

dharmavision

Buddhist Community News

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Success Story of Former Students



We are bringing you a story of this young boy who is twenty one years old. His name is Sok, a boy with no hands. His story was told to Kin Pheap, who is our Education Coordinator. Sok was a former student of one of our informal English class conducted by Noun Chanthol'. He graduated from our computer class.

Sok has always been an enthusiastic boy who loved learning English, hoping to get his dream job of an interpreter.

Sok has performed well in his studies and is now studying English at a local university. He claims that he is the best in his class where English is taught as a subject.



This English teacher graduated from our English class after studying four years. He was our first English student to become a teacher of English.



RIGHT LYING

Can a lie be right speech ?

By Lin Jensen

The call came from Enloe Hospital at 3:30 on a fall afternoon. A Japanese Buddhist woman, Chinatsu, was dying. I would find her, I was told, in room 302 of Enloe's oncology ward. Her family had gathered and had asked for me to come. I had been the hospital's designated Buddhist spiritual caregiver for several years but had never before been told to hurry if I wanted to see the patient alive.

At the hospital, I took the elevator to the third floor, only to discover that Chinatsu had died a few moments earlier. A ward nurse informed me that the family was waiting for me. Down the hall, I found 20 or more family members and friends packed into a small waiting area. A young man in a suit and tie greeted me with a bow and held open the door to a room where another dozen or so family members were gathered. When everyone from the waiting area had squeezed in behind me, there were close to 40 of us pressed tightly around the dead woman's bed.

The young man serving as my guide whispered to me that most of those present were Shin Buddhists. I took it that he was suggesting how I should proceed, But I'm a Zen Buddhist and have only slight familiarity with Pure Land practices. My first instance of wrong speech that afternoon, I suppose, was a lie of omission: I didn't admit to my shortcomings but instead tried to figure out what was best to do under the circumstances. When it comes to lying I'm not at all sure that I know when it's best to lie, or even whether or not it's ever best to lie. Nonetheless, I put on my rakusu (the traditional bib-like garment that represents a Zen monk's robes), clasped the palms of my hands together, and set out to make the best I could of what little I knew of Shin Buddhists ceremonies.

Seeing this, everyone grew still, and an air of expectancy settled over the room. Less than an arm's length from me lay Chinatsu. Although her body had been ravaged by the cancer that killed her late forties or early fifties. In my years as the senior Buddhist chaplain at High Desert State Prison in California, where most of my students were Shin Buddhists, I had learned a few Shin practices. And so I prayed that Amida Butsu-Amida Buddha, ruler of the Western paradise of Ultimate Bliss – would take Chinatsu into his care so that she might reside in the Pure Land, the cherished destination of all devout Shin Buddhists.

Understand, I don't have any belief in a Pure Land. In truth, I have no belief (or for that matter, disbelief) in an afterlife of any sort. Zen is not a repository of belief, either positive or a negative, relying instead on the circumstances of the moment to dictate what needs to be done without imposing any preconceived intent on the situation at hand. The only pure land I know of is the dirt under my feet. So my prayer for Chinatsu's deliverance was, I suppose a great falsehood, although my intention in offering it was not false. Or was it? Was I simply trying to save face and not appear unqualified? If so, then my patched-together prayer was a falsehood of the most self-serving sort. But if I was saying this prayer because 30 or 40 grieving family and friends were depending on me to perform an essential cultural ritual – and because, like it or not, I was the only spiritual caregiver the hospital had to offer at the time-then I'm not certain what sort of falsehood I was engaged in. I said some other prayers more or less of my own intention, and everyone seemed satisfied.

Japanese Shin Buddhism teaches that deliverance to the Pure Land is a grace bestowed on anyone who sincerely chants Amida Butsu's name. At the prison, I had run into considerable resistance among the Shin Buddhists when I tried to teach them meditation, which they thought useless, because for them salvific power lies solely in the recitation of "Namo Amida Butsu", Amida's vow. Since Chinatsu could no longer chant on her own behalf, I thought may be we would all feel better if we chanted for her, to help her on her way to the Pure Land. And so I began chant "Namo Amida Budsu." My guide seemed especially pleased with this, and he took over leading the chant as the whole room joined in. I chanted along with them until, as if by signal, they all stopped at once. In the absence of sharing any belief in what we were chanting. I voiced a genuine wish that their hopes for Chinatsu's deliverance to the Pure Land would be realized.

