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*The oldest dated printed book in the world is a copy of the Diamond Sutra, printed on May 11, 868. That's nearly 600 years before the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in 1455. Part of that Diamond Sutra, which is in the British Library, London, is pictured on the front cover of this issue of Rightview Quarterly.*

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## BUDDHIST LIFE:

MASTER JI RU

### THE SPIRIT OF GIVING AND THE JOY OF CARING ARE TWO OF THE BUDDHA'S GREAT GIFTS TO US

**B**uddhism is a way of living based on a personal choice to follow the teachings of the Buddha.

By following the Buddha's teachings we learn to avoid actions of body, speech, and mind that result in negative results and behaviors, both for ourselves and for those around us. This allows us to live in peace and harmony. In addition, by modeling Right View and Right Actions, we create a Pureland in the here and now--through compassion and equanimity.

#### **TWO MAJOR BENEFICIAL ORIENTATIONS OF BUDDHISM**

One view of Buddhism is to divide it into two beneficial orientations: a self-development orientation and an altruistic orientation.

##### **A Self-Development Orientation**

In one's daily life there are eight benefits derived from a self-development practice: (1) *simplicity of living*, (2) *contentment*, (3) *renunciation*, (4) *effort*, (5) *mindfulness*, (6) *concentration*, (7) *wisdom*, and (8) *liberation*.

*Living in simplicity means reducing stimulation to the senses and the complex of relationships that result from that stimulation. Living in simplicity means living a life of lessened desire. Living in simplicity means having simple, straightforward and honest familial, sexual, and social relationships.*

Contentment is the result of simple living. Without contentment, without the ability to achieve lives of simplicity, we encourage rather than abate our suffering and the suffering of others.

Therefore, we should avoid misstepping, and avoid prejudices, unwholesome habits, and harmful behaviors. This is renunciation, and it requires ever-present effort, from moment to moment, in order for the renunciation to be successful. With the benefit of this effort, renunciation is possible, generating lives of simplicity and contentment.

Stated another way, it is Right Effort and Right Understanding that lead us on the Path to Buddhahood, and lead us forward in our practice of the Buddha's teachings. We are expected to examine our personal experiences and the lessons of daily life. Everyday experiences will naturally indicate what is to be avoided, what is to be renounced.

Right Mindfulness is a special teaching and practice of Buddhism that leads to the development of increasingly beneficial lives. The cornerstone of Buddhist morality teaches one to continuously and progressively move from bad to good, from unwholesome to wholesome, from unrighteous to righteous.

Mindfulness, in the Buddhist sense of the word, is self-awareness of the mind and body, and of the mind and body's reaction to external things--self-awareness of one's feelings, of one's likes and dislikes, and of one's state of mind. This self-awareness is designed to lead to the attainment of a morally correct and simpler life.

With mindfulness, positive behaviors result in a peaceful mind, and that mindstate is independent from the bodystate. Mindfulness, leads to Right Concentration, that is, being able to be single-pointed in our everyday life, not just when one is on the meditation cushion. It is the most beneficial way to practice. Ultimately, mindfulness is at the heart of the Eightfold Noble Path, which provides the method to gain the wisdom needed for liberation.

These eight elements of the self-development orientation lead to a mature and pure practice and a more peaceful life. This benefits them, of course, by allowing them to live more and more peaceful lives. By reducing attachments, these benefits ultimately lessen stress and anxiety, dissatisfaction and suffering, and produce immeasurable benefit for others.

### **An Altruistic Orientation of Benefit**

In the altruistic orientation, the orientation in which a Buddhist's goal is to be selflessly caring and to act unconditionally for the benefit of society and of all beings, even at their own expense, there are four key teachings. Understanding these is what keeps a Buddhist on the right track.

### **THE KEY TEACHINGS**

**Impermanence:** Knowing that everything is impermanent, even that we ourselves are impermanent, reduces craving. Seeing that there is no permanent self (no-self or egolessness) provides the tools we need to minimize and ultimately

stop the reaction of clinging. Non-clinging/no-attachment is like a duster which can clean away the affliction that results from attachment to external things. In the Buddhist view, this reorients one to a clearer, simpler, calmer life.

**Compassion and Wisdom** Compassion is the shield, wisdom the armor that are necessary to ensure that we act in the positive and wholesome ways that are of benefit to themselves and to all sentient beings.

**Karma** Understanding karma (The Law of Cause and Effect) and the interdependent relationship between what we do with body, speech and mind, with the results of those actions, and the interdependent relationship between physical, external phenomena and the mind, encourages the cultivation of morally upright and disciplined lives.

### **THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES**

These four states of mind allow one to remain harmonious and peaceful, regardless of circumstances or surroundings:

**Lovingkindness** Lovingkindness is selfless love, the unconditional desire for others to be happy. (The opposite is meanness.)

In Buddhist practice, loving-kindness is offered freely and without any expectation for personal reward or benefit. This kind of offering can be sensed by others as positive and wholesome. It is especially important to offer lovingkindness in times of personal hardship and poverty, in times of societal distress, and in times of human-caused or natural catastrophes. Buddhism teaches one to be particularly alert to being unreservedly kind; it teaches one to make the giving of lovingkindness a practical, omnipresent habit. Always being kind is not only one of the most effective teachings for





the benefit of others, but it also produces calm and peace in those who practice it.

**Compassion** is the empathetic feeling that urges us into action to benefit others and ultimately to end suffering. (The opposite is pity.)

Being compassionate is an outpouring of our own internal happiness, a happiness that we find increasing in ourselves the more we practice the Buddha's teachings, the more we practice kindness and compassion.

### **Sympathetic Joy**

Lovingkindness and compassion lead to a feeling of sympathetic joy--to finding joy within when we see the success, prosperity, and happiness of others (The opposite is jealousy.).

Sympathetic joy is an infinitely wide mood, a state utterly removed from suffering. It is a joy that is not concerned with any personal profit or loss; it is a joy utterly devoid of ill-will toward others. It is an unconditional joy for others, completely free of any dualistic preconceptions or judgments.

**Equanimity** is the tranquil state that comes from greeting each moment, each situation, with an open heart and mind, neither hindered by preconceptions nor overpowered by the delusions of everyday life (The opposite is anxiety and stress.)

As long as we practice giving generously and selflessly of the Four Immeasurables, as long as we are inclined to continuous and ever-increasing good behaviors, as long as our giving is heartfelt and pure, altruistic and non-judgmental, it benefits us as well as others. It produces the blessings of a peaceful and progressively less stressful life, the trust and dependability of living a morally upright life, and the happiness that derives from the courage and confidence of a solid practice.

### **IN SUMMARY**

Because the aim of Buddhism is to relieve one's stress and distress, one's worries and anxieties, one's grief, pain, and suffering, our practice starts with giving—mindful, wholehearted, selfless giving. To practice in this way, we learn to rid ourselves of vanity, conceit, and deluded views. In this way we are able to truly be of benefit to mankind and to society.

The two beneficial orientations are based on a universal morality, based on self-awareness, and committed to peace and non-violence in the understanding of a mutually interdependent co-existence.

As a karmic result of this practice, as a result of walking the Eight-fold Noble Path with altruism as our aspiration and intention, and as a result of maintaining the Four Immeasurables, we benefit all beings, including ourselves.



Born in Malaysia, **MASTER JI RU** was ordained as a Theravada monk in 1980. He later studied Chinese Buddhism and ordained in that tradition under the great Buddhist Master, Venerable Zhu Mo in 1986. Currently he is Abbot of the Mid-America Buddhist Association in Augusta, Missouri, and its sister temple in Chicago, the International Buddhism Friendship Association.



# EXEGESIS

XIANYANG explores a traditional method of studying Sacred Scriptures as a tool for gaining a deeper understanding of Buddhist Sutras.

When I didn't understand something in a sutra my first Teacher would tell me to sit with it, which is what he said his Teacher told him to do under the same circumstances. Sitting with it didn't mean working with it during meditation, but rather just letting its presence be felt next to me when I was on the cushion. Eventually an understanding would arise. I found that I could support this practice with another tool for working with a tough sentence or sutra, which was exegesis.

The Catholic Encyclopedia defines exegesis as the branch of theology that investigates and expresses the true sense of Sacred Scripture. We know that exegesis has long been a part of Buddhist practice since we have examples of exegesis by Nagarjuna. Exegesis, which is simply a word-by-word analysis, gives structure, for those inclined to this style of study, to the study of sutras and other sacred texts. Stimulating as an exegesis can be for some practitioners, we need to remember that study and meditation should be used to support each other; one should never replace the other, as my Teacher would remind me when I asked too many questions.

Often in exploring the meaning of a scripture in this way, the primary idea being explored leads to unexpected discoveries in the tangential and tertiary arenas that arise as part of the investigation.

Here is a lightweight, introductory look at an exegesis of the opening sentence of the *Diamond Sutra*. The exegesis could be hugely longer if all the ideas alluded to were fleshed out. But as an example of how to do an exegesis, this seems sufficient. This first sentence of the *Diamond Sutra* was chosen because it is all too often skimmed over when we read, appearing so frequently in the Pali sutras that we take it for granted.

It is worth noting, before beginning the formal part of the exegesis, that the oldest dated printed book in the world is a copy of the *Diamond Sutra*, printed in 868 AD, on May 11<sup>th</sup> as the text reads. That's nearly 600 years before the printing of the Gutenberg Bible in 1455. Part of that *Diamond Sutra*, which is housed in the British Museum Library, London, is pictured on the cover of this issue of Rightview Quarterly.

## *Opening line from the Diamond Sutra:*

*Thus I have heard, at one time the Buddha was in Shravasti at the Jeta Grove with a gathering of monks numbering 1250.*

### *Thus I have heard.*

This is the *Once upon a time* of Buddhist recitation, the literary convention with which all of the sutras in the Pali Canon begin. It is said that Buddha himself chose these words for Ananda:

In an exegesis on The Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra, Nagarjuna writes about the use of the word I being there is no I. "If within the

THE  
DIAMOND  
SUTRA  
IS ONE  
OF THE  
SEMINAL  
WORKS OF  
MAHAYANA  
BUDDHISM

Buddha's Dharma it is said that all Dharmas are empty and nowhere is there a "self", why then is it declared at the very beginning of the Buddha's scriptures, "Thus 'I' have heard ...?" Here is his summary of the answer to his rhetorical question: "When in accordance with worldly convention one speaks of a self, it is not spoken from the standpoint of the supreme and actual meaning. For this reason, although Dharmas are empty and devoid of a self, there is no fault in speaking of an I simply to conform to the dictates of worldly convention." Nagarjuna accepts that we need to function, on some levels, in this mundane world. He posits that it is OK to do so, even when it appears to contradict the true Dharma, so long as we are not, in fact, distorting what actually is. This leads Nagarjuna into a discussion of the conceit of using words and of his favorite subject, emptiness. For our purposes here, we will not attempt to analyze those in this context.

*Thus I have heard.*

These words can be understood on several levels, only three of which are addressed here. First in terms of the codification of the Pali sutras at the first council; then in terms of its later use to add authority to sutras by implying that the actual words of the Buddha follow; and finally as a preface of causation. According to tradition, immediately after the death of the Buddha several hundred of his most accomplished monks gathered to codify his teachings at what became known as the First Council. Ananda, who was Buddha's personal attendant for the last 25 years of the Buddha's life, was seen as the repository of the teachings. He reputedly had memorized all the teachings of the Buddha.

In a prehistoric society, like that of the Buddha, memorization of vast amounts of material was not as extraordinary a feat as it seems to us today. Back then, the style in which material was presented was conducive to memorization, with repetition

and numbered lists, as well as standardized presentation formats, used to aid in memorization of oral teachings. As the main reciter of what would eventually become the Pali Canon, Ananda began each teaching (sutta in Pali or sutra in Sanskrit) with the words: *Thus I have heard*. This indicated that what followed were the actual words of the Buddha. It demanded our attention; it asserted accuracy.

Scholars believe that the *Diamond Sutra*, from which the sentence being analyzed here is taken, was written about 350 AD, some 700 years after the death of the Buddha. It was never taught by the Buddha, nor recited by Ananda. But its author(s) appended the phrase *Thus I have heard* to the beginning of the sutra to give it the validity of the Buddha's actual words.



The *Diamond Sutra* is one of the seminal works of Mahayana Buddhism. Its validity as a teaching is without doubt. When a teaching meets all the criteria of right dharma, it has come to be understood that it can be attributed to the Buddha. That's the case here.

Dogen's *Fukanzazengi* is an example of a writing that has been elevated to the status of a sutra and is worth examining in this context. Why wasn't this catch phrase attached to the *Fukanzazengi*? Was it already too late in the 13<sup>th</sup> century to write a new sutra? Was it because it was written in Japanese, not some ancient Indic language? Was it because its author was so well known? Or that its author was seen as a Buddha within his own right, so there was no need to authenticate the words? It would seem to me that the nature of how we write about the dharma today has pretty much precluded us from writing any more sutras.

So all the sutras begin with an opening sentence or two that goes something like this: *Thus have I heard that at one time the Buddha was at this place with these people listening.*

Because we are so familiar with this standard opening, we often overlook its importance. The Buddha could only have taught if conditions were right for teaching. This simple opening establishes that all the conditions that had to arise for a sutra to be given and then recited had arisen:

1. ***Thus have I heard*** establishes that there was someone there who heard the words is repeating them.
2. ***At one time*** establishes the when of this event, that this event actually occurred at a specific time.
3. ***The Buddha*** establishes that a Buddha was there to make this teaching.
4. ***At this place*** establishes the where of the event.
5. ***With these people listening*** establishes that someone was present to hear the teachings.

Viewing this standard opening from the perspective of all phenomena being conditioned, we realize that if any one of these conditions were absent, there would not have been a talk to repeat. As the Buddha taught, only when there is this can there be that, and when there is not this, there is not that. Exploring each of the conditions in more depth tells us about the weightiness of this event.

*Thus I have heard* is a personal testament from one of the most respected disciples of the Buddha, and the single monk most trusted by the sangha as the repository of the authentic teachings. In this opening phrase, Ananda is putting his life's work on the line for us.

The phrase sets us up to be there, listening to the words of the Buddha, as though we were one of the 1250 monastics in attendance.

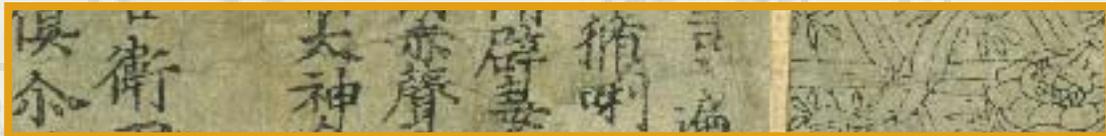
Before he even begins, Ananda has established an air of reverence for what is about to be said. How can we help but feel humble before these words?

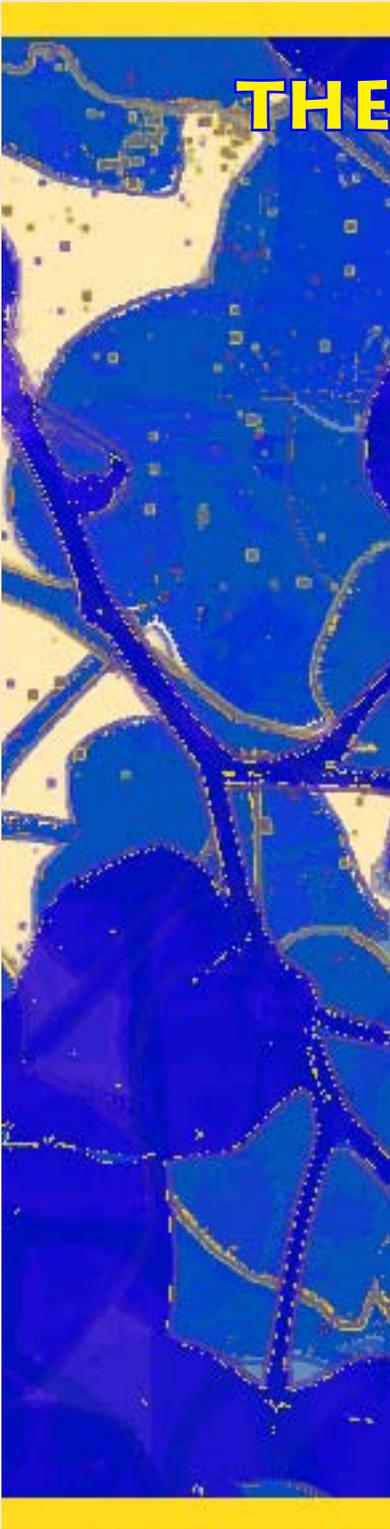
Ananda is making it clear that this is no Saturday morning dharma talk at the local Buddhist Center.

In a simple four-word phrase, we as Buddhists are being made a reverential part of the audience for this historic event. It would be like a Christian being invited to hear the Sermon on the Mount from the mouth of Jesus!

