

## The price of joy

It is our good karma to be able to be a Buddhist, and even better karma to be able to work for Buddhism. Some of us who see ourselves as being successful corporate figures often feel a sense of mission to venture outside our market, high-rise, condo and golf-field. Perhaps, we are able to join a religious committee. We could run the religious organization like a corporation – our corporation – and make it a great success.

After all, the Buddha was not a corporate person: he could not have done it like us. And so, the religious organization, church or temple, is corporatized. We're in business, and very good at it, too, at least by our definitions. We may even promote Facebook Buddhism and Google meditation, not some outmoded ancient teachings no one knows or want to know about. We must change all that. Or better, let's define our own Buddhism.

On the other hand, beyond the corporate shadows, there are those of us who, at some point in our lives, feel the urge to seek inner solace, or some deeper or higher meaning beyond the daily grind of our work. When we are capable of going higher in the corporate ladder, we suddenly notice the heights not so comfortable – those that we love seem smaller, more distant, far below us – or the rungs seem not so sturdy.

We are quite happy – moneywise, at least – right where we are. Now, that we have fulfilled our purpose in life (earning enough, or a lot, of money) we seek a higher meaning, perhaps a new purpose, in life. We know enough of the world “out there.” Now we feel the urge to explore and learn of the world “within.” We want to be a better person, perhaps even help others, to give back to society what it has given us, and maybe do more.

So, we join some religious group. It's always fun to meet people, but usually less so when we get to know them better. We usually “manage” such people, like we manage our corporate lives – but that's what we want to leave behind! But if we do not play the game (as we have done before), we will be at a loss. Where can we find a deeper meaning and greater purpose in life? Certainly not in organized religion.

This is when we discover that the teachings of the historical Buddha are still with us, stuck away under and behind the legion of thick glossy tomes of “modern” Buddhism, or hidden unheard below the loud and strange cacophony of “magical” Buddhism. We have discovered **the suttas**, the pure and simple records of early Buddhist teachings that are at the root of the Dharma renaissance in the west and westernized societies<sup>1</sup> – and the joy of true renunciants.

As we learn and master the Dharma, we realize that we need to let go of the Buddhism of greed, the Buddhism of hate, the Buddhism of delusion, and the Buddhism of fear. For, the Buddha teaches us love, compassion, gladness and equanimity.<sup>2</sup> Our lives are truly changed for the better. We are simply happier – *not* because of what we have – but because of what we are. We *are* truly happy, and do *not* even have any reason to be happy: we are *simply* happy! That's because we have tasted the Dharma.

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<sup>1</sup> See Reflection, [Buddhism rises in the West](#), R150, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> See Reflection, [True prayer](#), R452, 2016.

Most of us, however, only hear talks about Dharma food: talks about fascinating foods with fascinating names, even of great chefs and their sublime cuisines. The more fortunate amongst us learn to meditate on them. But we have never really tasted such food for ourselves – but our gurus must surely have!

For some 5 decades, I have wondered about Buddhism. I have never been a corporate person, but am familiar with corporate ways. I have left all that behind, except for a small sole proprietorship, run by my wife, Ratna, called “The Minding Centre” (TMC), registered in 2006.<sup>3</sup> It serves as a still centre of life’s storm: so, we also take in refugees from everywhere to comfort them and infuse them with wise faith, warm courage and clear direction.

Many who had difficulties with corporate or business Buddhism, even hurt or harmed by them, came to us for counsel, or with complaints. All this only confirm what we have suspected all along – the corruption that grips absolute authority and false royalty. We would, in time, feel uneasy, even alienated, in such a dark and cold realm. Leaving it all behind feels so liberating – we do not need to live in two worlds any more. We have the suttas, and there are others who love the suttas and mere Buddhism, too.

Freedom from the large organizations means that we have to seek mundane supports for our Dharma work and our daily lives ourselves. Running public courses through the TMC helped, but it was not always enough to pay even the rental. Yet, the TMC, being non-religious, is a perfect meeting-place for a wide range of individuals from different religions, local and foreign, who are interested in early Buddhism, especially meditation and a purposeful life.

As our work became better known, especially through our websites and our publications, we slowly gain support from well-wishers, especially those who love the suttas. Regular support from such people (plus the TMC courses) help us through our Dharma work and also to fulfill our worldly obligations. Whenever we face a shortfall or an emergency (such as health issues) – fortunately this is not too often – we are can usually rely on individuals who do have a thought for us. As a rule, we try to be as self-reliant as possible.

Since our Dharma work comes first, we do not see funds, numbers and fame as any real issues. They only become setbacks when we see them as priorities above the Dharma. Indeed, the joy that our work pervades our lives and yours, are rewards difficult to obtain anywhere else.

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[an occasional re-look at the Buddha’s Example and Teachings]

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, this idea was suggested by my late brother, TAN Beng Tee, who was an elder in his own Brethren Church, when I asked him how he overcame religious politics in his own ministry.