. For example, we think it is our right to get angry when something not to our liking is said or done to us, getting upset when some else makes a mistake, or the feeling of discontentment when we don't measure up to others, etc. What is really needed is the wisdom to understand that such reactions may actually do us more harm than good. According to the Buddha's



teachings, when a person does not conduct himself right, it is because he is ignorant; he does not know any better. What he needs is someone to show him the way that will not have undesirable repercussions or bad karma. Getting upset does not help. In this respect, I feel that we really should learn to be "less normal".

To me, being Buddhist means to be mindful of our everyday speech and action, looking within ourselves for answers to our problems rather than pointing an accusing finger at others, to be in oneness with everybody instead of being egotistical, to be compassionate instead of getting angry, tolerant instead of violent, to be of service to others with absolute selflessness. Ours would then be a beautiful world to live in.





## PRACTISE BUDDHISM CAN CREATE HAPPINESS

Since I took refuge in Buddhism, I was fortunate to learn Jen Chen Buddhism from Venerable Master Shen-Kai who taught me much about practising Buddhism. I have always experienced the Dharma joy of being with the Buddha. However, due to my strong attachment to emotion, love and passion, my innate nature of wisdom and brightness was inhibited. In addition, because I was affected by affairs of the heart, I was unable to realize the Dharma even though I fully understood it. I felt very ashamed of myself.

Looking back before I knew my husband, although life was not all a bed of roses, I had always felt peaceful and happy regardless of any setback in life. My philosophy of life was to let all matters, be it good or bad, take their natural course and I was never both-



ered or troubled by them. But, since I met my husband, I began to feel troubled due to my attachment of love for him and the expectation of his love for me. Having experienced the feeling of "having yet not possessing", I realized that emotion, love and passion are the roots of all pains and vexations as well as the cause to the cycle of birth-death transmigration.

My husband and I are very different in character. For example, I felt that a son/daughter should, while his/her parents are alive, fulfill his/her role of filial piety by providing them the best physically and spiritually. He thought otherwise. I thought that as the eldest of the siblings, I should care for and be concerned for my younger brothers and sisters. Again, he felt otherwise. He felt that everyone living in this world, should learn to survive and care for himself; one should not be dependent or expect to be taken care of. I felt that as parents, we should always communicate with our



children to exchange views and ideas, and should take them out as and when we have the time to widen their scope of life. In addition, parents should inspire their children's cultivation and development of virtue and conscience, and be concerned about their process of growth. But, my husband felt that all these are rather unnecessary; he felt that children have their own process of growth, and as parents, we should not be too attached to our own perceptions and methods. Thus, he was always only concerned about doing his own affairs and seldom spent time with the children. As for me, I was concerned about the comfort and joy of the family, thus I was always troubled and vexed by my husband's indifference.

Since I took refuge and started learning Buddhism under the guidance of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, I realized that I should not attach to my own view nor should I expect others to comply with me. Hence-



forth, I learn to change myself. In educating and caring for my children, I always communicate and share with them some of my personal experiences, discuss with them some events in the newspaper or examples from the Buddhist books on the good and bad conduct of people.

I hope my children will be able to differentiate what should be done and what should not, understand the natural Law of Cause and Effect, and be both wise and happy.

I no longer complain about my husband's uncooperation in taking care of the children nor his inability to provide a supportive role in my teaching of the children. Instead, I am sincerely grateful for his thoughtfulness in undertaking the role of sending the children to school every day early in the morning and for any extracurricular activities. He must also find it

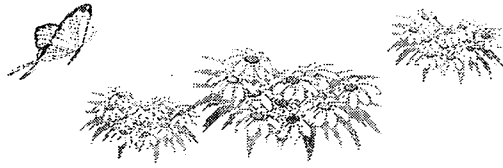


laborious. I realize that he is, after all, a good father. It is only that he express his "love" and "concern" differently. I used to care about and be attached to my set of ways which gave rise to my frequent complaints about his not caring for the children. In fact, I found some similarities between my two children's character and my husband as they grew into their teens. Like him, they are independent, quiet, cool, rational in thought and introspective. Although all these years they have spent a large part of their life with me, they are not at all influenced by my temperament. This made me realize that although nurture and guidance are important, everyone when he/she is born brings with him/her his/her own temperament and karmic effects from past lives. Thus, everyone must learn to be independent, accommodating, forgiving and mutually understanding; only then can we live happily and in harmony. Otherwise, it will only lead to each being a thorn in other's eyes; conflicts and frustrations become in-



evitable and we become unable to purify our mind, speech and bodily actions.

I did not like entertainment and chatting, yet my friends commented that I am amiable, hospitable, helpful, often concerned and care very much for others without much concern for my own well being, and all I want is for others to be happy. I am frank and sincere to my friends without any reservations; but for secrets and privacy, I am tight-lipped concerning others' affairs. Since I took refuge and started to learn and practice Buddhism, I did much soul-searching and discovered that I did not pay attention to my husband's feelings on whether he can accept or understand my enthusiasm in helping others. Henceforth, our conflict in views often occurred due to my enthusiasm and his coldness. In the past, I forced myself to accommodate his ways in dealing with matters and people in order not to annoy him. However, I was often vexed because



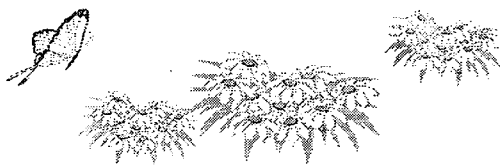
of this. I even thought of leaving him, but found myself unable to let go. Now, I realized that I too did not manage the situation well. I did not harmoniously and skillfully deal with many matters. I cared about what others needed, but I neglected my family's feelings and needs. That is why they did not respond happily to my enthusiasm in helping others. It was due to my lack of awareness and wisdom that I was not able to perfectly fulfill my intention of benefiting others as well as myself.

Currently, I have improved tremendously in this area. The teachings of Jen Chen Buddhism have developed my wisdom of human relationships, helped me and my husband to let go of our attachment in our own views and concepts. Now, we are able to coordinate well in many areas in terms of views and ways of doing them.



My husband is my virtuous teacher. I read a Buddhist scripture on Virtuous Living, and realized that as a wife, I should express more concern, care and understanding for my husband. Therefore, I started to apply what I have learnt. I began to show my concern and care in my husband's daily life and his career development. However, he rejected such behavior as nagging, bothersome and unwanted, and told me to give him some peace! He said he could take care of himself, and told me to learn to be like him, independent and capable to take care of myself. Initially, I was very sad and could not accept such rejection. However, on further reflection, I realized that "at birth, I came alone; on death, I will leave alone". If I do not learn now, who could save me on my death? By then, I would be drowned in my emotion, love and desire, and be in ceaseless transmigration without liberation. Realizing this principle, I was grateful to my husband for helping me to further understand the Buddha's teachings.





Because of him, I understand that one should see the situation and act accordingly, and also, one should see through the reality of life and learn to let go; only then, one can attain liberation.

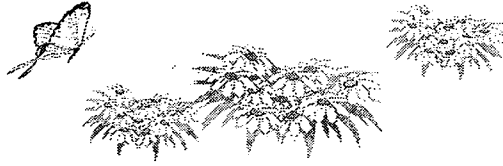
From the Buddha's teachings on the principle of Causes and Conditions, I realized that every husband and wife have their different causes and conditions - - be it good affinity, or evil affinity, or affinity of emotional entanglement, or Dharma affinity. Therefore, the ways of showing concern and living together are also different. I should not regard my husband as mine, that he must follow my view of loving and taking care of me. I must let go of all my inappropriate attachments in order to attain purity of the six senses, only then will I not be affected by my husband's behavior, attitudes and speech. Otherwise, I will be vexed and frustrated by him day and night. In fact, he is more concerned about the improvement in my practice, sup-



port and commitment to Jen Chen Buddhism. Now I am able to eradicate my foolishness and ignorance, and honestly accept my affinity with my husband.

Since I took refuge in Jen Chen Buddhism under the guidance of the Venerable Master, together with the experience gained from my relationship with my husband, I have grown to be a lot more independent. From learning to look at things positively, to be forgiving, tolerant, compassionate, having loving kindness and non-attachment, I have slowly experienced the benefit of liberation and carefreeness. I am still learning and growing; and I hope I will, one day, attain brightness and peace in every moment of my life.

By The Repentant



## I AM AWAKENED BY THE TEACHINGS

Owing to a very special affinity, I was able to meet with the teacher of Jen Chen Buddhism, Venerable Master Shen-Kai. The following evening, without much understanding of Buddhism, I took refuge and became a follower of Buddhism. Thus, I became a "betrayor" of the Catholic faith as members of my family called me so! After taking refuge, under the wise and compassionate Venerable Master Shen-Kai's guidance on how to practice Buddhism and on the principles of Jen Chen Buddhism, I began to understand the Dharma better.

Before I embraced Buddhism, I thought that Buddhism was only practiced by old folks and that it was a religion of superstition which preached unhealthy con-



cepts to the followers. In fact, my lack of understanding of Buddhism has resulted in such incorrect perception.

Ever since I took refuge, I realized that Buddhism is a religion with open-mindedness, with scientific background, great in philosophy and without prejudice. For example, to observe the Five Precepts and the Ten Virtuous Deeds, we learn to do good deeds, be law-abiding citizens and be morally virtuous persons. In addition, when we practice the Six Paramitas, we accumulate blessings, merits, wisdom and inner peace.

