

SHIN BUDDHIST  FELLOWSHIP UK

LANTERN FESTIVAL
24th February 2024

**IN PRAISE OF
KANNON
BODHISATTVA**



Imagine a desert land lying in absolute darkness ...

*A person of superior wisdom and virtue appears ...
and everything around becomes bright and clear.*



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Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK
Lantern Festival 24.02.2024

IN PRAISE OF
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PROLOGUE

Uniquely, Kuan-Yin is regarded with equal respect by Buddhists as a bodhisattva (a person who forgoes enlightenment so they can stay here on earth and help others attain enlightenment) and by Taoists as a goddess.

Traditionally, any spare time between the first new and the first full moon of the lunar year is spent cleaning the walls, doors, carpets, cupboards in your home. Everything should be done and dusted, and all brooms, mops and cloths put away before this most glorious full moon of the new year rises; made more visceral by the crisp, cold air that pervades at this time of the year. You can see it, you can feel it, and if you listen deeply, you can even hear it. It is saying *Namu Amida Buddha*.



C

Rev Daichi Gary Robinson
in the Three Wheels Temple Garden in London, October 2012

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PREAMBLE

A significant feature of Pure Land Notes, the quarterly journal of the Shin Buddhist Fellowship UK is that pieces published in it reflects the wide demographic of our readers and spans a broad spectrum of styles and approaches. Some are personal and creative, while others are more academic and deeply researched.

PLN v3i2 gave advanced notice of our Lantern Festival program and included text previews from many of the talks due to be presented that day (24th Feb).

The seminar was split into two parts. The first part was quite easy going and consisted of a string of unscripted free talks, based upon rough notes that I made prior to the event. I have now organised those notes into readable texts -and I can now offer them to you as the five short pieces. My inspiration for the style of theis compilation was side two of the Beatles album, *Abbey Road*. Between *Here Comes the Sun* and *Carry that Weight*, they run six songs past us in less than eight minutes. Miraculous!

Pieces included in the second part of my Lantern Festival seminar warrant more measured study.

Those included in this section are the *Preface* and the *Authors Notes* from *Thus Taught Master Shichiri* (p6) written by Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012), and the *Introduction* by Toshikazu Arai, Professor Emeritus, Soai University (p7-9).

Rev Daichi Gary Robinson. March 2024



My one and only personal meeting with Rev Zuio H. Inagaki, Kyoto 2012

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PART ONE

THE ORDER OF THE TWELVE ANIMALS IN CHINESE ASTROLOGY

In our western astrology we have the twelve signs of the zodiac. Many of these creatures are given mythical or symbolic forms. Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces.

In the Chinese calendar, which is based upon the phases of the moon, they also have twelve animals, but these are manifested in more natural forms. The only exception is the Dragon. The others, in order are Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, (Dragon), Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig ...

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/teaching-wiki/chinese-zodiac->

A long time ago, in China, the Jade Emperor decided that there should be a way to measure time.

He told the animals they were to compete in a race. The first 12 animals would be rewarded by having a year named after them.

On the day of the race, all the animals lined up beside the river. The rat and the cat, who were good friends, were worried as they were not very good at swimming. They asked the ox if he would carry them across on his back.

The ox agreed and they jumped on his back. When the race started, the rat and the cat were very pleased that the ox took the lead.

Just when they were about to reach the riverbank, the rat pushed the cat into the water!

“Well done!” said the Jade Emperor to the rat. “The first year of the zodiac will be named after you.” The poor ox was tricked into second place, and so the second year of the zodiac was named after him.

Shortly after, the exhausted tiger arrived at the riverbank. Swimming the river had been very difficult, as she had to fight strong currents.

The next to arrive was the rabbit, who hadn't swum across but hopped across on some stepping stones and then onto a floating log that carried him to the riverbank. “I shall name the fourth year after you,” the Jade Emperor said, cheerfully.

Taking fifth place was the dragon. “How come you didn't win the race when you could fly across?” the emperor asked. “I stopped to help some animals,” the smiling dragon explained.

