

MIND BRAKES

THE SEASONAL NEWSLETTER FOR BUDDHISTS ON THE INSIDE

DECEMBER 2023 ISSUE 11



HOLIDAY SEASON

BY ANNA CARMODY

If things are difficult this Christmas—you are not where you want to be or with people you care about—if you want to make the most of this Christmas, rather than just get through it, either by ignoring it or with teeth gritted, you can follow Lama Yeshe's advice and try to meditate. Not simply relax or fog out into narcotic consciousness, but try to separate your mind from thoughts of how to make your life easier, more comfortable, with more pleasant experiences, and nice stuff.

Meditate on love. Investigate. What does love really mean? How do I love? Is it given freely? Is it directed towards all beings without discrimination or do I want something in return? How can I achieve inner peace?

Whether you are aware of it or not, there are countless beings, Buddhas and high level Bodisattvas of course, but others as well, who have thought about these things and worked on their mind. They know what you are going through. They care about you. They love you and have compassion.

Christmas is a special time for many millions of people. Often it's a happy time. We can be happy for them.

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OBITUARY OF LAMA ZOPA

VENERABLE ROBINA COURTIN

When Ven. Roger Kunsang took over as attendant to Lama Zopa Rinpoche, in 1986, he had no idea what the job entailed. He decided to simply follow Rinpoche's lead in doing whatever needed to be done. But Rinpoche would never express a need. He didn't ask for anything. If you didn't put a cup of tea in front of him, he wouldn't have tea.

There was always an open door. People would come in while Rinpoche ate his lunch and he'd immediately engage with them. Even to someone coming through the window at three in the morning Rinpoche would be very accommodating, showing no surprise. Everyone's wishes became Rinpoche's priority.

Rinpoche would give whatever he had: statues, thangkas, malas, his robes, money. You could be sure that the gift you offered Rinpoche during your appointment would end up in the hands of the next person.

There was never any discussion about how long people would stay for their

meeting. Rinpoche never showed the slightest impatience or annoyance. He never expressed the wish for a structure, a schedule: for time off, time for meetings, time for eating, time for this and that.

Rinpoche never went to bed. The unconsciousness of sleep was an unbearable waste of time. He would never get out of his robes, he would never lie down, he wouldn't even stretch out his legs — he was always sitting in the meditation position.

There was no break for Rinpoche, and any suggestion of taking a break literally made no sense to him.

As Rinpoche travelled the world to the Dharma centres now in his charge, after taking over from Lama Thubten Yeshe after Lama passed away in 1984, it was the same, all day, every day, year in, year out. It was airport, centre, airport, centre. As soon as they arrived at a centre it was on for twenty-four hours—not eight hours or ten, it was around the clock. Teachings late into the

eating lunch at midnight, working on letters and the needs of the centres until the early hours.

At any given moment, there were hundreds, and later thousands, of letters from students and centres needing Rinpoche's attention. There was never any anxiety about this and Rinpoche might spend days, even weeks, on one letter: a man in prison received a letter of forty-five typed pages.

That was Rinpoche's way of taking over from Lama. He was one hundred percent intent on benefiting others, just like Lama, and this is how he did it.

After a few years of this, one day Ven. Roger threw his hands in the air and gave up—gave up trying to find ways to give Rinpoche a rest.

I remember saying to myself, very clearly, it just came out of my mouth, spontaneously: 'This is the bodhisattva's way of life, this is the bodhisattva's way of life.'

From FMPT website



GETTING A HANDLE ON ANXIETY

DANIEL TROYAK

The approach I use in addressing anxiety embraces the core principles of compassion and draws upon the wisdom of Buddhist practices, weaving together mindfulness and meditation as transformative tools. With this approach, we embark on an exploration of the intricate interplay between our mind and body, delving into the depths of our felt-sense experiences.

At the heart of this practice lies the practice of mindfulness, which invites us to cultivate a deep and unwavering focus on the present moment. Through the gentle guidance of our attention, we cultivate a gentle and non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. This can be achieved by choosing a specific focal point, such as the delicate touch of air passing through the tip of the nose, or by engaging fully in daily activities like walking or eating, attuning our awareness to the rich symphony of bodily experiences that often go unnoticed.

As we immerse ourselves in the realm of mindfulness, we

discover the transformative power of meditation, guiding us towards a profound integration of mind and body. Through intentional focus, we traverse the terrain of our bodily experiences, following the path of our breath as it effortlessly navigates through our body. With each inhale and exhale, we attune ourselves to the ever-changing landscape of sensations, embracing them with kindness and curiosity.

With each conscious breath, we gently breathe into the anxious energy residing in the body wherever it is experienced, acknowledging its presence without judgment or resistance. We breathe in relaxation and exhale tension, releasing the grip that anxiety may have on our body. Through the sheer power of awareness, we gradually dissolve the knots of tension that constrict the body. This simple yet profound technique allows us to cultivate compassion and nurturing within ourselves, enabling anxiety to dissolve in the gentle embrace of awareness. In union of mind and body awareness, we bring about a sense of wholeness

and harmony within us.

Through this practice and Buddhist approach, we open ourselves to the transformative potential of our felt-sense experiences. We learn to embrace the subtle whispers of sensations as they arise and pass away, fostering a profound understanding and acceptance of feelings. By cultivating awareness we learn to witness the ebb and flow of bodily sensations without becoming entangled in their transient nature.

The potency of this practice lies in its ability to harmonise the mind and body, creating a powerful integration that fosters inner peace and mental and emotional stability.

Should you encounter resistance or find yourself lost in thoughts, losing focus, or experiencing difficulties breathing into specific spaces, simply return to your focal point. Take a moment to reset and begin again. Allow your awareness to work with the feelings, enveloping them gently with your breath. Rest in the understanding that these feelings, too, shall pass.

VAJRADHARA AND THE DHARMAKAYA

ANNA CARMODY

Under the bodhi tree in Bodhgaya over 2,500 years ago, Buddha Shakyamuni attained enlightenment. The realisation or achievement of enlightenment is called the dharmakaya, the essence or ultimate reality of a buddha's enlightened mind, which is unborn, naturally radiant, free from conceptual thought and empty of true existence. It is beyond duality—there is no subject and object. This totally open consciousness, this blissful state of universal wisdom, is as spacious and open as the sky.

Vajradhara is the ultimate primordial Buddha according to the Sakya, Gelug and Kagyu schools of Tibetan Buddhism. (Samantabhadra is still the primordial Buddha in the ancient Nyingma school.) Buddha Shakyamuni manifested as Vajradhara, a male meditational deity, in order to reveal the teachings of secret mantra to certain disciples. Dark blue in colour, Vajradhara is traditionally represented seated in the lotus position on a moon disc, adorned with swirling silk scarves and various ornaments—necklace, earrings, bracelets, anklets and girdle. He holds a vajra and bell, representing compassion and bliss, and is often depicted wearing the five-jewelled crown of the Five Wisdom Buddhas.