Further, we can explore *at one time* in the context of the Buddhist meaning of the flow of time, and of life unfolding only in the present moment. We can explore the Buddha in terms of the definition of a Buddha, the role of a Buddha in our cosmology, and the sectarian differences in Buddhism about the use of the word Buddha. We can explore the importance of the place in relation and its implications for foreshadowing the importance of the teaching that is to follow. The number of listeners and their status, here all disciples of great accomplishment, and 1250 of them, also talks directly to the import of the words that are to follow, and can be examined relative to the audiences and content of other sutras.

***Once we explain all this, we would do well to remember that there was nothing to be explained, as the Buddha tells us in the Diamond Sutra!***





# THE NEVERTHELESS RELIGION

Robert Granat

*Suddenly there is a point where religion becomes laughable.  
Then you decide that you are nevertheless religious.*

Thomas Merton wrote that, jotted it into his journal two days after this Catholic priest's enlightenment experience at a Buddhist shrine and four days before his death at a monastic gathering. He died right after he'd delivered a talk quoting a Tibetan Rinpoche: "From now on everybody stands on his own two feet."

"This," said Merton to the monks, "is what Buddhism is about, what Christianity is about...You cannot rely on structures. The time for relying on structures has disappeared. They are good and they should help us and we should do the best we can with them. But they may be taken away and if everything is taken away, what do you do next?"

Within the hour all Merton's structures were taken away. Not merely religious structures, his very life, alone, in his room. What he did next was die.

Though he left it as a question, a koan for his hearers to ponder, Merton knew what to do next. As did Eckhart, Chuang-tzu, Augustine, Hakuin, Nachman, Rumi, countless others. They all knew. But Thomas Merton was one of us. He spoke the words we speak, saw the world we see, felt the Zeitgeist we feel. He knew this impoverished affluence, this data-rich ignorance, this nuclear-powered impotence. He pulled his life out of the same existential muck-pit we're in. The big difference between Merton and most of us is that he worked at it full-time, while we mostly work part-time.

"What do you do next?" Boil it all down to pure essence and that's what it comes to: what do you do next? In words, the answer is just as simple. Lots of people know the answer in words, including me. You do next what is next to do. If your dishes need washing you wash them; if your neighbor needs helping you help him; if war needs protesting you protest. If it's time to live you live and if it's time to die you die. If you can't see what to do next you wait and do nothing.

All you have to do is look, see what's next, and do it. What demands the greatest effort, what requires the great discipline, what causes the great pain, is the eye-training. Training your eye to see what really does come next. Because it has got to be your vision, not other people's visions, that does your seeing, the way it has to be your flesh that carries you through your existence, nobody else's. Because only what you see for yourself is real seeing for you and only what you do for yourself is real doing for you. You've got to walk the road yourself because you're the only being in the whole universe who is precisely where you are.

No, you can't rely on structures, though, as Merton says, they're good and they can help and we should do the best we can with them while we've got them.

Structures aren't just religions. They're everything temporary. Communities, relationships, ideas, feelings, bodies, personalities, nations, physical existence, the earth, the sun itself—they're all temporary.

So what's left? What's left is what is. What really is; what finally, ultimately, authoritatively is. That's where the faith comes in. That's why this is a religion nevertheless, not just rational analysis.

You've got to trust what is. Even if your head can't conceive the vaguest notion about it, your heart has got to trust it and rely on it. There's nothing else really, and until you do trust Isness you're thrashing blind in the muck-pit.

To trust what it means to affirm your own life, means to stand on your own two feet. Not your pathetic ego-self, but your common isness, because what is, includes you too. What is, is in everything—or, more accurately, everything is in what is—it's got so much more room. What comes next is also in what is, if we've got the eyes to see it.

*The religion of what-is/what-comes-next is the Nevertheless Religion; the new religion that's so old it looks like new; the timeless religion whose time has come; the religion that comes next, for which the earth has become ripe. The religion of the seeing eye, the hearing ear, the trusting heart.*

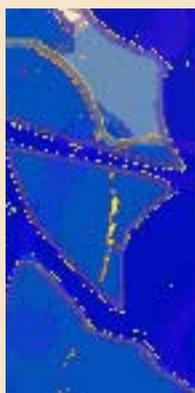
Naturally, we're going to get excited and talk a lot when we discover it, but after a while we'll quiet down and start working at it. It takes work too, since it's not a

Sunday religion or an hour-every-morning religion, or even a seven-times-a-day religion. It's a minute-by-minute religion, which you only stop practicing when your own structures are taken away—and maybe not then.

Of course such a religion is far too much for all the likes of us. Which means that the likes of us must itself be completely overhauled—and there are time-proven methods of training at that job—so that what is now obviously impossible can become not merely possible but natural, organic, even effortless. The capacity to do what's needed has been graciously built into our components.

Our kind has done it; our kind continues to do it; and any one of us can start doing it any time, if we want to. If we really want to.

WHAT  
DO  
YOU  
DO  
NEXT?



**ROBERT GRANAT** has published two novels: *The Important Thing* and *Regenesis*, and numerous essays and other writings. His interest in Buddhism goes back many years; his concern with "the important things" even further.



## INSIDE OUT PRACTICE

# UNHITCHING THE CART

**J**ames Hicklin

*“We are what we think; all that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. Speak or act with an impure mind and trouble will follow you as the wheel follows the ox that pulls the cart,” says the Buddha.*

*If you are an ox such as I, this verse will give you pause for consideration.*

Looking back on the long road I have traveled in my short 27 years, I see ruts the whole way. I have pulled a cart of trouble for a very long way.

In my youth, my cart’s load was comprised mostly of tremendous anger. I thought the anger was due to the taunting I received from my siblings. On account of my being short and fat, they frequently called me “Tank.” This exchange never failed to elicit a fit of rage on my part. The only word in the English language capable of angering me more, to near murderous rage, was “Pig.” My brother was particularly fond of that one, and usually let it fly just before the fight would ensue. I recall vividly how one such exchange landed my brother in the emergency room with a minor concussion. Yes, they sure knew how to push my buttons back then.

As I hit my early teens, I decided that my anger was a result of the injustice of life. It was all the fault of my abusive father and stepmother. All of my anger belonged to them, and the social workers who wouldn’t help, and the world that wouldn’t hear my cries. In my early teens I discovered them and I knew instantly that it was all their fault.

In my mid-teens I added the legal system to the group of them. What with the prosecutors and detectives and their trials, their life sentences, they were surely to blame.

In my late teens and early twenties, my anger—my ruts—were created by the rapists. That guy who convinced my cellmate to leave the cell open while I lay in bed sleeping. That guy that wouldn't take no for an answer. Yes, they were part of them as well.

Anger wasn't the only weight that dug ruts in the muddy road of my life. There was a lot of shame, a heap of depression, a touch of despair, and a mountain of addiction on my cart, digging my ruts even deeper. For a short time there was even self-mortification: branding myself with cigarette lighters, the Star of David I carved into my chest as a Christmas present to myself while I was in rehab. I was 12 then, waiting for my father to die, wanting the world to bear the weight I couldn't carry anymore. They wouldn't take away the weight, though; they just piled it higher.

Yes, by the time I was twenty something I had finally figured it all out. I knew exactly who was to blame for all of my troubles. I knew who was to fault for those deep deep ruts. My father for his abuse of me, my step-mother for hers, my mother for no particular reason, my family, the social system, the judges, the teachers, all of them were to blame for what was wrong in my life. It was all them.

The Dharma came to me at that point in my life. It was bitter medicine but it was just what I needed. It showed me that I had to forgive if I ever wanted to be healthy and happy. I had to come to understand the power of "I'm sorry" as well. It was the only way I was going to unhitch myself from this cart full of trouble, from digging ruts--scars really--into this road that is my life.

I recall the first "I'm sorry." It was so hard; I didn't know how to handle it when it came. I was in administrative segregation at the time; I was allowed one fifteen-minute call a month. It was during one such phone call, with my sister, that the apology came.

Heather and I were conversing about life, about everyday

things. She pointed out that she had seen Chris (my stepmother) in the grocery store. She went on to explain how she sees Chris around town from time-to-time, how they talk for brief periods. When I asked Heather for Chris's address, she said she didn't have it and swiftly asked why I wanted it. With a sense of conviction I haven't often felt in this indecisive life of mine, I said "I want to write her a letter to tell her I forgive her."

The rest of our conversation revolved around trying to understand why on earth I wanted to write this woman who did these awful things to me. What Heather never understood was that while the words I was using were "I forgive you," what I really meant was, "I'm sorry." For the first time in my life I wanted to approach this person and tell them from the bottom of my heart "I am sorry."

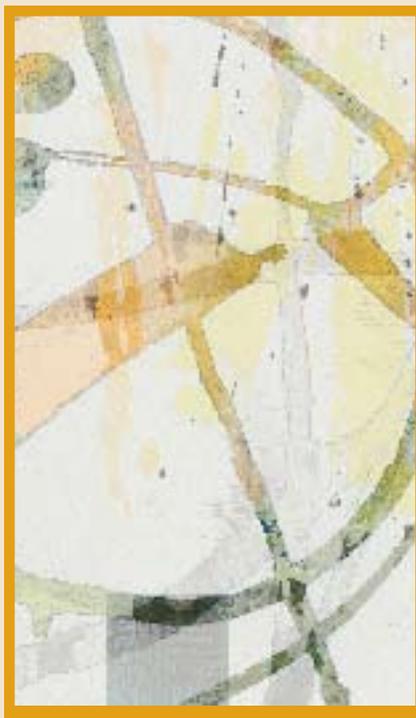
I never got to make that apology, as I never could convince Heather to give me Chris's address. In my heart, though, that day I gave my first apology.

Perhaps you are confused at this point, wondering what I was apologizing for. I will explain.

It was at that precise moment in my life that I finally understood that my stepmother had acted out of her suffering. In her mind, she believed that the things she was doing would bring an end to her suffering. All

beings are motivated this way. That is to say, all beings are motivated by one thought alone: "I don't want to suffer anymore." Knowing that, I knew that what my stepmother had done wasn't because she wanted to increase my suffering. She did it because she wanted to decrease hers.

So I had no need to forgive her. What I needed to do was tell her how sorry I was. I had to tell her I was sorry for not understanding her suffering. I was sorry for not working harder in previous lives to end her suffering before it got to this point. I was sorry for not working harder on my delusions, quelling them before I created the karma that allowed her and me to have such a horrible relationship.



*More importantly*, I was sorry for the years of anger I had directed at her, when the fault was mine.

Though I never got to say all those things, I learned that day that there are few greater forces in the universe than an apology. That same day I sat down with my dead father and apologized to him for not understanding his suffering. I told him I was sorry for not understanding his suffering. I told him I was sorry for not understanding that when the cancer hit him, he did not need the added difficulty that came from my getting revenge for all those years of abuse.

I told all of the ghosts of my past that I was sorry, that I would never forget to recall their suffering again. Then I began the process of apologizing to all of them. The list is long, and five years later I'm still telling people that I'm sorry for not considering them.

Somewhere along the line I even sat down with my own enemy, the only one of them that could rightly be called my enemy. I sat down with myself and said, 'I am sorry for all the pain I caused you, much of which you have yet to experience.'

*And then I forgave myself.*

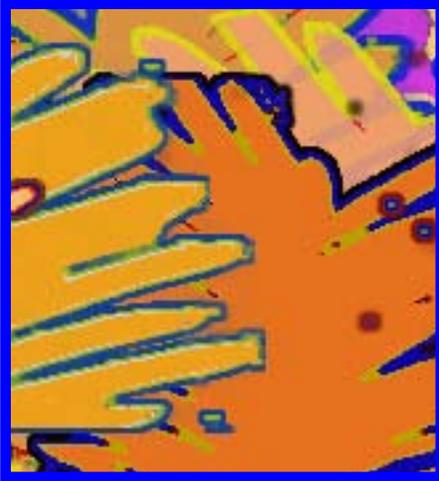
The Dharma teaches us to take this stance, without pride, without a sense of honor, in order to end the cycle of harmful relationships perpetuated by the karma of anger, in order to end the weariness that comes from battling the ghosts of enemies that never existed.

Most importantly, it is this stance that will give you a heart big enough to embrace the entire world.

At least it did for me.



**JAMES HICKLIN** resides in a maximum security prison in the Midwest. He is serving a life sentence without parole.



# ANGER TRANSFORMED

*Editor XIANYANG reflects upon a process that could have taken a very different turn.*

Understanding the ever-present conditions that allow anger to arise and cease in our lives allows us to better extinguish those conditions by practicing more effectively with anger's antidote: patience.



I suppose a certain amount of my anger is the result of my having chosen the parents I did. My mother was psychologically abused as a child. She suppressed her anger and practiced denial in order to survive. As an adult, however, the anger oozed out in mood swings, generalized anxiety and depression, sometimes erupting violently in bouts of uncontrollable hysteria that could last for weeks. (So much for suppression as an anger management technique!) My father was clinically depressed from the time he was a young child. He was angry at the world, always angry at everything. Periodically his anger erupted in fist swinging violence, slamming tables and banging walls. I remember feeling deeply threatened by the fist swinging, though he never actually hit me or any anyone else for that matter. At the age of 50 his suffering became so great that he took his life. Not surprisingly, he chose to end his life as angrily and violently as he had lived it.

Anger was a normal part of our family life. I learned it was an acceptable and appropriate behavior at a very young age. I also learned how to use anger and threats to get my way. It became a tool for success—the squeaky-wheel syndrome.

When I was twelve years old, my anger erupted violently for the first time when a kid down the street called me a “dirty name.” I beat him up. My parents came running. As my

father screamed for me to stop and pulled me off the boy, I remember how repulsed I was by my behavior. Even at that age I knew that my behavior was profoundly wrong. Then and there I swore to myself never to hit anyone again. It was the beginning of my lifelong commitment to non-violence and pacifism. It was one of the earliest seeds I planted that would later pave the way for my Buddhist practice.

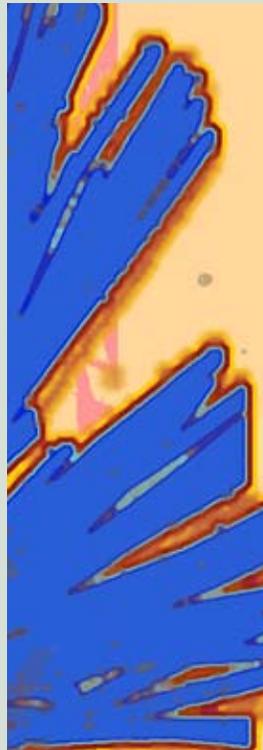
Although I would soon learn in Sunday school that the God of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) was an angry God (dare I say a “capricious bully”), I doubt that that in any way explained or justified my anger. I had learned at home that anger didn’t have to be explained or justified, not anymore than one had to explain or justify being kind. While I was only ten or twelve years old when I was taught about the punitive nature of Yahweh, I can remember categorically rejecting any expectation that I believe in this kind of a wrathful Maker. Having no other spiritual options at that age, I rebelliously planted my feet on the ground as a non-theist; my Sunday school days were soon over and I was done with any idea of a God.

Another seed was planted that would later allow me easily and wholeheartedly to embrace the Buddhist path.

As I moved through adolescence into adulthood, I developed a distaste for anger in general and for my anger specifically. Anger didn’t dominate my worldview, as it had my father’s—I was bathed in the optimism of my generation (the sixties)—but it was always there gnawing away at me, often in one form or another of resentment because, as I had learned at home, the-grass-is-always-greener-on-the-other-side. Occasionally, my anger would appear as an embarrassing explosion in a restaurant or shop. Waitresses and sales people became random targets for unexpected outbursts. And I had an embarrassingly good aim; when the anger took control of me I suddenly turned brutally mean.

As I grew older, though, I reflected on the fact that our culture does rely on the Judeo-Christian conceptual frame for anger, not only to justify personal and interpersonal anger but also socio-political anger: God was angry, and we were made in his image, so it’s ok to be angry, even good to be angry. And it was not only the God of the Hebrew Scriptures who was angry; Jesus seems to have also had a bit of a temper too. Further, because anger is God-given, it is ok to act on our anger and to defend and justify that behavior in His name, theoretically making the defense irrefutable.

Although my early training led me to perpetuate my anger and my angrily acting-out, the karma of that behavior became more and more detrimental as I grew older. Even my best friends were leery of accompanying me on a shopping trip or inviting me to a restaurant for dinner. My karma had caught up with me, leaving me deeply marginalized.



What I realized after I began practicing was that because we are human (ok, human and not yet fully awakened), we label and judge [consciousness: name and form; the twelve links]. We label and judge everything good or bad, I want or I don’t want. Whether we judge a thing good or bad, wanted or unwanted, there is aversion. In the positive cases (good, want), our aversion is toward someone or something’s loss; in the negative cases (bad, unwanted) our aversion is toward someone or something’s occurrence. Anger arises in response to aversion, and aversion is inherent in everything

in life [life is dukkha]. Anger is as central to our lives as the air we breathe. In the Abhidharma, aversion is listed as the root cause of anger, along with wrath, enmity, spite, envy, aggression, and anxiety. Anger can also give rise to other feelings, like meanness, viciousness, malice and revenge. When we look at anger, it is worth looking at these sister feelings and volitions as well. It is

also worth remembering that anger arises in the mind—that anger arises in our mind. No one can make us angry. Our anger is always and only our own.