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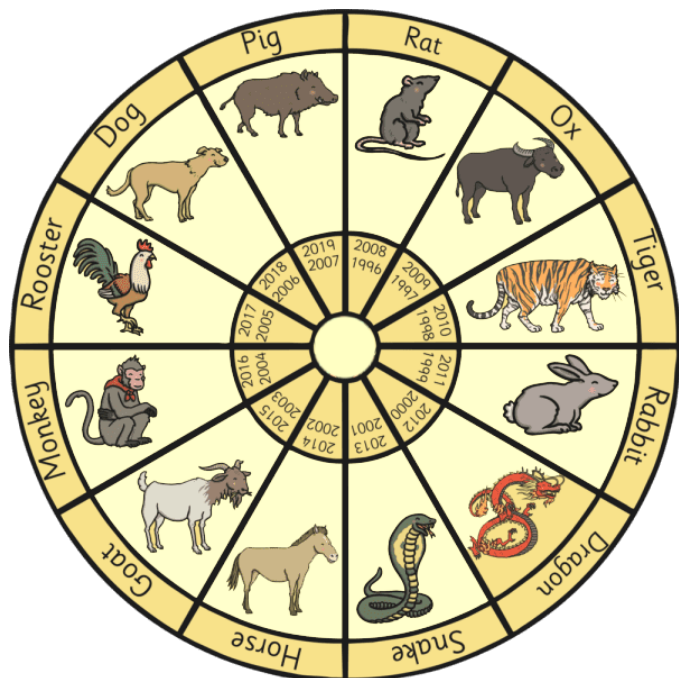
Next, travelling quickly towards the finish line, was the horse. Just as the Jade Emperor thought the horse would cross, the snake wriggled around one of the horse's hooves. The horse was so surprised that they jumped back, giving the snake a chance to slither forward and take sixth place. The horse made it to seventh place.

Not long after, a rather well-constructed raft made its way to the riverbank carrying the monkey, the rooster and the goat. They explained how they had worked as a team to get across. The emperor was very pleased. He said the goat would be the eighth year, the monkey the ninth and the rooster the tenth.

Splashing happily onto the shore next was the dog. "What took you so long, when you're such a good swimmer?" asked the emperor.

"The river was so lovely and fresh that I decided to have a bath along the way," the dog explained. She was rewarded with the eleventh year.

There was one place left in the zodiac. **The sun was setting, and the emperor** wondered who the last winner would be. All the animals and the emperor had their eyes on the horizon, waiting for the last animal to appear...



Everyone then heard a *scuffle*, a *squeak* and an *oink*. The pig turned up! "You took a long time. What happened?" the emperor asked.

"I was hungry and stopped to eat, then I fell asleep," said the pig. And so, the twelfth year was given to the pig.

As for the poor cat, he finally crawled out of the river, soaking wet and tired. But, he was too late to have a year named after him. The cat was very angry with the rat for pushing him into the water. Since then, cats have disliked water and have never been friends with rats!

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ABOUT TIME

With the rising of the first new moon on 10th February 2024, the Year of the Dragon began. Of all the animals in the Chinese zodiac, the dragon (the only ‘mythical’ one) is perhaps revered the most revered.

At a basic level, the dragon appears once every twelve lunar years. However, each animal (including the dragon) also has one of the five elements attributed to it.

Therefore, a complete cycle (12x5) takes sixty years to complete. Furthermore, these also alternate between being yin and yang. Because twelve is an even number, a cycle ends on the same yin or yang characteristic that it began with.

I was born in the Year of the Dragon. Accordingly, I was sixty years old when ‘my year’ (that of the year of the black metal yin dragon) returned following my birth. This will not happen again until my one hundred and twentieth year. So, it is effectively a once in a lifetime occurrence!

