

Bus-Ride To Nirvana

by Piya Tan

My emergency counselling session was just over at the The Minding Centre near midnight, and I just managed to catch the last bus no 187 home. It is not crowded and comfortably peopled. There is a certain calm air pervading the bus, and people speak in soft tones. A few are resting with eyes closed, others are sitting quietly relaxed as the bus smoothly sail through the almost deserted well-lit streets of Jurong East

It is a good feeling, knowing I'm going home, confident that the bus will reach my destination. It's like practising the Buddha Word and feeling inner stillness as I move through life. I know this stillness will always be with me and guide me rightly.

Imagine how lonely and lost some people would feel when they miss the last bus. They might even feel a sense of unease or fear all alone in the blanket of surrounding darkness and strangers. Their first thought surely is how to get home, have a wash and a good rest.

It's good just to be home and be yourself.

It's sad some people do not know which bus to take, or worse, how to get to their destination, that is, if they have one.

I read somewhere that there are those who enjoy taking pictures of buses and talking mostly about buses. I suppose we could find some friends that way. But I still prefer riding buses when I need to, rather than photoing them or collecting their number plates, and telling my friends how many buses I've seen.

Buddhism is like a network of buses that take us home. But we must go to the right bus-stop and stop the right bus, board it, pay the charge, and simply sit back and enjoy the journey. We never quarrel with the driver, or chat too much with him. We can enjoy the journey, or maybe read a good book, or just lie back at peace with ourselves.

When we open our eyes, we are already home. My purpose of life is to go home; it's always fun to go home after giving an enjoyable Sutta class, or after a meditation course, or a counselling session, or a trip to the Botanic Gardens or Labrador Park or Butik Batok Nature Reserve.

The purpose of Buddhism is to bring us home, where we really belong. Our true home is our inner joyful stillness. As our heart becomes more still, we begin to feel more confident that we are approaching this most beautiful city in the cosmos: Nirvana.

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