Afterward, I asked if anyone wanted to say something to Chinatsu. A few did, speaking in Japanese and sometimes, as a courtesy to me, in English as well. Then a woman wearing a soft blue cap worked her way toward me from the rear of the group until she stood opposite me on the other side of the bed. "I think Chinatsu would like you to say something about the God," she said firmly.

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A few others murmured assent. It was only then that I saw, partly hidden in the folds of Chinatsu's gown, a tiny cross stung around her neck. The woman lying dead before me was not a Pure Land Buddhist but a Christian!. It was an absurd moment. I could only surmise that the Shin Buddhist practitioners in the room had let me carry on because they preferred that Chinatsu be sent to the Pure Land rather than to a Christian heaven. I might just as well have conducted a Zen ceremony, I thought. Still, if they wanted me to say something about the God, that I could manage: fourteen years of childhood attendance at Trinity Episcopal Church in Orange, California, had given me enough Christian Liturgy to get by.

And so I began with a few prayers of the sort Reverend Hailwood might have offered in the Trinity Sanctuary all those years ago. I recited the Lord's prayer, the Twenty third psalm, and the Apostle's Creed, which affirms the God as the maker of heaven and earth, the virgin birth of His son, and the resurrection of the body and life everlasting-not a word which I still subscribed to. This was the last and, perhaps, most blatant lie of the afternoon in Room 302.

But despite my disbelief, the familiar words rolled out of me, over Chinatsu, and gathered around us like a rising mist from ancient seas of past beliefs. I couldn't keep my eyes dry.

In the end, both the Pure Land Buddhists and the Christians seemed content with the ceremony. They wouldn't let me go until they'd taken up the collection as an offering to my services. I left the hospital with a pocket stuffed with cash -and ambiguous feeling about what I'd done. Or not done.

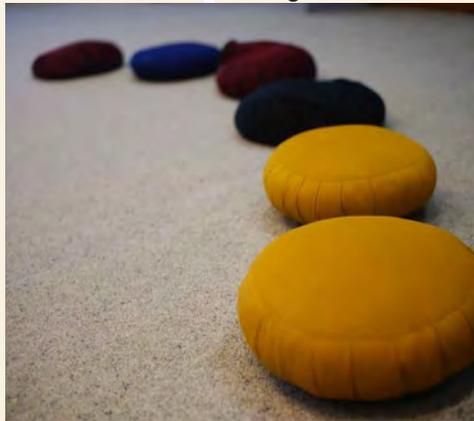
In the Pali Canon, the Buddha defies right speech:"Abstinence from the false speech, abstinence from the malicious speech, abstinence from harsh speech, abstinence from idle chatter: this is called right speech." As an ethical guide, I treasure this as much as anything ever said in the subject. But when, exactly, is speech false? False to what, or to whom, and by what measurement of falsehood? When does the truth become harsh or malicious? These are real questions for which the Buddha provides us with no precise answers.

At one point in his teaching on abstaining from false speech, the Buddha describes a truthful person as one who "never knowingly speaks a lie, either for the sake of his own advantage, or for the sake of other person's advantage, or for the sake of any advantage whatsoever." In room 302, the temptation to lie for the sake of my own advantage, or the advantage of those gathered in the room, was virtually unavoidable. But is advantage what's really at stake when a lie is told to spare a person's feeling or ease a difficult time for someone? If anyone stands to feelings or ease a difficult time for someone? If anyone stands to benefit from a lie, it seems to me that the intention behind the lie, as well as the nature of the benefit, must be weighted. The Buddha's teaching on right speech is offered in the light of his teaching on right intention: our choices of speech

and action, he said, should be consonant with an intention of selflessness, kindness, and harmlessness. If I'm torn between truth and falsehood, I have to ask myself if the choice I'm leaning toward would be self-serving or selfless, harsh or kind, harmful or harmless. Only then can I know what's best to do.