Note: My son Joe was born in 1988, when I was twenty-eight years old. This means that he is also a dragon! To calculate the Chinese zodiac sign a person was born under, exact dates are at first irrelevant. These are not needed until one needs to identify the assigned colour and element. However, because our birthdates are divisible by the even number of twelve, I can be sure that he is, like me, a yin dragon



TODAY IS SATURDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2024

I decided long ago that this (*Today is Saturday 24th February 2024*) would be the first sentence in one of the pieces that I intended to present at our 2024 Lantern Festival. As I mentally went through what I planned to say, I started each time at the beginning; and I must have said it in my head a few hundred times by now. However, it is only on this day that this is a factual statement - it *really is* Saturday 24th February. But, just how accurate is it to say that?

There was in fact no Saturday 24th February in 2023, but there was a Friday the 24th. In 2022 it was a Thursday the 24th, in 2021 the 24th fell on a Wednesday ... and so on. This anomaly

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is a consequence of the Gregorian Calendar, and this slippage is compensated by inserting a leap year (365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days) every four years; and having months of different lengths. (Note: The first syllables of October, November, and December refer to the numbers eight, nine, and ten!)

This year is a leap year, and so February has twenty-nine days, as opposed to the normal twenty-eight. Accordingly, there will not be another Saturday 24th February until in 2031. But this is all actually quite irrelevant because, according to the lunar calendar, the night of the first full moon in the new year of 2025 will occur on Wednesday 12th February. This means that the first new moon falls in January (on the 29th), which is quite rare. The lunar new year can fall anywhere between late January and early March. This is due to the discrepancies between the Gregorian and lunar calendars.

For instance, in the days of the Julian calendar (named after Julius Caesar), Easter had slipped into the month of May, and the main purpose of establishing the Gregorian (named after Pope Gregory XIII) was to align the Easter season to the phases of the moon, and to the religious observances beginning with Lent, including Good Friday, Easter Monday and Christ's resurrection on Whit Sunday. This is set to fall on the seventh Sunday after Easter; observed as a feast in commemoration of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles fifty days following Easter.

The same discrepancy applies to every event that we celebrate on the same *date* every year. New Years Day, Saint Valentines Day, Halloween, Guy Fawkes, Christmas. The only significance in their placement in time is that they are (on average!) 365 $\frac{1}{4}$ days apart. The Gregorian calendar is a human construct. It is a mathematical algorithm and as such, it is not a true and real measurement of time.

The organisation that is now called the SBFUK held its first meeting on 14th Feb 1996. Twenty-eight years and ten days ago today ... more or less! In this year, the lunar year began with the rising of its first new moon on the 1st of Feb. Therefore, the full moon that followed fourteen days later (24th) marked the night of the Lantern Fest, and it is at this time our attention turns towards the lovely and the holy Kuan Yin.

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THE LOVELY AND THE HOLY KUAN YIN

The organisation that is now called the SBFUK held its first meeting on 14th February 1996. Twenty-eight years and ten days ago today ... more or less! Back then, the lunar year began with the rising of its first new moon on 1st February. Therefore, the full moon that followed fourteen days later (on the 24th) marked the night of the Lantern Festival, and the time when we turn our attention towards the lovely and the holy Kuan Yin.



MY VALENTINE

For reason far too complicated and personal to go into now, I have to say that the relationship I had with my mum was not a good one, and I have very few memories of her involvement in my childhood. It was obvious to me that things between my parents was not as they ought to have been, and I felt relieved when their inevitable divorce came, when I had just turned fourteen. While they both went about looking for new accommodation for themselves, I went to live with my gran. I was staying there most weekends anyway.

Since my grandad died (I have no solid memories of him either) my gran lived alone in a crowded terrace of two up 'two down workers cottages', close to Portsmouth Harbour and the Royal Navy Dockyards.

By the time I was fifteen, my dad had remarried, and I moved into a semi- three-bed semi in a leafy suburb with my new step-mum and her two (younger than me) daughters. This didn't work out, and I left on my sixteenth birthday. I got myself a bedsit in Portsmouth city centre – and started drinking. My consumption was excessive, but I learnt how to hide the truth.