Synonymous with the dharmakaya, the ultimate reality of the enlightened mind, Vajradhara is the Dharmakaya Buddha.



THE FIVE RECOLLECTIONS

ANNA CARMODY

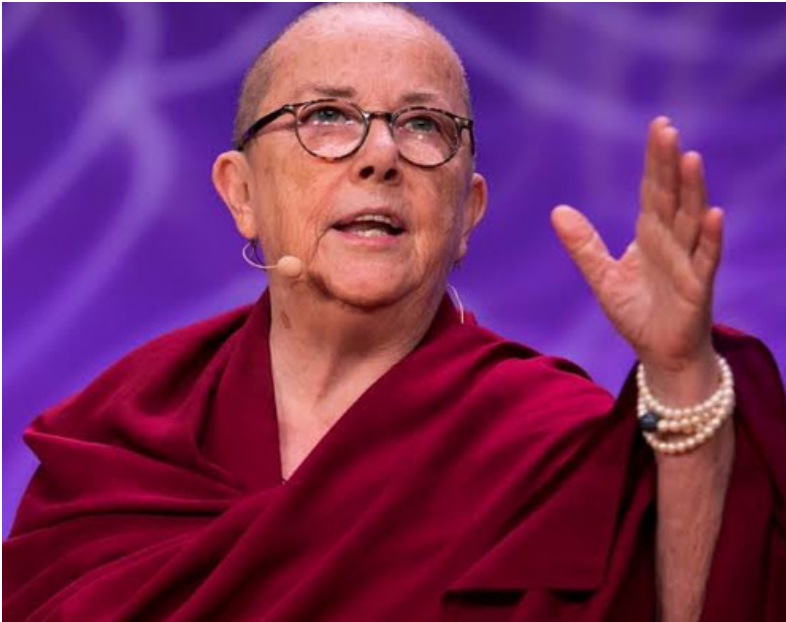
These statements from the *Upajjhattana Sutra* are attributed to the Buddha.

1. I am of the nature to grow old; there is no way to escape growing old.
2. I am of the nature to have ill health; there is no way to escape having ill health.
3. I am of the nature to die; there is no way to escape death.
4. Everything that is dear to me, and everyone I love, is of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them.
5. My deeds are my closest companions. I am the beneficiary

of my deeds. My deeds are the ground on which I stand.

We can recite, reflect and meditate on these remembrances every day. We can make them our own.





WE ALL POSSESS BUDDHA NATURE

VENERABLE ROBINA COURTIN

All beings just naturally possess the potential to become a buddha—free of all delusions and perfected in all goodness. Which part of us has that potential? The mind.

From the Buddhist perspective, mind is the basis of everything: all our happiness and all our suffering. If this is so, we'd better understand what the mind actually is—because Buddha's view is mostly certainly not the view of neuroscience and modern psychology!

Before we understand mind's ultimate nature, its buddha nature, we first need to understand how it exists conventionally.

First of all, it is not physical, not our brain, not even a function of the brain. You could say that what goes on in the brain is a physical indicator of what goes on in the mind.

Mind is the name given to the subjective cognitive process of thoughts, feelings, emotions, unconscious, subconscious, intuition, instinct—you name it.

Mind is beginningless; you

can't track it back to some first cause. If everything is governed by the natural law of cause and effect, by definition there cannot be a first cause, as nutty as it sounds to us. We all desperately want a first cause; but it's absurd. As soon as you say it began back there somewhere, you're saying that there is a first moment that itself didn't have a cause. Not possible.

Therefore it is not the handiwork of anyone else: this is huge: it clearly contradicts the views of both materialism and creator religions. As His Holiness joked in one of his conversations with scientists: Big bang? No problem. Just not the first big bang, that's all!

We either think that we come from a creator or our parents. Sure, our body comes from our parents, but not our mind. For the Buddha, the idea that our mind, our thoughts and feelings and emotions and our various tendencies come from someone else is pretty weird.

Our mind is its own continuity: it's referred to as a *mental continuum*: a river of mental moments, each moment of which finds its main source in the previous moment, and so

on, back and back and back.

Buddhism asserts far subtler levels of cognition that can be accessed by achieving single-pointed concentration, samatha. The only levels of mind that the prevailing views posit are conceptuality and sensory.

Mind, being impermanent, can change; it's not set in stone. This is incredibly encouraging and can lead us to understand the subtler fact that it lacks an intrinsic nature: its emptiness.

And its emptiness is what is meant by its buddha nature. Because the mind is empty of existing in and of itself, from itself, as Lama Yeshe puts it, it can 1. be removed of all delusions and 2. be perfected in all goodness.

Every mind possesses buddha nature in the same way that every acorn possesses oak-tree nature: it's a simple way to say it. As long as there is an acorn, by definition it is a potential oak tree: that's its nature; it's what it is in its very being. That potential defines its existence.

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02 Dec, 2023



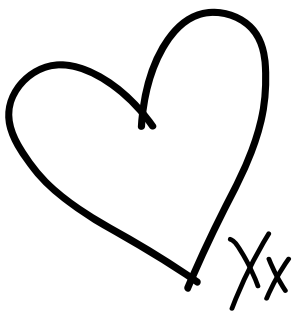
Wei Jian 魏健

I only speak Chinese, and I require support related to Buddhism and culture. 我的唯一语言是中文，我需要有关佛教和文化方面的支持

Buddhist Chaplain 佛教牧师

I am here to assist. Simply fill out an inmate request form, specifying your need for a chaplain who speaks Chinese. 我在这里提供帮助。只需填写一份囚犯请求表格，具体说明您需要一个会说中文的牧师。





UNPRECEDENTED ACT OF COMPASSION

DANIEL TROYAK



In a study reported in the *Journal of Threatened Taxa*, researchers detailed an incident in which a young dog in the state of Maharashtra, India, found itself pursued by a pack of feral dogs and sought refuge in the shallow waters of the Savitri River.



The dog floating in the Savitri River in India. Pic: Utkarsha Chavan, *Journal of Threatened Taxa*

Unaware of the three mugger crocodiles nearby, typically described as *opportunistic predators* by the Wildlife Institute of India, the dog appeared to be an easy target. However, rather than attacking, the adult crocodiles gently guided the dog to safety on the riverbank, away from the feral pack. This behaviour led the researchers to consider the possibility of *sentient behaviour suggestive of cross-species empathy*.