One of the Buddhist inmates I'm teaching at High Desert Prison wrote me recently about "white lies". He had been studying and practising the Buddha's teachings on right speech and wondered if he had broken the precept. Another inmate had read him a poem and asked he liked it. My student didn't like it much at all" he thought it was too moralistic and obvious. But his fellow prisoner had been working on the poem for weeks, and so my student said what he thought the poet wanted to hear, praising the poem's wholesome message and ignoring the poet's lack of skill. But he was troubled about the lie he'd told.

We tell this story of lie all the time, in the service of not hurting someone's feelings. Once my mother, as she was leaving the house for lunch with the friends, asked me,



"How do you like my new hat?". Mother was a beautiful woman, but the hat looked awful to her. She was clearly pleased with her new purchase, however, so I said, "You look great, Mom." A lie, yes, but what was truth at that juncture? What about the truth of simple affection for my mother and concern that she has a good time at her luncheon? My guess is that her lady friends didn't think the hat

was flattering either, but according to Mother she received compliments in how good it looked on her. The downside of this, of course, was that my mother convinced that the hat was a winner, began wearing it everywhere she went. I was relieved when she found another hat that actually did look good on her.

Surely the precept "Do not lie" is to be honoured in a spirit of truthfulness rather than in a rigid adherence to fact. Right speech isn't matter of telling "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God." We cannot say definitively, "This is a lie" without consulting the intent, and probable consequence, of what is spoken. Zen rests on seeking the heart's consent, and it does so because the truth or falsehood of what we say resides in the totality of the circumstances and not in whether or not the words are consistence with the facts. For one thing, in the world of facts, there's generally more than one fact that bears on what is best to say in any given instance. There's the fact that I wasn't qualified to conduct a Pure Land ceremony - and the fact that if I hadn't done so, no one else would have. There's the fact that the inmates's poem was without merit - and the fact that he had spent half a year making it as good as possible. There's the fact that Mother's new hat was unflattering - and the fact that she was so pleased with it. And in all these, there's the .

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truth of the heart, a truth that resolves the contradiction between the teachings of right speech and the most obvious of lies. The heart's truth makes a marriage of opposites.

In the languages of the west, heart and mind are separated. Heart relates to feeling and mind to intellect, and the matters requiring judgement, intellect is perceived as more reliable than feeling. In the Chinese and Japanese languages, however, the character for "heart" is the same as the one for "mind". You can't even think "heart" or "mind" without simultaneously thinking of the other; there is only "heartmind". Likewise, in Zen the heart's truth and mind's truth are one and the same, arising from and undivided self whose being is inseparable from the living moment. It is within this inclusive wholeness that the Zen ethic of right speech resides. To speak truly, one must engage with, and depend upon, the accidental and unforeseen circumstance of the living moment. No outside guide will suffice. The best we can do is show up for the event, heart and mind. Yet simply showing up without prescribed guidelines may seem like slender support for practicing right speech: without rules to go by, we're at the mercy of momentary judgement that might well be flawed - and often is. But even with rules, could we ever get it exactly right? Does anyone imagine that applying even the most commendable precept guarantee the right response?



Ethical rules are, at best, provisional. George Orwell, in his classic essay "Politics and the English Language" lays down six rules of good writing. The first five have to do with metaphor, brevity, passive and active constructions, and jargon, but the sixth is "Break any of these rules sooner that say anything outright barbarous." Orwell speaks pure Zen when he frees the writer's pen from compliance with preconceived rules. Orwell knew that you can't write solely by rules, and we can't speak solely by them either. When it comes to right speech with its injunction forbidding lying, what's needed is an Orwellian rule of exclusion, a rule that frees the heart to determine when it might be best to lie-perhaps something like "Tell any lie rather than speak some pointlessly damaging truth." There's no Buddhist rulebook to tell us when and how to do this, which is perhaps why Zen insists that we shoulder the responsibility on our own.