The most important practice in Buddhism is to eradicate undesirable habits and affliction, thus keeping a clear and peaceful mind. We can then understand that all events in this world are the results of aggregation of various causes and conditions. If the



causes and conditions are incomplete, the phenomena of all events or matter will not eventuate or will disappear. The essence of all phenomena is actually void or emptiness as nothing is permanent. Buddha also taught us not to attach to the past, present or future and not to cling onto attachment in the four forms of "I; persons; sentient beings and time-span". In respect of all good and bad, gain and loss, have and have-nots, we should not have attachment to such feelings as they will only result in ignorance and affliction. Thus, "From our mind, all elements of existence arises; in our mind, all elements of existence ceases." "If no thoughts arise, why should there be any teaching to repress these thoughts; if no teachings are available, how should those arising thoughts be curbed!"

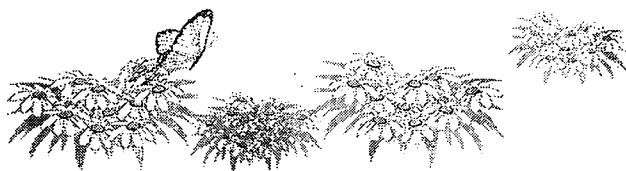
The importance of learning Buddhism is to cultivate the mind; one who has a righteous mind will not be influenced by evils, nor can an impure mind be



corrected by the Dharma. Therefore, to learn to practice Buddhism helps us to realize our awareness, to unfold our wisdom and brightness so as to lead a blissful life. This has immense benefit to mankind.

I hope more people will come forward to understand and embrace Buddhism; treasure their life, practice Buddhism and walk the Bodhisattva Path.

By Kok Poh



## AH! I HAVE FOUND IT!!

"Jen Chen Buddhism! What is Jen Chen Buddhism?" I asked seriously.

"Jen Chen Buddhism was advocated by Venerable Master Shen-Kai."

"I am sorry I have no knowledge of the Dharma, or do I have any experience of its practice. I think I am not suitable." I politely declined the invitation to learn the teaching.

"It's okay! All of us are still learning."

"When I put down the phone, I thought, 'Buddhism is Buddhism. Why is there a Jen Chen Buddhism? Probably this is elementary. Well, maybe I should learn the elementary first, then progress to the



intermediate and later the advanced level. I can then learn the Bodhisattvas' Six Paramitas until I attain supreme enlightenment."

Fortunately, at the end of 1987, Venerable Master Shen-Kai came to Singapore with two of his disciples. I was finally able to meet the Master in person. He looked very healthy and much younger than his age. I thought this might be the look of a great practising Buddhist Master.

On the following day, when Venerable Master Shen-Kai discussed the Dharma with a group of us, I came to understand that the teachings of Jen Chen Buddhism is so wonderful and perfect as it is well suited to the needs of the present society. This new understanding of Jen Chen Buddhism is completely different from what I previously thought about Jen Chen Buddhism. In fact, the practice of Jen Chen Buddhism





is what we do in our daily life - to maintain our awareness, to rid ourselves of our undesirable habits, and to carry out virtuous deeds until our understanding of the Dharma and our actions harmonize and blend in. We can then personally experience and realize the Buddha's teachings.

Jen Chen Buddhism is so real and down to earth! It is closely associated with our daily life. It is so natural and full of wisdom that it helps to liberate us from our worldly worries.

As long as we practice the Dharma and "Be with Buddha" at all times, we will certainly have brightness in our lives. Without attachment, we will not be greedy, angry, foolish, arrogant and suspicious. We will not be ignorant nor will we bear unwholesome thoughts. In addition, in respect of our relationships and dealings with people, events or happenings, we will be able



to accept the good and bad karma with ease. By applying Buddha's teachings at all times, we will receive much blessing and happiness in our lives.

Ah! I have found it! I have finally found the Dharma. I have even found the very much respected and sought after Dharma teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai. I realize that although Buddha expounded on the Five Vehicles of Buddhism, in the ultimate form, there is only One Vehicle that leads to the attainment of supreme enlightenment. I realize that Jen Chen Buddhism is the "Buddhahood Vehicle."

I vow to practice the Bodhisattvas' Six Paramitas life after life until the time when I am perfect in wisdom and merit, I will then naturally attain the supreme enlightenment of Buddhahood.



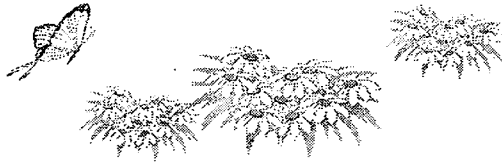
## WISH TO FOLLOW IN MASTER'S FOOTSTEPS AS A SWEEPER

It was in June 1991 that I met this new female colleague from another department at my workplace. At that time, it was totally beyond my imagination that this long-haired, attractive colleague would be the kind advisor who eventually led me to walk on the Jen Chen Bodhisattva Path. After knowing her for some time, she started introducing Jen Chen Buddhism to me. In addition, she lent me some Jen Chen Buddhist Magazines and other Buddhist books to read. She even went a step further in persuading me to take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and to practice Buddhism. However, due to my lack of good sense, I was totally untouched by her persuasion. I merely treated the loaned magazines and books as leisurely reading materials. Furthermore, I thought, "To learn Buddhism;



it is never too late to start after my old-age retirement!" As I was in my twenties then, I was totally disinterested in taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and learning Buddhism!

However, after her repeated persuasions, I dragged myself along and followed her to the Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center to attend Dharma talks. The clergy at the Center encouraged me to diligently learn and practice Buddhism; however, whatever they said could not strike a chord with me. That was simply because I was leading an aimless life and my main concern then was to lavishly enjoy myself. I was constantly surrounded by misery and affliction at that time and there was totally no peace in my mind. As a result, my health deteriorated gradually, and I did not even know how to cope with such a bad situation! Furthermore, I was then still devoted to an evil cult which subscribed to evil thoughts and beliefs, ac-



cepting falseness as truth. This evil cult promoted killing animals as offerings to the ghosts and deities; and yet I deeply believed in such teachings to the extent that I contributed both my effort and time as well as financially. Recalling such wrongful devotion, I realize my ignorance and the intense negative karma in me which I wholeheartedly repent now!

It was fortunate that I had the opportunity to meet up with the disciples who imparted the right thoughts to me. Furthermore, after having read some Jen Chen Buddhist books, I gradually began to have a vague idea what true belief Buddhism was. Since then, I started to be suspicious of the evil cult which I believed for more than two decades. I strongly felt that the evil beliefs and teachings preached by this cult is totally incomparable to the perfectly rounded, supreme Buddhist doctrine taught by the Buddha. Buddhist Dharma is the cleanser for the defilement of ig-



norance and is the light of wisdom which eradicates the darkness of evil. After a tough psychological struggle, I decided that I should no longer be deceived by the evil teachings of this cult. I therefore "left the darkness and switched to the brightness", which literally means the halt of all evil beliefs, replaced by the right ones. That marked by first step towards the practice of Buddhism.

Even though I had decided to change, the newly developed root of benevolence was of no comparison to the severe negative karma. I remained sluggish in the practice of Buddhism, and neither did I treasure the true Dharma. As for my presence at the Buddhist Center to attend Dharma talks, it was only possible due to the repetitive, ardent zealous invitation by the kind Buddhist followers. In spite of the numerous invitation, I, with reluctance, merely attended those talks a couple of times. When I was at the Dharma talk, I



paid little attention as most of the time my mind was wandering wildly. When our Master, Venerable Shen-Kai came to Singapore in June of 1992 to preach the Buddha's teachings, even though I had registered to take refuge; due to my intense negative karma, I regretted such a move on the scheduled day of taking refuge. I was fortunate that the seeds of Bodhi were sown in my past lives and with the majestic, solemn influence of the Master, I finally took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Furthermore, I deeply repented my evil belief and ignorance. After starting to learn and practice Buddhism, I sincerely appreciated the fact that it is of great difficulty (through millions of kalpas) for one to be born again as a human being and it is of even greater difficulty (through billions of kalpas) for one to learn about the Buddha's teachings! I truly felt that it was propitious that I could encounter the rightful Dharma



of Sakyamuni Buddha. At this point, I would like to express my profuse gratitude to our Master, the clergy and the kind Buddhist advisors. I have indeed benefited tremendously from the practice of Buddhism.

After taking refuge, there was a slight improvement in my awareness. However, owing to my intense negative karma and severe sluggishness, I was still not serious enough as far as practicing Buddhism was concerned. Although I intended to be more diligent in such practice, I nevertheless did not overcome my sluggishness. Often with some excuses, I frequently exonerated myself from participating in the Dharma sessions held at the Buddhist Center. What a waste of bliss and time! At that time, based on my meager understanding of Buddhism, I was upset about my mother, who was still following the beliefs of the evil cult. My ultimate intention was to stop her from unfolding and she eventually took refuge in the Buddha,





Dharma and Sangha! While I am now penning this passage, my greatest wish is that my father would one day take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, too. I pray to the Buddha and Bodhisattvas for their blessing on my father so that his negative karma shall diminish and his blessing and wisdom shall unfold and develop.