In 1993, I was on the brink of my second divorce. There comes a time in the life of most alcoholics and addicts in general, when they become *sick and tired of being sick and tired* - and finally own up to having a problem; most importantly, they begin to come to terms with the fact that they themselves are the cause of their problems was not 'everyone else', but them alone.

That time came for me in 1994, a few months before my gran died. Her funeral was the first social event I attended sober in more than twenty years.

In 1995 I became a confirmed Buddhist; and at the turn of the year, I began renting a small room in which I could meet with friends to meditate and study Buddhism together.

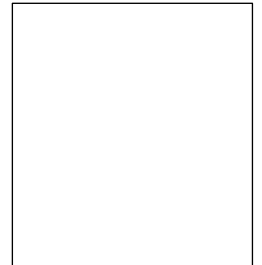
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PART ONE SUMMARY

I have now complete a cycle of sorts and brought us back to Saint Valentines Day in 1996, which coincided with the first full moon in the new lunar year ... and the time when we turn our thoughts towards the lovely and the holy Kuan Yin.

By then I had been living alone for nearly ten years, and I had become quite comfortable in that lifestyle. In short, I was not looking for any new long-term relationship. However, whenever Valentines Day came around, I did deep down inside somehow still crave a sweetheart, female compony, a lady friend. Someone I could send flowers too. It was then that I decided the object of my affection would henceforth be ... the lovely and the holy Kuan Yin. Soon, the spirt of the bodhisattva also manifested herself as my gran, and then most unexpectedly, my mum!

Now, twenty-eight years later, Kuan Yin has become a part of my life. But graciously and gradually, she has shuffled aside a little, and ushered for Amida Buddha to take centre stage.



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PART TWO

A DRAGON SINGS ON A WITHERED TREE

With the assistance of the late Rev George Gatenby, and Rev John Paraskevopoulos, ten poems written in ancient Chinese by Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012) were compiled into a booklet entitled “*A Dragon sings on a Withered Tree*” (*Koboku Ryūgin*). All ten poems are presented in their original Chinese form, preceded by Japanese readings, and followed by a translation into English. Just one of those poetic pieces, ‘*In Praise of Kannon*’, and original related text is featured below.

Rev Inagaki dedicates the collection “*to the memory of my father and mentor, Rev Zuiken Inagaki (1885-1981) and Mr. Harold Stewart, my teacher from Australia (1916-95)*”. DGR

EXTRACT FROM THE

PREFACE OF IN PRAISE OF KANNON

Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012)

“It was not until my father Zuiken died in 1981 that I thought of composing a Chinese poem. When I saw him on his deathbed and marveled at the glorious scenery attending his cremation, I felt that I could not express my deep emotion in Japanese, whether in prose or in a waka poem. After some time, I found myself writing a poem in classical Chinese. I was amazed by the depth of my feelings that could be expressed in that way. Besides, I was able to follow the lingering pathos created by the mystical Chinese words.”

This small collection is a classic of religious and philosophical truth expressed in Zen-Shin Buddhist terms that goes beyond the written or spoken word.

EXTRACT FROM THE

AUTHORS NOTES ON IN PRAISE OF KANNON

Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012)

It is stated in the Heart Sutra that when Kannon (Avalokeshvara) Budhisattva practiced deep Prajnaparamita, he realised that the five *skandas* (the five constituent elements of one’s existence), beginning with form, were void. He realised that *rūpa* (form) was *shūnyatā* (voidness) and that *shūnyatā* was *rūpa*.

Additionally, he realised that the other elements, that is, perception, conception, volition, and consciousness, were equally void. He further realised that other elements, such as objects and other spheres of perception were also void.