The definition of aversion is wanting to be separated from someone or something. The reason we want to be separated is because we're afflicted, because we deludedly label people and things as undesirable, thus aversion includes a high degree of projection of our subjective biases. Anger, then, arises when we feel strongly enough about the aversion that we need to act on it—whether tapping our foot or mumbling to ourselves at a minor irritation or exploding in a fit of rage so powerful that we capriciously shoot at passing cars or kill children in schools.

Anger is perhaps the most powerful of all our delusions. It leads to everything from “playful” teasing to global wars. Because anger, and its root cause, aversion, is fundamental to our being, minimizing and eliminating it from our lives requires great commitment, diligence and effort. There is no simple or easy fix, no set of guidelines or numbered list to end anger.

While I am suggesting that anger is a natural part of us because we are human, I am not suggesting that we should resign ourselves to being angry. Anger is not an impulse over which we have no control. There is always some degree of decision-making involved in our becoming angry, and in most cases, a considerable degree of choice. I am not suggesting the other extreme either, that we can totally do away with anger.

What I am suggesting is that the way we deal with anger is the way we deal with life. The way we practice with anger is the way we practice. How we practice with anger is a direct reflection of where we are on the path.

What I am suggesting from my experience is that the Buddha has given us the tools we need to allow us to minimize the conditions necessary for anger to

arise, and that when it does arise, he has shown us ways to minimize its impact. The more we “practice with our anger,” the more rapidly we can recognize its causes arising and its arising and then are able to let go of the anger, so the less anger we have—and the less karmic perpetuation our anger has on us. Suppressing anger, as my parents did and as I was taught to do, is a wholly ineffective way to deal with this affliction; in fact, suppression perpetuates the anger and causes it to become self-renewing. We all know, one great burst of anger, one great explosion of our temper, can haunt us for weeks or months, or even years. A lifetime of practice can be shaken to the core with one moment of rage.

As Shantideva wrote:

***...a single outburst of anger  
can destroy all the good  
conduct that has been acquired  
over thousands of eons.***

In America today, anger is a pervasive part of our lives. We are inundated with it on television and the radio, on billboards and in newspapers and magazines, it pervades the workplace, in cities it is present on every street corner. Our children learn it in the halls of their schools. As the I-wants

have turned into the I-deserves, as the I-know-what-is-rights have turned into the I-am-going-to-prove-its we have become more and more angry as a nation. We have moved in recent years from believing we knew what was right to being warriors of certainty and irrational military bullies.

We have not only deeply identified with the anger of our everyday lives, we also have institutionalized the anger, making it a part of the very fiber of our society. We have transformed it into a core value.

In some minor way, though, we have begun to recognize it is a problem. We have anger management programs in our workplace, anger management classes in our schools, anger management seminars and books and workbooks and guidebooks and trainings. None of which are particularly effective. Why? Because they preach quick solutions, and



they preach external solutions. We have become a people like carvings in a rock. Our anger and our resolve to remain angry have become carved into our psyche. They cannot be unlearned in a 3-hour course at the office.

In the Anguttara Nikaya the Buddha describes three type of people: ***Those who are like carvings on a rock, those who are like scratches on the ground, and those who are like writing on water.***

People who are always getting angry and whose anger lasts for a long time are like a carving in a rock—the elements of winds and water, time and air barely have an effect on them. Then there are people who are like scratches on the ground; they are generally angry, but the anger is milder and it doesn't last long. And there are those who are like writings on water. Regardless of how harshly or unjustly they are treated, how abusively they are talked to, they remain peaceful and patient. When anger does arise in this last group, it is so mild and so momentary that it completely ceases almost as quickly as it arises.

In another sutra, the Buddha describes this situation: You are walking down a road when some highwaymen capture you, rob you, and use a saw to dismember you, limb by limb. Instead of getting angry the Buddha suggests you practice forbearance; practice feeling loving-kindness toward someone who is suffering so greatly that he would be capable of such a heinous action. When we develop the wisdom to understand that people commit those heinous acts to relieve their own suffering, we are better able to respond to them with understanding and compassion—like writing on water. (See *Inside Out Practice*, page 12)

Anger, whether directed at others or turned inwards towards ourselves, leads to frustration, irritation, and anxiety, and eventually to depression. In Buddhism it is therefore always viewed as a cause of suffering [*dukkha*], and any act, no matter its size or intensity, that causes suffering is unwholesome. Buddhists do not

subscribe to notions such as “righteous anger” or “justifiable anger.” As Allan Wallace wrote: “Righteous anger is in the same category as righteous cancer or righteous tuberculosis. All of them are absurd concepts.”

As Buddhists we have an obligation to find ways to practice with anger and to cause the conditions for patience and forbearance to arise, for wisdom, compassion and loving-kindness to arise.

The more we practice, of course, the more we move from our delusions and afflictions and our rigid beliefs in self and permanence which lead us to anger and the more we move toward our Buddha Nature, with our sense doors open only

***In the Anguttara Nikaya, the Buddha describes three types of people: those who are like carvings on a rock, those who are like scratches on the ground, and those who are like writing on water.***

enough to allow us to notice, to touch, but not enough to grasp and attach.

Applying the Dharma of no-self, impermanence and extinction to dealing with anger is an aspect of Buddhist education that I believe is one of the two best tools for dealing with anger that Buddhism gives us. Cultivating mindfulness is another key tool as it guards against anger, and meditation is one of the best practices for cultivating mindfulness. Every moment spent on the cushion brings us one step closer to peace and calm and non-reactivity, and takes us one step further away from our anger and the karma that pushes us toward that anger.

***Shantideva writes powerfully about anger as the main obstacle to developing compassion and the awakened mind.*** However, it is important to note that in Buddhist thought, compassion is not an emotion or feeling like anger, so the two are not opposites as so often portrayed in Western thought.

**The antidote for anger in Buddhism is patience.** Being patient means to welcome, unconditionally and wholeheartedly, whatever arises. Being patient means to give up the idea that things should be other than what they are. It is always possible to be patient; there is no situation so bad that it cannot be accepted patiently, with an open, accommodating, and peaceful heart.

When patience is our state of mind, through the three trainings [moral rectitude, meditation, and wisdom], it is impossible for a smorgasbord of aversion and anger related thoughts to gain a foothold on us. There are many examples of people who have managed to practice patience even in the most extreme circumstances, such as under torture or in the final ravages of cancer. For some of us, learning to practice patience with small difficulties gradually increases our capacity to deal with bigger anger-provoking events. For others, it takes being confronted with a life-threatening event for the practice to arise.

## PATIENCE IS SIMPLY UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

Regardless of which has arisen in our life, if we practise the patience of voluntarily accepting suffering, we can maintain a peaceful mind. If we maintain this peaceful mind through the force of mindfulness, anger will have no opportunity to arise. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to dwell on unhappy thoughts there will be no way for us to prevent anger from arising.

Patience doesn't mean that we don't take practical steps to improve our situation. If we have a headache there is no reason to practice patience with it and not take a tylenol, but until the tablet takes effect we need to accept whatever discomfort we feel with patient-mind. If we get angry and fight it, we will only increase its strength.

We are all here together in samsara. We cannot avoid unpleasant situations and a certain

amount of physical discomfort, sometimes even a great deal of heartache and physical pain. But instead of reacting blindly with anger, we should practice patience. There's no need to become angry just because things do not go our way. Although for forty-five years of my life that this was my reaction to difficulties, once I recognized that there was an alternative in practice, a more realistic and constructive way of living, my life changed dramatically for the better.

So how does patience work? Patience is simply unconditional acceptance. Utter acceptance of things as they are, with no desire to change externals. When we exhibit this patience, our hearts are open, we are not longer judging or critical, no are no longer labeling, we have eliminated the key conditions necessary for anger to arise.

Patience does more than just produce merit in us, it also helps those with whom we are patient. Being accepted feels very different from being judged. When we feels judged we become tense

and defensive, but when we feel accepted we relax and our best qualities arise. Patience causes a stable mind to arise in us, eliminating the conditions necessary for suffering to arise, but it also changes the way people react to us, for giving patience is another form of giving no-fear [dana], and when we act in ways with body, speech, and mind that give no-fear it spreads peace and harmony.

Patience, which arises from following the precepts, from the practice of the six paramitas, from meditation, from deepening our awareness of the twelve links of dependent origination, from wisdom, and from training ourselves sufficiently that we are able to afford an apartment in the four heavenly abodes, that patience is the tool we need, the tool the Buddha gave us, to minimize and ultimately eliminate anger and the causes of anger, in ourselves and in all beings.

Dare I say " Patience is Right View?"



## NOT EVERYDAY FAITH

*J*udith Toy

At the start of my Zen practice, what did I know about faith?



Our family was destroyed by the murders of three people in one night—my sister-in-law Connie and my two nephews Allen and Bobby, 16 and 14, cut down by the hatchet of a madman. Faith as I see it in Zen is rooted in experience. Faith and experience are interdependent, too. No inside and no outside. My experience at that time had been obscene, painful, heart shattering. How could I have known this tragedy would be a call to love?

Our murder was the first case involving DNA evidence in the county. It was front page, top of the evening news, and our district attorney wanted nineteen-year-old Charles Grand convicted. So

did the public. My family, too, wanted him to suffer. We wanted Charles to be forced to think long and hard every day of his life about what he had done. After stopping the trial by confessing to the crime, he received three consecutive life sentences without parole.

*Distraught, I took refuge in Zen.* It was then I got some relief from my grief and confusion through stopping and calming my breath. The fruits of the practice came slowly. Stilling my body/mind day after day, I inched toward the faith that led to forgiveness. This didn't happen until five years after the fact. Forgiveness came suddenly, in an unbidden way.

It was autumn, near the fifth anniversary of my family's death date, October 15. I picked up a

pencil, my therapy. Out of Zen's rich tradition of meaning surrounded in silence, I breathed in. With a heavy heart, I began writing a poem about the night of the murders, trying to sort out my feelings. By then I'd become a disciple of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, who wrote in one of his poems: I am the frog, swimming happily/in the clear waters of my pond,/and I am the grass-snake who,/approaching in silence,/feeds itself on the frog./I am the child in Uganda/my legs as thin as bamboo sticks/and I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda.

It's not important which words I then used to compose my poem. But what happened, to my absolute shock and surprise, was that I began to identify with the rage of the boy who was stabbing and bludgeoning Allen and Bobby, killing and raping their mother, dear Connie. Suddenly in the writing I seemed to inhabit his body! I felt blind, out of control, out of my own body and mind.

I went numb. I felt only rage, hatred and stabbing, my pounding heart.

That was the day I stopped thinking of Charles as a beast and began thinking of him as a boy in whom something had gone awfully wrong. The pain of resentment vanished! Breathing out, I saw in me the seeds of murder, seeds which have not been watered. So they've withered. Still they are

The Heart Sutra tells the same story. "After this penetration of prajna paramita, Shariputra overcame pain"--precisely what happened to me! We experience emptiness when we penetrate or absorb a thing, be it the mind of a murderer or a crust of bread. Thich Nhat Hanh says that when he's doing calligraphy he likes to take a tea break. One day when he picked up his tea cup and took a sip, he tasted the mountains of China.

Most of the time we don't see things—dharma—as fluid, spacious, receptive. A table for example. It looks and feels hard, when in fact it's a fluid dance of myriad molecules and space, never static. So there's a tendency to grasp at what we see as solid and apart, with edges. The same goes for our experiences. We don't need to gulp the dharma as if it were a brand name. We don't need to visit every monastery, meet every teacher, grabbing for enlightenment. If we cannot find forgiveness where we're standing now, where do we expect to wander in search of it?

Most of our murders, though, are little murders. The faith I developed from my sudden satori of forgiveness was not everyday faith. It traveled from the macro of murder to the micro of the little murders of everyday life—the "he-said-she-said" variety of drama and difficulty. I came to Zen angry, confused, demoralized. Zen taught me to embrace my anger and confusion, no matter how minor. We learn

*Forgiving the boy who murdered my family was like striking a match to my grief. For as Buddha said, hatred never ceases through hatred--only through love.*

there. I saw within me not only the victims, but the perpetrator. Sadly, before I was able to tell him so, Charles took a laundry bag and hung himself to death in his prison cell. I mourned his passing. Twelve years after the murders, his mother and I cried together over our mutual loss.

to treat our anger like a child, rock it. We ask our anger, "What is it you need from me now, my dear?" Instead of sweeping it under the rug, we sit and walk and breathe with it. Hold its hand. Pushing it away only disperses our energy. But embracing our anger,

seeing it as something that needs help from us—the dragon as princess in travail—we’re able to transform anger to love. At this point we see deeply into the person we’ve perceived as the cause of our hurt. We forgive them.

Sometimes our fear keeps us from reconciling, as it did in the case of the murderer of my family. I had forgiven Charles, not condoned what he did. And I was still afraid of him. Then he hung himself to death and it was too late to tell him. Had I still perceived him as separate from myself? Is this why I did not say the words, “I forgive you,” via letter or in person? Knowing he was knee-deep in his own grief, this much I was able to do: mentally, I put myself in his cell and took him in my arms every day, held him as if he were my son. But I didn’t go there; I am no Sister Prejean.\*

I have a brother who doesn’t speak to me. It’s been hard for me to reach out to him, like touching a hot stove, because I’m afraid of getting singed again. How to forgive? Or what about those times when the roles are reversed? When we need to be forgiven? When we catch ourselves up short—usually as the result of the reign of terror of our own anger?

Those times when we say a thing we later come to regret. Unmindful speech! If only we could take it back! Erase that scene. Or rewind and replay it in a more skillful way. Nevertheless, here we are in a situation which, when we realize our own part in the mess, we regret. How to ask for forgiveness?

Often because we’ve properly alienated the other, i.e., they’re not speaking to us or they’re just avoiding us, our plea for pardon has to be made via letter. Once I ordered a bouquet of I’m-sorry flowers and had them delivered to the person whose appointment I blew off. That was easy. No, I’m talking here about the times we thoroughly screw up. A love letter? Yes. Extolling the real virtues of the other, owning our mistakes, our unmindful speech and actions. In such a letter, we need to be specific, sticking to “I” messages. The

rule I give myself is these messages can’t be forged or figned; they have to come out of my actual truth.

There’s a Zen tradition of requesting a thing of the teacher three times. My usual strategy is three attempts at throwing straw on the mud—say, two phone calls asking for a personal interview—and when my calls are not returned, the love letter. No recriminations. Just love and an expression of my desire to reconcile in person. Telling only my own feelings, without projecting my feelings onto the other. If I don’t truly feel love for the other person, I do nothing.

After a dharma talk on forgiveness, a student asked me for an interview. She was angry. She wanted advice on a situation where she felt she’d been wronged. My mistake was that I gave her this advice: Stop pointing the finger of blame. Look to yourself; make this your practice. This escalated her anger; she aimed it at me; she felt judged. I called and wrote emails asking for a face-to-face interview to tell her this: I am sorry to have done anything but listen to you! She found it easier to point and click than come face-to-face. She sent a number of what I called gorilla emails.

I countered with several love letters, pointing out qualities of hers I cherish. Alas, the gorilla emails continued, my love unacknowledged. I have had to let go of this one—accepting that all transactions are not clear. More often, they’re muddy and unresolved. Still, I leave the door open....

The letting go took some time because I care for her. It helped me to envision her surrounded in light, in *maitri* meditations, saying prayers for her. And most important for me was to look deeply to understand why she was so angry. This is rarely rocket science—why people behave as they do. At that time, her mother had just had a massive heart attack. And she herself had been diagnosed with a chronic illness. Exchanging myself with her, I asked, under such conditions, would I be able to maintain



my equanimity? She didn't want my advice; she only wanted someone to listen to her, to love her through the difficulty. In this regard, I failed.

How often are we left holding the bag? Needing to forgive ourselves? How often, really, do we practice *maitri* meditations for ourselves? I can't tell you how often during days of mindfulness folks have said in dharma discussion, "The person I most need to forgive is myself." And, of course, they add, and my parents.

Thich Nhat Hanh suggests as a *maitri* practice that we envision our parents as vulnerable five-year-olds, ourselves as five-year-olds. In this way, we water the seeds of compassion that lead to forgiveness. Once in a morning meditation, I went back in time. I traveled through my life as far as toddler days. With a heart/mind of love, I called out to myself every name I've ever had—from nicknames to dharma names, good names to bad names—Jelly Bean to True Gate of Heaven. How powerful! Then I took this practice into a women's prison. One of them wrote to me, "So wonderful, this meditation. It takes me where I long to be. Even behind prison walls, I am free!"