Recalling my practice of Buddhism at the Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center for the past three to four years, the benefits that I received are great! Our Master taught us the importance of eradicating our self-serving habits and cultivating purity in our body, speech and mind; to enhance the blessing, wisdom and solemnity within us. He further taught us to emulate the spirit of all Bodhisattvas, to walk the Bodhisattva Path until the attainment of Buddhahood. As a disciple of Jen Chen Buddhism, I shall strictly follow such teachings throughout my entire life. With



such deeds, there may still be a chance for me to reciprocate the kindness of the Buddha, my parents, my Master and teachers and the society. I only wish that life after life, I could follow our Master, Venerable Shen-Kai, and be a member in his team of "sweepers" (to purify the human mind) in the Saha World, and hope that the world will be a much peaceful and blissful land for everyone to live in. May you be with Buddha!

By Liu Chong Tark



## TO BE MASTER SHEN-KAI'S DISCIPLE LIFE AFTER LIFE

Perhaps it is fated. My six years of primary school education was spent in a Buddhist school. I have some understanding on Buddhism because at that time, "Basic Buddhism" was one of the compulsory examination subjects I had to study. During our weekly assembly session, we had to sing the "Song of the Three Treasures". As I grew up, I began to gradually understand the meaning of the lyrics and fell in love with it. Even after leaving my Alma Mater for over two decades, I often sing the song.

When I entered secondary school, my understanding of Buddhism came to a standstill as there was no religious subject in the school curriculum. However, I have always wished to take refuge to be a Bud-



dhist. It was not until my third year in secondary school that I underwent a "Take Refuge" ceremony in a Buddhist mission and formally became a Buddhist. However, at that time, I knew very little about Buddhist principles and the practice of Buddhism.

After I graduated from school and started working, I either participated in Buddhist Youth Dharma group activities or attended Buddhist chanting sessions. During that period, I did not learn much and found some of the Buddhist teachings too profound to be comprehended. After I got married and started a family, I was so preoccupied with the daily household chores that I no longer had any free time to go to the Buddhist mission. But, I harbored strong beliefs in such issues as superstitions, offering prayers, fortune-reading and geomancy.

Time went on until sometime in mid 1991 when



Sharon Koh invited me over to her house to attend a "Learn Buddhism" talk. I felt obliged to attend the talk because of her earnest invitation. During that evening, she gave us an introduction to Jen Chen Buddhism and analyzed the difference between learning Buddhism and offering prayers, thus making me realize that Buddhist principles are involved in our daily life! At the same time, she also recommended some books on Jen Chen Buddhism to me. Those books documented Buddhist principles which were simple to read and easy to understand. From then on, I began to acquire a deeper understanding and interest in Jen Chen Buddhism. Henceforth, I took refuge again, this time to be under the guidance of Venerable Master Shen-Kai.

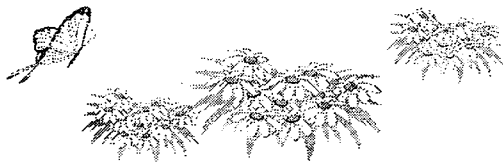
After I started learning the teachings, I still could not change some of my old habits and practices, which frustrated me so much that I even felt that learning



Buddhism was an arduous task. Thankfully, the support and guidance of my Buddhist friends helped to inspire and foster my will to learn Buddhism.

Recently, I learned that our teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai was taken ill as a result of physical exhaustion in selflessly promoting Jen Chen Buddhism. For the sake of his sacred mission, he overcame his illness and continued tirelessly in the hope that Jen Chen Buddhism can be spread to different parts of the world so that more sentient beings can leave the sea of suffering and lead a blissful and happy life. This is a Bodhisattva's spirit of great fearlessness which is forever an example to all Jen Chen disciples.

"I wish to be a disciple of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, life after life. Jen Chen Buddhism is like a big Dharma vehicle, following the footsteps of Venerable Master, moving along the path towards enlightenment



until this world becomes a Pureland. I wish to be part of the two back wheels of the Dharma vehicle to fulfill this aspiration of our teacher."

By Hui Ying



## LEARNING BUDDHISM TO ATTAIN HAPPINESS AND LEAVE SUFFERING

Since I began to understand things around me, my childhood days were saddened by the death of my siblings. My younger brother died of diphtheria at the age of two. A few years later, my fourth brother also died because of illness. A few years later, my fourth brother also died because of illness. In addition, I had a baby sister who died of measles at the age of one. With my personal encounter of these tragic happenings, I started to fear death and began to question the purpose of life. Why is one born"? Why does one have to die?

Since the diagnosis of a heart problem in my younger age, I have had to visit the doctor fortnightly and have been put under long-term medication. Even





my father, who had been working very hard throughout his life, was stricken by stomach cancer before he was able to see the fruits of his labor! Seven years later, death again knocked on our door and took our beloved mother away from us. Left with me were four unmarried brothers and a sister who was still studying. Having experienced these continued setbacks and uncertainties, I began to lose faith and motivation in life. Soon, I was searching for a spiritual reliance - a religion.

Finally, the opportunity came in 1983 when I participated in a Buddhist class organized by the Ministry of Education. To my disappointment, I learned nothing except the chanting of Buddha's name. In 1985, due to my prolonged depression, I was afflicted with thyroid and weakness in the heart. I had to be hospitalized for two weeks and managed to return to work after two months' recuperation. Since then, my



days were lived in fear; fear of a sudden departure from this mortal world, to the extent that I was afraid to close my eyes to sleep, fearing that it might be an endless sleep! It was also then that I began to chant the Buddha's name everyday to repress the fear in my mind.

In 1991, I was deeply affected by the sudden death of my third brother. I was on the verge of a breakdown, but I was saved by the Buddha in my mind, which gave me strength and support to move on with my life. At that time, I had a very strong urge to take refuge in Buddhism, but regrettable it was not fulfilled.

In 1993, my sister took refuge in Buddhism after a friend of hers introduced her to Jen Chen Buddhism. Coincidentally, in the same year in September, I was led into Jen Chen Buddhism by my friend. Two weeks later, I took refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.



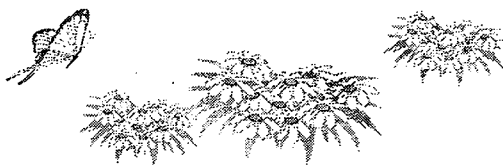
Since I became a Buddhist, my mind has opened up and I feel so much happier and peaceful!

In the Buddhist center, the Venerables and the clergy tirelessly enlighten us on the teachings of Buddha, the relationship of Buddhism to our daily lives and the practice that brings us closer to the truth. Lay members are also encouraged to share with others their progress and experience. Whether rain or shine, I have never failed to attend the activities and have learned much from the Dharma talks and sharing sessions. My life has since taken a turning point; I no longer live with fear. Instead, I feel much fulfilled and carefree. Instantaneously I have become "rich"! I realized that application of the Dharma into our daily life brings benefits in every corner. The Buddha's teaching is like a good means of transportation that brings us away from the suffering shore to the other shore of bliss and peace. Not only is there no fear in me, my



mind is more stable and peaceful. Friends even complimented the noticeable changes in me. I am convinced of the saying: "Our mind produces all phenomena; all phenomena alter when our mind changes." However, this is only the beginning as I believe we have to maintain humbleness and constant zeal in our practice in order to attain higher stages of cultivation. In this way we may soon arrive at the other shore (the shore of eternal happiness, infinite wisdom, compassion and life) .

Indeed, I am very fortunate to encounter Jen Chen Buddhism, and I understand all the good teachings, such as the Law of Causality, the concept of Cause and Effect and its application in our daily life. I am no longer confused about the direction of life, for I have realized that only by learning and practicing the Buddha's teachings in my everyday life that I can keep away the darkness of ignorance, unfold my wisdom,



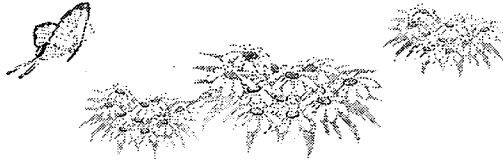
embrace bliss and brightness, emulate the deeds of the Bodhisattvas that are self benefiting as well and being beneficial to others. This is indeed a meaningful life!

By Hui Ci



## LEARNING BUDDHISM FROM AN ENLIGHTENED MASTER

Before I came to know about Buddhism, I could not distinguish between Chinese deity worship and Buddhism. It was not until I read a Buddhist book brought home by my brother, that I began to understand what Buddhism is about. It is actually scientifically-based, realistic and is related to our daily life. It is an application of wisdom without any element of superstition. Since then, I was inspired to learn Buddhism. Everyday after school, apart from finishing my homework, I spent most of my free time reading books on Buddhism. In addition, I seldom missed any chance of discussing Buddha's teachings while chatting with my classmates with the hopes that they, too, would learn about such an excellent and enlightening religion.



At that time, my knowledge of Buddhism was merely theoretical because I did not seek advice from any Dharma teacher. I did not really know how to apply the teachings in my daily life. Later, through my eldest sister, I met with the Teacher of World Jen Chen Buddhism, Venerable Master Shen-Kai. During that meeting, I sensed that the Master was very special. He was compassionate, supra-mundane, portraying an unsecular personality and his eyes were unusually sparkling. His complexion was soft, smooth and radiant. In fact, he looked many years younger than his age. He had a majestic look and was amiable, easily approachable, and emitting a sense of peacefulness, serenity, gentleness and happiness.