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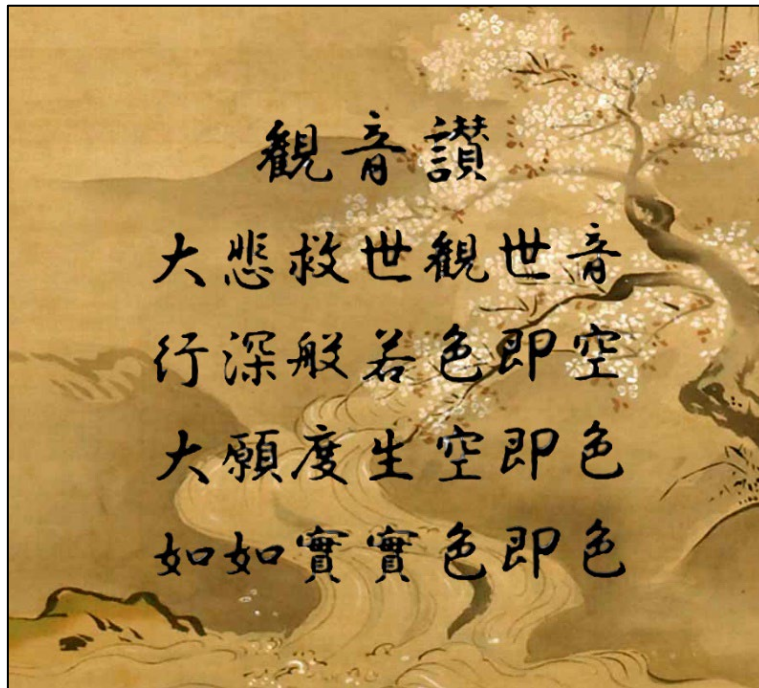
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The Mahayana asserts that all existing things are non-existent. If one realises the total negation of all existents, one gets rid of all attachments and attains Nirvana. This realisation is a reversal of the general Hinayana (Theravada) theory that all *dharmas* (elements) do exist. Mahayana breaks this view and clarifies the truth of universal voidness. This reversal of the common-sense view brings to light the Mahayana teaching that nothing really exists.

Next, in the general Mahayana view, *bodisattvas* make vows of saving all beings. Without clinging to the earlier realisation of *shūnyata*, they plunge into the realms of samsara and undertake the work of removing causes of suffering. This shows that *shūnyata* is *rūpa*.

In the advanced Mahayana teachings, such as Tendai, *dharmas* are seen in the light of absolute reality as well as *shūnyatā*. Here nothing is negated or abandoned. Things are accepted as they are.

In other words, one perceives *rūpa* as *rūpa*.



IN PRAISE OF KANNON

Renditions in Chinese calligraphy (above), and in Romanized Japanese (next page) by
Rev Zuio H. Inagaki (1929 – 2012). Piece dated 12th December 1982.

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KANNON-SAN

**DAIHI KUSE KANZEON
GYÔJIN HANNYA SHIKI SOKU KÛ
DAIGAN DASHÔ KEN SOKU SHIKI
NYONYO JITSU JITSU
SHIKI SOKU SHIKI**



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THE TEN-PHRASE LIFE-PROLONGING SUTRA (EMMEI JUKKU KANNON GYO)

Because we ran short of time towards the end of the Lantern Festival a couple of events had to be cut. One was the reading of a translation of the Ten-Phrase Life-Prolonging Sutra (Emmei Jukku Kannon Gyo) by Philip Yampolsky. It is important that this is now included in this collection because it was the central element in the Buddha Service at the commencement of the evening's events. An introduction to the piece follows, and that is in turn followed Romanized Japanese, Classical Chinese calligraphy, and English renditions.

Hakuin Ekaku (1686-1769), Two Blind Men Crossing a River



Towards the end of his life, the great Zen Master Hakuin (1689-1769) (self-portrait below left) took an increasing interest in life outside the monastery and in the lives and practices of his lay disciples, government ministers and the aristocracy.

In a letter dated 1754 to Lord Nabeshima he tells of the virtues required of a good leader and the merits attached to recitation of the *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo* (Ten Phrase Life Prolonging Kannon Sutra).