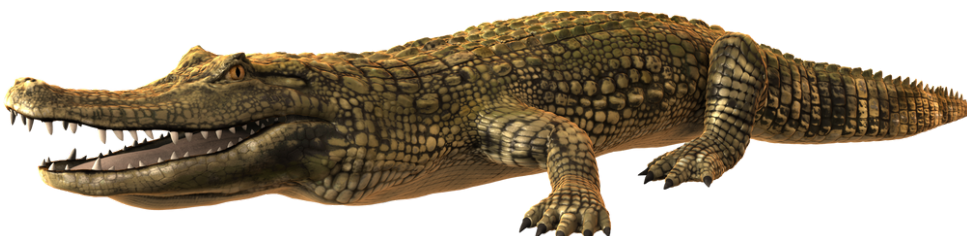
While the analysis was speculative, it emphasised the intriguing notion that the crocodiles' actions might have been motivated by more than just a lack of appetite. This incident raised questions about the capacity of these reptiles for emotional empathy and highlighted the need for further research in this area, as reptiles' mental faculties in such situations remain relatively unexplored.

We can take inspiration from anywhere. Zookeeper and conservationist, Steve Irwin was an Australian hero who cared about all wildlife, including snakes and crocodiles doing everything he could to help them flourish. At 44 years of age he was stabbed hundreds of times by a giant stingray. In unbelievable agony, his friend reported, He just sort of calmly looked at me and said, I'm dying.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche had these general suggestions for ways Buddhist students could care for pets in everyday life and at their death.

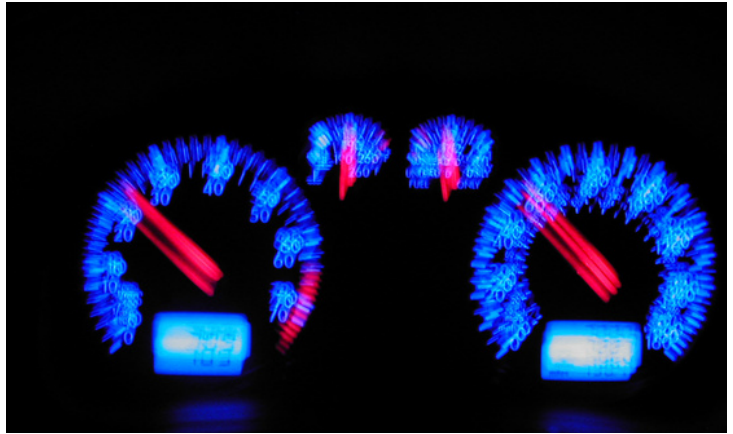
If you love your animal very much, you must do this for them, for their rebirth and quick liberation from samsara. When the animal is dying or has died, recite OM MANI PADME HUM, You can recite the mantras 21 times or more. Blow air from your mouth strongly on the animal's body after each recitation.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche wrote a letter of condolence to his family. See *Mind Brakes 4*.



A DISCIPLINE OF SOBRIETY

BY BHIKKHU BODHI



Several months ago, I went for a two-week retreat to a hermitage in the low country highly respected for the austere, meditative life of its monks. Each day a different group of donors comes to the monastery bringing alms-food, often from remote towns and villages. They arrive the previous evening, prepare an early breakfast which is sent up to the refectory, and then, in the forenoon, offer alms directly to the monks when they come down on alms round. After the other monks have collected their food and gone back up, one elder stays behind to give the Refugees and Precepts, give a short sermon, and conduct the dedication of merit.

One day during my retreat I noticed some of the male donors behaving rather oddly near the abbot's quarters. I asked my friend, a German monk, about their strange behaviour, and the explanation he gave me jolted my mind. *They were drunk*, he told me. But that wasn't all. He continued: *The only thing unusual about yesterday's incident was that the men had gotten drunk early in the day. Usually, they put on their best behaviour until the formalities are done, then they break out the bottles.*

This stark revelation aroused in

me both indignation and sorrow. Indignation, at the idea that people who consider themselves Buddhists should flaunt the most basic precepts even in the sacred precincts of a monastery—indeed one of the few in Sri Lanka where the flame of arduous striving still burns. Sorrow, because this was only the latest evidence that I had seen of how deeply the disease of alcoholism has eaten into the entrails of this nation, whose Buddhist heritage goes back over two thousand years. But Sri Lanka is far from being the only Buddhist country to be engulfed by the spreading wave of alcohol consumption. The wave has already swept over far too much of the shrinking Buddhist world, with Thailand and Japan ranking especially high on the fatality list.

The reasons for this ominous trend vary widely. One is rising affluence, which for the rich makes of liquor (hi-grade imported) a visible symbol of newly acquired wealth and power. Another is a burgeoning middle class, which blindly imitates the social conventions of the West. Still another is poverty, which turns the bottle into an easy escape route from the grim face of everyday reality. But whatever the reason, it is more than our woes and worries that alcohol is dissolving. It is

gnawing away at the delicate fabric of Buddhist values on every level—personal, family, and social. For his lay followers, the Buddha has prescribed five precepts as the minimal moral observance: abstinence from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and the use of intoxicants. He did not lay down these precepts arbitrarily or out of compliance with ancient customs, but because he understood, with his omniscient knowledge, which lines of conduct lead to our welfare and happiness and which lead to harm and suffering. The fifth precept, it should be stressed, is not a pledge merely to abstain from intoxication or from excessive consumption of liquor. It calls for nothing short of total abstinence. By this rule the Buddha shows that he has understood well the subtle, pernicious nature of addiction.

Alcoholism rarely claims its victims in a sudden swoop. Usually it sets in gradually, beginning perhaps with the social icebreaker, the drink among friends, or the cocktail after a hard day's work. But it does not stop there: slowly it sinks its talons into its victims' hearts until they are reduced to its helpless prey.

To dispel any doubt about his reasons for prescribing this precept, the Buddha has written the explanation into



A DISCIPLINE OF SOBRIETY

BY BHIKKHU BODHI

the rule itself: one is to refrain from the use of intoxicating drinks and drugs because they are the cause of heedlessness. Heedlessness means moral recklessness, disregard for the bounds between right and wrong. It is the loss of heedfulness, and moral scrupulousness based on a keen perception of the dangers in unwholesome states. Heedfulness is the keynote of the Buddhist path, *the way to the Deathless*, running through all three stages of the path: morality, meditation, and wisdom. To indulge in intoxicating drinks is to risk falling away from each stage. The use of alcohol blunts the sense of shame and moral dread and thus leads almost inevitably to a breach of the other precepts. One addicted to liquor will have little hesitation to lie or steal, will lose all sense of sexual decency, and may easily be provoked even to murder. Hard statistics clearly confirm the close connection between the use of alcohol and violent crime, not to speak of traffic accidents, occupational hazards, and disharmony within the home.