When I asked Venerable Master questions, he would normally give a brief but precise answer which completely cleared my doubts and would further enlighten me. He seemed to know my thoughts! His great

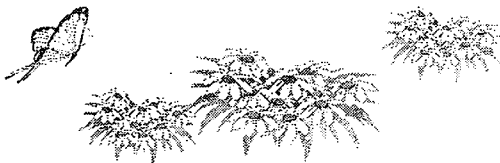


wisdom was transcendental. My respect and veneration for him grew very strongly.

Learning from Venerable Master Shen-Kai, I realized that learning Buddhism is to perceive and apply the Buddha's teachings in our daily life. It is definitely not a mere study of philosophical theory. Venerable Master Shen-Kai always told us that "learning Buddhism means learning from the Buddha. How the Buddha cultivated and practiced, we should thus cultivate and practice." In addition, Venerable Master Shen-Kai promoted Jen Chen Buddhism using simple, easily understood words so that the people of today, who lead a busy and hectic life and are unable to find time to study the Tipitaka-Collection of all sutras, can have a clear and precise understanding of Buddhism. They can then unfold their wisdom and lead a blissful life.

Since I took Buddhist refuge and become a Jen





Chen Buddhist under the guidance of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, I have a better and deeper understanding of the learning and practice of Buddhism. I am very grateful to our great Buddha and Venerable Master Shen-Kai. We, sentient beings, have bliss and brightness because the world is filled with their compassion, loving kindness and wisdom.

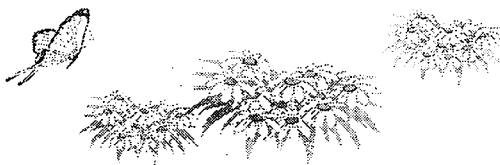
By Zhi Ren



## A RARE AFFINITY

At the age of sixteen, I attended a Buddhist talk by Venerable Shen-Kai at the Singapore Conference Hall. It was a very enlightening speech and I was very much inspired. I experienced an inner serenity, bliss and peace of mind. I gained a deeper insight into life; realizing that everything is impermanent and that things arise due to an aggregation of causes and conditions, and they cease due to a dispersion of causes and conditions. The transience of worldly life and gains disturb our peace of mind and is a cause of suffering. Both the physical and mental factors are impermanent and ever-changing; "permanent self" does not exist. Once this is realized, we can actually regard worldly conditions in a wise, cool, happy and detached manner.

After the talk, everyone gathered around Vener-



able Shen-Kai to make offering and pay reverence. Although I could not reach him as he was standing too far away from me, I could sense his serenity and brightness, which at a distance, produced the highest morality and wisdom. It was indeed a majestic image appearing before me and it made a deep impression in my mind. I knew that I had found a great master, one who was different from the others. He is a Bodhisattva, and enlightened teacher. Tears kept rolling down my cheeks. I was both happy and touched, like seemingly finding a long lost kin. I strongly wanted to take refuge in Buddhism under him, the only teacher whom I wanted to follow. Although I had already taken refuge when I was twelve; I knew this time it would be different, not just to take a refuge to be a Buddhist, but more of a strong desire to take refuge under an enlightened teacher - one whom I would not want to miss life after life! I registered for the refuge ceremony and finally my wish was fulfilled - Venerable



Shen-Kai became my refuge teacher!

Taking refuge is the first step onto the path to enlightenment and bliss. Even if enlightenment is not achieved in this life, a Buddhist who takes refuge in the Triple Gems, practices the Buddha's teachings and treads on the Bodhisattva Path, is already on the journey towards enlightenment in a future life, just like someone who climbs a mountain and keeps the summit in view so as not to lose his way. Under Venerable Master Shen-Kai's wise guidance, my understanding in Buddhism was much in-depth and broadened. His transcendental wisdom, compassion and patience in guiding us and his skillful means of helping us to develop our wisdom, to surpass the mountain of ignorance and guiding our practice, are like a sharpened knife that cuts easily through a solid object. I realized that when we purify our minds and acquire wisdom through practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, the Six Paramitas and by maintaining awareness in our con-



duct, speech and thoughts, we will naturally see the truth - the reality of life and the universe, rather than being deceived by seemingly real yet unreal superficiality of life. Realizing the causes of suffering, we understand that only when greed, anger and ignorance are removed, can we attain bliss. Thus, through maintaining purity of the mind, developing wisdom and walking on the Bodhisattva path to benefit more sentient beings, bliss and enlightenment will be attainable.

I have always felt that it is indeed a great blessing for me and Jen Chen Buddhist followers, to be able to meet with the Venerable Master Shen-Kai, to listen and practice his teachings in this life. Indeed, it is a rare affinity to be much treasured and I hope that we will not let this very life of ours go to waste. Instead, we should zealously practice the Dharma and gradually move towards the path of enlightenment.



## DESTINED FOR BUDDHISM

I was born in a family, which for generations paid reverence to Sakyamuni Buddha. However, my family members only knew about paying respect to the statue of Buddha without understanding the teaching; so I became a "Buddhist without any knowledge of Buddha's teachings". It was not until three years ago when I met a friend, who is now my wife, that I learned of the correct concept of Buddhism. My wife told me that the purpose of learning and practising Buddhism was to unfold one's wisdom through cultivation of one's conduct and purification of one's mind. Only when one has gained insight into the reality of life, applied the Buddha's teachings to one's daily life and developed one's wisdom, can a blissful life be achieved! Her keen explanation inspired my interest in Buddhism and was further enhanced through reading Buddhist books and magazines that she lent me. Perhaps she



did convince me that Buddhism is not just a set of beliefs; it is a way of living that leads to the attainment of enlightenment.

To provide me with greater in-depth knowledge of Buddhism, she brought me to Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center and introduced me to the clergy, Sharon Koh who taught me more about the fundamentals of Buddhism. I began to understand that in Buddhism, the ultimate reality is formless, bathed in perfect brightness. It can only be realized through practice and awakening.

I did not hesitate to seek refuge after realizing the truth about Buddhism. It was a real joy to take refuge as even the recitation of the verses inspired my mind, not forgetting meditation would help to maintain the awareness of our mind.

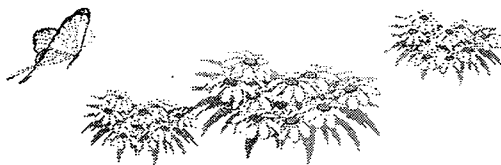


Buddhism advocates the cultivation of the mind. It advocates the eradication of all impure thoughts and the attainment of inner liberation. We need to practice amidst our busy activities, be it at our home, workplace or anywhere. I accepted the Triple Gems - the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha as the guiding ideals of my life.

My wife and I share many Buddhism beliefs and we apply the Buddha's teachings into our daily life, which has helped us to value the importance of having a family life filled with wisdom and bliss. We are both very grateful to our Master, Venerable Shen-Kai for his enlightening teaching and guidance on the Dharma and practices.

It is definitely through Buddhism that all will gain a deeper insight into the meaning and purpose of life and be able to make good use of their lives for the





welfare and benefit of many. Buddhism is the noblest of all unifying influences and the only lever that can uplift the world to deliverance from suffering. Through Buddhism, I also realize that we should, without hesitation, check on ourselves every day and change any conduct or habit that is not perfect - that is the key to creating our own destiny. May everyone be with Buddha.

By Gary Goh



## BENEFITS FROM MY TAKING REFUGE IN BUDDHISM

Hi! Everybody! May we all be with Buddha! To-day, I would like to share with you what I have gained after taking refuge in Buddhism and how that has affected my family and my job.

First of all, let me talk about my gains in learning Buddhism. Recently, I read a book entitled "Talk about Accomplishment in Self Cultivation". There were a few sections on self cultivation that relates to my experiences in the application of Buddhism.

- (1) In "The Way of Serenity", there is a section which reads" One's thinking needs to be clear first before one's action and speech can be gentle and peaceful. Speech and action are bound to one's mental state while one's



mental state can affect one's speech and action. The body and mind of a person are forever in interplay with each other." This reminds me of the similarity to what our teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai, said: "Always observe that ignorance does not arise, naturally the world will be in peace." This means that in whatever we do, in our dealings with all affairs and people, we must maintain our awareness and mindfulness; always be with the Buddha' constantly observe the arising and ceasing of our thoughts and our actions and speech will be in accord with our awareness, then naturally there is brightness and carefreeness in every moment of our life. Therefore, following the Buddha's teachings and cultivation enable us to unfold our innate wisdom, and maintaining awareness in every activity of our daily life will ensure that



our dealings in all matters will be more rounded and perfect.

- (2) In the article on "Giving but Not Receiving", it described "if a person wants to attain contentment of the mind, it is essential that he needs to first forget about his self benefit but only thinks about benefiting others. A healthy mental state and contented life can only be achieved through honesty, sincerity, loyalty, generosity and selflessness." This excerpt verifies the concept of giving in Buddhism. Actually, there are many kinds of giving, not merely in monetary terms. For example, when you see someone carrying a heavy load and you go forward to give him a helping hand is a form of giving. In another instance, at the Buddhist Center, if every member smiles frequently, visitors will be cheered up

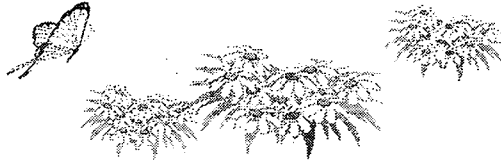


and feel the sense of hospitality and friendliness. They will be motivated to go to the Center more often to join in the activities. Indirectly, the smiles of members have led others into Buddhism. This is also a form of giving which does not cost a penny, yet it helps attract other persons to come, listen and learn about the teachings of Buddha. This adds merits to the individual member, too. So, why not do it? In addition, when one performs the act of giving, one should not remember oneself as the donor, and should not remember the receiver as well as what has been donated. This act of giving will then harvest immense blessing.