Taoist writer Derek Lin tells a story (I've changed the genders)--about the Taoist master who instructs her student to fill up a bag of cut potatoes, one for every resentment she holds, and to carry it around for a week. The cut potatoes begin to stink, and the student's back hurts. At the end of the week, the teacher asks her, What did you learn? That my resentments are loading me down, that they stink. I think I'm ready to forgive them all, she says. Okay, says the teacher, unload the bag. The student pours the rotten potatoes onto the ground. Then the sage asks the student whether anyone offended or annoyed her during the week. Actually, yes, answers the student, reluctant to begin refilling the bag. If we continue this way, won't there always be potatoes in the bag? she asks. Yes, as long as people keep offending you, answers the teacher. So what good is the Tao? the student wants to know. This is not the Tao, says the teacher. With the Tao, there's nothing to attain. Then what is the Tao? the student wants to know. Wake up, says the teacher. If the potatoes are your resentments, what does the bag represent? The student asks, My self-importance? Yes, says the teacher. When you're ready to lay down the bag itself, this is the Tao of forgiveness.

There is even the danger that faith itself will become the bag of potatoes, the stuff of ego and dogma. But if we let go of the bag, of our separate self, there's nothing

to grasp. The murders taught me that. Even more, they led me to the joy and freedom of letting go! The Dalai Lama says the sensation of emptiness—non-self—is soft, yielding.

As one of my Zen teachers wisely put it, "***You sit, you drop yourself, and you're right in the middle—paradise.***"

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# RESPECT

*THE BASIS OF COMPASSION AND WISDOM by MASTER JEN CHUN*

*A compassionate resolve of walking through fire and water,  
A wise planning that “offers one’s heart on a platter,”  
When generated with clarity and purity, enables  
An (ordinary) person to see the great bodhisattvas.*

Throughout history we have seen many examples of people who were willing “to walk through fire and water” to uphold justice, to preserve the integrity of their religion, and to protect their country. These are very difficult tasks. The fire fighters who were involved with the rescue missions following the 9/11 terrorist attacks were examples of those who “walk through fire.” They went right through the fire to fight the fire, even though they knew they might die. They did this because it was their responsibility. When one is willing to go through fire and water, one demonstrates compassion and resolve in action.

A focus of wisdom is openness. “Openness” means that there’s nothing covert; our heart and mind are clearly displayed for others to see; we are willing to “show our cards.” Such openness and enthusiasm require true wisdom. True wisdom illuminates: it puts our physical and mental conduct under the spotlight so that everyone knows what’s on our mind. We will then have the courage and vigor to put our moral beliefs into action.

The wisdom of Dharma is the most excellent. The teaching of the Buddha is most worthy of our respect. We revere the words of the Buddha -- the Teacher of the plain and simple truth. We aspire to truly understand the Dharma.

Compassion means the ability to place everyone else above ourselves. Even the Buddha, the most lofty of all, upheld the notion of equality. Our willingness to endure our own pain and suffering will enable us to provide others with protection and safety.

Buddhism often speaks of having great aspiration and resolve. “Aspiration and resolve” means the firmness of our determination. We apply this firmness to everything we do -- true firmness arises only if we are never deceitful -- and with such purity of all our actions, we do what should be done and refrain from doing what shouldn't be done.

When an ordinary person's own determination gradually becomes pure, he/she begins to see the greatness of the great bodhisattvas. Great bodhisattvas are great because of their extraordinary qualities, the qualities that stem from their great resolve. They do what others hesitate to do; they take up what others fear to undertake. They consider such difficult deeds as their own responsibility, which they must never shirk.



**WE SHOULD FIRST RECOGNIZE THAT WE CANNOT EXIST IN THIS WORLD INDEPENDENTLY.**

**C***ontemplate with wisdom and destroy the ego, which hinders and conceals.*

Act with compassion and support others, who open our hearts and broaden our minds. By the luminosity and virtuous qualities of great resolve and pure karmic action, internal breakthroughs and support from others will continuously come.

Though we all have a heart and a pair of eyes, they are often blind. They are blinded by the delusion of self. Therefore, the single most important aim in practicing Buddhism is to eliminate the fallacy of self. We should first understand that a “true self” does not exist; there is only a “conditioned self” -- this entity that we call “self” is only a temporary conditional existence. If we understand the nature of this conditioned self, we can make good use of the conventional entity “self.” Through the conditioned self, we resolve to create a bright future. With such wisdom, we will be able to break through our delusion of self.

We walk around as if we are wearing a blindfold over our eyes and a veil over our hearts and minds. If we understand this, we should apply wisdom to remove the blindfold and pull off the veil. Then we will be able to truly care for others and extend to them our loving-kindness. There are two elements of loving-kindness. The first element is rational differentiation -- knowing and choosing right from wrong; the second is forbearance of the truth, holding back on personal liberation in order to help others. If we understand the true meaning of loving-kindness, we can truly devote ourselves and truly promote and spread morality through loving-kindness.

What is the meaning of “open and broaden”? We should first recognize that we cannot exist in this world independently. We exist through our connections with innumerable supporting conditions, both human and material. Therefore, we need to devote ourselves to the public welfare and open the valve of our hearts to broaden the capacity of our minds.

How do we open our hearts and broaden our minds? First we make a determination to purify our actions by removing the blindfolds, by not being controlled by the delusion of self. Gradually our deeds become righteous and our resolve solidifies. The luminous and virtuous quality will eventually manifest itself, enabling us to break through the blindfold of self and sustain our practice. Over time, our wisdom will gradually gain in strength, and the capacity of our mind will be further enlarged.

***T***ime spent on worthy causes conducted with integrity will be free from disdain.



The emptiness doctrine is observed with pure clarity; the principle that is lucidly explicated can transform and inspire (others).

Human beings have two treasures besides the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha): time and space. When we spend time on worthy causes, we cultivate an upright character and we are free from the disdain of others. Without integrity, wealth and lofty social position do not make us useful human beings.

The doctrine of emptiness teaches us not to cling to the two extreme wrong views of eternalism and annihilationism. When we understand the true nature of self and are free from any false view of self, there would be no adverse effect (the delusion) in the activities of “self,” and we will gradually achieve purity in our physical and mental conduct.

The word “discourse” in Chinese (*li*) also means the ultimate principle or guideline. What kind of principle is considered the ultimate guideline? The principle refers to the ultimate truth -- the truth that can withstand the scrutiny of the most rigorous logic. Once we penetrate this ultimate truth, we are “victorious” because from then on our actions will always reflect the principle, namely, the truth. If we can then clearly explicate this principle, we can transform and inspire others.

Everyone should share the responsibility to spread the Dharma. Whether you are a lay person or a monastic, you need to spend time studying the Dharma, so that you will be able to give discourses. Do not think it is another person’s responsibility. Do not simply enjoy the benefit of the Dharma. Do not be lazy and waste your time. Don’t waste your life as a human being

***F***or those who never diverge from the mindfulness of respect, herein mundane and supramundane qualities arise.

For those who frequently make ample use of mindfulness of respect, wherever they go, their path is clear and wide.

***We should have respect at all times.***

Having respect is more than paying lip service. We demonstrate respect in all our actions. Once we can hold respect in our minds at all times, it naturally flows out through all our activities. All moral actions, whether mundane or supramundane, will then be born from respect.

What difference does it make to have a sense of respect? Without a sense of respect, we are without sincerity. An insincere person follows the flow of samsara, from life to life, like a leaf drifting on flowing water. If we apply respect, we can reach a relaxed state of mind because the mind will be free from the control of our egos. Any pressure that we normally feel in life will not affect us, and our mind will be calm and strong.

Whether you are a monastic or lay person, if you are a pure follower of the Buddha, you will be able to win respect wherever you go and you will be faced with a path that is clear and wide. If you can have this open mind, you do not have any selfishness in your mind and everything you do, you do for others; wherever you go, others will want to make a connection with you. Once you are able to make connections with everyone, you will be able to make connections with all the Buddhas. That is where the great effectiveness lies.

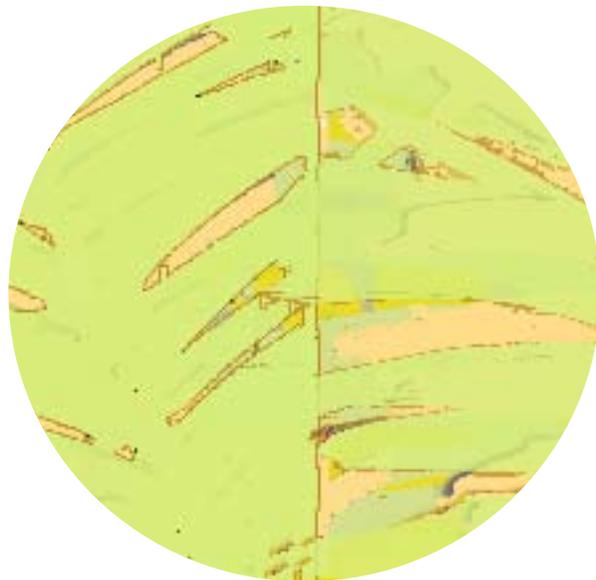
On the other hand, whether you are a lay person or a monastic, if you can maintain pure Dharma practice, you will also win the respect of others. The path in front of you will be clear and wide. Because of your openness and selflessness, everything you do, you do it to benefit others. People will then want to connect with you wherever you go. Building a connection with everyone, you are building a connection with all the Buddhas. This is the great use of respect.

We should look to the Buddha to learn how to show respect. The Buddha Shakyamuni not only paid respect and showed reverence to all the Buddhas of the past, he also showed respect to all sentient beings in the past, present, and future. This is the true essence of Buddhism. This is the difference between it and other worldly religions.

You should apply the same kind of reverence and respect to everybody surrounding you. With this kind of universal reverence, you will not lose your temper. Not only should you show respect to good people, you should also show respect to bad people because whatever these people did that makes them bad is only temporary. You should apply this attitude of equality to everyone and then you will have no anger or aversion. Your mind will then be calm, pure, and steady.

***What kind of person was the Buddha?***

He was one who always placed others before himself. He never had one thought of craving for himself. Because he possessed this kind of mentality, he was able to dedicate everything he had to everybody else. If you are able to follow the example set by the Buddha, you will have no craving and greed. With non-greed, your behavior will show integrity and wherever you go, you will exude purity and integrity in your actions



For the past 20 years, **MASTER JEN-CHUN** has led a simple life in New Jersey, teaching with the goal of creating a pure form of Buddhism in the United States by emphasizing the study and practice of Dharma, instead of ritual practices and ceremonies. He is founder and spiritual leader of Bodhi Monastery in New Jersey.



## MERCY KILLING: IS THERE AN ETHICAL MIDDLE GROUND?

by Xianyang

*This is the first of a four-part series on Buddhist ethics designed to explore some of the implicit and explicit moral guidelines used to make ethical decisions in our lives.*

*Twenty years ago a novice practitioner at a Buddhist monastery in California found a maimed deer lying on the ground, near death, at the edge of the monastery's property. He went to the most senior Teacher and asked what to do. The Teacher organized a vigil to sit around the deer and gently chant the Heart Sutra, which they did with open-hearts and compassion, for the next 2 days as the deer died. Twenty years later, that novice practitioner, who himself had become a venerated Teacher, remained deeply skeptical of and troubled by that response.*

\* \* \*

*Recently I watched a dear friend die of cancer. She had undergone numerous surgeries—including a mastectomy and the removal of a lung—and had suffered willingly and patiently with round after round of chemo and radiation, clinging to this life with great strength of character. Finally the cancer weakened her so much that she decided it was time for her to die and she asked to go into hospice care. Although the doctors were willing (albeit through the use of ambiguous language), no one in the family would ask that she be given the increased amounts of morphine necessary to hasten her death. It wasn't until the tumor in her brain became so painful that she asked for something to relieve the "pounding" that morphine was requested. All faithful Christians, the family felt the decision, for the most part, was God's, not theirs.*

**M**ercy killing is the blunt and emotive phrase; euthanasia is the clinical and dispassionate alternative; but words aside, this is intentional killing of another being. As we get older, on one level or another, directly or indirectly, we are confronted with the ethical issues of executing another being—whether or not to encourage or ask others to do it, whether or not to support its legalization, whether or not to do it ourselves.

How we respond to these ethical challenges seems to be as critical as what we actually do in the situations that cause these questions to arise. Why? Because intentionality is fundamental to Buddhist ethics, because intentionality is fundamental to Karma.

Let's start with the traditional answer, then look at the question in terms of applying the seals of impermanence and non-self and nirvana, and finally examine the consequences of our responsibility for our actions (in body, speech, and mind) in Buddhist thought. And for the sake of this article, let's ignore the distinction made in the Pali Canon between killing a Buddha, killing a human being, and killing an animal, as those distinctions do not effect the outcome of this discussion.



In Buddhist reasoning, there is no such thing as a completely altruistic killing; euthanasia is never a wholesome act. If that seems cold and indifferent, the Abhidharma does offer an alternative to standing around and doing nothing in critical end-of-life situations. What it offers, however, may seem out-of-touch with today's sensibilities, sensibilities which are in the throws of change. While euthanasia is legal in some Western countries, like The Netherlands, and while attempts to legalize some forms of euthanasia have been and are being made in this country, we here in America did send Dr. Kevorkian to prison for assisting terminally ill patients in their suicides.

So what does “traditional” Buddhism offer as an alternative? It offers, more implicitly than explicitly, *metta* and *karuna* practices. Not much of an answer by the standards of modern situational ethics. In Buddhism, *metta* and *karuna* practices are regarded as appropriate responses to the suffering of others. *Metta* meaning lovingkindness practice and *karuna* meaning action based on compassion that reduces the suffering of others. In Buddhism, cultivating lovingkindness and compassion in the face of suffering is a very practical response to the problem of suffering brought about by our birth, sickness, old age, and death. Both are seen as complimentary to wisdom and right view, and both are necessary for the practice of enlightenment.



These alternatives—*metta* and *karuna* practices—highlight what amounts to a crucial difference in perspective between the worldview of traditional Buddhism and the worldview of contemporary ethical thought and, for the most part, contemporary ethical practice. The two examples given at the beginning of this article also illustrate the fundamental difference in perspective between an orthodox Buddhist response and a contemporary Western Christian response, *metta* practice vs. tacit approval for others to hasten the death.

So why is the Buddhist response so clear and straightforward, so seemingly rigid and unyielding, especially in terms of the dharma teachings of impermanence, non-self and extinction, Buddhism's three seals? Why is Buddhism so firm in its denial of even the possibility of an altruistically intentioned killing?

The answer is twofold. First, the very idea that killing a living being might be the solution to the problem of suffering runs counter to the First Noble Truth, the Buddhist concept that life is *dukkha*. As the First Noble Truth, the reality of *dukkha* must be fully understood, not denied.

And second, in Buddhist psychology, mercy killing or active euthanasia can only be carried out when there are feelings of aversion and ill-will on the part of the perpetrator toward the fact of the patient's suffering. Even though the motivation behind a mercy killing may appear to be "good" on the surface, namely to prevent further suffering for the patient, intentionally killing another being is, in fact, a selfish act of greed (I want to stop that...), hatred (because, I hate seeing someone in pain.) and delusion (I am only doing this for the benefit of the other person.).

So when a doctor performs, or we instruct her to perform what we, and perhaps she, believes is a purely altruistic act of killing, the intention is not arising from compassion but rather it is arising from the three poisons: greed, hatred, and delusion. Actions motivated by the three poisons are, as we know from personal and direct experience as well as from the core teachings, always unwholesome.

***But can there be an accommodation?*** Can there be a set of circumstances where genuine compassion might play some part in the decision to kill a living being, even if that killing is understood to be fundamentally unwholesome? The answer in today's world would seem to be yes, but a conditional yes.

First, because Buddhism, even ancient Buddhism, is not really concerned with laying down ethical absolutes, Buddhism is concerned, rather, with focusing on us understanding the causes

that motivate us to act: greed, hatred, and delusion. So saying that intentionally killing a living being is wrong is not, in fact, presented in Buddhist thought as an ethical principle; it is a claim about how the mind works, about the nature of certain mental states and the kinds of action they give rise to.

Further, it is a claim that when certain mental states, like *metta* and *karuna*, have penetrated the mind it is inconceivable for us to act in certain ways, like intentionally killing.

So if one were to respond to the Abhidhamma claim that an act of intentional killing motivated by compassion is a psychological impossibility, then the opposite of that would seem to be a possibility: If an act of intentional killing is motivated solely out of compassion, then it is ok to do it. And this, of course, begs the question of there being a middle ground. Is there a time when, understanding our own simultaneously wholesome and unwholesome natures, we can appropriately choose to participate in a mercy killing--making that choice with full awareness and acceptance of the negative karma we are causing, to ourselves and to others?

