**A Lesson from Gardening**

There is a lemon tree in the backyard of the house where I live. It’s not the prettiest of lemon trees but it produces lemons regularly, about two times a year. That was up until last year. Last year, whether it was because of the climate, or the extension that was built to the home that cut the amount of direct daily sunlight in half, it produced just one batch.

Last summer, it began to bud, green buds of forthcoming yellow lemons. They grew and expanded into fully round green lime color. And when they should have continued developing in size and changing color to yellow, they stopped. Nothing. No movement. I was waiting to pick a lemon to add a squirt with water first thing in the morning. But no, either way nothing was happening. No matter how many times I went to the tree to look, there was no growth. It was like the tree had gone to sleep, or taken a vacation to visit the lemon tree across the street whose tree was full with plump, bright yellow lemons which I could only eye with envy!

Whatever was going on, something had to be done. I have learned that there is cause and effect for everything, and this lemon tree included. This lemon tree is not beyond the law of causality, which means that the problem can be fixed. The cause or the condition needed to be changed, and then the result would change too, I thought. So, I read up on lemon trees and their requirements. It needed heavy watering twice a week for the most part. On top of that I decided that I would give it nutrition in the form of food scraps.

I dug the soil. It was packed solid and bone dry from just below the topsoil. The soil was so hard I wondered how the roots ever got water to stay alive. So I dug deep and tossed it up, watered it and began mixing in the food scraps a few times a week. Very quickly the soil looked better, taking on a rich dark chocolaty color. I was hopeful. The weeks went by and I continued to water and put the nutrition in. Within a short time some fresher greener leaves came forth along with a few longer healthier stems. Good things were happening I could see. I waited in expectation for the turning of the green limes to yellow lemons. But weeks turned into months, and still the green hard prepubescent lemons did not budge. They were like stubborn teenagers wanting never to grow up. I began to doubt if my efforts were having an effect at all. But I persisted. I would make this work.

Then one day I was given hope. While digging the soil to put in the food, I dug up a worm. “Where did this come from?” I wondered with surprise. There was definitely no worm in the soil a few months ago when I began to cultivate. No worm could possibly have lived in that hard dry soil. But the appearance of a worm meant that the soil had improved. Worms in the soil is a good thing, they make the soil more fertile. Several weeks passed after first seeing that solo worm, when low and behold there was another worm, side by side with the first worm. And they were fat and long. It could only mean that the soil was getting richer.

Soon after the appearance of the second worm, I went away for 6 weeks. The next time I visited the tree, almost two months had passed. There were still no lemons to be seen. I vowed to keep going regardless. I dug the soil as usual to put in food and I couldn’t believe what I saw. All around were worms. Small ones, big ones, long ones, short ones. Loads of them. I had been doing the right thing. The foundation of the tree, the soil, was in good condition now. Something else was going on that was causing the lemon’s not to develop. But I felt I had done enough. Eventually the green hard limes turned into lemons, but not what I hoped for, and certainly not as attractive as the neighbor’s across the street.

One of the lessons I learned from this experience is that results will appear in their own time. Whatever time we want them to appear does not count apparently. When the cause and appropriate conditions come together the result will surely appear. Thus we are advised to keep planting seeds i.e. do good actions until the results come about.

Some say, “I’ve been listening to Buddhism for years and I still have not attained the true faith. How much longer do I have to wait?”

If the result of true happiness has not flourished in the mind of the seeker, then one’s bond to the truth is not fully ripened, in a matter of speaking. Thinking “I have done enough already to be saved” is the not correct mindset since it does not match with the law of cause and effect. When the cause and condition come around, the result will surely appear. When the persimmon is ripe, it WILL drop. As with the lemon tree, nature works on its own time depending on the cause and conditions. No matter how much I believe that the lemon’s “should” appear, (whether based on previous years, or because of my attempts at cultivating), the reality is that I don’t understand gardening and lemon trees enough to know the appropriate cause and condition for the tree to bear fruit. Similarly to think one should have attained true happiness already is assuming that one has a full and perfect understanding of Buddhism, or that one has done enough already to have attained salvation. If my mind were in tune with nature then I could figure out the cause of why the lemons are not ripening. But my mind is not in accord with the nature of gardening, and so I am at a loss for direction and must keep going by trial and error until I get it right. The person who is in tune will get the results faster. And such a person can teach and lead people as to the correct and faster way to nurture the tree.

I like the example of Amida Buddha’s call likened to a radio station that is broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our minds are like the tuner. When the dial moves, at some point we tune into the radio station. The mind that has not yet tuned into the correct wavelength will not hear what is being broadcasted. Our minds are being cultivated by Amida Buddha, nurturing us towards the frequency where Amida broadcasts. The moment we are tuned into that frequency, our minds and Amida’s are in accord, for the first time we hear the call of Amida, and are granted true faith. How wonderful it is!