- (3) In another article on "Waiting for Opportunity", the passage described "In this world, there are many people who are infatuated



with opportunity, and there are many who have misinterpreted opportunity. What is opportunity? Opportunity is something vague; it is intangible yet exists; seemingly easy yet difficult. Opportunity can only embellish life, but it cannot completely influence life. Try throwing a coin for a head or a tail, which has more chances? Head or tail?" this example reminds us of the blessing we have had in encountering Venerable Master Shen-Kai and being his disciples. We ourselves should be diligent in cultivation according to what Master had taught us. We should not just hope and wait for the Master to come and transmit to us some special Dharma; yet even if he had imparted the method to us, if we did not put in the effort ourselves, then it would be no different from the so called "Waiting for opportunity" and we would be just



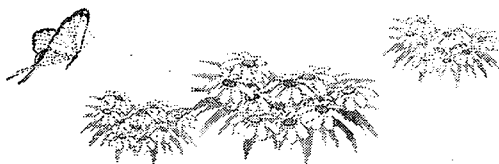
wasting our precious time. Henceforth, we should treasure this rare and precious opportunity, be zealous and progress in our practice so as to create even better conditions.

Now, let me share with everyone the changes in myself, my family and my working attitude after I took refuge in Buddhism. I have a small family - myself, my wife and a son. Before becoming a Buddhist, my wife and I used to quarrel over trivial matters, sometimes to the point of fighting a "cold battle" for two to three weeks and treating each other as strangers. Naturally, my son became the innocent victim of our pent-up anger. Fortunately, my wife's friend introduced us to Jen Chen Buddhism and brought us to the Center to attend the weekend Dharma talks. Only then did we realize that we should exercise wisdom in handling problems and not just battle over problems for solutions. At this point, I would like to express my grati-



tude to our Venerable Master and the clergy for their guidance all these years which enabled us to build a happy Buddhist family. Nowadays, whenever my wife and I have any conflicting opinion, we would apply Buddha's teachings to help to resolve the conflict and have always come to a happy and satisfying conclusion. In the area of my job, I was attached to the fact that I had served the company many years and was in the pioneer group, so I was frequently in "friction" with my boss. Due to my impatience and bad temper, I used to argue with my boss and we often ended up not talking to each other for days. Even my attitude towards customers was quite impolite and arrogant. If any customer were to test any audio/video products and yet ended up not purchasing any at all (I work in an audio/video shop), I would utter some insulting words at him and felt very pleased with myself. But, after I have become a Buddhist and learned about the teachings of Buddha, I realized how foolish and unwise I was.





Nowadays, even if my boss is at fault, I would not argue with him because he is, after all, my boss and I should respect him for that, I would calmly discuss the matter with him. In this way, problems are solved easily and more things can be accomplished. With regard to my attitude toward customers, I have changed, too. Even if customers do not purchase any item after several testing, I would patiently welcome them to patronize the shop again even there is not successful business deal. Now, I am much happier physically and mentally, and I enjoy doing my job better and with efficiency.

Last but not least, I want to express my gratitude to my Venerable Master Shen-Kai who taught Jen Chen Buddhism, which enabled me to follow and benefit from his teachings. I am able to cultivate for improvement and associate with wise advisors in my practice. I also hope that everyone would emulate our Venerable Mas-



ter Shen-Kai, follow the Bodhisattvas' Path in assisting more sentient beings towards bliss and enlightenment, and always be with Buddha.

By Zhi Pei



## MY FATHER'S DEMISE LEADS ME INTO BUDDHISM

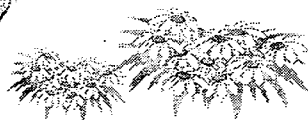
I first learnt about Buddhism in 1991 when I used to send my wife, Yu Lan, to attend Dharma talks at a clergy's home. A 2-hour discussion each week on the Dharma gradually gave me an insight into Buddhism.

With a desire to obtain a deeper understanding on Buddhism, I accompanied my wife and two relatives to visit Venerable Master Shen-Kai in Taiwan during the December vacation in 1991. I am ashamed to say that even with the meeting of such a great teacher, one with great wisdom and high esteem - Venerable Master Shen-Kai, I had failed to realize the importance of taking refuge. After returning to Singapore, all the events and scenes of the temple, the majestic disposition of the Sangha, the serenity and bliss experienced when with them, were vividly imprinted in my mind. I



am unable to forget, especially the deep impression that I had on the "prostration of 3 steps, 3 bows", the morning, evening chanting sessions and the disciplined conduct of the Sangha in taking their meals that was so solemn and majestic. At this moment, I realized that it was my arrogance which had hindered me from pursuing and progressing towards the liberated path of wisdom and enlightenment.

In fact, in June 1991 before my father's demise, the clergy came to my house to brief us on the fundamentals regarding the dead and the handling thereafter. My father had accepted Buddhism and took refuge in his dying days. At that time, I witnessed the solemn ceremony and personally saw the change in my father's dying disposition from a haggard, dry and dull colored face to one of a healthy, rosy look. He had actually nodded his head to express his happiness in taking refuge. What was more marvelous was

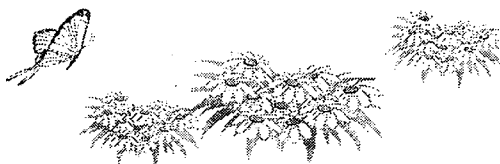


that at the time when my father breathed his last breath, he was very serene and calm with a vivid and majestic countenance. I managed to stay at his bedside to narrate to him the "Sutra of Amituo Buddha". I said to him, "Father, in your lifetime, you have continued the butchery of business of our ancestors to make ends meet for the family and raised us. As living standard improved, you switched your line of business to become a retailer and repaid the society by doing your part in charity and as Head of the village. You never lagged behind in any charitable contributions, be it in terms of monetary or physical efforts. You upheld justice and settled any disputes arising from fellow villagers. By virtue of these virtuous deeds, may you ascend to the Buddha's Western Pureland. In the Western Pureland, everything is beautiful and virtuous, there are no worries or afflictions; besides, you have the Amituo Buddha there to guide and enlighten you. Now, let go of all worldly attachments and concerns;



with one mind, pray for Amituo Buddha to come and lead you to the Pureland." Thereafter, together with all my family members, we continuously chanted the name of Amituo Buddha for several hours.

Having witnessed the many pleasant changes in my father since he took refuge till his last breath, I thus took refuge and became an authentic Buddhist. At the same time, I made a vow to give my best as and when circumstances fit, to spread Jen Chen Buddhism, and to diligently learn and practice the teachings of Jen Chen Buddhism. In addition, I will stay away from all evils and any paganism groups, eradicate my undesirable habits and cultivate the purity of mind, speech and bodily actions. I will carry out actions to benefit others as well as myself in order to repay my gratitude towards the grace from the Buddha, my Venerable Master Shen-Kai and my parents.



## STEPPING ON A SMOOTH, BRIGHT AND PROPER WAY

I was born in a family without any proper religion. Besides my parents, brothers and sisters, my grandmother also lived with us. My grandmother, being a liberal minded, free and unrestrained character, did not even display the altar of my late grandfather at home which most Chinese families would have done. However, during festive seasons, we followed the superstitious practice of writing names of our ancestors on a piece of red paper and made offerings of animals, vegetables, fruits and also prayed. Occasionally, the adults would go to temple to pray for the health of the children when modern medical treatment failed to cure the sick children. Influenced by neighbors, my parents also started praying to the Earth God. I observed those neighbors' superstitious practices and used to ask myself, "Do they know the meaning of



these practices? Is the objective of praying merely to satisfy one's own desires and enjoyment? Should we encourage this superstitious way of praying to the gods?"

When I was studying in secondary school, I realized that the Chinese tradition of praying to the gods is not a Buddhist practice. From a Moral Education textbook, I found the Buddhist philosophy on the truth of life; the relationship between Cause and Effect, and that one reaps what one has sown as well as the concept of transmigration in the six realms of existence. I thought, "This is a good religion. Why has it not been promoted properly? Instead, it has been misinterpreted as a superstitious practice. It is indeed pitiful!" From that moment, I had the desire to get an in-depth understanding of Buddhism.

In school, most accessible religious materials





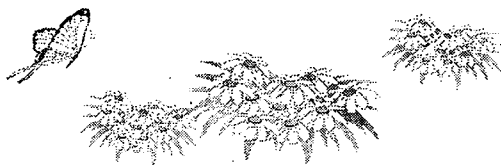
were on other religions. After reading them, I found peace and joy but they seemed to lack what I was looking for. In order to know more about those religions, I participated in their activities for more than three years. However, I still could not comprehend the truth of life.

It was after I graduated from university that I began to learn Buddhism seriously. After reading Buddhist books, listening to Dharma talks and discussing with friends, I realized how complete and ultimate Buddhism is. The Buddha's teaching is filled with wisdom and perfectly harmonious. It is an in-depth insight into the reality of life, the development of an enlightened mind and its application in our daily life. So I made the decision of choosing Buddhism to be my religion. I then looked for the guidance of a reverend master and a place of practice, and hoped that I could get involved in and contribute toward Buddhist activities.



