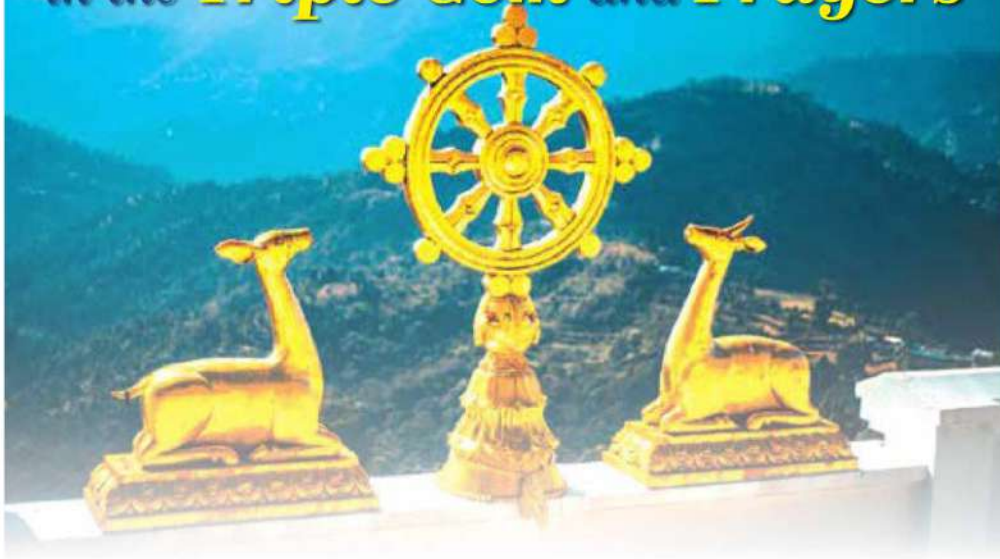


# Seeking Enlightenment in the Triple Gem and Prayers



*Susan Griffith-Jones tells Janice Goh how she keeps calm and centred in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic through prayers.*

**M**s Susan Griffith-Jones started practising Vajrayana Buddhism some 20 years ago. Since then, her appreciation of the Triple Gem has evolved with the ebb and flow of life and her increasing self-awareness.

Back in 2001, her teacher, His Eminence Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche, gave her an initiation into the path of Vajrayana Buddhism. According to Ms Griffith-Jones, the focus of refuge in this particular practice was to first dissolve all impure views into the Dharmadhatu (sphere of Absolute Reality — emptiness). Then, from that state, she was to visualise a pure land at the centre, where her teacher sat on a lion throne.

“Bringing all sentient beings along with you to take refuge in the Triple Gem, we would imagine our teacher as an embodiment of the

Buddha’s mind (Buddha), the qualities of the Buddha (Dharma) and the nature of the Bodhisattvas (Sangha),” said the 48-year-old British native, who is an artist based at the Kullu-Manali valley of the Indian Himalayas in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh.

“In this sense, the Teacher is a combination of the Triple Gem,” she added.

She held this practice for several years before her teacher introduced her to the Nature of Mind and the Dzogchen path of ‘The Great Perfection’. She was taught to become aware of what was going on in her own mind at all times and to see her mind as the Guru.

“Now, having gradually accepted and understood that my own mind is the empty space from which everything arises and dissolves back into, the Triple Gem refuge has

transformed into a kind of trust in my own mind,” she said.

She elaborated, “My mind retains clarity of wakefulness even if it is not holding anything in particular within it. The emanation from this state of mind is actually a continuous stream of authentic instructions on how to live my life, or the choices I should make that are ultimately beneficial for all beings.”

## Steadfastness in the Triple Gem

In trying times, Ms Griffith-Jones strives to remember enemies and obstacle makers as standing in front of her in the traditional refuge of the Triple Gem, and she would bless them for having such kindness to give her this suffering. She said this helps her to remember the path of the Dharma and repent her past karma.

She would also recall a dream-like state of

## Ms Susan Griffith-Jones

chanced upon Buddhism at the age of 28 in 2001 when she was invited to work on a documentary about the lives of the women in a nunnery high above the Annapurna mountains in Nepal. During that period, she found herself resonating with the place, culture and Buddhist teachings, so much so that she left the United Kingdom to study the Buddha Dharma more intensively in Nepal from 2001 to 2007 under His Eminence Chogyé Trichen Rinpoche. Then, she moved to Mussoorie, a town at the foothills of the Indian Himalayas, near another one of her teachers, His Holiness Sakya Trizin, till 2010, before settling down at her current residence.

Calling herself a “Creative Innovative Artist”, she integrates and interprets the relationship of religion and art seamlessly. She has taken standard art forms such as film-making, photography and sculpting, and manipulated them into methods to hold and express the meanings of the Buddha Dharma.

She currently resides in India, where the number of COVID-19 cases is one of the highest in the world, but shared that the spate of outbreaks has been predominantly concentrated in the overcrowded metropolises of the country. According to her, the situation is well-managed in the state where she lives.

For more information on her works, visit [www.pyramidkey.com](http://www.pyramidkey.com)

profile

existence with translucent images whirling in the space around us, which are but merely emanations of the clear, empty space of mind.

Just simply recognising this is a key to letting things pass, she said.

“Sometimes, even if you recognise that it is a dream-like situation, you may find yourself unable to let go of the situation, unable to neither accept nor reject a so-called ‘negative’ situation that causes your ‘suffering,” she added.

“However, since it is coming from a clear, natural state of mind, there is nothing to do but see it as that throughout its duration. As long as you stay in that recognition and remain conscious of it, it will resolve when the energy runs out.”

She continued, “I think that once we can recognise our natural state of mind when times are bad, we must make an effort to recognise it when times are normal, too. Gradually, we can increasingly try to remain in that awareness, so that the gaps between forgetting who you truly are and getting carried away in life’s dream-like state lessen, until the natural state is a seamless stream of awareness shining into our lives.”

“That is the kind of refuge I am praying for now,” she said, adding that prayers can help one to connect to one’s inherent Teacher, or natural state of mind.

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### Power of prayers

Time has shaped not only her appreciation of the Triple Gem, but also how she prays these days.

While she previously used the standard prayers of the Vajrayana tradition, nowadays, she tends to make up her own, depending on the situation at hand.

For example, if someone tries to attack her verbally and in doing so, is harming him or herself, she would say a quiet prayer to help the person to recognise his or her own truth, now or some time in the future.

“And when I feel afraid, threatened or confused, I ask for guidance to remember who and what I really am, which often takes the edge off the situation at hand,” she added.

Additionally, she used to perform many sadhanas of the Vajrayana tradition every day — up to three hours at a time and four times throughout the day — and recite tens of millions of mantras!

As her practice matured, she started performing shorter sadhanas, which she said have transformed to become more like punctuated reminders to help her put her mind in a certain state at the beginning and end of a day.

She said, “It then becomes my job to remember

the key points of how to remain aware of what is happening throughout the day and to apply the tools that I have learned to everyday situations, to maximise the benefit to anyone I come into contact with.”

With the world still reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with no end in sight, the devout Buddhist felt that this was the most important time for fellow Buddhists to really put our Dharma understanding into actual practice.

“When our knowledge of Dharma stays at an intellectual level, it is not useful,” she said.

“The energy of fear is only going to perpetuate and even worsen the situation, so now we need to embrace who and what we really are in truth and ask for help to keep the channel to our source open and bring the maximum amount of enlightened qualities into the world to help transcend this crisis.” ❁