This matter of truth and falsehood isn't as simple as lie or don't lie. Each situation must be considered in the context of the moment, and nothing absolves us of responsibility for the consequences of what we say. While there have been times when I've lied and deeply regretted it, there have also been times when I've just deeply regretted telling the truth. Years ago, as a teenager, I worked on my father's turkey farm in California. Nearly all his farmhands has been part of the Depression-era exodus from dirt-poor Oklahoma and Arkansas. One year, father received a letter from Ikle, a young man in Denmark, where my father was born. Ikle wanted to come and study modern methods of turkey production under my father. He arrived and went to work, but the other hands and I noticed with some irritation that he was spared the hardest and dirtiest jobs. What angered us more, however, were Ikle's complaints about his salary: it was twice what the other farmhands were earning.

One morning, I ran into my father in the hallway between his bedroom and the bathroom. I was in work boots and jeans on my way to the fields, and father was in pajamas and slippers. The hallway was so narrow that neither of us could pass unless the other stepped aside. I refused to move. Confronting him, I said, "The men are angry about the wage you're paying Ikle." "He's only here for a few months," my father countered. "The point is," I shot back, "he's not just another Okie. He is your Danish countryman, you're ashamed to pay him what you've been paying other hands all these years."

Father's face froze, and I watched him getting ready to tell me I was wrong and how dare I question his judgement. Then suddenly he crumbled, and the energy seemed to drain out of him. I had spoken the truth, and he knew it. But what had it served? What was the point of being right if the consequence was the pain of a man cornered in a hallway in his pajamas, humiliated by his son?

Still, despite the vengeful or self-serving truths we sometimes tell, truth remains beautiful thing - the only thing that liberates us from the falsehood ego fabricates in the service of its own cause. Truth-telling reports things as they are, not as we wish they were. If we indulge the human propensity to understate, exaggerate, and alter facts for whatever comfort or false security a lie might accord us, we forfeit our capacity to see reality clearly, and see only a world of our own invention. So there are compelling reasons that one of the basic precepts of the Buddhist path is the vow to tell the truth and not lie. But the real truth is the truth of the inborn Buddha, the one who transcends all rules and invariably speaks and acts with a wisdom tempered by kindness.

Lin Jensen is the senior Buddhist chaplain at High Desert Prison in Susanville, California, and the founding teacher of the Chico Zen Sangha in Chico, California. His latest book is Deep Down Things: The Earth in Celebration and Dismay.

Courtesy of Tricycle 2011 Spring

This rickety old bridge provided the only access to a small village and to one of our non formal classes



With a total cost of \$350 including a \$100 from a small Belguim NGO, we replaced the bridge with a permanent structure. The village people provided the labour and the rocks. We provided the other material.



Our mobile dental clinic treats children in the outlying schools and transports children to our other clinics at the closer schools



Another load of patients for the dental clinic



New School under construction donated by Trustee Ian Murray



Our New Pre-School Class



Concrete rings are being built for water tanks



Tanks decorated by volunteer Art Teacher Michelle Cutler

By the end of 2010, we had built over 3000 concrete tanks. We add 100 - 150 tanks a month depending on donations



Sri Lanka Commemorates Sri Sambuddha Jayanthi 2600

Sri Lanka has protected and preserved the Noble Teachings of Lord Buddha for over 2600 years. 2011 marks the “Sri Sambuddha Jayanthi”, or the 2600th year of the enlightenment of Lord Buddha.

To commemorate "Sri Sambuddha Jayanthi", the Buddhist Cultural Centre of Sri Lanka has taken the responsibility of building the world's largest Buddhist Publication and Information Centre which consists of a conference hall with a seating capacity of 600 Nos., an information centre, a language laboratory, an audio-visual studio and a separate unit for buddhist research and missionary activities. The center also holds a buddhist book shop, where purchases can be made online.

The Buddhist Cultural Centre has been instrumental in spreading the message of Buddhism across the world through the publication of many buddhist books and literature which have been protected and preserved as the noble teachings of lord Buddha through the years.