**Ultimately, ethical principles cannot tell us how to act in this world.** For that we need to look into our hearts and minds. Whether we are renunciates or lay people, Bhikkhus or Bodhisattvas—distinctions I believe are irrelevant to this discussion though they are often made in modern Buddhist thought—we must look into our hearts and minds in each situation, in each moment, to make ethical decisions. If we want to know that the dharma suggests, what Buddhism offers us as guidelines, we should remember the three pure precepts:

Cease doing evil.

Cultivate goodness.

Act for the benefit of all beings.





## CONSCIENCE

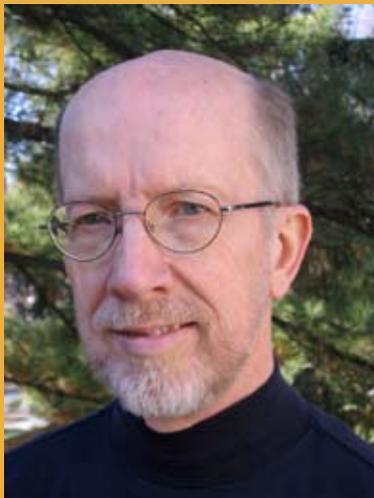
*from An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics  
by Peter Harvey*

*The role of conscience in Buddhism is performed by a small group of qualities, starting with hiri and ottappa, which are seen as the immediate cause of virtue and as two bright states which guard the world. Hiri is “self-respect,” which causes one to seek to avoid any action which one feels is not worthy of oneself and lowers one’s moral integrity. Ottappa is “regard for consequences,” being stimulated by concerns over reproach and blame for an action, embarrassment before others, (especially those one respects), legal punishment, or the karmic results of an action. Appamada, “heedfulness”, a combination of mindfulness and energy, is also said to be the basis of all virtues. Mindfulness is alert presence of mind, cultivated strongly in meditation practice, which enables one to be more aware of one’s mental states, including intentions and motives. It is complemented by sampajanna, “clear comprehension”, which acts to guide one’s actual behavior to be in harmony with one’s ideals and aims.*



# INSIGHT MEDITATION

LEARN TO RELATE TO ALL OF YOUR EXPERIENCES  
WITH KINDNESS AND MINDFULNESS.



***PHILIP L. JONES** offers clear and comprehensive instructions on an ancient, yet thoroughly relevant, meditation practice.*

*Philip L. Jones ([www.midwesterndharma.org](http://www.midwesterndharma.org)) is president of the Board of Directors of Mid America Dharma. He has practiced for the past 21 years, and has taught for the past 10 years. He studied with Matthew Flickstein, Bhante Gunaratana and teachers from Insight Meditation Society, Spirit Rock Meditation Center and Abhayagiri Buddhist Monastery.*

# INSIGHT MEDITATION

## *What it is and how do I start?*

Each person comes to the practice of insight meditation for different reasons. One person may simply be curious about meditation. Another may be seeking a way to reduce the stress in their lives. Someone else may be seeking a way to manage chronic pain. And another person may be seeking a spiritual path. Whatever your motivation, what follows is a response to the questions that beginners often bring to this practice.

Stress, dissatisfaction and suffering are a part of our lives. Usually we want some way to avoid this. Our culture offers many options to help us try to avoid experiencing this stress: TV, the internet, shopping, alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex, books and exercise are a few. Although each of these methods may provide some relief, we never seem to escape the stress for long.

Insight meditation provides a very simple method for reducing the stress, the suffering, in one's life. It is based on two observations. First, that when we resist reality, either by trying to hold on to an experience or by trying to push it away, we create stress and suffering for ourselves. And second, that when we are simply present for our lives in this moment, rather than with holding on or pushing away, then we can experience some of the clarity and peacefulness that is always available to us but usually obscured by the effort to control life. When we are present in the moment, our lives become more vibrant.

Insight meditation teaches us how to be present. It teaches us to relate differently to our experiences through opening our hearts and our minds to whatever arises in our lives in the moment. Insight meditation is also a method for investigating our experience. It is a way to see for ourselves if it is true that holding on and pushing away our experience leads to stress and suffering. And it is a way to see if it is true that clarity and peacefulness are available when we relax and let go into our lives in this moment. In learning insight meditation, we learn to investigate these questions by learning to relate to our experience with two qualities of mind and heart: kindness and mindfulness.

*The instructions here are given sequentially.  
Each set of instructions builds on the previous set.*

### **1. GETTING STARTED**

### **2. MINDFULNESS OF THE BODY**

### **3. MINDFULNESS OF FEELING**

### **4. MINDFULNESS OF MINDSTATES**

### **5. MINDFULNESS OF THINKING**

This complete set of instructions provides us with the skills needed to relate to all of our experience with kindness and mindfulness.



## **GETTING STARTED**

In this section we will explore posture for sitting meditation, awareness of the sensations of breathing and some general suggestions for establishing a regular meditation practice

*The key to sitting in meditation is to have an erect but relaxed back.* This allows one to breath easily and to sit with some physical stillness. If our bodies are still, then rather than distracting us with constant movements we can begin to see more clearly what is happening in our minds and hearts. We can begin to see how we are relating to our experience.

A simple exercise can help one discover what “erect but relaxed back” means experientially. While sitting, stretch the spine and head up towards the ceiling while inhaling. Then exhale and relax while keeping the spine erect. Notice how this feels. Then if you wish you can gently rock a little to the left and right to settle into a balanced position.

Although it is traditional to practice insight meditation while sitting on meditation cushions on the floor, it can actually be practiced in any posture. There are a number of sitting technologies available now: round meditation cushions (zafus), benches, “smiley” cushions among others, with a thick pad or cushion (zabuton) underneath to protect the legs. All of these aids are available through the internet. However sitting in a chair is also quite acceptable. Simply be cautious of the tendency to slouch, which can make it difficult to breathe easily. Remember: An erect but relaxed spine.

### ***Meditation guidelines***

Find a location in your home where you can sit quietly and undisturbed. This should be a place where you feel safe and comfortable. Sitting in the same location each time will help establish some regularity in your practice.

Decide on a specific amount of time that you plan to sit. Use a clock or a timer, which is preferable, to keep track of the time. Initially 10-20 minutes should be long enough.

Insight meditation is a skill. Similar to learning to play a musical instrument or a sport, insight meditation requires regular practice for the skill to develop. It is strongly recommended that you practice each day.

It is best to not have any expectations about what your meditation should look like. This is a practice of discovering what our experience is like. Having an expectation interferes with this process of discovery.

Give yourself the gift of this time to step away from the activity of your daily life. Let go of your plans and concerns during the period of meditation. You can return to them when you are done meditating.

### ***Mindfulness of breathing***

Mindfulness of breathing is the foundation for insight meditation. The sensation of breathing is the primary object of meditation; it gives the mind something to focus on and it is an anchor to return to during times of difficulty. Paying attention to the sensations of breathing builds the concentration necessary for further development of mindfulness and

insight. It also contributes to feelings of relaxation, to grounding oneself in one’s body and it can be useful in stress management.

In some forms of meditation there is an emphasis on changing the way that one breathes. In insight meditation we do not adjust the breath. We allow the breath to be the way that it is; sometimes it is long, sometimes short, sometimes smooth, sometimes ragged, etc. The emphasis is simply on bringing attention to the sensations of breathing.

When we begin to bring attention to the sensations of breathing, we are attempting to develop some concentration. It is an attempt to settle the mind so that we can begin to see more clearly what is occurring within our minds and bodies. People often get stuck in this stage of insight meditation, believing that they do not have sufficient concentration to move to other aspects of the practice. However, all that is needed is a few moments of concentration.

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING FOR INSIGHT MEDITATION**

*Settle into your sitting position.*

Close your eyes completely. (If you have been trained in other methods which instruct you to leave them partially open, that is acceptable.)

Soften the muscles in your face and around your eyes, your shoulders, arms and hands, and your legs.

Sit with an erect but relaxed posture.

Focus your attention at the tip of the nose. (If you have been trained to follow the sensations of breathing in the abdomen or the chest, those are also acceptable locations.)

Take one or two deep breaths to help settle the attention in the location where you are following the sensations of breathing. This may actually be the upper lip, a location just inside the nostrils or at the tip of the nose. Use this spot as the location for your attention during the remainder of the meditation.

As the breath moves in and out of the body notice the sensations that occur in the spot where your attention is located. Do not try to follow or imagine the breath flowing in and out of the body, just notice the sensations where your attention is focused. Initially this may simply be an awareness of an in-breath and an out-breath, or if following the sensations in the abdomen the rising and falling of the diaphragm or the in and out of the abdomen.

Sometimes it is helpful to silently count the breaths. Counting “one” on the in-breath, “two” on the out-breath, “three” on the in-breath, etc. up to ten. If the attention wanders completely away from the breath, when you notice it, begin again. When you are able to follow the sensations up to “ten.” let go of the counting and simply continue following the sensations of the breath.

Just try to follow one in-breath as clearly as you can, and then one out-breath. Don't get overly ambitious and expect yourself to follow more than one breath. This is a training in being present in this moment. Also, expecting to be mindful for more than one breath sets one up for discouragement.

When your attention wanders away from the sensations of breathing and you notice it, appreciate that moment of waking up and being mindful. There is no need for judgment. Just gently return your attention to the breath and continue to follow it. Each time you awaken like this and bring the attention back to the object of meditation gently and without judgment, you are strengthening the factors of concentration, mindfulness and kindness.

When you are able to stay in contact with the sensations of breathing, you may notice when the breath is short and when it is long.

As your concentration becomes stronger, you may follow the sensations from the beginning of the in-breath through the middle to the end and then you follow the sensations of the out-breath in the same way.

Continue to follow the sensations of breathing until your meditation period is over.

If at any time you become confused about the instructions, simply return to the point in the instructions where you feel most comfortable and confident.

*If you wish, you can take a few moments during the day to get in touch with your breath. This is a good way of helping yourself settle down and coming back to the present moment's experience.*

### ***Concentration and mindfulness***

Insight meditation uses the mental factors of concentration and mindfulness. These factors allow us to experience what is true in this moment.

All forms of meditation require a certain amount of concentration, which allows us to keep awareness focused on one object, such as the sensations of breathing, a word or a candle flame. Without concentration, the mind would not settle down enough for us to begin to feel some peacefulness and to begin to see what is actually happening in our experience.

While concentration allows us to hold our attention in this moment, mindfulness allows us to experience the present moment. Like concentration, mindfulness can be cultivated or strengthened. When a bell sounds, there is a moment in which it is recognized before the mind says “bell” or “sound.” The moment of recognition is mindfulness. Sometimes mindfulness is called bare attention because it is bare of three qualities: judgment, decision-making and commentary.

Bare of judgment means that when an experience comes into awareness it is not judged as right or wrong, good or bad; it is simply perceived. For instance, when a bell sounds and mindfulness is predominant there would be a non-conceptual recognition that hearing was occurring without any judgment about whether what was heard was good or bad, loud or soft, etc. There would just be the experience of hearing.

Bare of decision-making means that we are not using the experience to try to solve a problem. When a bell sounds and mindfulness is predominant, we are not trying to decide whether it is the dinner bell or the doorbell. There is simply the experience of hearing the sound.

Bare of commentary means that we are not responding to a sense experience by getting caught up in a story about it. For example, when a bell sounds and mindfulness is predominant, we don't start thinking about how much we enjoy, or dislike, the sound of bells.

Mindfulness is like viewing clouds from the perspective of the sky, simply noticing them arising and passing through without any sense of them being good or bad clouds. They are just clouds. Mindfulness creates a space in which we can see things as they are, separate from our reactions to them. By creating this space and allowing us to see the truth of our lives in each moment, we develop a clear seeing and a wise understanding of how to respond.

Mindfulness and kindness or compassion go hand in hand. How can we possibly see what an experience really is while we are trying to push it away or trying to destroy it? In order to truly experience what something is, our minds must be free of judgment, decision-making and commentary and our hearts must be open, kind and accepting of what is. But this only needs to happen one moment at a time.



## MINDFULNESS OF THE BODY

*We spend most of our day caught up in our thoughts.* While taking a shower in the morning, we may be thinking about our schedule for the day and the projects we have to work on or the places we need to go. While eating a meal, we may be reading the paper, watching TV or thinking about what has happened or is about to happen. Although

all of these activities seem important, as we live this way our life is slipping away from us. Each moment of our lives is a moment that is unique and that will never return. Yet, rather than fully experiencing what our life is in this moment, we spend much of the day being out of touch with most of our sensory experience. How often do we truly experience the sensations of taking a shower, or the taste and texture of the food that we are eating?

One of the joys of beginning this practice is re-discovering the body, re-discovering what it is like to live in the body once again. We begin to become re-acquainted with our bodies and the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. In order to re-connect to the sense pleasures of the body, though, we need to be open to all of our sensory experiences, some of which are not so pleasant. Through mindfulness we learn how to be present with the unpleasant sense experiences as well as the pleasant. This ability to be present for the full range of our human sensory experience frees us from the constant effort that we make to avoid the uncomfortable and to seek comfort. Through mindfulness we discover an ability to experience this full range of experience with equanimity.

This ability to be present for all of our bodily experiences allows us to begin to have insight into, to see more clearly, the true nature of these experiences. One of the things that we come to see is that they are an ever-changing process which arises and departs simply due to causes and conditions.

Before we can experience these truths for ourselves, though, we have to learn to bring mindfulness to the body. We have to learn to open to our bodies, to physical sensations, with mindfulness, compassion and curiosity. We have to discover for ourselves what an itch or pain, a touch, a sound, a smell, a sight or taste actually is. Can we allow it to be? Can we come to rest in our life as it is in this moment? You can begin by practicing mindfulness of physical sensations.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINDFULNESS OF PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Mindfulness of physical sensations/the body begins to broaden the field of awareness while building on the previous instructions. Physical sensations are sensations within the body including the sensation of breathing as well as other physical sense experiences such as hearing, smelling, seeing, tasting and the experience of touch.

Mindfulness of the body helps us to be more grounded in the reality of our experience, in the reality of who we are. It helps us to move beyond the stories in our head to what our life actually is at this moment. With these instructions we also make the transition from concentration meditation to insight meditation in which we bring moment to moment concentrated, mindful and compassionate awareness to the ever-changing flow of our experience. When the change from concentration to insight practice begins, the instructions have been italicized.

Begin as with the instructions for Mindfulness of Breathing for Insight Meditation.

Then, if a sensation or experience in the body is strong enough to pull your attention away from the sensation of the breath, allow your attention to rest in that new sensation (object of meditation) until it subsides or until a stronger sensation (a new object of meditation) pulls the attention away. When the attention is pulled away by this stronger or newer

sensation, use that as the object of attention/meditation until it subsides or yet another stronger sensation pulls the attention away. Continue in this way for the remainder of the sitting period.

Note that this movement of attention is not a willful process. Rather our attention moves with our ever-changing experience in which a new sensation momentarily arises and grabs the attention like an object floating on the ocean moves from wave to wave.

Try to meet these physical sensations without judging them, holding on or trying to push away. Be curious, without being analytical. Hold the attitude What is this? while allowing

the sensation to reveal itself.

If you find yourself struggling with a physical sensation, try to open to it, to let it be. If you continue to struggle at this stage in your practice, simply return your attention to the sensations of breathing. After the mind has settled and developed more concentration, return to insight practice once again.

As you continue to bring your awareness to physical sensations, try to maintain your mindful attention on them from the point when they come into awareness to the point when they pass from awareness. When you meet them with mindfulness, what happens to them? This may help you begin to see more clearly the transience or impermanence of the sensations.

Continue this practice until your meditation period is over.

*Following your meditation period take a few moments to reflect on your experience. Do you now experientially understand the difference between concentration practice and insight practice? Are you able to tell the difference between a physical sensation and the mind's reaction to the sensation? Continue to practice with these instructions until these issues become clear in your own experience.*





## MINDFULNESS OF FEELING

In his book, *Touching Peace*, Thich Nhat Hanh has said “Peace is all around us - in the world and in nature - and within us - in our bodies and our spirits. Once we learn to touch this peace, we will be healed and transformed.”

What keeps us from seeing that peace is all around us? It is our tendency to get caught in our experiences. We get caught in our experiences because we don't see their true nature. We see our experiences as being permanent, satisfactory and as having a solidity to them. Through the practice of insight meditation we begin to investigate our experience so that we can see for ourselves what is true about our experiences and how we get caught in them.

In the first section of instructions above, we learned how to ground ourselves, how to settle ourselves and develop concentration using the sensations of breathing. In the second section we explored opening to the body, to physical sensations and we discovered a number of insights about how we relate to them. We also learned experientially how insight practice is different from concentration practice. As we move to different aspects of our experience, we begin to focus on more and more subtle experiences. Sometimes they may be easy for us to see, at other times quite difficult. It mostly depends upon how much concentration and mindfulness we have been able to develop at any particular moment. During this section we will explore mindfulness of feeling and then look at working with distractions.