Along with the letter he sent a copy of the Sutra and told Lord Nabeshima of the miracles that were associated with its recitation, both in China and Japan.

Hakuin expresses the hope that his lordship will recite it two or three hundred times each day and encourage his retainers, the uneducated and illiterate, to do so as well. He goes on: 'The reason lies in the testing. Give this to those who are seriously ill or have met with disaster for their consolation.

If it is recited with sincerity, miracles will without fail be accomplished and the person who recites it will be free from disease and attain a long life. This applies to anyone at all.'

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KANZEON!

SALUTATION AND DEVOTION TO THE BUDDHA!

WE ARE ONE WITH THE BUDDHA

IN CAUSE AND EFFECT

RELATED TO ALL BUDDHAS

AND TO BUDDHA DHARMA AND SANGHA.

OUR TRUE NATURE IS

ETERNAL, JOYOUS, SELFLESS AND PURE.

SO LET US CHANT EVERY MORNING

KANZEON WITH NEN (ATTENTION)

EVERY EVENING KANZEON WITH NEN!

NEN NEN ARISES FROM MIND

NEN NEN IS NOT SEPARATE FROM MIND.

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EMMEI JUKKU KANNON GYO

KAN-ZE-ON NA-MU BUTSU
 YO BUTSU U IN
 YO BUTSU U EN
 BU PO SO EN
 JO RAKU GA JO
 CHO NEN KAN-ZE-ON
 BO NEN KAN-ZE-ON
 NEN NEN JU SHIN KI
 NEN NEN FU RI SHIN

延命十句觀音經
 觀世音南無佛
 與佛有因與佛有緣
 與佛法僧緣常樂我淨
 朝念觀世音暮念觀世音
 念念從心起念念不離心
 延命十句觀音經

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KUAN YIN GUIDED MEDITATION

<http://www.templeofthegoddess.org/temple/a-kuan-yin-meditation/>

Taken from the book " *Discovering Kwan Yin* " by Sandy Boucher. It is meditation that is great for beginners.

Sit in comfortable chair, or on a floor cushion if you prefer. Close your eyes, let your body relax, and for a few moments pay attention to your breathing. Breathe deeply and slowly, in and out, feel the air entering and leaving your lungs.

Now, transport yourself to a beach at the ocean. Imagine your favourite stretch of sand next to the water and place yourself there. It is a cloudy night. Hear the steady mutter of the waves, feel the warm sea breeze, smell the salt air.

Now look up to see a beautiful round Full Moon that has just risen. Watch the moonlight shimmer on the water. Gaze at the moon for a long time.

Now see it get brighter and brighter, until you can barely look at it. Gradually, the moon becomes Kwan Yin herself, her body surrounded by a glowing aureole.

Slowly she descends towards you, until she stands on a lotus blossom that floats on the waves. She is a mature woman with Asian features, an ornate headdress, and flowing robe.

At the sight of you, Kwan Yin smiles a beautiful smile, and tears of happiness shine in her eyes. As she comes closer, let her radiance enter you. Let her strength, her peace, and her compassion become a part of you.