The building was completed and was ceremonially opened on the 15th May 2011 by the President of Sri Lanka.

website: www.buddhistcc.net

Nirvana as a subjective mental event

One of the Buddha's most common terms for the ultimate goal is Nibbana (Nirvana in Sanskrit). It is clear that Nibbana is reached through the complete ceasing of clinging: “A bhikkhu without clinging attains Nibbana” (Majjhima Nikaya 106:12). It is also certain that Nibbana, as the ultimate goal, involves the ending of suffering: “What I teach is suffering and the end of suffering” (MN 22:38). However, almost no discussion exists in the suttas about what Nibbana is. When it is described, it is explained by what it is not, by what is absent: “It is hard to see this truth, namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions/ attachments, the destruction of all craving, dispassion, cessation, Nibbana” (MN 26:19). It is likely that Nibbana, like the other items in this list, refers to the absence of something.

The temptation is always to substantiate, reify, turns something from a verb or transient state into a noun, something solid. This temptation also exists when speaking of Nirvana, or Enlightenment - to turn it into something permanent or lasting, whereas in fact it's like everything else: dependently co-arising. This quote from Sariputra, the Buddha's eminent and enlightened senior disciple, shows that he is experiencing Nirvana as a series of quickly passing experiences instead of a place or a permanent heaven. Even the full sweet taste of Nirvana as “cessation of becoming” is at the same time recognised by him as just a passing experience. In other words, he sees Nirvana as a subjective mental event rather than according it ontological status as something separate from our ever-changing minds.

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“Cessation of becoming is Nirvana”: thus one perception arises in me, another perception fades out in me. Just as when a faggot-fire is blazing, one flame arises and another flame fades out, even so, one perception arises in me: “Cessation of becoming is Nirvana” and another perception fades out in me:

“Cessaation of becoming is Nirvana.” (Anguttara Nikaya 10:7)

Perception

Ah, this is arising, this is passing away. You still experience Nirvana, but not as independent from your perception. It doesn't have a separate existence. There is no place to go.

In the development of Buddhism, in the Abhidharma, Nirvana came to be viewed as unconditioned.

Many Buddhists consider this as part of the original teaching of Sakyamuni, but the Abhidharmist move contrasts with the early teachings, in which there is nothing that does not dependently co-arise. (See D.J. Kalupahana's scholarly works for a detailed exposition.)

Everything is paticca samuppada (conditions arising together), even enlightenment, even Nirvana. To my mind, this understanding makes for a more meaningful relationship with the possibility of enlightenment.

It is not a separate realm divorced from my ordinary life. And when it arises out of conditions of my consciousness, I don't have to sweat and groan to make it last - because I know it won't.

by Joanna Macy
(The writer is an eco-philosopher and a scholar of Buddhism.)

Nibbana - Action noun

Because the word Nibbana is a noun, it is easy to assume it is a thing or state. However, it is an action noun describing “cooling, quenching, extinguishing and releasing.” Its likely etymological meaning is “unbinding.” The challenges of translating Pali into English often reinforce a tendency to see Nibbana as a noun.

This happens when Enlightenment or awakening are used as translations for Nibbayati, a frequently appearing passive verbal form of Nibbana. As the word refers to the action of “being nibbanized,” its more literal meaning in English would be “to be cooled” or “to be released.

Being that liberation is explained in terms of absence, it is difficult to describe what that absent state is actually like.

Certainly, the suttas provide very little help with this. Perhaps this is because explaining it by what remains may not be the point. Perhaps freedom from clinging is experienced or described differently for the different people who attain it.

Perhaps the same person may even experience it differently at different times. It may be like the condition of prisoners released from prison at the same time: each ex-prisoner shares the same freedom from incarceration, but each may vary widely in how they experience their life after being freed.