In the tradition of insight meditation, feeling refers to the tone of an experience, whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Although in our society we often use the words “feeling” and “emotion” interchangeably, in insight meditation they are distinct. Feelings are part of our automatic response to sensory input through any of the five sense doors or through thoughts. Emotions are much more complex and involve moods, such as anger, desire

or joy, as well as physical sensations and thoughts, often stories we tell ourselves. Feeling is actually part of the foundation upon which emotion is built, so developing some ability to be aware of feeling allows us to be less reactive to emotions as well.

*It is important to be aware of feeling because this is what keeps us hooked into our conditioning.*

We are conditioned to react to pleasant sensations with sense desire and attachment. We want more of the pleasant feeling and believe that more will make us happy. We are conditioned to react to unpleasant sensations with anger, fear and aversion. We want to get away from the unpleasant and believe that doing so will make us happy. A neutral feeling is often un-noticed. However, we may experience aversion, in the form of boredom, to a neutral feeling. This may then give rise to other mind-states that undermine our meditation, such as sleepiness, searching for something more exciting, or getting caught in a conversation in our mind. The constant effort to get the pleasant and to avoid unpleasant and neutral keeps us from finding that peacefulness comes from simply being what is present in our lives in this moment, whether things are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Mindfulness of feeling begins the process of de-conditioning these patterns of reactivity.

The key way of working with feeling is through mindfulness. Simply being aware, in a non-judgmental way, of whatever comes into awareness. Simply being aware of whether it has a pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feeling tone. As we practice mindfulness of feeling, we begin to see for ourselves how our reactions to pleasant, unpleasant and neutral experiences dominate our lives. The ability to recognize the feeling of an experience allows us to break our identification with it, to become unstuck from the experience. We can begin to see it as just an experience that is happening rather than “my experience” or “me.” This awareness of how we react creates the possibility of responding to feeling with more flexibility and appropriateness for each situation rather than simply reacting based on our past conditioning.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINDFULNESS OF FEELINGS

Begin your meditation as previously instructed using the breath as the primary object of meditation.

If a sensation or experience in the body is strong enough to pull your attention away from the breath, allow your awareness to rest in that sensation.

Notice whether the experience is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

As different experiences become predominant in your awareness, continue to notice the feeling quality of each experience, and your reaction to it such as holding on, pushing away or becoming bored.

As you meditate with the feeling quality of experience, notice whether it is something that lasts, or whether it is something that comes into awareness, is present for a while and then dissipates.

If you become lost in thought or sensations, when you notice it look back at the thought or sensation to notice whether it was pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. This will help to reveal how the mind gets caught in reacting to the feeling-tone of an object of experience. Then, gently return your attention to the breath and continue with the instructions above.

If you ever feel confused about what you are experiencing or what you should do, simply return your attention to the breath.

Continue with the practice of mindfulness of feeling until your meditation period is over.

After your period of meditation, you may find it useful to reflect on what you have noticed about your experience. Here are some questions to explore as you reflect on your experience. Does every moment of your experience have a feeling-tone, either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral? Is there actually a tendency to hold onto the pleasant, to push away the unpleasant and to be bored by the neutral? If you bring mindfulness to a pleasant experience does

it last or does it come into awareness and then leave? How about unpleasant experiences and neutral ones?

*During the day, spend some time noticing the feeling tone of your experiences and how you react to them.*

### ***Working with distractions and difficulties***

Insight meditation is a practice of opening up to your experience, a practice of opening your heart and seeing more clearly what is true in your life. It begins with being open to and compassionate towards yourself. As you develop some concentration, you may begin to notice thoughts or feelings or sensations that pull your attention away from your object of meditation. You may perceive these experiences as difficult or distracting. However, the rule of thumb in insight meditation is that nothing is a distraction. Instead, everything is a potential object of meditation.

Try to meet these “distractions” and “difficulties” with kindness, without judging them as good or bad. You may find yourself wanting to avoid certain thoughts, feelings or sensations, or you may find yourself wanting to hang onto them. Simply be aware of the desire to avoid or to cling, meeting those judgments with kindness as well. Being mindful of the feeling tone of an experience can be helpful in getting disentangled from it and seeing it more clearly.

### ***Working with Physical Sensations and Feeling in Daily Life***

What we have been practicing is one of the tools in this practice. So far we have worked on three tools: mindfulness of the sensations of breathing, mindfulness of physical sensations and now mindfulness of feeling. When you practice, you can use these tools in two different ways. First, you can focus your attention on one aspect of your experience to develop a more comprehensive understanding of it. Second, you can use whatever tool is appropriate as different experiences arise into awareness.

In your daily life attempt to use both approaches. Take a day to just be aware of the feeling tone of your experiences and how you react to them. Then

on another day simply try to bring mindfulness to your experience when physical sensation becomes predominate or when you notice the feeling tone of an experience.



## MINDFULNESS OF MINDSTATES

Perhaps you've heard the expression that the world looks cheery through rose-colored glasses. This points to the experience that our attitudes, intentions and moods affect the way that we see the world. For instance, you may have noticed that if you wake up in a grumpy mood, you often find that your day is colored by that mood. As a result the day is a series of irritating events. On another day, though, you might wake up with a bright and cheery mood. In this situation you might notice that even when unpleasant events occur during the day, they just don't weigh you down. Moods such as these are sometimes called mind-states, which is an apt term since, as we've seen, when we are caught up in a mood it tends to set the tone for our state of mind.

Just as moods influence and limit our range of responses to an event, our intentions and emotions can as well. For instance, when our intention is to find a ripe tomato at the market, our mind may be so influenced by that intention that we do not notice the other ripe vegetables available for our meal. The mind is so conditioned by this intention that there is a kind of tunnel vision that limits our ability to see what is before us in this moment. Or, when we are driving if someone cuts us off, intense anger may arise in the mind. If the mind is filled with anger at this point, then the only possible responses we may see are aggressive ones such as angrily honking the horn, yelling, making a rude gesture or riding on that person's bumper.

When we are caught in the moods, intentions or emotions that arise in the mind, we are said to be identified with them and regard them as who we are, for instance "I'm angry" or "I'm happy." When we are identified with these aspects of mind

and leave them outside of awareness, we have less flexibility and clarity about how to respond effectively in a situation. We are simply subject to the conditioning from our past experiences, rather than having a fresh response to the actual situation in this moment.

Mindfulness of the mind or consciousness involves becoming aware, or mindful, of the state of the mind. We notice whether it is a mind filled with sense-desire, a mind filled with anger or fear, a confused mind, a clear mind, a concentrated mind, etc. By meeting the mind-states with attention that is free of judgment, decision-making or commentary, we are in effect stepping outside of these mind-states. This creates some space, which allows us to choose how to respond to them, possibly responding by simply noticing them and allowing them to come and go in awareness. An analogy would be simply noticing what the weather is outside. Mindfulness of mind is similar to noticing what the weather is inside.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINDFULNESS OF MINDSTATES

When speaking or thinking of the state of mind, it is useful to refer to it as "There is anger (or desire, confusion, etc.) in the mind" rather than stating "I'm angry (etc.)." This helps to loosen the identification with mind-states.

Begin as previously instructed using the breath as the primary object of meditation.

After developing some concentration, broaden the field of awareness to notice the state of the mind. Is it calm and clear, agitated, confused, or does it have some other quality? Simply open to it with mindfulness, allowing the state of mind to reveal itself to you.

If there is judgment about the mind-state that is noticed, at this point in practice simply let go of the judgment, if possible, and return to the breath, settling the mind once again.

If you become lost in thought and you notice it, appreciate that moment of noticing, of waking up and being mindful.

Then gently return your attention to the breath and continue to follow it.

Then again, after developing some concentration, broaden the field of awareness to notice the state of the mind.

If you ever feel confused about what you are experiencing, see if you can be aware that it is a mind state with confusion.

If you find a mind-state too difficult to be with, simply return your attention to the breath.

Continue this practice until your meditation period is over.

*During the day, take a few moments to be mindful of your breath, body sensations, feeling and mindstate.*

### ***Skillful and unskillful states of mind***

As we begin to have more awareness of mind-states, we can also reflect on the fact that some mind-states bring more happiness, more peacefulness into our lives while others bring more difficulty. States of generosity, kindness, joy have different effects on us than states of greed, fear, anger and aversion. As you investigate, or open, to the different mind-states and actually let yourself experience deeply what they are like, it will become more apparent whether they lead you to peace or to difficulty. Part of what we are doing as we investigate and open to these mind states is we begin to see how they create the stress in our lives. What we will also begin to see is that we can feed and cultivate our state of mind. If, when anger arises, we buy into the angry thoughts then we are actually feeding the anger. We are giving it energy and planting seeds, laying the conditions, for more anger to arise. The same is true for kindness or generosity. In this way, mindfulness of skillful and unskillful states of mind lays the groundwork for cultivating those mind-states that lead to more harmony, peacefulness and contentment in our lives.

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR MINDFULNESS OF SKILLFUL AND UNSKILLFUL STATES OF MIND**

Whether doing sitting meditation or simply bringing mindfulness to your everyday life activities, notice the state of mind that is present.

Reflect on whether this mind-state contributes to peacefulness or stress in this moment. (This does not mean spending a lot of time analyzing. It simply means noticing the state of mind and body. Is there agitation and distress with the current situation, or is there contentment whether the situation is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral?)

Notice the effect on the mind-state, if any, when it is met with mindfulness and compassionate acceptance and letting go as contrasted with judgment and holding on or pushing away.

If you ever feel confused about what you are experiencing, see if you can be aware that it is a mind state with confusion.

*If you find a mind-state too difficult to be with, simply return your attention to the breath.*



## **MINDFULNESS OF THINKING**

Thinking is a wonderful tool. The ability to think has allowed us to develop marvelous civilizations with great art and amazing technologies and material comforts. But when we forget that it is just a tool, thinking can become a real problem for us. We get caught up in stories that we tell ourselves. Stories about who we are, how we aren't good enough and how we need more of this or that to make us OK. Stories that reinforce our sense of dissatisfaction and unease. Or we get caught in

stories about why it is someone else's fault that our lives are a particular way. Stories that reinforce our sense of separation, alienation and victimization.

We often forget that concepts are simply tools, simply a short-hand, for describing part of what we experience. We begin to believe that the concepts really do describe reality and so we stop paying attention to the lives that we are living moment to moment. We know what an apple is, so we don't really notice this apple's shape, color, flavor, aroma and texture as we eat it while doing something else. We are disconnected from our actual experience and then don't understand why we feel that our lives aren't quite right.

An example of the difference between thinking, the conceptual layer of our lives, and the reality can be found in an experience that is fairly common for people who do sitting meditation. After sitting quietly, holding the body in one position for a period of time, we begin to notice unpleasant sensations in some part of the body, perhaps the knee. We tell ourselves there is pain in the knee. It seems like a very solid thing, this pain, and something that lasts for a very long time. We may become frightened about it and start having thoughts about how our knee is going to be permanently damaged and we will end up having to have knee surgery and then we won't be able to run or play tennis or sit cross-legged for a long time.

But if we let go of the concept pain and look more closely at the experience, we will see something very different. We will see that what we call pain, which seems so solid, is actually a quickly changing series of sensations. There may be tightness, then sharpness, then an unpleasant vibrating sensation. We will see that these sensations come and go and maybe a similar sensation will arise a few moments later. We recognize that pain is not solid and lasting but simply a changing series of sensations quite different from the thought of pain, even though both are unpleasant. As we see more clearly the actual experience, it becomes easier to be with it and there is less fear and contraction.

So we have this paradox that thinking is an essential tool but it is also an impediment to experiencing our lives fully. The way through this paradox is to recognize the experience of getting caught in thought and to learn to relate to our thinking in a different way.

One of the first steps in recognizing that we are caught in thinking is to understand the various forms that thought can take. We can experience it as words, whole thoughts, judgments, images, numbers and imagined sounds such as a song that repeatedly plays in our heads. The particular form that it takes will depend on our conditioning, the forms of thought that we are most frequently exposed to. If we listen to a lot of music, when the mind becomes quiet we may find that lots of songs arise into awareness. If we write poetry, we may find that poems arise in the mind. It is simply important to recognize that they are all forms of thought.

When insight meditation teachers talk about the process of confusing thinking with reality, we often use a word that the Buddha used. We speak in terms of clinging. I'm sure we've all had the experience of taking laundry out of the dryer and finding it clinging together. As we attempt to pull the clothes apart, it is as though there is a magnetic force pulling the pieces of clothing together. In the same way, if we look closely at our minds we can see that most of us have minds that are highly conditioned to be attracted to thoughts, to cling to them. Another way of talking about how we get caught in thought is in terms of identification. Being identified with a thought means that we are caught up in it. We are caught in the content of the thought. We are caught in believing that what we are thinking is who we are. Or, we are caught in believing that what we are thinking is who the person or thing we are thinking about is.

As we begin to recognize thoughts and that we are getting caught in them through clinging or identification, then we need to learn how to relate differently to our thoughts. The mind typically has a tendency to respond with the idea that if thinking is a problem in meditation, then the solution is to not think! If you've already been practicing with mindfulness of breathing, you have probably noticed that no matter how much effort you put into focusing on the sensations of breathing, if the mind wants to think it will form thoughts. When we believe that meditation means that we are not supposed to be thinking, this can be very frustrating and can lead to a lot of judgment (more thoughts) that we are not doing it right. Instead of trying to stop thinking, the practice is to let go, to stop the clinging or identification by meeting our thoughts with mindfulness.

We begin practicing mindfulness of thinking by

making the intention to recognize when we are caught in thought and to meet the thought with mindfulness. This process of recognition often takes a while. We may get caught in a thought and then have many more thoughts develop from it before we recognize that we are caught. But that moment of recognition is a moment of mindfulness. Each time we meet a thought with mindfulness, we are strengthening the tendency for mindfulness to arise and weakening the tendency to identify with thought. As we continue to practice and as our concentration and mindfulness strengthen, we will often find that it is easier to recognize that we are caught.

Sometimes after we recognize that we are caught there will be a judgment that we haven't been practicing very well. It is important to recognize that this is just another thought! Remember that mindfulness is attention that is bare of judgment. It is also bare of decision-making and bare of commentary or storytelling. When we meet thoughts with mindfulness, then we are not manipulating our experience. It is not necessary to make an effort to let go. When we meet thoughts with mindfulness, we are just letting thoughts be thoughts without trying to make them last or to make them go away. And when we do that, the thoughts will reveal their impermanence to us. Often when we meet them with mindfulness they will simply come and go on their own, or as the Tibetans say, they will self-liberate. If the conditioning for the thought to arise is strong enough, it may arise again. But this is simply a new thought to be greeted with mindfulness as well.

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR PRACTICING MINDFULNESS OF THINKING

Begin as previously instructed using the breath as the primary object of meditation.

Allow the mind and body to become settled with some concentration.

Then, when you become aware that your awareness has been pulled away from the breath or that you have become lost in thought, meet that thought with non-judgmental awareness until the thought disappears. Then return to the breath.

If you are finding that it is very difficult to hold the thought in awareness, you might try gently labeling it as thinking ... thinking ... thinking until the thought disappears. Labeling or noting can be a support for developing concentration and mindfulness.

However, it can also become a habit that can interfere with your ability to be present. When able to hold a thought in awareness, see if you can drop the noting.

As your ability to meet thoughts with mindfulness strengthens, notice the quality of impermanence, how the thoughts arise, are present, and then pass away.

After the thought passes away, return your attention to the sensations of breathing until another thought pulls your attention away.

If you ever feel confused about what you are experiencing or what you should do, simply return your attention to the breath.

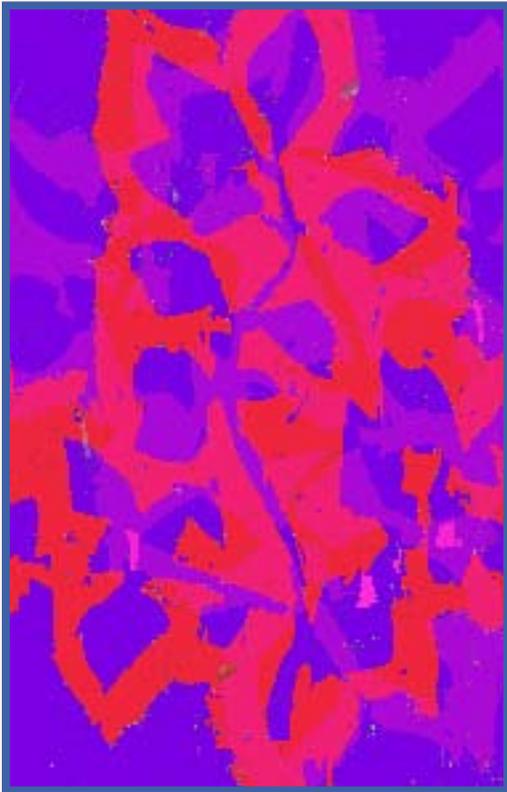
Continue this practice until your meditation period is over.