Alcoholism is indeed a most costly burden on the whole society. When the use of intoxicants eats away at even the most basic moral scruples, little need be said about its corrosive influence on the two higher stages of the path. A mind besotted by drink will lack the alertness required for

meditative training and certainly won't be able to make the fine distinctions between good and bad mental qualities needed to develop wisdom. The Buddhist path in its entirety is a discipline of sobriety, a discipline which demands the courage and honesty to take a long, hard, utterly sober look at the sobering truths about existence. Such courage and honesty will hardly be possible for one who must escape from truth into the glittering but fragile fantasyland opened up by drink and drugs.

It may well be that a mature, reasonably well-adjusted person can enjoy a few drinks with friends without turning into a drunkard or a murderous fiend. But there is another factor to consider: namely, that this life is not the only life we lead. Our stream of consciousness does not terminate with death but continues on in other forms, and the form it takes is determined by our habits, propensities, and actions in this present life. The possibilities of rebirth are boundless, yet the road to the lower realms is wide and smooth, the road upward steep and narrow. If we were ordered to walk along a narrow ledge overlooking a sharp precipice, we certainly would not want to put ourselves at risk by first enjoying a few drinks. We would be too keenly aware that nothing less than our life

is at stake. If we only had eyes to see, we would realise that this is a perfect metaphor for the human condition, as the Buddha himself, the One with Vision, confirms. As human beings we walk along a narrow ledge, and if our moral sense is dulled, we can easily topple over the edge, down to the plane of misery, from which it is extremely difficult to re-emerge.

But it is not for our own sakes alone, nor even for the wider benefit of our family and friends, that we should heed the Buddha's injunction to abstain from intoxicants. To do so is also part of our personal responsibility for preserving the Buddha's Teaching. The Teaching can survive only as long as its followers uphold it, and in the present day one of the most insidious corruptions eating away at the entrails of Buddhism is the extensive spread of the drinking habit among those same followers. If we truly want the Dharma to endure long, to keep the path to deliverance open for all the world, then we must remain heedful. If the current trend continues and more and more Buddhists succumb to the lure of intoxicating drinks, we can be sure that the Teaching will perish in all but name. At this very moment of history when its message has become most urgent, the sacred Dharma of the Buddha will be irreparably lost, drowned out by the clinking of glasses and our rounds of merry toasts.

VIPASSANA

ANNA CARMODY

Meditation is looking at your mind. There are many ways of doing this: Vipassana, which claims to be non-sectarian, is a ten-day, twenty-four hours a day meditation course that directs the mind to the drivers of our thinking, the physical sensations of the body, and allows the mind to explore the connections between the mind and body. The student learns to understand how the mind works, how and why we are what we are.

This can be difficult in our ordinary everyday life. Always chasing pleasure, our mind flits from thought to thought, seeking distractions, rarely



looking at what is actually going on in the mind. This is why we often find ourselves saying and doing things that surprise us. If they don't surprise us, it is because we have done them again and again. We are familiar with them. And guess what? Meditation is becoming familiar with your mind. Getting to know your mind. And perhaps actually doing something about it.

Released in 2007, *The Dhamma Brothers*, is a documentary film about this program in a prison in Alabama USA. One inmate said Vipassana was 'No one telling us what to think. We work it out for ourselves.'

Another claimed that when you are 'scared to deal with life, Vipassana lets you 'see things as they really are.' A third spoke of the fear of knowing oneself.

These are bold claims, and these men were brave. They toughed it out for 240 hours—more or less—and learned invaluable lessons about themselves and others.

Doing Time, Doing Vipassana, is another documentary about the program involving thousands of prisoners in India.

How can I remain calm when there are so many bad things in the world?

Thich Nhat Hanh suggested we look closely at the people, or the person, who is being cruel. We will see that they are suffering. We can remember that compassion is wanting the suffering to stop. Great compassion is thinking I shall do what I can to relieve their suffering. Even if we cannot do a lot, we can transform our anger into compassion. This can help us, and others too.

See more in *Is Nothing Something* by Thich Nhat Hanh

THE BUDDHA

AJAHN CHANDAKO



The man who was to become the Buddha was born Siddhattha Gotama around 2,600 years ago as a prince of a small territory near what is now the Indian–Nepalese border. Though he was raised in splendid comfort, enjoying aristocratic status, no amount of material wealth and sensual pleasure could conceal life's imperfections from the unusually inquisitive young man. So at the age of 29, he left wealth and family behind for the remote forests and mountains of Northeast India to search for a lasting answer to life's problems. He studied under the wisest religious teachers and philosophers of his time, learning all they had to impart, but they could not provide the answers he was seeking. He then struggled on the path of self-mortification, taking that practice to the extremes of asceticism, but still to no avail.

By the age of 35, he realised that neither self-indulgence nor self-mortification were leading him to the answers that he was looking for. Then, on the full moon night of May, having turned away from these two extremes, he sat beneath the branches of what is now known as the Bodhi Tree in a

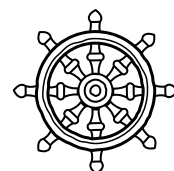
secluded grove by the banks of a river, and developed his mind in deep, luminous and tranquil states of meditation. With the extraordinary clarity and sharp penetrative power that is generated by inner stillness, he focused his attention on investigating the nature of existence, its cause and its cessation. Through this contemplation of the essence of reality, he attained the supreme awakening, the experience of enlightenment. From that point on he was known as the Buddha, the Awakened One.

His enlightenment consisted of the most profound and all-embracing insight into the nature of the body, mind and all phenomena. This awakening was not a revelation of a divine being, but a discovery made by himself based on the deepest levels of meditation. It was an insight that liberated his mind from the roots of all suffering: selfish desire, anger and delusion. This experience eliminated all traces of inner conflict and discontent, revealing unshakeable peace. He had found the ultimate solution to life's problems that he'd sought, and the result was unparalleled, sublime, true happiness.

Having realised the goal of perfect enlightenment, the Buddha spent the next 45 years teaching a path of training and development which, when accurately and diligently followed, will lead anyone regardless of race, class or gender to the same awakening. These teachings are called the Dhamma, literally meaning the nature of all things or the underlying truths of existence.

From *What is Buddhism?* by Ajahn Chandako.

