

## **Lunar New Year Message**

From Piya Tan

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Blessings of the Niu Year—the year of the ox (牛 *niú*) to you, your family and acquaintances. Both Ratna and I are of the Ox year. Naturally, we enjoy hard work, especially when it is doing sutta work and Dhamma teaching which are very enjoyable and beneficial both ways. It is a blessing to learn and a joy to teach: as we teach, we learn; as we learn, we teach. This is the nature of Dhamma-inspired Oxen.

### **Global sutta classes**

This new lunar year begins with a number of significant blessings. First of all, we have started using social media to give global classes via Zoom. On the invitation of the Seck Kia Eenh (Malacca Buddhist Association, Malaysia), Ratna and I are giving a Zoom global sutta fortnightly class. It started in May last year (2020) averaging 100 students each time. Besides locals, we have students come from Australia, the Americas, Europe, and of course Asia.

We call this the Global Sutta Study (GSS) series, and are well into the new series, GSS2021. The GSS series opens with Puja and a short guided meditation.

### **More global dhamma classes**

Encouraged by the growing interest in early Buddhism, we have launched 2 more series. The 2<sup>nd</sup> series is the monthly “Training for the path” (TP2021), a practical study of the 3 trainings in moral virtue, mental cultivation and insight wisdom. It is held on the 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of the month from 8.00-10.00 pm Singapore time, especially to accommodate students from west Australia and from Europe.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> global Dhamma series is also monthly, on “The Body, Mind and Meditation” (BMM2021), an exploration of the 5 aggregates in terms of practice for streamwinning in this life itself. This series is held every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday from 10.00 am - 12 noon, especially for students in the Americas and west Australia.

### **Study and reflection**

All these global classes (2 hours long each)—totaling 4 sessions a month—are based on the Sutta Discovery notes (of which we now have over 80 SD volumes of about 200 pages each). However, during the classes, I mostly speak from my own understanding after over 5 decades of sutta study and joyful practice. These sessions have also been recorded by Ratna for the benefit of those who missed the classes and for posterity. In fact, we now have over 600 videos of my sutta talks on YouTube. Thanks to Ratna’s diligence!

Our Sutta Page on Facebook serves as a platform for ground-breaking news in our sutta translation and research, explaining difficult teachings and interesting points in the suttas. Every week, I would write and post a Dhamma reflection on the Facebook page and also

send them to our subscribers (like yourself). These weekly reflections now number well over 760.

### **Yoga for seniors**

Well before December 2019, when the COVID-19 pandemic started and spread, I was doing regular basic health routine in the open-air exercise areas of our neighbourhood parks. With the pandemic restricting social movements, my exercise routine stopped. That was when I learned some simple yoga for seniors, and put together a daily routine of sitting yoga and standing yoga. It involves a mindful routine of simple yoga postures consisting of the stretch and bend posture, varieties of the mountain posture, the cow's face posture, and so on suitable for those in the 70s like myself. These stretches and postures help with keeping my muscles and joints in good condition, and a healthy circulation in the brain.

### **Vegetarian**

After 3 months of these exercises, the pains from my cervical spondylosis are completely gone (helped also by completing prescribed physiotherapy, acupuncture and Vitamin B). My blood pressure is also down to well below 120/80.

Last year, Ratna decided to officially go vegan, and seems to take to it naturally. Inspired by her example, I have myself decided to be a lacto-ovo vegetarian. I'm saying all this, not as a health report, but rather to encourage you to place a priority and premium on your health in terms of taking the right kind of healthy food, in the right proportion, and knowing moderation.

The vegetarian ox represents the healthy body supporting a healthy mind.

### **Health, the highest gain**

Health is indeed the highest gain (Dh 204). Good health allows us to study and practise the Buddha's teaching, and truly live well. It helps to fully work with the suttas to discover and benefit from the true teachings of early Buddhism. It is easier to work with a healthy body to cultivate a healthy mind.

May this year bless you with good health, body and mind, and a life of wisdom and joy.

With metta,

Piya Tan & Ratna Lim

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