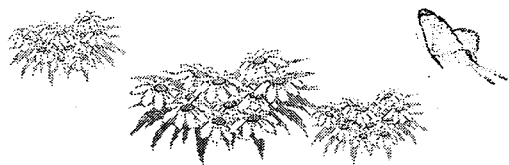
During a trip to Taiwan at the end of 1991, I met Venerable Master Shen-Kai. His teachings and virtues greatly impressed me. After due consideration, I was convinced that Jen Chen Buddhism was right for me and so I took refuge under Venerable Master Shen-Kai. Under his teachings and guidance, I apply and experience Buddhism in my daily life. I do not practice complicated rites. I aim to develop my innate potential of brightness and wisdom; try to help others and always maintain my awareness and be with Buddha at all times. I am inspired to emulate the Buddha's and Bodhisattvas' spirits and practices. To date, I have never regretted making my choice. I am grateful that I have not wasted much effort in embarking on the right path and have been moving on a fast, smooth track toward Jen Chen Buddhism. I wish everyone could be as fortunate as I am!

By Teo Hwee Hua



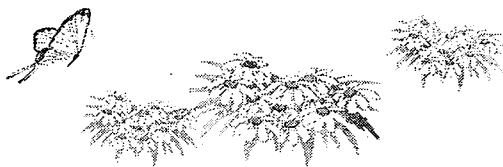
## TURNING SUPERSTITIONS INTO RIGHT BELIEFS

I was brought up in a small village where the majority of the villagers prayed to ghosts and deities. On special days of celebration, chickens and ducks were slaughtered in order to make offerings to ghosts and deities. Being constantly exposed to such ill practice, I started to adhere to such worship when I was young; constantly praying for protection and guidance from the deities. Not only did I not use my own judgement in handling personal matters; I even went to the extent of seeking opinions from the deities before doing anything. I can recall an incident when my 29-year old cousin had his leg pricked by a nail and the wound became inflamed. The inflammation was so serious that he had a high fever. My aunt sought the help of the deities and was instructed to forbid her son,



my cousin, from meeting strangers, including doctors. As there was no proper treatment, my cousin's condition worsened and he went into a coma. By the time he was admitted to the hospital, it was too late to save his life! It was superstitious belief that caused my cousin's death! Since then, I became skeptical about deities and I often wondered, "What are deities? Are they really important to us"? I was also very scared of offending the "deities".

My parents used to teach us to stay away from getting attached to greed, to be self contented, to cultivate purity in our speech, to be both honest and well-mannered, to be always willing to lend a helping hand to others and to lead a virtuous life. They advised that if we maintain our virtuous conduct, the deities and ghosts should not daunt us and these spirits might even help us! Under such parental guidance, we dared not commit any evil deeds but tried to do good when-

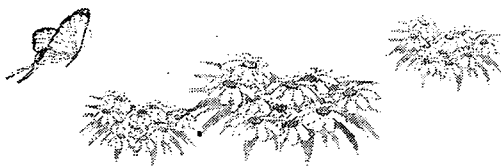


ever opportunity arose. After my marriage I still maintained the practice of burning joss-sticks and drawing lots in temples whenever I encountered any problems that I could not solve. There was an occasion that I was indecisive in the purchase of a private house; so I resorted to praying to Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva and drawing a lot. It turned out to be a superior lot, so I bought the property. In order to reciprocate the kindness of Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva in helping me to successfully purchase the house, I paid reverence to Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva at home. After quite a number of years of paying reverence, I nevertheless still did not know if Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva was a deity or a Buddha. One day, my cousin came to my house and invited me to attend a Dharma talk on Buddhism. In order to have a special understanding of "Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva" so I followed him to his house. To my surprise, he requested me to take vows and followed the "point-and-propagate" master (diàn-chuan-shi) to repeatedly



chant certain mantras. Feeling terrified at moment, I realized that it was not the authentic Dharma. Since then, I did not dare to go to my cousin's house.

Sometime later, my daughter borrowed two Jen Chen Buddhist books from her friend. After reading the books, I found that the teachings described in them were very good. It was later that I had the opportunity to go to the Jen Chen Vihara to listen to Dharma talks. I then took refuge under the teacher of Jen Chen Buddhism - Venerable Master Shen-Kai. Later, I had the opportunity to visit the Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center. During that visit, I was met by a clergy. Seeing this kind and compassionate clergy who staunchly shared the teachings of Buddha with other devotees, despite her busy working schedule, raised my faith and interest in Buddhism. I felt that I was very fortunate to have found the authentic Dharma.



Since then, I became one of the advocates and patrons of the Center.

After learning Buddhism, I eradicated many undesirable habits and eliminated a great deal of hindrances from karma, attachment and worries. This imperceptibly brought joy to my family. I constantly remind myself to "be with Buddha" in order to cultivate mental purity and awareness.

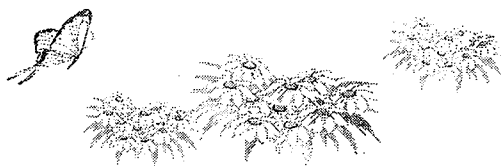
Now, I would like to extend my gratitude to Venerable Master Shen-Kai for promoting Jen Chen Buddhism, through which we learn the Buddha's teachings. I would also like to thank the clergy for clearing our doubts pertaining to Buddhism. I shall always treasure this invaluable opportunity whereby I could learn and practice Buddhism; zealously practice in order to reciprocate the kindness of the Buddha and Master.



## TAKE REFUGE AND PRACTISE BUDDHISM TO REDUCE NEGATIVE KARMA

I have always claimed to be a free-thinker. After my marriage, I began to worship idols in the temple, burn incense paper, joss sticks and carry out other meaningless practices. As my son was a sickly child and medicine failed to work its wonders, it made me even more determined and sincere in making offerings to gods and deities in the hope that they would heal and protect my son. This continued for about a year. I then came upon a friend, a Jen Chen Buddhism follower, who advised me to let my son take refuge in the Three Treasures - the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. She said that it would reduce my son's sufferings. I thought over what she suggested and agreed as prolonged medical treatment did not cure my son. I told myself that I would resort to any possible means





to regain my son's health. Thus, my son and I took refuge in the Three Treasures under Venerable Master Shen-Kai.

I began to frequent the Jen Chen Vihara and felt that the Dharma teachers there are different from those whom I used to be in contact with. Serenity, compassion and wisdom seem to flow endlessly from them, which inspired my desire to learn Buddhism and improve myself. Since then, whenever I have any questions or problems in life that I do not have my own solutions, I would ask the Jen Chen clergy friends of mine. I also attended the weekly Dharma discussion sessions and read Buddhist books written by our Venerable Master Shen-Kai. I do not miss any opportunity to introduce the good teachings to my friends and relatives. Since then, my life began to take off to new heights; even my son's health improved tremendously! I feel that learning Buddhism is indeed wonderful!



Whenever I met people who were distressed or afflicted with illness, I would try to apply the teachings of Buddha to help them. In fact, I am grateful for the Buddha's blessing because many of these people became less attached to their troubles and were more at peace with themselves. They, too, learned to apply the teachings in their daily life. I could see the positive change in their outlook of life. Since we embraced Buddhism, my friends and I have benefited greatly and we are more peaceful, wiser and more open-minded. My conviction for Buddhism gets deeper, and I sincerely hope that more people will take refuge and learn to apply Buddha's teachings in their daily life. They will then lead a blissful life and always be with Buddha.

By Katherine Yeoh



## LETTING GO AND BE FREE

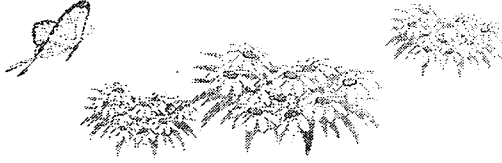
I grew up in a family that was very devoted to worship of deities. On the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month, my mother would be very busy killing chickens, ducks and fish to prepare them as offering to the deities in the temple. Although I did not understand why, I was always doubtful about such a practice.

By chance, I was introduced to Mdm Tan who is a Buddhist. We started talking about religion and she introduced Jen Chen Buddhism to me. She invited me to the Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center to listen to Dharma talks delivered by the clergy. As I was quite interested in Buddhism, I accepted the invitation and began to frequent the Center.

After learning Buddhism for over a year, I began



to understand what is "Cause and Effect", "Awareness", "Morality", "Liberation" and "Practice in the midst of one's daily activities". All these principles have helped me a lot in handling affairs in my daily life. Besides, the members at the Center are very friendly, helping each other like brothers and sisters. I always feel very peaceful, carefree and very much at home when I got to the Center every time. After having taken Buddhist refuge, I am more aware of my behavior; and each time when I am on the verge of losing my temper, I would quickly remind myself that I am a follower of Buddha and a disciple of our compassionate teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai. Therefore, it is not right for me to harbor anger and hatred. In the past, my working attitude was very passive and lazy. While at home, I loved to laze around and sleep very much. I never helped out in any household chores. However, after taking refuge and under Venerable Master's wise guidance, I learned to be zealous in my work and du-



ties. My attitudes changed and I became more energetic and help in doing household chores, including taking care of my children.

