

# Books that break you free

**In the dharma lies the key** to shedding life's suffering, and guides to finding it abound

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SPECIAL TO THE NATION

**A** man has an affair with a woman, claiming she's aware that he's married. He asks a monk if he's sinning. If you knew it's not sinful, the monk replies, you wouldn't be asking me.

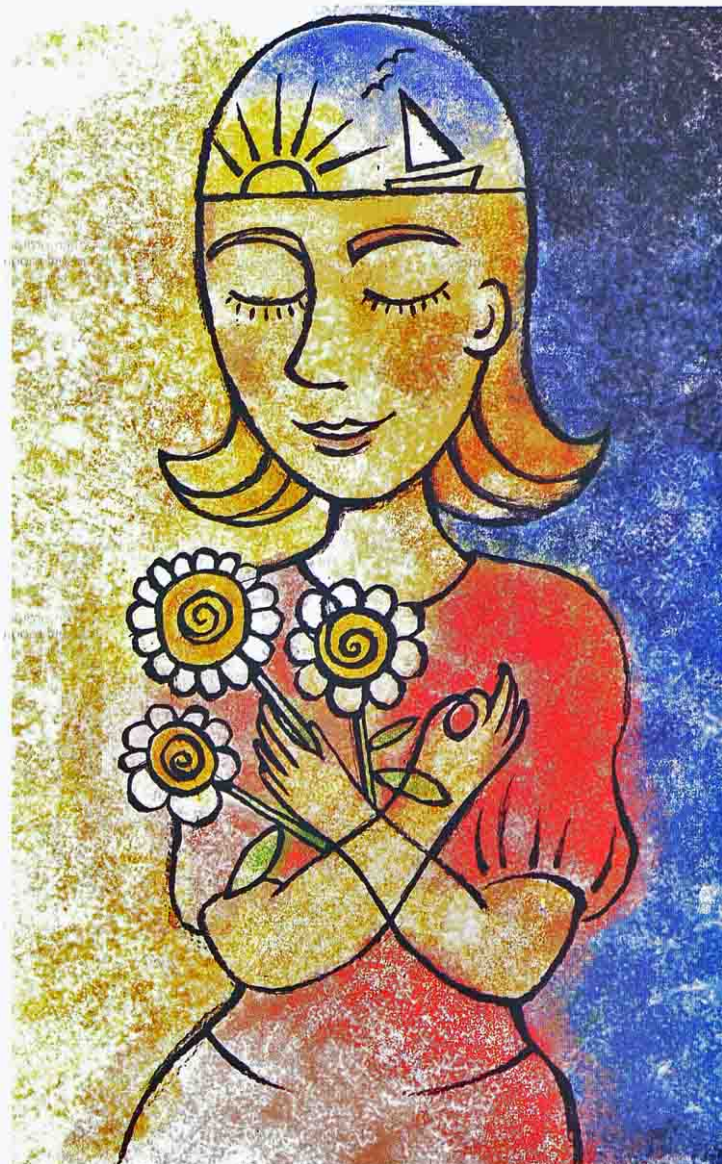
"The human mind always knows what's right or wrong," says Warattada "Meow" Phatharodom. "When I talk about the dharma and sila - the five precepts - a lot of people stop listening, but the fact is that sila should represent the lowest human standard."

Meow is a direct-marketing guru, but as the author of "Plien Kwam Kid Cheewit Plien" ("Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life"), she knows that people these days have lower emotional thresholds, get angry more easily and grumble all the time.

She used to be one of them, and people started calling her "Meow the bitch".

"I used to throw orange traffic cones at people who cut in front of me in traffic lines. Imagine how cranky I was!" Meow said at a recent seminar on "contemporary dharma".

The talk, aimed at sharing the secrets of finding release from suffering, was organised by



DALLAS MORNING NEWS



Warattada



Orasom

Rakluge Women and More of Life Publishing.

Successful and earning a six-digit salary by age 25, Meow spent money in a bid to "buy" happiness. Her purchases proved short-lived, but the shopping was addictive just the same.

"The happiness when you're shopping comes from the moment you get something, not what you buy, so you have to go shopping again and again," she said.

Meow suggested we change our perception of suffering. "The more people suffer, the closer they are to the dharma, and people are lucky to be close to the Buddha's teaching."

She advocates overcoming suffering, anger, greed and the like by recognising that such debilities come and go.

Meow credited her own awakening to her classes in vipassana (insight) meditation with SN Goenka. She's discovered a new life, she said - one that has far less anger in it.

"Just like the aches and numbness you experience during sitting meditation, all suffering should be accepted for what it really is. Talk to your suffering - say, 'Let's see how long you last!'"

Meow's book touches on ego, forgiveness and death in a realistic yet playful way, and provides links to websites on vipassana meditation.

Orasom Suddhisakorn, who edits the dharma books published by More of Life, believes the Buddha's teachings are now more widely shared compared to the past, when they were seen as the preserve of elderly people - or disregarded altogether as boring.

"In today's consumer society, where everything is quick-paced,

our work is to make the dharma easy to digest," Orasom said. "The dharma can at least give people a less excruciating life!"

She edited "Phra Ananda Buddha Anucha" ("Ananda, the Buddha's Cousin") by Wasin Intasara and "Kled Lab Dab Took" ("Secrets to End Suffering") by W Vajiramedhi.

The latter book includes "rules of happiness", "transforming worldly assets into spiritual assets" and "miracles of awareness".

"Phra Ananda" is an abbreviated version of a book listed in the "Encyclopaedia of World Literature in the 20th Century", as a vivid accounting of suffering and truth in the stories related to Ananda during the time of the Buddha.

Orasom said the popularity of dharma books continues to rise, contrary to global trends in other genres.

"People seem to be suffering more today, and when they suffer more they need ways to get rid of it," she said. "I think there's no better way than the dharma."

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WARATTADA "MEOW" PHATHARODOM



## LIBRARY FOR LIFE

Look for these titles from More of Life Publishing at leading bookstores:

- "Plien Kwam Kid Cheewit Plien" ("Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life") by Warattada Phatharodom, Bt145
- "Kled Lab Dab Took" ("Secrets to End Suffering") by W Vajiramedhi, Bt195
- "Phra Ananda Buddha Anucha" ("Ananda, the Buddha's Cousin") by Wasin Intasara, Bt195