*During the day, take a few moments to be mindful of your breath, body sensations, moods and thoughts. This is a good way of helping yourself to settle down into the present moment and to bring your meditation practice into your everyday life.*

## CONCLUSION

All of the basic instructions for practicing insight meditation have now been presented. To help you learn the instructions and to help you recognize different aspects of your experience (body, feelings, mind-states and thoughts), the instructions have focused on each of these objects separately. However, once the instructions have been learned, one does not have to focus on one aspect of experience for a whole meditation period. Instead, one practices the skill of bringing kindness and mindfulness to each moment of experience whether it is a sensation, a mind-state or a thought and whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

We begin by learning how to meet our lives with mindfulness and kindness by practicing as we sit on a cushion or chair. However, the whole of our lives is the true sphere of our practice. So whether we are sitting, standing, walking or lying down, we practice with our experience, with our lives. As we are able to open to all of our experience and see our lives as they are, we can discover for ourselves what leads to stress and suffering and what leads to contentment and joy.



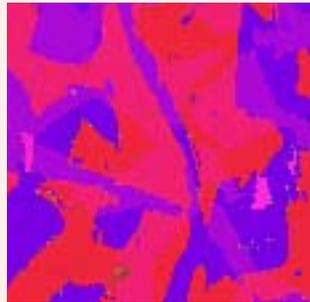
## With Only a Robe and a Wooden Walking Stick: 17th Century Women Chan Masters

### **BEATA GRANT**



The notion of a woman Chan (Zen) master was by no means something completely new in seventeenth century China. The great Song dynasty Linji master Dahui Zonggao (1089-1163) is well-known for having named several female Dharma-heirs, including two nuns, Chan Master Miaodao, and Chan Master Miaocong (1095-1170), and one laywoman, Lady Qinguo. But it was not until the seventeenth century that we see the emergence of a relatively larger number of such women Chan masters. Many of these women looked back to Dahui's female Dharma-successors for inspiration, or were compared to them by others: "Miaocong reborn" or "Miaodao come again" are phrases often heard when describing the more eminent of these women.

The names and lives of these women have, until now, been more or less forgotten, despite the fact that they appear to have exerted considerable religious influence in their time. Over the past several years, I have been doing my best to recover and reconstruct these women's lives based on the relatively scarce and scattered primary sources available to me. Most of the women Chan masters I have studied were from the elite class and relatively highly educated: many had already acquired reputations as *cainü* or women of literary talent before entering the religious life. Many had also acquired reputations as virtuous and filial daughters, wives, and even mothers, taking the tonsure only after having fulfilled their responsibilities to their parents and in-laws, and in many cases, after the death of a husband. Some, however, appear to have been placed in the convent as children, perhaps by families unable to support them, and still others refused to marry, sometimes with the support of their parents, sometimes having to more drastic measures to convince their family of their determination to pursue the religious life.



What does seem characteristic of all of these women, regardless of their personal circumstances, was their fierce personal determination not to go beyond the purely personal and the purely domestic (although, as we shall see, in their Dharma-talks, they assured their lay women followers that they could achieve enlightenment within the home). Perhaps because of their relatively high educational level, they also appear to be less interested in just Buddha-recitation, or *nianfo*, a practice considered to be proper for pious women within the home (although, again, they certainly do not reject this practice out of hand). Rather, they express a desire to engage in intensive Chan meditation, and in particular the form of koan practice known as *kanhua* or “investigation of the phrase” that had been perfected by Dahui Zonggao, together with his female Dharma-heirs, Miaozong and Miaodao. As Chan practitioners, these seventeenth-century women wanted to test their understanding by means of Dharma exchanges with masters, who in their time were for the most part males. This entailed traveling to mountains and monasteries where these monks and masters happened to be in residence. And should some of these women pass these tests and be officially declared Chan masters, as indeed

they were, they would then be empowered to ascend the Dharma hall and speak publicly, often, if we can believe the accounts, to mixed audiences of hundreds of people, as well as to print and circulate their Dharma writings. This type of public exposure outside of the “inner chambers” went against traditional and very deeply-held Confucian notions of proper female behavior. This may in part explain responses such as the following, written by none other than Qian Qianyi 1582-1664, one of the most famous poets and officials of the time:

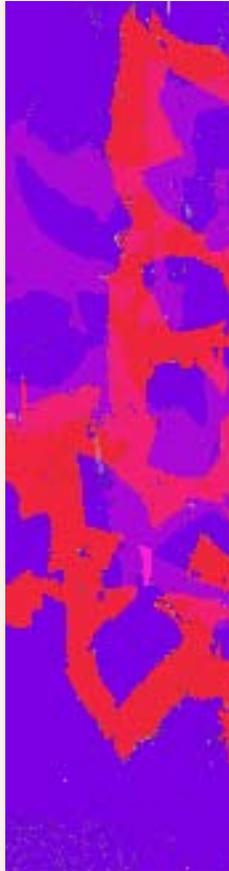
*In these degenerate days of the Dharma, the Chan school has lost its way. Witchlike nuns and their demonic kin ascend the [Dharma] hall, preach to the congregation, and circulate their discourse records. This is all due to a generation of heterodox teachers and blind Channists who indiscriminately bestow the seal of transmission. Oiled heads and rouged cheeks wrangle over who will grasp the flywhisk; untouchable slave girls are elevated to the status of lineage masters.*

Despite this current of disapproval, a significant number of women persisted and became lineage masters of considerable repute. An example of one of these women Chan masters, compared by an admiring male follower to Miaozong, was Jizong Xingche. Born in 1606 to a family of officials in Hengzhou, in what is today Hunan province, she had only been married for a few years when her husband died in the political turmoil that accompanied the fall of the Ming dynasty to the Manchu Qing conquerors in the mid-seventeenth century. Widowed and childless, Jizong decided to become a nun. Her motivation for doing so may have initially been one of desperation, but it was not long before it turned into something very different.

*I then built a cloister in which I installed a [Buddha] image and began to engage in the cultivation of a merit field. At dawn and dusk, I would take time from my other duties, to sit in quiet meditation; I took such delight in adhering to the precepts and [religious] discipline that I became determined to leave the householder's life. In the days that followed, I began to seek interviews with teachers of knowledge and wisdom.*

Jizong took refuge with the Linji monk Shanci Tongi, with whom she studied intensively for several years, before he unexpectedly passed away in 1645. Jizong then took up her traveling staff and went to Zhejiang province, which even in this period of chaos, was still the center of Buddhist culture. In a letter to her brothers back in Hunan, she talks about the difficulties – and the joys – of travel:

*The several decades since I left home have sped by more quickly than a blink of the eye, and you can imagine all of the changes the world has undergone since then. Gazing far away in the direction of home, I really can't imagine what it might be like anymore. With only a tattered robe and wooden walking stick, I made do wherever I landed and in this way I completely traversed the rivers of Chu and the mountains of Wu. This is what is meant by [the saying] "I share the same root with Heaven and Earth, I share the same substance with the myriad things." My feet, from toe to heel have [taken me] in this direction and then that; what matter that my body should become covered with mud and my patched robe drag along the ground... If the nostrils of your nose are like a cave through which one can penetrate Heaven, then one can travel everywhere unhindered without it being threaded through.*



When Jizong arrived in Zhejiang, she visited the various sites associated with the Linji lineage of her masters, and finally became an official Dharma-heir of Wanru Tongwei (1594-1657). Although she had originally planned to go back to Hunan, Wanru Tongwei persuaded her to stay on in Zhejiang, and in 1654, at the age of 48, she assumed the abbacy of the Huideng Chan Hall in Suzhou. In the years that followed, she acquired a wide reputation for her deep understanding of the Dharma. She was also known for her forceful teaching. As we can see from the following description penned by a prominent Buddhist layman, she was not the slightest bit hesitant to make use of non-verbal teaching methods when she felt they would be more effective.

*The gentry-officials all looked up to [Jizong] with admiration; the four kinds [of Buddhist practitioners: monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen] flocked to her in droves: and there were none who did not wish to extend her an invitation to preach the Dharma. Her blows and shouts were delivered with the power and swiftness of lightning; her preaching of the Dharma was of benefit to sentient beings. Although those who filled the halls were many who achieved insight, she was not indiscriminate about naming Dharma-heirs.*

As had always been the tradition for all Chan Masters, but rarely for women, Jizong Xingche's Dharma talks and other writings were collected by her disciples and printed in order to receive a wider circulation. As was also the custom, famous literary figures were asked to write prefaces to this collection. Wang Xiangshuo, the author of the following preface to Jizong Xingche's collection, does, it is true, indulge in a certain amount of hyperbole. But at least it shows that not everyone (or perhaps, I should say, not every male literati) disapproved as strongly as did Qian Qianyi of these women Chan masters.

*When I read these texts, I knew that they pointed to the one [orthodox] transmission, sweeping away forever all of the weeds and briars. [Her] great methods and great expedients surely embody the complete realization, the truth beyond words and phrases. And in this way, I came to even more convinced of the truth of the statement: "The great way is not divided into male and female form."*

What is worth noting about Jizong Xingche – and this is true of many of these seventeenth-century women Chan masters – is that in their Dharma-talks to their laywomen disciples, they were not advocating that they leave behind their families or neglect their domestic duties. Not only were all of these women good Confucians as well as dedicated Buddhists, but it was clear to them that becoming a nun was not for everyone. They were emphatic, however, in their insistence that the goal for women, as well as for men, was enlightenment and not mere solace. Moreover, one gets the feeling that it was enlightenment in this life (and that included the household life) and this body (and

that included the female body) that she is referring to. She does not seem to have held the belief that all women could do was pray to be reborn as a male in the next life, or in the Pure Land. We can see this expressed in no uncertain terms in the following Dharma talk:



*[The old Masters said] “In practicing Chan one must aspire after enlightenment; if there is no enlightenment, there will be no way by which one may escape the great sea of birth and death. Nowadays [so-called] followers of the way mistakenly swindle by means of mouth and ear the denizens of the inner chambers when they tell them that they do not need to be enlightened in order to be liberated from life and death; glib and loquacious, they vilify the great wisdom of insight, and even go so far as to completely obscure its sacredness. This demonstrates a lack of gratitude towards the sages of the past. How can it not be lamented! Since you have taken refuge with me, then I hope you will seek the Great Way and urgently strive to distinguish between the different paths of clarity and blindness. All you need to do is to focus on a huatou and then proceed straight ahead without indulging in distractions. .... If you practice, you should practice the real practice, enlightenment should be the real enlightenment, when you have become very clear about this, then you can be resolute and firm, then you can be considered Dharma material.*

There is no question that Jizong Xingche was herself a very resolute woman. No doubt she had to be, especially given the milieu in which she lived. She clearly saw herself as having transcended gender. Although the non-gender specific nature of Buddhist Dharma names sometimes makes it hard to tell whether the addressee is a man or a woman, it is safe to suppose that unless there is some other indication of gender, it is usually a man. Often the content of the texts also provides a hint, as in the following short poem addressed to Person of the Way Yizhen:

In this world, among fellow-soldiers how  
many practice together,  
But I simply admire how you’ve been able  
to attain your freedom.  
Cutting off completely the gate of emotion,  
as chilled as water:  
Fully understanding the sea of bitterness  
is like a drifting cloud  
Gone the sorrow and sadness within,  
the piled-up worldly desires:  
You are the courageous companion  
of the Buddha and the patriarchs.  
Once you have seen through the external  
form of male and female,  
Where in this great universe will you not  
feel completely at ease?

The very first line of this poem is an example of what Miriam Levering and others have called the “rhetoric of heroism” -- the reference to her fellow nun as a fellow soldier (*tongdui*) clearly has a strongly masculine or virile cast to it that many have associated with Chan Buddhism. In the following lines as well, we see Jizong Xingche’s attempt not only to cut off the roots of emotion and desire, but to transcend the gendered duality of male and female form in order to be a companion (not a bride, as would be the case in the Christian context) to the Buddha and the patriarchs and enjoy unrestricted freedom. It is with this image of the “liberated” woman that Jizong herself most clearly identified. It was not so much that Jizong longed to be a man, but rather the liberation that, on the relative plane, being a man, symbolized and that, on the more absolute plane, actually was the enlightened state.

We know very little about Jizong Xingche’s final years, but we do know that she did return to Hunan, and to the Heng mountains (also known as the Nanyue or Southern Peaks) that she loved so much.

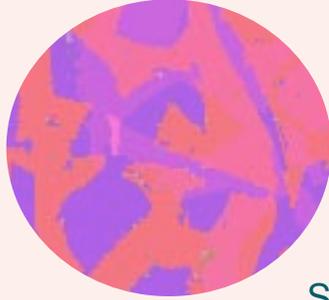
The following poem is the twentieth of a series of twenty-five poems entitled “Living in Seclusion in the Southern Peaks,” which was most likely written during this time.

The azure sky in the window shines pure and clear;  
I open the door to let in the blue-green of the hills.  
From out of the rosy mists, the lone crane returns;  
Circling the rocks, freely soaring up into the clouds.  
A low bed of moss can be used as a meditation mat;  
The scattered leaves on the eaves can serve as a robe.  
The setting sun has disappeared far into the west;  
The weary birds instinctively know their way home.

Jizong Xingche is only one seventeenth-century woman Chan master – she shares some characteristics with the others (her upper-class status, for example) but in other ways she is also quite unique. These women by no means speak in a single voice, their experiences, interpretations and understandings of Buddhist practice are not all the same. By the same token, while some of these experiences, interpretations and understandings of Buddhist practice seem to be inextricably tied to a particular time and place we may find that others of them still speak to us with surprising directness and poignancy.



**Dr. Beata Grant** is Professor of Chinese and Religious Studies at Washington University. Her scholarship and expertise is in Chinese religion and literature, pre-modern Chinese women’s literature and culture, and Buddhism.



Drop off the body: the river of  
the world will never end,

Stately and grand: nothing to  
show but the inner master.

When morning comes, change the  
water, light the incense,

Everything is in the ordinary affairs of  
the everyday world.

### ***Kedu***

from *Daughters of Emptiness::  
Poems of Chinese Buddhist Nuns*  
by Beata Grant





## *Lovingkindness and Mindfulness*

SUSAN STONE

*“It’s like falling in love.”* That observation was made by a young man so new to Vipassana practice that he wasn’t aware that the activity the group had just completed was called “meditation,” for I, the instructor, hadn’t said so and nothing in his past experience clued him in. A resident of a half-way house sponsored by an evangelical Christian church, the man moved in that moment past his religious convictions, which would have viewed meditation with hostility, and for the first time directly experienced his body as he walked. The experience brought tears to his eyes.



Though Anthony couldn’t know it, his comment touched on a current conversation about the nature of mindfulness,<sup>(1)</sup> and points to a conundrum that nags at many practitioners in the Western Theravada tradition. How does lovingkindness fit into mindfulness practice? Is it intrinsic to mindfulness or is it something extra? For those whose primary practice is mindfulness, lovingkindness can seem a separate practice, one that dangles like a loose thread.

The purpose of this article is not to try to provide a definitive interpretation of either mindfulness or lovingkindness. Practices and views about both vary among different schools of Buddhism. This article attempts rather to call attention to the integral and layered connections that exist between them in the context of the contemporary Western Theravada tradition. Though these connections may be understood intuitively, they are not widely discussed. This article is an effort to open for inquiry an area that has the potential of broadening understanding and deepening spiritual practice.

*In one of its widely used meanings, mindfulness is described as being “restricted to a kind of attentiveness that...is good, skillful or right.” (2)*

It is the quality of being present in the present moment without judgment, commentary or automatic reaction. Since our minds are habituated to precisely the opposite, mindfulness is frequently described as “bare” or “dry” attention—which is to say, pure attention without the usual mental embellishments or emotional reactions that distract and prevent us from clearly recognizing the nature of our momentary experience. I for one have often bristled at these definitions, for in their precision they omit something important. The descriptors make no allowance for lovingkindness. Indeed by implication, lovingkindness appears to be relegated to the realm of emotional reactivity.

The Pali scriptures seem to confirm the impression that lovingkindness is extrinsic to mindfulness and that the two perform completely different roles along the Path. In the *Satipatthana Sutta*, a central discourse on mindfulness, the Buddha referred to mindfulness as the “direct” (some say “only”) path to awakening. The *sutta* doesn’t contain a single reference to lovingkindness. Indeed, throughout the Pali canon, mindfulness and lovingkindness are largely dealt with either in separate scriptures or in the same scripture as separate practices. On one level, the division makes sense: Mindfulness involves being present with attention to whatever phenomena arise and pass in the moment, and lovingkindness refers to the cultivation of an open and kindly connection with all. While the meditation style of the former requires a degree of alert non-selectivity, lovingkindness meditation, as typically taught and practiced by Westerners in this tradition, involves visualization of the beings to whom one is offering love. Apples and oranges.