In addition, I have also gradually overcome my pettiness and become more-minded in dealing with people and other affairs. I no longer get angry over trivial matters or bear grudges against those who offend me. Indeed, I am more peaceful, liberated and carefree now! These positive changes were bestowed on me after I took refuge in the Three Treasures. Thus, I hope other will come and embrace Buddhism soon, unfold their wisdom, learn to let go, be happy and carefree persons.

By Tien Soon



## I BECAME AN AUTHENTIC BUDDHIST

I became interested in Buddhism since I stepped into the working society. I came across a few Buddhist books by chance and after reading them, I was captivated. With my brother's guidance, I took refuge and became a Buddhist. Thereafter, I frequented many temples to chant and pray, thinking that I was practicing Buddhism diligently. However, I did not understand what I had chanted. Later, I read a few Buddhist books written by Venerable Master Shen-Kai and listened to his Dharma talks from audio-tapes. His books and talks were very enlightening and easy to understand. It was then that I began to really understand what Buddhism is all about. Henceforth, I took refuge again under the guidance of Venerable Master Shen-Kai. Since then, I have improved further on the path of learning Buddhism.



Venerable Master Shen-Kai's books and the "Be With Buddha" magazines are easy to comprehend. This had further strengthened my faith and deepened my understanding. I also realized the importance of associating with virtuous advisors and listening to Dharma talks. Apart from these, I also understand the importance of eradicating undesirable habits, overcoming ignorance, unfolding wisdom and seeking liberation. Only then will our life be filled with bliss and happiness! It is such a shame that my greed, anger, ignorance and undesirable habits are still very deep-rooted. Although I have become a Buddhist for years, I have not made much improvement. I hope that I will be more diligent in learning Buddhism and be liberated from all vexations. Only then I will be able to enlighten myself; be able to help in various organized Buddhist activities, assist in spreading Jen Chen Buddhism and be able to influence more people into the



fold of Buddhism so that they will be liberated from suffering and be able to attain happiness.

By Hui Mei





## CREATION OF A BRIGHT AND WISE LIFE THROUGH LEARNING BUDDHISM

Before learning Buddhism, on every first and fifteenth days of each lunar month, I used to go to the temple to pray to the Bodhisattvas. After listening and learning the teachings of Buddha, I realized that we do not only pray to Bodhisattvas, we need to learn to be Bodhisattvas and walk the Bodhisattva Path.

Three years ago, introduced by my sister and sister-in-law, I learned about Buddhism and have enjoyed the benefits of its application. Whenever ignorance or unwholesome thoughts arise, my awareness naturally will arise, thus preventing me from committing any wrongful deeds.

I am now leading my life with greater wisdom. In



addition, I always apply the teachings in trying to prevent others from committing evil karmic deeds. For instance, recently a colleague of mine was contemplating an abortion as she was worried that she might be forced to leave her job after giving birth to her baby. I advised her that abortion is a deed of taking a life - the first precept of not to kill in Buddhism. I tried my best to talk to her and finally managed to persuade her from committing such evil deed!

In fact, Buddhism and blissfulness of our life are inter-related. The teachings of Buddha can be indefinitely applied and experienced in our life. I will always learn and practice Buddhism diligently to ensure a wiser, brighter, benevolent and blissful life.

By Hui Fen



## LEARNING BUDDHISM IS FULL OF JOY

In 1991, my youngest sister-in-law invited me to attend a Dharma discussion at a Jen Chen Buddhist's house. I was skeptical but I still went along. After attending the first session, my concern had been unfounded. It was a real eye-opener! The contents of the Dharma talk clarified most of the superstitions and misunderstanding I had about Buddhism. It was totally different from what I had in mind about Buddhism all these years.

Buddhism is not a religion that advocates superstition. The teachings educate us on how to conduct ourselves in life; to be virtuous persons; to conduct ourselves in such a manner that our actions will not only benefit ourselves but others; to cultivate, unfold



our wisdom and keep ourselves away from suffering. I felt that constantly listening to such enlightening talks would help us greatly in our daily life. We would face less suffering and frustration, be at peace with ourselves everyday. Even if woeful events happen, with the knowledge of Buddhism, we can attain inner liberation and have less attachment to all these changes in life. Through practicing Buddhism, one can easily find true happiness and tranquility.

Since I embraced Buddhism and benefited from it, I share with my family what I have learned. They too like it, and soon my daughters came to fully appreciate the Buddha's teachings with me. After embracing the religion, in a new light, I became mindful of my speech, actions and thoughts. I am wiser and kinder in my dealing with others and learned that we must not, for the sake of our own convenience, forget the convenience of others.



My children and I have developed a close rapport because we are constantly reminding one another of our actions. We like to discuss Buddha's teachings, the obstacles we encounter during our learning and putting them into practice. My relationship with them has improved!

In 1992 when Venerable Master Shen-Kai arrived in Singapore, my family members, relatives and some friends took refuge in the Three Treasures. The following year, Jen Chen Buddhist Blissful Culture Center was established and we participated in the activities held there. At the Center, we worked together in harmony like a happy family. Everyone there is selfless and is always willing to lend a helping hand.

After taking refuge, I have been trying my best to put into practice Buddha's teachings in business



dealings and to my consolation; I have managed to influence my husband to do the same. We learn and grow together, and all of us agree that learning Buddhism is full of joy!

By Lin Rong



## BEFORE AND AFTER TAKING REFUGE IN BUDDHISM

When I was young, I used to follow my mother to temples on festive occasions. She burnt incense paper and joss-sticks to deities in the hope that they would bestow grace and good health on our family members. At dawn and dusk each day, my mother would pay respect to the god of heaven and our ancestors by burning joss-sticks. This was how my mother paid reverence, to be a so called Buddhist.

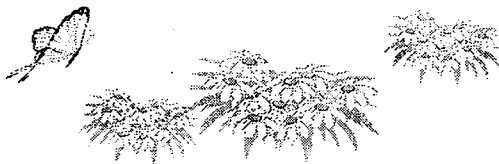
When I was in my first year at secondary school. My sister completed her Chinese Senior Middle Three education (equivalent to pre-university standard) but could not find a job. My father then transferred me to a mission school where the medium of instruction was English. In that school, I had to sing hymns and pray to Jesus Christ and His Father every morning during



assembly. When I returned home, I would watch my mother burning joss-sticks to our ancestors and the god of heaven. This is how I was brought up in the midst of Christianity and my mother's so called Buddhism!

Time flies! Almost thirty years passed! At the end of 1986, for the benefit of my children's education, I resigned from the teaching profession, migrated with my husband and my three sons to Perth, Western Australia. At that time, the thought of learning about Buddhism crossed my mind. However, being a quiet and not very sociable character in a strange new place, I found it very difficult to find any Buddhist books or to get a chance to hear any talks on Buddhism. On two or three occasions during the tedious ten years, I managed to follow some friends to a couple of Buddhist centers where I followed the congregation in the chanting session. However, I did not understand what





I was chanting or reading. It was meaningless and useless.

On January 5, 1997, through a friend's introduction, I met a Dharma teacher at the Jen Chen Buddhism Bliss Culture Mission. After listening to her talk on the teachings of Buddha for less than 20 minutes, I knew in my heart that I had finally found the right place. One week later, on the official opening ceremony of the Mission, I took refuge in the Three Treasures of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; paid reverence to Venerable Master Shen-Kai as my teacher and became an authentic follower of Buddha.

After taking refuge in Buddhism, irrespective of weather conditions, I never missed any Dharma talk and Buddhism practice sessions at the Mission. In addition, I tried my best to find time to read books written by our teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai. In a



matter of less than a year, my attitude towards life had changed! Whenever possible, I would try to apply the teachings of Buddha in my daily life - in my thoughts, my actions and my speech. I find that the Five Precepts are not difficult to uphold, as they are agreeable with my normal practice. I do become introspective, more tactful when mixing or conversing with people, as I need to go in line with their temperament. Before I became an authentic follower of Buddha, I could not understand why some people get jealous easily or are very mean and malicious. Now I understand all these are related to their past karma and undesirable habits. I used to weep when others were mean to me. Nowadays, when someone is mean or intentionally tries to be rude or abusive to me, I will take it as that person is helping me to reduce my negative karma! With that thought, I can let go the feeling of being insulted or taken advantage of. So, I am at ease. In the daily encounters, I always bear in mind that I need to be rid



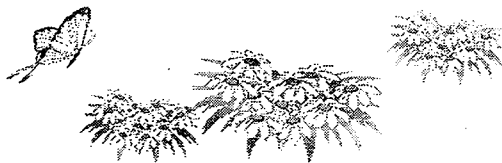
of ignorance and maintain my awareness in order to solve any problem wisely. In addition, I am working towards the eradication of all my undesirable habits and cultivating a pure mind.

Before I took refuge, whenever there was any setback in our business, I would blame my husband for causing and bringing that affliction on me. (My husband used our savings and bought a business without consulting me about five years ago. Due to the poor economic conditions, we owed the bank a sizeable sum of money, in addition to what we had put in initially.) After taking refuge, I had some understanding of the teachings of Buddha. I did not blame my husband anymore; instead I tried to console and advise him to put his health on priority when he was downhearted and distressed with the business predicament. Towards the end of February this year, I was concerned that my husband might not be able to take



the blow if his business failed and had to go into bankruptcy; so I asked him if he would like to take refuge to be a follower of Buddha. He replied affirmatively without any hesitation as he personally saw and felt the changes in me.