More important than what Nibbana may or may not be is the function that it has for a practitioner. When we are in a burning room, what an open door is like is less important than how it helps us escape the fire. The attainment of Nibbana functions as the ultimate escape from suffering. Once one has escaped, it might not be so important to know what Nibbana is.

by Gil Fronsdal
(The writer is a meditation teacher)

Courtesy: The Budhusarana newspaper of Sri Lanka
May 2011

Students of one of our art classes organized by Michelle Cutler



Community Events

Vipassana Meditation Course by Grahame White

The aim of this four week course is for its participants to learn Vipassana (insight) meditation techniques that develop the mind and gain some understanding of basic theoretical principles that support the meditation practice

23, 30 August, 6th and 13th September (7.00 - 9.00pm) at the Buddhist Library

By Donation

Inner Path to Happiness

a workshop By Dr.Chien Hoong Gooi

Saturday 10th September (1.30 - 5.00pm)
at the Buddhist Library

By Donation

Sydney 2011 -Tibetan Buddhism Public Talk - Monday 10th October

with acclaimed tibetan Buddhist master His Eminence Dzogchen Rinpoche

Redfern Town Hall, 73 Pitt Street, Redfern, NSW

Doors open 7.00PM, talk begins at 7.30PM

Information: 0416 404 826
www.shenpenaustralia.org

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Services provided by Buddhist Library

We provide number of services for the benefit of the Buddhist community in Australia.

The Library has a collection of Buddhist books and other media for sale.

Free Books on Buddhism and meditation are available, please visit our website.

We have a hall available for hire. Please contact us on 9519 6054 Monday to Friday (12:30pm - 5pm) with your request.



Meditation Stools and Cushions are available for sale.
Meditation Cushions : \$ 75
Meditation Stools : Folding \$85 , Fixed legs \$70.

Regular Programmes at the Buddhist Library

Tuesday Night Meditation Class 7.00PM with Giles Barton, Grahame White, Dr. Chien Hoong Gooi and Jim Teoh.

Wednesday Evening Meditation Class - Lotus Buds Group 7.30 PM - 9.30PM
Info: www.lotusbudsangha.org **John Barclay** 9559 8805 **Khanh Le Van** 9543 2873

Zen Open Circle Friday Evenings with **Susan Murphy**. Starts at 5.30PM - Info: 0413 646 377 or info@zenopencircle.org.au

Yoga and Meditation Class with Giles Barton
10.00AM - 11.45AM Saturday Mornings

Library Opening Hours

Monday 12.30 - 5.00PM

Tuesday 12.30 - 7.00PM

(The library has extended hours for borrowing and browsing before the Tuesday Night Class)

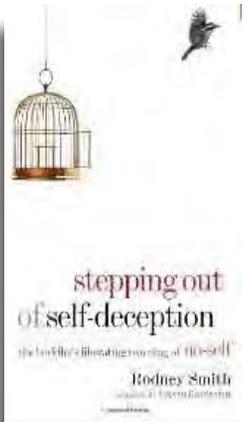
Wednesday 12.30 - 5.00PM

Thursday 12.30 - 5.00PM

Friday 12.30 - 5.00PM

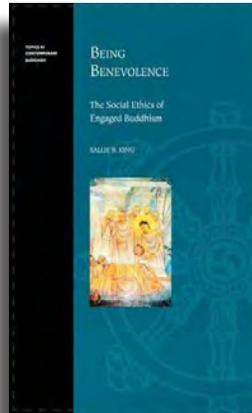
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New in the Library



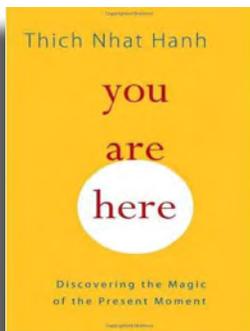
Stepping out of Self Deception Rodney Smith

Anatta is the Buddhist teaching on the nonexistence of a permanent, independent self. It's a notoriously puzzling and elusive concept, usually leading to such questions as, "If I don't have a self, who's reading this sentence?" It's not that there's no self there, says Rodney Smith. It's just that the self that is reading this sentence is a configuration of elements that at one time did not exist and which at some point in the future will disperse. Even in its present existence, it's more a temporary arrangement of components rather than something solid. Anatta is a truth the Buddha considered to be absolutely essential to his teaching. Smith shows that understanding this truth can change the way you relate to the world, and that the perspective of selflessness is critically important for anyone involved in spiritual practice.