Ajahn Chandako was ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1990 in the lineage of Venerable Ajahn Chah. His interest in the teachings of the Buddha grew as he studied towards a BA degree in Religious Studies from Carleton College (1984)



GENTLE AND HUMBLE

AJAHN LIEM

You need to train to bring forth an attitude of gentleness and humbleness. The words *gentle* and *humble* are about our good conduct as Sangha members—something that we need to practise by ourselves and develop in ourselves. With these qualities, the Sangha is well accepted by society.

Anyone who behaves gently and humbly will always be well respected, even by the devas. The devas praise gentle and humble demeanour. Whatever it is, our prostrations, or the way we raise our hands to greet, all these expressions of good manners that all of us in our Sangha should practice.

This practice and training is one of the embellishments of a renunciant. It makes him beautiful and enriches him. When a renunciant relates to society, he will never provoke feelings of aversion, irrespective of the social status of the people he meets. A renunciant is well-accepted by society. It is worth noticing that those leaders of society who take seriously the ten Dhamma (Dharma) qualities for a leader also need to develop the quality of gentleness and humbleness. The same was true for the Buddha himself. He gave these qualities importance because they bring up beauty in oneself and cause others to appreciate one.

We should understand that gentleness and humbleness are very important qualities for a Samana. The expression *adikalyanam* (beautiful in the beginning) points to this: one becomes beautiful to look at right from the start. It is normal that raw materials need to undergo processes of change and alteration until the outcome is a useful product that pleases people. With no changes and corrections, the result would be displeasing. Similarly, if human beings don't undergo training, exercise or practice, they are like raw products and other people won't see them as useful. So we should train in being gentle and humble.

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Ajahn Liem Thitadhammo was born in Sri Saket Province in the Northeast of Thailand on the 5th of November 1941. He is a Buddhist monk in the Thai Forest Tradition and the Abbott Wat Nong Pat Pong.

MEETING WITH EUROPEAN CAMPAIGNERS FOR PEACE

FROM THE OFFICE OF H.E. DALAI LAMA



Thekchen Chöling, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India. The morning of November 8, 2023, His Holiness the Dalai Lama met a group of peace campaigners mostly from Europe. Their leader, Sofia Stril-Rever from France, declared that their hearts were filled with joy to meet him again. She told him that they were inspired by the example he has set in service of humanity. She reported that the group took part in observing the UN endorsed Day of Conscience on 5th April. This occasion is dedicated to establishing fundamental freedoms and human rights for all people without distinction.

Stril-Rever asked His Holiness how good conscience and love can contribute to lasting peace in the world and he responded:

As human beings we all receive our mother's love as soon as we are born. As young children we unhesitatingly play with other children without caring where they are from or what they or their family believe. This kind of openness is our basic human nature.

In answering questions about the climate crisis, His Holiness remarked that the changes taking place seem to be beyond our ability to control. He reiterated that as human beings we are all the same and we must learn not only to live together but also to work together in our common interest. As adults, too many of us see other people in terms of *us* and *them*, basing our discrimination on secondary political or religious differences between us. If we are to contribute to peace among us, we must find ways to acknowledge that fundamentally, as human beings, we are all the same. We share a common experience. We are born the same way and ultimately, we all die.

Focussing on differences of nationality or faith just becomes an excuse to kill each other. It's unthinkable. Even animals live together more peaceably. If things are to change, we 8 billion human beings must learn to live together on this planet. We must recognise our common humanity. That's why, whenever I meet some-

one new, I always see them as another human being like me. And because of this I recognise that we all belong to one human family.

While we still have time, he added, "it would be sensible to cultivate a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood and help each other. We need to find a way to prolong the basic human love our mother shows us at birth and extend it to others for the rest of our lives.

Asked how religion can influence the future of the world, His Holiness replied:

The essence of religion is warm-heartedness. This is what all religions teach, whatever philosophical stance they adopt. Warm-heartedness is the essence: cultivating this is what will help.





MEDITATION BEGINS WITH LETTING GO

AJAHN SUCITTO

Meditation commences with the act of letting go. To introduce this practice, when you disengage your focus from any specific object or subject and maintain awareness, you will discern certain fundamental qualities, even if they form a backdrop to the thoughts swirling in your mind. These qualities remain consistent, unaffected by circumstances, encompassing the sensations of vitality, solidity, and warmth affirming your physical presence, coupled with a non-verbal awareness of this embodied state. Settling into this foundation, you become attuned to the rhythmic pattern of your breath, the involuntary, restful flow. This practice, even if just for a few minutes, offers relief and a fresh perspective on your concerns. Yet, you'll observe that the mind seldom remains fixated on the breath for long; it gets drawn into memories, speculations, irritations, desires, anxieties, and self-recrimination.

The inability to sustain relaxation stems from underlying tendencies and unresolved issues surfacing when other distractions subside. Meditation, like life itself, isn't merely about relaxation; it requires training and guidance in accordance with the teachings. On the other hand, exerting excessive control can hinder embodiment and strain the mind.

Keeping your awareness anchored to your breath strikes a balance between doing too much and doing too little. Overthinking blocks receptivity and disrupts the natural flow of breath, while doing too little implies neglecting the need for attentive supervision and encouragement of the process.

Breathing is involuntary but its energy can be refined and directed. Consequently, reactions and attachments, seemingly beyond control and resistant to rational thought, can be penetrated at their root and released through the direct insight facilitated by this process. This requires skill and time but becomes manageable because it is rooted in pleasure. As evident in various suttas, the Buddha encourages pleasure derived from maintaining awareness of the body and heart.

Returning to the original teachings to reflect and practice in accordance with their prescriptions is wise. For instance the Buddha insisted on fulfilling the practice of *ānāpānasati* for awakening as per his instructions. This discourse recounts his teachings to bhikkhus who diligently practiced various meditations for four uninterrupted months. However, this wasn't an isolated instance; in other places, the Buddha mentions *ānāpānasati*, meaning

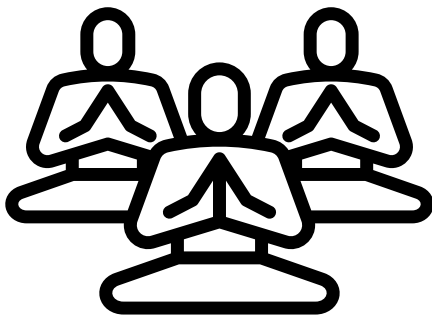
mindfulness of breathing, as part of a list of practices, including contemplation of the unattractive aspects of the body and the cultivation of loving-kindness. He even recommended *ānāpānasati* specifically as a remedy for wandering thoughts.

