



# Monthly Guide



International Buddhist Meditation Center

November 2010

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## Patriarch's Memorial Day Sunday November 28

November marks 30 Years of the passing of Ven. Dr. Thich Thien-An. To mark the anniversary we will perform a brief ceremony in his honor and hear stories from Ven. Dr. Karuna Dharma about her Precious Root Guru and the early days of IBMC.

If our good karma ripens and all conditions come together, we may just have the long awaited Statue of Ven. Thien - An installed in our new Bo Tree Garden! The statue is finished and on its way! If weather conditions permit, we may



be able to have Sunday service under our beautiful Bo Tree! Please Plan to Join Us!



*Delusions are states of mind which, when they arise within our mental continuum, leave us disturbed, confused and unhappy. Therefore, those states of mind which delude us are called delusions.*

### THE FEELING AGGREGATE

Buddhist psychology describes four Mental Aggregates: Feeling, Discrimination, Primary Consciousnesses (5 senses and mental awareness) and the other aspects, gathered as the Compositional Factors.

The Feeling Aggregate is defined as 'an omnipresent factor of the mind which labels experiences into three categories: pleasant, unpleasant or neutral':

- When the label of **pleasant** is given to an object, we develop **attachment**.
- When the label of **unpleasant** is given to an object, we develop **aversion**, and sometimes even anger or hatred.
- When the label of **neutral** is given to an object, we often **don't care** about the object or even **ignore** it.

The process of labeling by the Feeling Aggregate usually only takes a fraction of a second. After applying the label, we tend to create a static opinion and image of the object in our mind. At this stage, the seed for prejudice is usually planted. Once we have established the opinion that something is pleasant or unpleasant, we often need a large amount of evidence before we are willing to change our mind - that is, if we are prepared to change our mind at all.

Once we have labeled an object unpleasant or bad, it appears as if the object is all bad by itself, as if bad is an inherent quality. We may label a person "bad", but the friends of this person would certainly not agree!

Therefore, we need to realize that "good" and "bad" are merely subjective opinions of our mind, and the opinion is often founded on nothing more than a first glance and an almost automatic label. Things and people change quicker than our labels! Everyone tends to prejudice.

Labeling is a convenient way to quickly make some sense of our surrounding world by categorizing things in being "good" or "bad" to us. The main problem is that we tend to react to the world merely via these (over)simplified labels.

A practical example to reflect on would be medicines: most of them are poisonous in a large dose, but can still be healing in small doses. Every living being requires salt to live, but try eating half a pound of it, and no doctor can prevent your speedy death.

One way to understand how delusion arises, practice watching your mind.

Begin by simply letting it relax. Without thinking of the past or the future, without feeling hope or fear about this thing or that, let it rest comfortably, open and natural. In this space of the mind, there is no problem, no suffering.

Then something catches your attention--an image, a sound, a smell. Your mind splits into inner and outer, self and other, subject and object. In simply perceiving the object, there is still no problem.

But when you zero in on it, you notice that it's big or small, white or black, square or circular; and then you make a judgment-- for example, whether it's pretty or ugly. Having made that judgment, you react to it: you de-

cide you like it or don't like it. That's when the problem starts, because "I like it" leads to "I want it." We want to possess what we perceive to be desirable. Similarly, "I don't like it" leads to "I don't want it." If we like something, want it, and can't have it, we suffer. If we don't want it, but can't keep it away, again we suffer. Our suffering seems to occur because of the object of our desire or aversion, but that's not really so -- it happens because the mind splits into object-subject duality and becomes involved in wanting or not wanting something.

We often think the only way to create happiness is to try to control the outer circumstances of our lives, to try to fix what seems wrong or to get rid of everything that bothers us. But the real problem lies in our reaction to those circumstances. What we have to change is the mind and the way it experiences reality.

We can see that there are many ways in which we actively contribute to our own experience of mental unrest and suffering. Although, in general, mental and emotional afflictions themselves can come naturally, often it is our own reinforcement of those negative emotions that makes them so much worse. For instance when we have anger or hatred towards a person, there is less likelihood of its developing to a very intense degree if we leave it unattended. However, if we think about the projected injustices done to us, the ways in which we have been unfairly treated, and we keep on thinking about them over and over, then that feeds the hatred. It makes the hatred very powerful and intense. Of course, the same can apply to when we have an attachment towards a particular person; we can feed that by thinking about how beautiful he or she is, and as we keep thinking about the projected qualities that we see in the person, the attachment becomes more and more intense. But this shows how through constant familiarity and thinking, we ourselves can make our emotions more intense and powerful.