After taking refuge to be a disciple of Venerable Master Shen-Kai, my husband began to read books written by our master and listen to the Master's Dharma talks in cassette tapes. He understands the Law of Cause and Effect and realizes that one must bear the consequence of what one has done, be it good or bad, with willingness. He knows that he has to learn to see through, let go and liberated from earthly ties. He, too, learns to bear the indescribable mental affliction with willingness and at the same time he tries to harvest blessings and reduce his negative karma through practising Buddhism and cultivating Awareness. About four months later, we finally passed through this frus-



trating, pain-stricken predicament and had our business sold to a public listed company.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude and sincere thanks to our teacher, Venerable Master Shen-Kai, for his compassionate guidance and for giving me the chance to learn about the Buddha's teachings as well as to realize the importance of applying the teachings in my daily life; to emulate the Buddha; to promote the Buddha's teachings and to purify the human mind.

By Hui Qun



## GLOSSARY

### Bodhisattva:

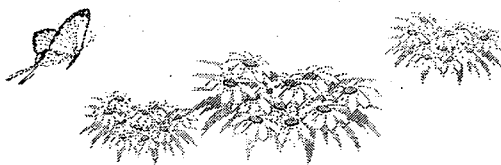
An Enlightened Being who has great and infinite compassion and kindness, enlightens self and others with Buddhism, benefits self and others with infinite virtuous means and practices the Six Paramitas towards the attainment of Buddhahood, life after life.

### Buddha:

The Fully Enlightened One, whose awareness, compassion, wisdom are supreme and perfect. His actions of body, speech and mind are pure and flawless.

### Dharma:

The teachings of the Truth; the Buddha's teachings.



### Five Precepts:

#### Refrain from:

killing living creatures  
taking what is not given  
sexual misconduct  
false speech; and  
taking intoxicants

### Four Noble Truths:

The Truth of Suffering  
The Truth of the Cause of Suffering  
The Truth of the End of Suffering; and  
The Truth of the Path leading to the End of  
Suffering

### Jen Chen Buddhism:

Jen Chen is a phonetically translation from  
Mandarin meaning Humanity Vehicle. "Vehicle"



in Buddhism is analogous to a conveyance of deliverance for sentient beings. The five vehicles of Buddhism taught by Sakyamuni Buddha are the Humanity, Deva, Sravaka, Pratyeka-Buddha and Bodhisattva Vehicles. Jen Chen Buddhism is the teachings expounded by the Buddha to humanity. It aims at purifying the human mind, developing the wisdom of humanity, promoting a bliss culture for humanity, guiding humanity to observe the Five Precepts and to perform the Ten Virtuous Deeds which ensure rebirth in the human form life after life, and to cultivate the Bodhisattva Path until the attainment of Buddhahood.

### Noble Eightfold Path

Right View

Right Meditation

Right Speech

Right Action

Right Livelihood





Right Effort

Right Thinking

Right Stillness of Mind

Sangha:

A community of Bhikkhus (monks) or Bhikkhunis (nuns) who practice and teach Buddhism to benefit themselves and others.

Six Paramitas:

The six practices that ferry Bodhisattvas beyond the sea of birth and death (mortality) to Nirvana. They are:

The Giving Paramita

The Keeping Precepts Paramita

The Endurance of Insult Paramita

The Mindful and Diligent Progress Paramita.

The Zen-Ding Paramita and,

The Wisdom Paramita



### Six Realms of Existence:

Deva realm; Asura realm; Human realm; Animal realm; Ghost realm and the Hell realm.

### Ten Virtuous Deeds:

No killing of living things;

No stealing;

No unlawful and inappropriate sexual activities;

No lying;

No speech that encourage inappropriate and unlawful sexual activities;

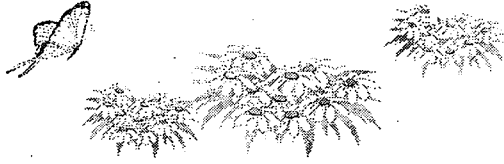
No slander and no speech that destroys others' good relationships;

No harsh and evil speech;

No greed;

No anger and hate;

No wrong views.



### Three Treasures ( or Triple Gems ):

The Buddha, Dharma (Buddha's teachings) and Sangha.



# 幸福文化书籍 — *Journey to Bliss*

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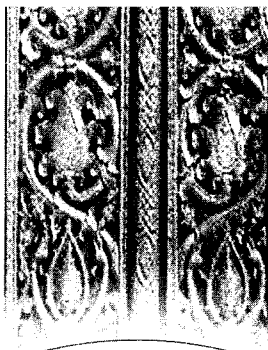
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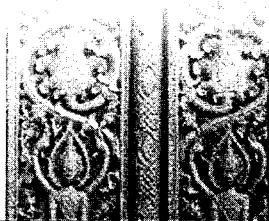
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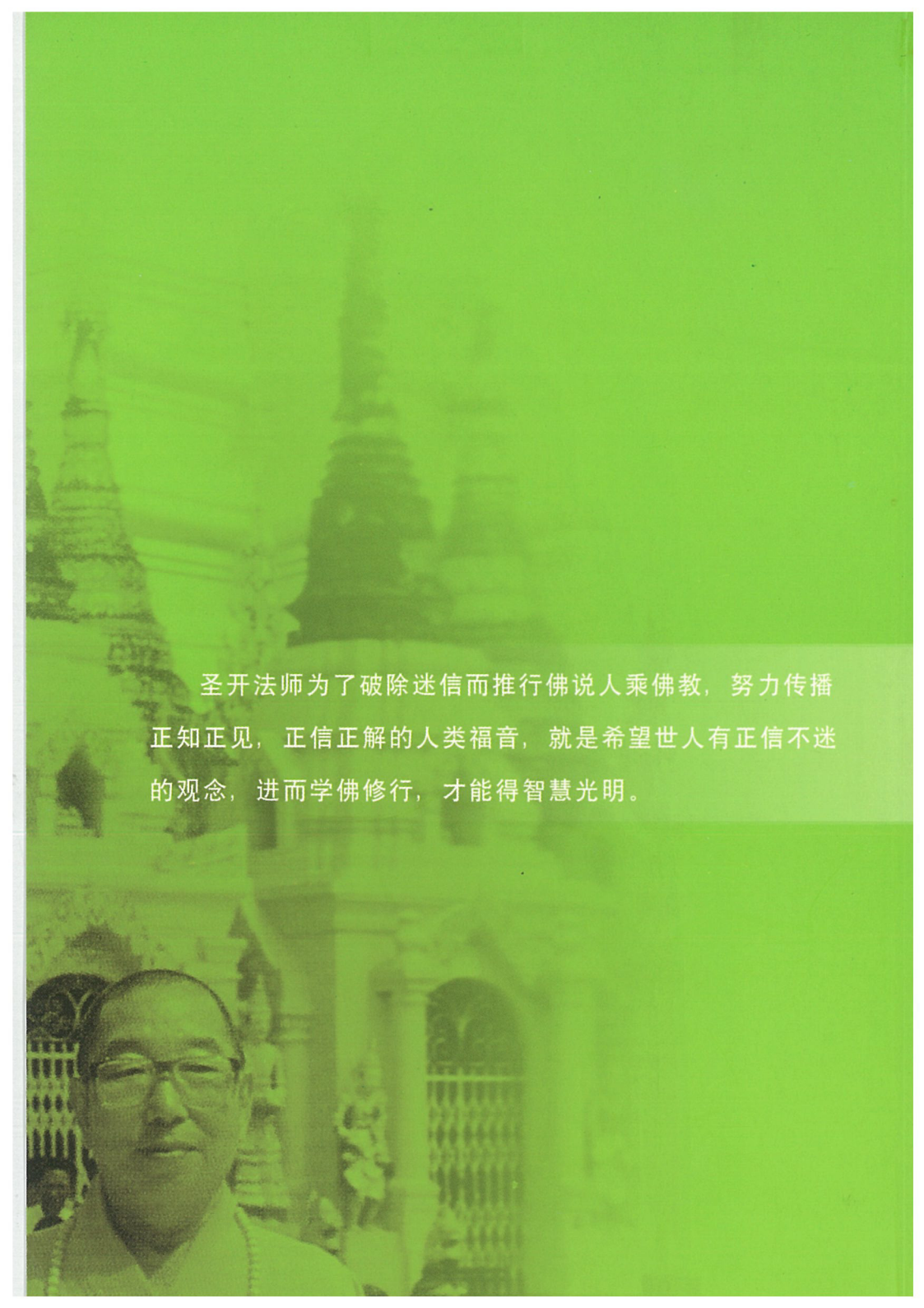
Superstition is better than no belief in anything.

Wise belief is better than superstition.

Right belief is better than wise belief.

People who possess right belief should further believe that they have an infinite treasure which will never be used up.

by Venerable Master Shen-Kai

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a Buddhist temple, likely in Southeast Asia, featuring several prominent stupas or pagodas. The image is heavily tinted with a green color. In the lower-left foreground, there is a portrait of a man with glasses and a shaved head, wearing a light-colored traditional Buddhist robe and a prayer mala. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white rectangular area in the center of the image.

圣开法师为了破除迷信而推行佛说人乘佛教，努力传播  
正知正见，正信正解的人类福音，就是希望世人有正信不迷  
的观念，进而学佛修行，才能得智慧光明。