I must clarify that I do not consider *ānāpānasati* a practice that beginners can fulfill without engaging in other forms of mental cultivation. Wisely applied, *ānāpānasati* is one component of a broader mental cultivation that promotes ethical alignment, attentive mindfulness, goodwill, and a turning away from worldly pursuits and values. By guiding mental behavior in harmony with these principles, you can return to the practice of in-and-out breathing over the years as a regular meditation. Cultivate spacious awareness, ease the emphasis on goals and self-criticism, and allow this practice to be enriched by the skills you develop. Even if practiced for just a few minutes, it holds the key to relieving tension, hyperactivity, overwhelm, and fatigue. Mindfulness of breath is universal and requires no specific ideology; it tends to dissolve preconceived notions, leaving only the aspiration for the cessation of suffering and stress, a goal that is fitting and universal.



HELPFUL MEDITATION TIPS

DANIEL TROYAK



Mindfulness is the key to everything. When you are mindful, you are fully alive, you are fully present. You can get in touch with the wonders of life that can nourish you and heal you. And you are strong enough to face the difficulties and challenges that life presents to you

Thich Nhat Hanh

New to meditation? You've likely wondered, "Am I doing this right?" This common question plagues not only beginners but seasoned practitioners too. Challenges such as intrusive thoughts, restlessness, motivation woes, and uncertainty often arise. It's essential to know that there's no 'wrong' way to meditate. Meditation is a practice, and progress emerges through persistence.

Meditation methods vary, with mindfulness of breath being the most popular. Other techniques include lovingkindness, mantra repetition, visualization, and zazen (just sitting). These practices share the goal of cultivating the mind, fostering clarity, equanimity, and wisdom. If you seek extra support, consider connecting with a Buddhist teacher, joining a meditation group, or creating one.

Here are five valuable meditation tips:

- **Let Go of Specific Goals:** Meditation isn't about achieving goals but being present in the moment.

- **Stay Flexible:** Establish some structure in your practice but remain flexible. Maintain some structure in your practice but refrain from being overly critical or hard on yourself for missed sessions. Nevertheless, it's crucial to establish a daily practice to maximise the benefits of your meditation practice.
- **Comfortable Posture:** Maintain proper posture—head, neck, and back aligned, eyes closed or slightly open, and natural breathing through the nose.
- **Allow Thoughts:** Don't suppress thoughts during meditation. Acknowledge and let them go. Over time, your mind will settle.
- **Embrace All Experiences:** Don't restrict meditation to good times or challenging situations. Accept all experiences, even restlessness and boredom.

These tips, applicable to any meditation style, help you build a sustainable practice. Additional resources and guided meditations can be found on the tablets under L&D.



THE GREAT SEVENTEEN MASTERS OF NALANDA

VENERABLE KHYENTSE

His Holiness the Dalai Lama frequently emphasises that the Buddhist of Tibet, Mongolia and the Himalayan regions follow 'the Nalanda tradition.' Nalanda is the name of a monastery that was also a university in Northern India, which was completely destroyed in 1203. So, how is the name 'Nalanda' still relevant to us today?

In its heyday, Nalanda had more than 30,000 monks from all over the world and was the greatest centre of Buddhist learning in South Asia. Not only were the monks studying, contemplating, and practicing, they were producing the most qualified teachers to explain every aspect of Buddhist psychology, philosophy, meditation, and ethics. They created a unique tradition of debate, encouraging every part of the teachings to be rigorously scrutinised for logic and authenticity. They were writing masterpieces of Buddhist literature to inspire ever-broader and deeper learning of the Buddha's teachings.

When the huge library at Nalanda was set alight by

invading zealots in 1203, it was reported that smoke was still drifting out of the embers of the building many months afterwards – that's how many books were on site. However, the Tibetans had already long-adopted Buddhism and had an unquenchable thirst for the knowledge of the great masters of Nalanda. So, thousands of the texts written by Nalanda teachers had already been translated from Sanskrit to Tibetan, and the responsibility fell to the Tibetans to preserve this endangered treasure of wisdom in our world.

If it was just about books, all they would need is a few good archives. However, the written word was only one part of the all-important legacy of Nalanda. It was the emphasis on finding out the truth for oneself without any sectarian biases, analysing the teachings with logical reasoning, allowing our ideas to be tested by discussion and research as well as our personal practice, and finding methods to transmit the teachings to others that were the hallmark of Nalanda. And, so, it is that indomitable spirit, that passion for learning, truth, and openness that no amount of

fire could extinguish, and which is the foundation of the Nalanda tradition that remains as relevant today as it did all those centuries ago.

In Tibet, thousands of the precious teachings by the most enlightened of Nalanda teachers were preserved but a small selection of them became part of the curriculum of study at Buddhist universities there. The authors relied upon in the curriculum were known as 'The Six Ornaments of the World and the Two Supreme Ones'. In effect, several authors became just as relied upon for supporting teachings and, so, His Holiness the Dalai Lama extended the list and coined the term The Seventeen Great Masters of Nalanda, writing a prayer to them that will feature in our series of write-ups on these illustrious teachers.

It is worth noting that many of the Mahāsiddhas—great adepts or accomplished yogic masters—who transmitted the Vajrayāna teachings, such as Nāropa, Virūpa, etc., started out at Nalanda. So, although they are not counted in the list, the background for the Vajrayāna teachings can also be traced back to Nalanda.



Ven. Khyentse exploring the ruins of Nalanda University in the State of Bihar, in north-east India.

In the same spirit, people drawn to Tibetan Buddhism may favour the powerful meditations of the direct mind-training teachings or the Vajrayana practices, shying away from the idea that a whole curriculum of academia and debate is possible or needed for everyone. It's not just the catalogue of books, though, that makes the Nalanda tradition so valuable. It's the emphasis on open inquiry, on putting the teachings to the test instead of blind faith, which underlies the application of the great works of the Nalanda masters. In that spirit, the Nalanda tradition would never be undermined by modern scientific findings and analysis but, rather, is compatible and even enhanced by it. In fact, the Sanskrit word for these great masters, *pandita*, means something like a scientist—an enlightened scientist.

So, of these enlightened scientists, who were the Six Ornaments already mentioned? We've got 1) Nāgārjuna and 2) Āryadeva who started the Middle Way school, 3) Asanga and 4) Vasubandhu

from the Mind-Only school, and 5) Dignāga and 6) Dharmakīrti whose speciality was the study of logic and the science of mind. The Two Supreme Ones are the go-to authors on the monastic discipline called the Vinaya; namely, 1) Gunaprabha and 2) Śākyaprabha.



In the coming issues of *Mind Brakes*, we'll let you know more about each of them and the rest of the seventeen great masters of Nalanda. In today's issue, let's get started with the renowned Nāgārjuna.