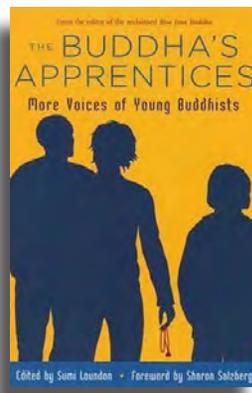
Being Benevolence Sallie B. King

Engaged Buddhist leaders; Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, Dr. A. T. Aryaratne, founder of Sri Lanka's grassroots development and peace movement; Aung San Suu Kyi, and Venerable Maha Ghosananda, make some of the most important contributions in the Buddhist world to thinking about issues in political theory, human rights, nonviolence, and social justice. Being Benevolence provides for the first time a rich overview of the main ideas and arguments of prominent Engaged Buddhist thinkers and activists on a variety of questions.



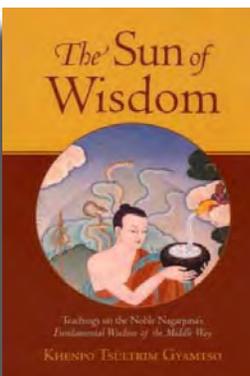
You are here Thich Nhat Hanh

In this book Thich Nhat Hanh, the renowned Zen monk, author, and meditation master, distills the essence of Buddhist thought and practice, emphasizing the power of mindfulness to transform our lives. "Mindfulness is not an evasion or an escape," he explains. "It means being here, present, and totally alive. It is true freedom—and without this freedom, there is no happiness."



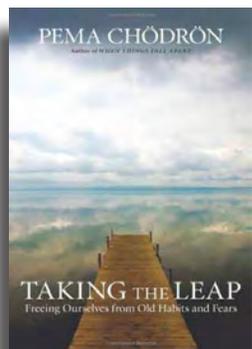
The Buddha's Apprentices Sumi Loundon

Sumi Loundon's Blue Jean Buddha was hailed by The New York Review of Books as "a bellwether anthology," mapping the spiritual paths of a generation of young American Buddhists. The Buddha's Apprentices explores that territory in greater detail, telling 27 more stories from young Buddhists, including teenagers and prominent older Buddhist teachers looking back on their own youth. Loundon's rich commentary helps contextualize these essays within the ever-evolving chorus of American Buddhism.



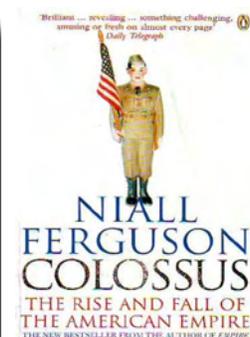
The Sun of Wisdom Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamsto

The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way was written in the second century and is one of the most important works of Nagarjuna, the pioneering commentator on the Buddha's teachings on the Madhyamika or Middle Way view. The subtle analyses presented in this treatise were closely studied and commented upon by many realized masters from the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist tradition.



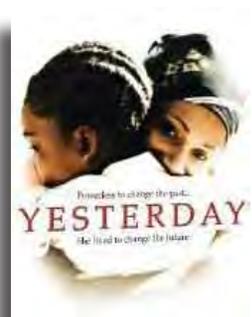
Taking the leap Pema Chodron

Best-seller Pema Chödrön draws on the Buddhist concept of shenpa to help us see how certain habits of mind tend to "hook" us and get us stuck in states of anger, blame, self-hatred, and addiction. The good news is that once we start to recognize these patterns, they instantly begin to lose their hold on us and we can begin to change our lives for the better.



Colossus Niall Ferguson

Acclaimed historian Niall Ferguson ranges across the entire history of America's foreign entanglements and delves into all the dimensions of American power—military, economic, cultural, and political. The result is a book whose conclusions are as convincing, and troubling, as they are original. Ferguson demonstrates that America has always been an empire in denial and shows the fateful consequences of its special brand of imperialism.



Yesterday (DVD)

2004 academy award nominee for Best Foreign Language film "Yesterday" an inspirational story, set against the landscapes of South Africa, of a young mother's battle with AIDS to see her daughter's first day of school.