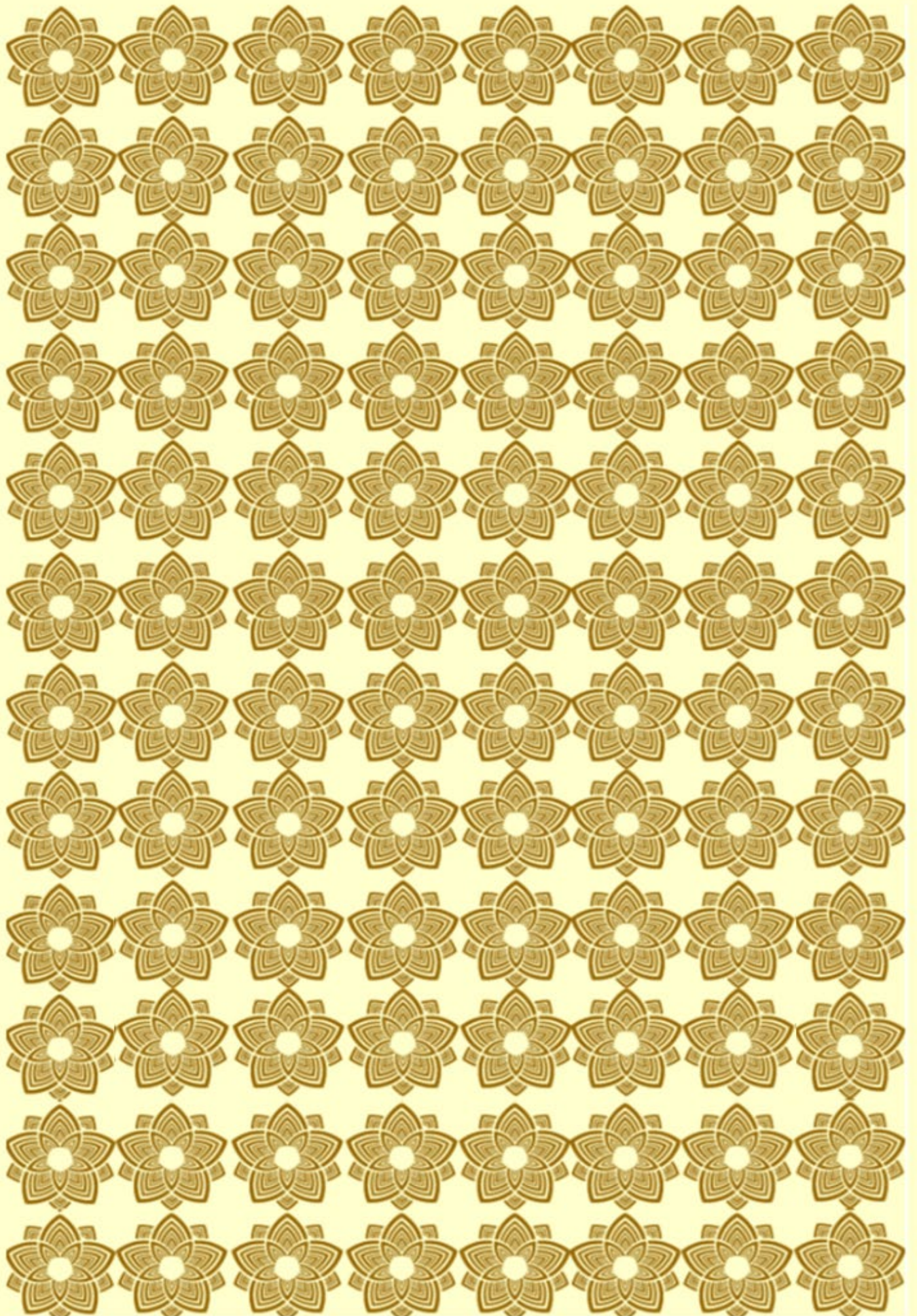
In this moment, you feel bottomless compassion for yourself and all other creatures. Your difficulties, your weaknesses, your inadequacies, all those ways in which you do not measure up to your own standards, all those moments in which you acted carelessly or unskillfully, or when you were immobilized by confusion; all your pain that sometimes seems endless, rising up when you least expect it – let these aspects of yourself be utterly accepted by you.