ABOUT VENERABLE KHYENTSE

VENERABLE KHYENTSE, BORN IN 1981 IN THE UK WITH MEDITERRANEAN AND SCANDINAVIAN ROOTS, EXPLORED BUDDHISM AT THE AGE OF EIGHT, INFLUENCED BY A BOOK ABOUT THE DALAI LAMA. HE BEGAN MEDITATING AT 11 AND SECRETLY LEARNED SANSKRIT IN LONDON. ORDAINED IN THE FOREST SANGA TRADITION, HE BECAME A SKILLED TIBETAN BUDDHIST TEXT TRANSLATOR. TODAY, HE SUPPORTS THE NEXT GENERATION OF DHARMA TEACHERS, INCLUDING THE SYDNEY LAY COMMUNITY, AND PROMOTES COMPASSIONATE PRACTICES IN CORRECTIONAL CENTERS BY OFFERING SUPPORT TO CHAPLAINS.



Nagarjuna

THE SEVENTEEN GREAT MASTERS OF NALANDA

VENERABLE KHYENTSE



In this series, we meet seventeen of the most illustrious authors, as accomplished in contemplative practice as they were learned in their fields, associated with Nalanda, the most important ancient Buddhist university in India. Their works are the classics that shaped the spiritual landscape of Buddhism in Tibet and many other parts of the world, and are still studied today.

Expert elucidator of the intended purpose of 'the Mother of the Victorious Ones', the meaning of suchness beyond limiting extremes, Through profound modes of reasoning on dependent co-arising;

Prophesied by the Victorious One, founder of the Madhyamaka system of the supreme vehicle:

At the feet of Nāgārjuna, I offer my prayers.

— from *Prayer that Illuminates the Three Faiths* by H.H. the Dalai Lama.

Who: Nāgārjuna

When: approximately 150-250 c.e.

Where: born in South India

School affiliation: Middle Way (Madhyamaka)

Emphasis: profound view

Nāgārjuna was considered the pioneer of the Mahāyāna by bringing 'the Mother of the Victorious Ones' that is the *Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom* teachings of the Buddha to light as prophesied by the Buddha himself. He wasn't born enlightened—he was, in fact, born in a Hindu family, chose Buddhism, and reached realisation through his diligent study and practice. His works are considered so

valuable that he is sometimes nicknamed *the second Buddha*.

He authored several classic treatises for which he is regarded as founder of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy.

He is also counted among the 84 Mahāsiddhas—the great adepts or yogic saints—with several important Vajrayāna practice lineages being traced back to him.

His most important writings are in sets: the set of Middle Way reasoning, the set of advice, and the set of praises.

The set of reasoning:

- 1) *The Root Stanzas on the Middle Way* entitled 'Wisdom' (probably his most important work),
- 2) *The Refutation of Objections*,
- 3) *The Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness*,
- 4) *Sixty Stanzas on Reasoning*, and
- 5) *Crushing to Fine Powder*.

The set of advice:

- 1) *Precious Garland* (Buddhist lifestyle advice),
- 2) *Letter to a Friend* (Great introduction to the Buddhist path),

- 3) *Tree of Wisdom* (Buddhist etiquette guide),
- 4) *A Hundred Wisdoms*,
- 5) *Drops for Healing Beings*,
- 6) *Commentary on Bodhicitta* (essential reading before entering the Vajrayāna), and
- 7) *Compendium of Sūtras* (anthology of Buddha's quotes).

The set of praises:

- 1) *Praise of the Dharmadhātu* (about Buddha-nature),
- 2) *Praise of the One Beyond the World* (about the Buddha's core teachings for transcendence),
- 3) *Praise of the Inconceivable*, and
- 4) *Praise of the Superfactual*.

Of his many students, Āryadeva ranks as second in the list of great masters of Nalanda.

*If we ourselves and all the world
Wish for unsurpassed enlightenment,
Its basis is bodhicitta,
Stable as the king of mountains,
Compassion reaching out in all directions,
And wisdom that transcends duality.*

Nāgārjuna, *Jewel Garland*, verse 2:75-75



THE DOORS TO ALL HAPPINESS

LAMA ZOPA RINPICHE

The thought of wishing one sentient being to have happiness, even just one sentient being, is the door to all happiness. It is the door to all temporary happiness and to ultimate happiness, including enlightenment for ourselves.

Remember I mentioned the four happinesses that we cause other sentient beings: this life's comfort and happiness; the happiness of all the coming future lives; liberation from samsara and full enlightenment. Our thought to bring one sentient being to happiness becomes the door to all this happiness: to this life's success and happiness, to all our future lives' happiness, to the cessation of the whole of suffering and its causes and to the highest liberation, enlightenment. Our thought to bring even one sentient being to happiness becomes the door opening all this happiness.

his thought cherishing this one sentient being, the wish to bring one sentient being to happiness, is the cause for us to have the infinite qualities of a buddha, a buddha's holy

body, holy speech, holy mind, besides having all the qualities of Dharma and Sangha. With our thought to bring even one sentient being to happiness, the benefit is like the limitless sky.

It's a simple thing. This is just to give an idea, but we can go into great detail, looking at all the realisations and qualities of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, as well as all the temporary happiness and enjoyment we get from that.

With all this achievement that we get from our thought of bringing even one sentient being to happiness, with all the realisations and with enlightenment, we are able to cause numberless sentient beings happiness in that life and happiness in future lives as well as bringing them the cessation of all suffering and its causes and even bringing them to the highest happiness, full enlightenment. From this thought that we generate to one sentient being, as a result we are able to cause all this happiness for numberless other sentient beings. Just this is unbelievable. There is no greater profit we can achieve in life.

Now listen! Pay attention. All this benefit we get from the thought to bring one sentient being to happiness, and what we can offer numberless other sentient beings, all this we get from this person, from the thought to benefit this person, to bring this sentient being to happiness. We get all these skies of benefit from this sentient being, by practicing bodhicitta on this sentient being. In other words, this sentient being is giving us skies of benefit, and with that we can benefit all sentient beings. This one sentient being is giving us this opportunity.

Now we can see these sentient beings are the most precious ones in our life, whether it's one insect or one human being. They are the most kind, the most precious ones in our life.

We think money is very precious. Nobody needs to explain how important money is, *OM MANI PADME HUM*, money! Everybody likes money; nobody needs to explain how important money is. Everybody knows money is precious, we all cherish it. We can see the benefits because of what we can do with it. We can have many chocolates or



‘EVEN IF WE DON’T HAVE EVEN A DOLLAR OR A DIAMOND, WE CAN PRACTICE LOVING KINDNESS’

biscuits! Anyway, I’m joking! We understand the benefits of money, therefore everybody cherishes money.