*The Buddha frequently expounded on lovingkindness*, identifying it as one of the Heavenly Mindstates (Bhrama Viharas). Some practitioners, however, relegate it mainly to the status of skillful means, a practice in the service of other goals. For example, lovingkindness is practiced as a gateway into the meditative absorptions, i.e., into the non-ordinary states of consciousness known as jhanas. On a more basic level, one teacher referred to lovingkindness merely as expedient behavior to be used to ward off physical danger. (3)While

there are scriptural precedents for these views, it is important to remember that, although the Buddha taught lovingkindness as skillful means, he also taught that it is universal in scope. This is what he was referring to when he stated, “As a mother would risk her own life to protect her only child, even so towards all living beings, one should cultivate a boundless heart.” (“Discourse on Lovingkindness,” Kh). Lovingkindness is a vitally important practice in its own right.

The universality of lovingkindness is powerfully appealing. In Western sangha settings, it has become the frequent theme of retreats, dharma talks and guided meditations. Despite its appeal, however, many Western Theravadan practitioners still regard mindfulness as the central practice and lovingkindness as an add-on; mindfulness as the “hard stuff,” and lovingkindness, the softer, lesser practice. As individuals, we are likely to have a preference for one or the other. Nonetheless, to view them only as separate practices is to miss a key point—namely, lovingkindness and mindfulness are integrally connected.

On the level of ordinary experience, the link is this: Mindfulness means observing phenomena intimately without judgment as to their content—pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. It is a spacious and attentive allowing of things to be as they really are, minus the imposition of our intellectual and emotional reactions. Such allowing is not merely non-attachment; it is relationship and the name of the relationship is love. Love, of course, has different meanings in our culture. Most attention through the millennia has been focused on sensual love, the love that involves a sense of possessiveness of another being who, however subtly, is regarded as an object. But I think we need to understand the Buddha’s directive to love all living beings as a mother would love her only child in non-sensual, non-attached way. The whole of the Dharma leads us to understand that this statement refers to the depth of a mother’s love



for her child, not her sense of attachment. We are being taught to offer this kind of love to all beings without condition. And what else is love on this high and non-sensual level but an intimate yet spacious and nonjudgmental attentiveness? It is as close as we, who are conditioned beings, can come to unconditional love. This is lovingkindness. Practicing mindfulness, we hold others in this space, we hold ourselves in this space. The connection is so simple that it is easily missed, but I think we understand it intuitively. Certainly at some level, Anthony, the young man at the evangelical church, did.

LIVING FROM  
INSIDE OUT  
AND  
HAVING  
DISCOVERED  
LOVING  
KINDNESS  
TOWARD  
OURSELVES, WE  
NATURALLY  
BEGIN TO  
EXPERIENCE IT  
IN REGARD TO  
OTHERS  
AS WELL.

This connection has found little explicit expression in the Theravadan scriptures. In my admittedly incomplete reading of the Pali scriptures, I have found only one explicit reference, and it is brief. The much-quoted “Discourse on Lovingkindness,” which is understood to be the words of the Buddha, identifies lovingkindness as a kind of mindfulness. Referring to the cultivation of lovingkindness, the discourse declares, “One should develop this mindfulness; this is call divinely dwelling here.”

While explicit references are few, looking closely we discover that the link between the two

is implied and pointed to in numerous ways in the scriptures. For example, the Pali word *satipatthana*, which is usually translated as “foundation of mindfulness,” can more accurately be translated as “attending” or “caring” with mindfulness.”(4) And the Buddha’s final words, which are usually translated as “strive on diligently,” can just as well be understood as “practice with care.”(5) Traditionally, this diligence or care has often been understood as a hard-driving imperative to train as though one’s hair were on fire, but it can just as well be understood and as conscientiously practiced in a gentler fashion, with the kind, non-personal regard that is lovingkindness.

Beyond the scriptural dimension, mindfulness and lovingkindness are linked experientially. If we approach practice without bias against lovingkindness, we readily recognize their complementary nature. They are like two hands on a keyboard making music together. In early stages of practice, where a strong sense of self is present, we are keenly aware that we are putting forth considerable effort as we try to mindfully observe our breath or other objects of attention. And in the practice of lovingkindness, we struggle to move beyond aversion in order to offer spacious regard to those who have caused pain, including ourselves.

It can feel to be an impossible task. The mind wanders endlessly. Repetition of lovingkindness verses can seem rote and meaningless. Yet, eventually, a surprising development occurs: A genuine sense of lovingness toward oneself begins to develop. Sharon Salzberg, Vipassana teacher and founder of the Insight Meditation Society, notes that during a month-long lovingkindness retreat several years ago, she spent the first week focusing on directing the practice toward herself. Although she had planned to expand the practice to others in subsequent weeks, she was called out of the retreat unexpectedly. She criticized herself, feeling that not only did the practice have no noticeable effect, but she had spent a week being selfish. Then, as she was leaving the retreat, she accidentally dropped a jar. Her immediate thought was, “You really are a klutz but I love you.” Surprised, she noticed that something had changed after all.(6)

Many practitioners have their own experiences with the seemingly remarkable effects of lovingkindness practice, when rather than waiting for lovingness to strike like lightning, we intentionally grow it. In Anthony’s terms, we can say that we begin to fall in love with ourselves. This happens not only because we are cultivating lovingkindness and compassion with regard to self, but also because of the nature of mindful attention: The close, non-judging attention with which we have been observing phenomena impartially embraces everything that arises within us—that which is admirable, that which makes us shudder and all that is in between. This is the true meaning of self-love. It is a complete and kindly acceptance of self. Even the Buddha, who had transcended the boundaries of self, experienced it on some level. He said, “I visited all quarters with my mind, nor found I any dearer than myself; self is likewise dear to every other.” (Udana 47, Kh).

We have been deeply conditioned by our culture to love others but to regard self-love as selfishness. It is likely that this conditioning contributes to the widely-recognized, fairly pervasive sense of low self-esteem among Westerners. It is probably also a factor in the resistance that some have to lovingkindness practice. It is hard to fly in the face of cultural norms, especially when one has internalized them. Yet if we can work past our resistance, the falseness of the assumption of selfishness in lovingkindness practice is eventually revealed. Through practice, we begin to discover that self-love arises naturally and it is entirely wholesome. Indeed, we need to welcome its arising, for it is the foundation from which we progress in spiritual training.

*By bringing lovingkindness to our mindfulness practice*, we more readily train without inner violence. Holding ourselves with lovingkindness when thoughts proliferate in a blizzard of activity radically transforms the nature of mindfulness practice. Rather than reacting with frustration, anger or a sense of inadequacy, we observe each blizzard and even little flurries with kindness and then allow each to pass. Again and again, bringing the gift of kindness to the ever-active mind.

Living from inside out and having discovered lovingkindness toward ourselves, we naturally begin to experience it in regard to others as well. How can a spacious regard for others not manifest when, like oneself, they are beings with a messy mix of admirable and less-than-admirable characteristics? Our hearts expand with lovingkindness, or, using the more common idiom, we “fall in love” with others. This kind of falling in love of course does not involve the possessiveness and attachment that the term “love” usually connotes, for it is an outflow of an open regard irrespective of personal feelings of attraction or aversion. We can experience lovingkindness even when we dislike another, just as we experience it toward ourselves when unlovely aspects of self arise. The Buddha was no doubt referring to this dynamic when he said, “Who loves himself will never harm another.” (Udana 47, Kh) And of course this love extends not only to other beings but to objects and situations as well, for finally the external object is not the determining factor; the free expression of lovingkindness is. Like the sun, it shines on all.

One need not be a Buddhist practitioner to experience this. Jacques Lusseyran, the blind hero of the French resistance during World War II, expressed in a manner uncharacteristic of the Buddhist tradition, but he pointed to the same truth when he wrote,

As a child I spent hours leaning against objects and letting them lean against me. ...this gesture...is more than seeing them, it is tuning in on them and allowing the current they hold to connect with one's own...this means an end of living in front of things and a beginning of living with them. Never mind if the word sounds shocking, for this is love.(7)



At later stages of practice, we begin to glimpse the illusory nature of a sense of self. We directly experience, maybe just for an instant, what the Buddha was pointing to when he said no-self (*anatta*) is one of the marks of existence. From an experiential point of view, we discover a reality that is inexpressibly other than what we had thought it to be. What a surprise! This moment is all there is and simultaneously it is nothing at all. This is Knowing beyond knowing. This is the realm of the non-relative. When the ego re-arises, as it invariably does, and swings back into its cycles of inflation and deflation, an echo of the truth of no-self may still be heard. It reveals, implacably, how puny and irrelevant the whole effort is. We laugh and somewhere a profound humility is born.

In the wake of this insight, we notice that a shift has occurred in the practice of mindfulness and lovingkindness. From the place of no-self, there is neither subject nor object—no subject who is mindfully observing, nor objects that are being observed. Nor is there a subject who is offering

lovingkindness to another who is the object of the love. In the unimpeded openness through which Knowing and Brightness flow, mindfulness and lovingkindness are transformed. We discover that they are not merely linked as complementary practices; they are congruent realities, so closely identified that it is difficult to tell which is which.

For most of us, the experience of congruence is fleeting. It appears, fades, then reappears like the sun playing hide-and-seek with the clouds. Theravada scriptures explain that the comparing mind, which is an expression of a notion of self, is one of the last fetters to fall away completely. Experientially, this implies that when any sense of self is in residence, so too are the relative perspectives that accompany it, including the wholesome though limited perspective that lovingkindness and mindfulness are separate and complementary practices. When the truth of no-self again reappears, even momentarily, so too, the congruence of mindfulness and lovingkindness. Then we understand the comment made by Dipa Ma, a profoundly realized teacher who influenced many Western practitioners. She said, "From my own experience there is no difference between mindfulness and lovingkindness." (8) We may assume she abided in that congruence.

Mindfulness-lovingkindness

bowing,

bowing...



## NOTES

- 1 "Mindfulness: The Heart of Buddhist Meditation?" Inquiring Mind, Spring 2006, pp. 4-7, 28-29.
- 2 Nyanaponika Thera, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, Weisner, 1993, p.9.
- 3 Upasika Kee Nanayon Pure and Simple, Wisdom, 2005, p.126.
- 4 Ven. Anlayo, *Satipatthana; the Direct Path to Realization*, Windhorse, 2003, p. 29
- 5 Stephen Batchelor, "The Buddha's Last Word: Care," Insight Journal, Spring 2005, pp 8-11.
- 6 Sharon Salzberg, *Lovingkindness; The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*, Shambala, p.40.
- 7 Jacques Lusseyran, *Then There Was Light*, Parabola, 1998, pp. 27-28.
- 8 Amy Schmidt, *Knee Deep in Grace, The Extraordinary Life and Teaching of Dipa Ma*, Present Perfect Books, 2003, p. 91.

**Susan Stone, Ph.D.**, was ordained as a Zen lay priest. She currently co-leads the Insight Meditation Community of Charlottesville (VA), and teaches mindfulness-based stress reduction at the University of Virginia. Susan also leads nonsectarian meditation and mindfulness workshops and retreats in both lay and monastic settings. She is a hospice volunteer and a Reiki master, and has extended her Dharma practice to those with HIV/AIDS and to those in prison.

# Daily Gathas

As I open my eyes  
I vow with all beings  
to see the world clearly  
and to live each moment of this day  
with compassion and wisdom.



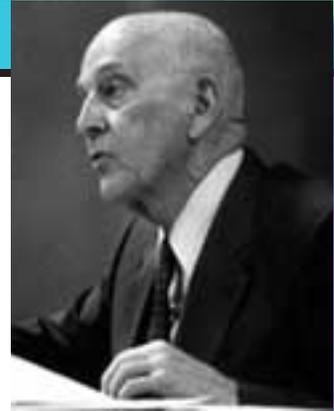
As I bathe this body  
I vow with all sentient beings  
To wash dust and confusion  
From body and mind  
And to feel healthy and clean  
Within and without.

# FROM OUR BOOKSHELVES



**BURTON WATSON**

**THE LOTUS SUTRA  
and  
THE ESSENTIAL LOTUS SUTRA**



**H**ow do you know if you are getting a Dharma-authentic translation of a sutra? The folklore around the Lotus Sutra provides us with one answer—cremate the translator and you'll find out.

There's no certainty about who composed the Lotus Sutra--or when, or even in which language, though it was likely to have been written in a local Indo-Aryan dialect and translated into Sanskrit to give it authority. We do know, however, that the sutra was around by the mid-third century AD (about 260) when the first Chinese translation was made. The translation done in 406 AD, however, by the great scholar-monk Kumarajiva, is universally accepted as the definitive Lotus, both in terms of language and doctrine.

Kumarajiva said that we would know if he had made a pure and accurate translation when he died. How? He said that when he was cremated, if the translation were accurate and authentic, his entire body would turn to ashes, but his tongue would remain intact. When he died and his tongue didn't burn, the translation became canonical. Or so goes the legend.

Watson's translation into English is based on Kumarajiva's translation from the Sanskrit into Chinese. Although Watson has not suggested that anyone cremate him to test his translating abilities, there is no doubt that his tongue, too, would not burn.

The Lotus is one of the most important sutras in the Mahayana canon. It crystallizes the Mahayana notion of "saving all sentient beings" in a way that is startlingly fresh--startling fresh because the Lotus uses a phantasmagorical literary device to present doctrine.

As Watson says in his translator's introduction to *The Essential Lotus*, "Its setting, its vast assembly of listeners, its dramatic occurrences in the end belong to a realm that totally transcends our ordinary concepts of time, space, and possibility. Again and again we are told of events that took place countless, indescribable numbers of kalpas or eons in the past, or of beings or worlds that are as numerous as the sands of millions and billions of Ganges Rivers. Such numbers are in fact no more than pseudo-numbers or non-numbers, intended to impress on us the impossibility of measuring the immeasurable. They are not meant to convey any statistical data but simply to boggle the mind and jar it loose from its conventional concepts of time and space. For in the realm of Emptiness, time and space as we conceive them are meaningless; anywhere is the same as everywhere, and now, then, never, forever are all one."

It is also worth noting, for those unfamiliar with the stature of the Lotus, that the Lotus is the conceptual cornerstone of the Japanese Nichiren School (and its sister organization, *Soka Gokkai*), where it is considered so powerful a document that just chanting its title can bring you to enlightenment.

### ***The books and this translation:***

These two books were first published in 1993, but in recent years they have been out-of-print. Since they are now available again, it seems appropriate to bring them to our readers' attention.

The full sutra, *The Lotus Sutra Translated by Burton Watson*, stands as a masterpiece of Buddhist literature, a drama of colossal proportions filled with striking imagery and poignant parables about the universal accessibility of Buddhahood.

But the sutra is sometimes repetitive, and some of the chapters delineate minor ideas. *The Essential Lotus, Selections from the Lotus Sutra*, is an abridged version of the sutra in which Watson places only those chapters of the sutra that expound the core ideas and those concepts which have been important to the development of Buddhist thought.

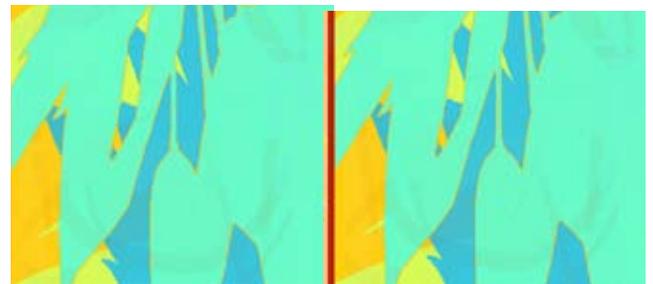
If you are new to the Lotus, and want to get at the heart of the sutra quickly and easily, start with *The Essential Lotus*. On the other hand, if you are already familiar with the Lotus and want to experience it in its full, rich glory, *The Lotus Sutra* is the Lotus for you.

## Burton Watson

Burton Watson is renowned as one of the world's best translators of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist and literary works. His translations are known for their grace, elegance, simplicity, and accuracy. Beat Poet Philip Whalen described Watson's translation of the Lotus Sutra as "the only one worth reading."

Watson said he created this translation so that it would be accessible to those with no special background in Buddhism or Lotus studies. This translation exceeds that goal: it is friendly and inviting, not only for newcomers, but also for anyone interested in reading, chanting, or studying the Lotus Sutra. Consider it a must-have for any Mahayana home library.

Watson was born in New York in 1925. He was educated at Columbia University, from where he received his PhD in 1956. He has taught Chinese and Japanese language and literature at Kyoto, Columbia, and Stanford Universities. He is recipient of two of the most prestigious awards in the field of translation: the Gold Metal Award of the Translation Center at Columbia University (1979) and the PEN Translation Prize (1981).



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We have enough Zen centers. We need more Zen corners.

*Thich Nhat Hahn*



How sad that people ignore the near and search for truth afar.



from *Song of Enlightenment* by *Hakuin Zenji*



The Middle Way is not the average.

*Kazuaki Tanahashi*

## UNATTRIBUTED TEACHINGS

It is impossible to find the beginning or the end of anything.

Existence is identical to emptiness.

To make an apple pie from scratch, you have to start with the Big Bang.



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