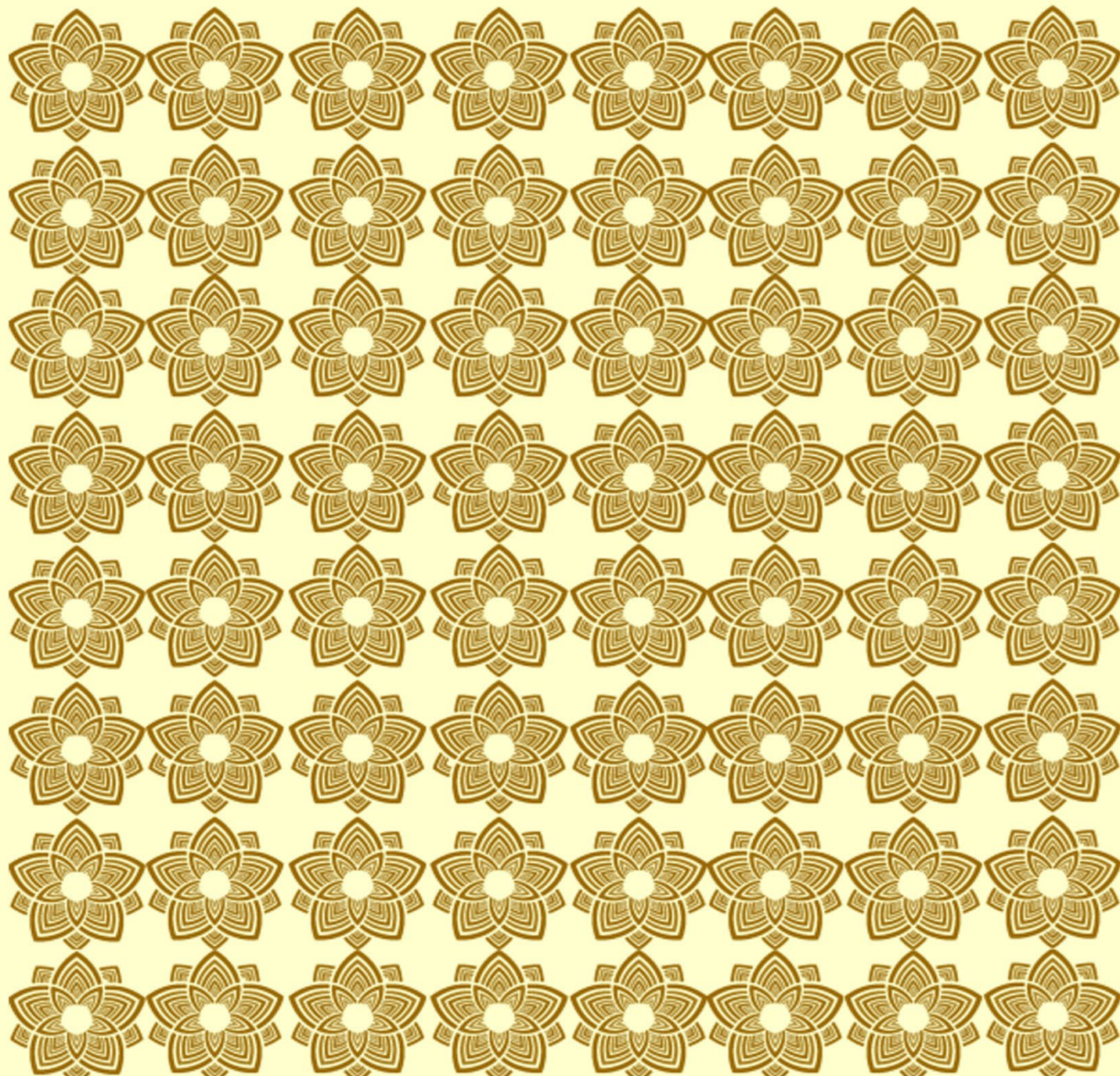
Feel your suffering and confusion surrounded by the love that Kwan Yin awakens in you. Let yourself surrender into her compassion for all life. And stay there as long as you need to.

Finally, it is time for Kwan Yin to leave. As she moves away, she becomes smaller and smaller. At last, the sea and sky vanish, too, and you rest in contemplation of the beautiful empty space that is left. Let yourself open into that space and experience it, so restful.

When you are ready, come back into your room, into your body, as you experience it sitting on the chair or cushion. Focus again, on your breath and breathing, until you are ready to open your eyes.







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