

## **Still centre**

Many of us, as we mature as practising Buddhists, find it confusing and troubling when we attend any temple activity, be it a public talk, or a weekly puja, or a grand dinner. It would be good if we were moved by the Dharma experiences of Buddhist speakers, and not see them as mere entertainers. It would be helpful to learn to chant gentle ancient Pali rather than sing strange songs and alien hymns like those we were fed with in the churches we have left, looking for higher truths. It would be uplifting if our public events were more civil and refined. It would be really a boon if a centre or temple were a truly quiet or peaceful place where we can better hear the Dharma.

The good thing is that there are such places, if we care to look. One sutta student – let's call him Sudhana -- who has been touched by the Dharma wrote to me about his visit to an often empty temple in Singapore. He observed that stragglers came there to do their routine prayers and rituals, and then went away. He thought: Why don't these people meditate, and not merely do routines and rituals?

Then, Sudhana thought, what if he were to meditate there himself. Perhaps then these people might meditate, too? And he did just that for over a year there. Later, he noticed some interesting developments. A middle-aged man, after his routine chanting (while the student was meditating), approached him and warned him of the harms of meditating!

Surprisingly, on another occasion, perhaps noticing how peaceful Sudhana was, this same man asked him to teach him meditation. He instructed the man as requested. So now the man included some meditation as part of his religious routine. This is a good example of how we inspire others by our own inner peace and outer radiance through the Dharma, enriching the lives of others. This is an example of life-changing Buddhism.

Now, there is another man who regularly came to that same empty temple to do his routine chanting, too. However, his loud chanting sometimes distracted Sudhana from his meditations. Sudhana nevertheless kept up his meditation, mindful of the sounds and letting them go just as they had come. He cultivated lovingkindness and compassion.

Then, one afternoon, about a year later, when this second man came, the student did *not* hear any sound of chanting. When Sudhana opened his eyes after his meditation, he was happily surprised to see the man sitting in silent meditation! Apparently, seeing Sudhana meditating, he too decided to sit quietly, at peace with himself.

What Sudhana related next was even more inspiring. He said that just as he felt that his silent happy presence had inspired those two temple devotees to do some meditation, even so the Minding Centre (TMC) is quietly playing a vital role in Dharma networking.

The Minding Centre is not a large Buddhist centre at all, nor does it have any connection with wealthy or powerful people, nor patronized by any large prestigious institutions. Yet it is a very *big* place in a spiritual sense because of its work. It gives us the opportunity for joyful peaceful Dharma. This is the feedback from our inspired student, Sudhana.

TMC is the heart of a quiet global network of peace-loving Buddhist seekers and those drawn to the Dharma of self-healing and life-changing wisdom. We empower one another by touching the Buddha Dharma, reaching out to one another, accepting one another unconditionally. Many of us have never met, and yet we feel a familiar connection because of our love for the Dharma and the Dharma of love.

TMC is like the layman Bodhisattva Vimalakirti's tiny meditation hut. It is very small but when we enter it, we are in the presence of the whole universe. As the samsaric storm rages around us, TMC remains the eye of this storm, its still centre. It appears empty, but an emptiness that contains everything, all we need to be meaningfully happy here and now.

*Tough love by Piya Tan*

We can be anywhere in this world and yet be in this minding centre. For, it is a Dharma centre, a radiant lotus, in our hearts of lovingkindness. That loving radiance, that radiant love, is always there, whenever we need it. We only need to enter that radiance of love in our joyful stillness. There is this healing light as long as we love the Dharma.

We are feeling that joyful stillness even now. It begins as a tiny firefly radiance, but we are gathering globally, like the very atoms and molecules that constitute us. When we feel lovingkind, when we spread out that lovingkindness towards others, our hearts become great, we are truly open-minded. Even in the absence of bodies, we are embraced by loving hearts. May we be well and happy; may we embrace more in the growing light of lovingkindness.

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