We also often add to our pain and suffering by

being overly sensitive, overreacting to minor things, and sometimes taking things too personally. We tend to take small things too seriously and blow them up out of proportion, while at the same time we often remain indifferent to the really important things, those things which have profound effects on our lives and long-term consequences and implications.

So to a large extent, whether you suffer depends on how you respond to a given situation.

*"Monks, there are beings who suffer not from disease of body for 1 year, for 2 years... even for 100 years. But it is hard to find in the world beings who can admit freedom from mental disease even for one moment, save only those who have destroyed delusions."*

The Buddha [Anguttara Nikaya (A.II:143); Samyutta Nikaya (S.III.:2)]

## HOW TO TRANSFORM NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

Two people have been living in you all your life. One is the ego, garrulous, demanding, hysterical, calculating; the other is the hidden spiritual being, whose still voice of wisdom you have only rarely heard or attended to. As you listen more and more to the teachings, contemplate them, and integrate them into your life, your inner voice, your innate wisdom of discernment, what we call in Buddhism "discriminating awareness," is awakened and strengthened, and you begin to distinguish between its guidance and the various clamorous and enthralling voices of ego. The memory of your real nature, with all its splendor and confidence, begins to return to you.

You will find, in fact, that you have uncovered in yourself your own wise guide, and as the voice of your wise guide, or discriminating awareness, grows stronger and clearer, you will start to distinguish between its truth and the various deceptions of the ego, and you will be able to listen to it with discernment and confidence.

In the Tibetan tradition, the most basic method

to rid ourselves of negative emotions is via analytical meditation. The reasoning is that the negative emotions are delusions - misunderstandings of reality. If one analyses the process of how they come about, we can discover where real problem lies. Analytical meditation appears a very good method, as one avoids emotional excitement in meditation, and very calm observation of the workings of our own mind usually presents answers quite easily. So, simply by being calm and quiet, analyze what is behind these destructive emotions and learn where the fault really lies. In Buddhism, the fault never lies ultimately with the outside world! As all our positive and negative experiences are results of our own karma, only our failure to behave more positive causes all our problems.

*In the way that a gardener knows how to transform compost into flowers, we can learn the art of transforming anger, depression, and racial discrimination into love and understanding. This is the work of meditation.*

Thich Nhat Hanh from "Touching Peace"



## November Events

10 AM - 108 Bows

10:30 AM - Meditation

11 AM - Sunday Dharma Talks

11/7 - Ven. Kusala Bhikshu

11/14 - Ven. Havanpola Shanti

11/21 - Ven. K'shanti Karuna

11/28 - Ven. Karuna Dharma

## Meditation Times

Friday: 7:30 PM Zendo - led by Ven. Kusala

Sunday: 10:30 AM & 7:30 PM Zendo - led by Ven. Kusala

## IBMC Classes

Mon. Tue. Wed. Thurs. & Fri. 7 PM -

Tibetan Buddhism - Palmo Chöling Nunnery  
- Bhikshuni Chitta Karuna

Wed. 7:30 PM - Everyday Buddhism -  
Zendo Ven. Kusala Bhikshu

Sat. 9:30 AM - Kundalini Yoga - Ananda  
Hall

Led by - Dharamjeet Kaur

## IBMC eMail addresses

Ven. Karuna's eMail: karunadh@ca.rr.com

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## IBMC Web Pages:

www.ibmc.info

www.karunadharma.info

www.urbandharma.org

http://palmoling.tripod.com

http://bsila.tripod.com

**Prison Dharma**, a column devoted IBMC's Prison  
Outreach Ministry.

### URGENT NOTICE [Info Updated please read]:

In order to allow the smooth transition to the new guide format we are extending the premiere issue until the winter issue which will begin in January. We will continue the monthly format until the end of 2010.

This will also allow you time to inform the library and /or Chaplin of the upcoming change and inform IBMC of any means we need to make sure you receive you guides.

The New Guides will come to you through the Prison Via the Library or Chaplin.

Thank you for all the submissions so far! The premier issue is coming along nicely, we hope you will be pleased. Please continue send your writings. **More art is needed!**

Thank you for you help in keeping the Prison Dharma Outreach Program a viable part of IBMC's Dharma work

To All Students if you haven't - please send IBMC your correct Name, ID Number, and please include the Institution Name written out fully and chaplains' name if necessary

Only the corrected names, numbers and facility names that we have received will be continued on the mail list.

See You Along The Path...

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