People sacrifice their lives for money because they see its benefits. They give up their life for money. I’m not saying that is correct, but I’m saying they do this because they see the benefits of money, how money is precious.

It’s exactly the same here. Since I brought up this example, money, we can compare the value of one sentient being and mountains of diamonds. Diamonds are more precious than gold, when rocks and stones become diamonds. Maybe at that time something else would be more precious.

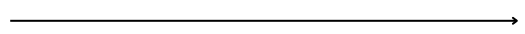
Anyway, one sentient being and mountains of diamonds, mountains of dollars. Even if every bill is a million dollars and there are mountains of it. And then there’s one sentient being. Which is more precious in our life? The example can be anything that we like so much. It can

be cars. It can be piles of antiques, it can be piles of broken cups or piles of old bones, if somebody likes bones very much! The example doesn’t have to be dollars or diamonds but anything that we like most; it can be mountains of chocolate or anything. So now, those great mountains of many millions of dollars, or diamonds, and this one sentient being, which is more precious in our life?

Without mountains of diamonds alone, even if we own that much, by depending on the existence of the suffering sentient beings, we can make the vow to not harm sentient beings. Because sentient beings exist, we can practice morality, which causes us to achieve not only the peace and happiness of this life, but a good rebirth in all the coming future lives and also liberation from samsara, as well as, by practicing morality with bodhicitta, that causes us to achieve enlightenment. By practicing morality with this suffering sentient being, we can achieve all this. We get all this benefit from this sentient being.

Even if we don’t have one single dollar or diamond, we can practice morality on this sentient being and, from that, we can achieve all this happiness up to enlightenment. Whereas even if we own that much wealth—mountains of diamonds or mountains of millions of dollars—there’s no way to practice morality on that, but because sentient beings exist, we can make charity and the same again, we can achieve all the happiness from that. And the same with patience and perseverance. All this is the same. With money alone there is no opportunity to practice charity to achieve every happiness. Like that, it’s same with the other perfections.

Even if we don’t have even a dollar or a diamond, we can practice loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta on the object, sentient beings, the obscured suffering sentient beings, and we can achieve enlightenment. Sentient beings give us all these benefits, all the realisations of the path and enlightenment. We get all this benefit. Without depending on these sentient beings, even if we





THE DOORS TO ALL HAPPINESS

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

have that much wealth—mountains of diamonds or mountains of million dollars—there's no way to generate compassion, no way to generate loving kindness, no way to generate bodhicitta, so there is no possibility to achieve enlightenment. Without depending on the kindness of sentient beings, even just the existence of suffering sentient beings, just this alone, even if we have that much wealth, with that alone we cannot stop rebirth in the lower realms and achieve a good rebirth in the next life. And then no question, we cannot attain liberation from samsara. With that much wealth alone we cannot achieve enlightenment without depending on the kindness of sentient beings.

Therefore, all this wealth, no matter how valuable it is, is nothing. Even though before we analysed it appeared more precious and the sentient being seemed nothing, now, after analysing, the value of those mountains of diamonds and that many millions of dollars is nothing when we compare it to one sentient being, whether it's

an insect or a human being. The benefit we get from this one being is like the sky; it is so unbelievably precious. That much wealth is nothing.

There is no valuable material that can compare to one sentient being, that is of the same level as the value of a sentient being. Among all material things, a wish-granting jewel is the most valuable. This is the jewel that in the past wheel-turning kings with great merit got from the ocean. After cleaning them in three ways, they are put on top of a banner on the roof of a house, and on the fifteenth day, on those special days, by praying to them, a sentient being receives whatever enjoyment, whatever material possession they need. This is basically due to their merit and the power of the material thing, the wish-granting jewel.

This is the most precious thing among all material possessions, but, even if we had mountains of wish-granting jewels, even if the sky were filled with wish-granting jewels, it could never compete, it could never compare to the value of one sentient being. Even that many wish-granting

jewels filling the whole sky is nothing when we compare the value of one sentient being, the benefits we can receive. All those wish-granting jewels are nothing compared to the value of one sentient being in our life.

The reason they use wish-granting jewels is because it's the most precious thing among all material objects, and if we can find one, it is very easy to feel how precious it is.

This is to get the feeling that even one sentient being is the most precious one, the most important one. When we compare ourselves and the other sentient beings, whether it's an insect or a human being, they are the most important.

This excerpt is taken from *Lecture Five of Kopan Course 32*, which took place at Kopan Monastery in Nepal during November-December 1999. It has been gently edited by Gordon McDougall.

Eight Verses for Transforming the Mind

For me, all sentient beings
Are more special than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
So, with the intention to accomplish their optimum welfare,
May I always hold them dear.

Whoever I associate with,
May I think of myself as though I were the lowest among all
And respectfully hold others to be supreme
From the very depths of my heart.

In all activities, may I inquire into my own mind-stream
And as soon as an afflictive emotion arises,
Endangering both myself and others,
May I firmly face and repel it.

May I cherish sentient beings of bad nature,
Those oppressed by the experience of forceful misdeeds and suffering,
As if I had found a treasury of precious jewels
Very difficult to find.

When others, out of envy, treat me badly
With abuse, scorn and the suchlike,
May I voluntarily join the losing side
And offer victory to them.

When one whom I have benefited
And in whom I have placed great hopes
Treats me very badly, may I see that kind of person
As a sacred spiritual friend.

In short, may I offer all my mothers
All hope and happiness, directly and indirectly,
And secretly take upon myself
All their harm and suffering.

May I keep all these practices free from conflation
With the stains of the eight worldly topics and,
By understanding that all phenomena are illusions,
Be released from the bondage of clinging.

BY GESHE LANGRI THANGPA



DON'T BELIEVE A SINGLE WORD BUDDHA SAYS

VENERABLE ROBINA COURTIN

Buddhism is basically Buddha's own direct findings, his own experiences about how things exist. And of course he would say confidently that his views are factual. He's allowed to say that; anyone can say that. But you have to back it up with your findings, your proof, etc., etc.

Buddha's like Einstein. If I were Einstein here, and I start telling you about $E=MC^2$ and I say, This is the truth! well, you would hope I would be confident that it is true! If I'm sitting here saying, Well, I'm not sure if it's true, you're laughing and you tell me to shut my mouth, don't confuse you. If I'm not confident, I should keep quiet.



So we want Buddha to be confident that he is right too. But he's not asking us to believe him: this is a crucial point that we're not used to hearing when it comes to spiritual teachings. He's asking us to check out his findings, to discover the truth of them—or not!—for ourselves. It's up to us; we're the boss, not Buddha.

Like with Einstein, we need to listen to what Buddha says and then, with confidence, decide to use his views as our working hypothesis in order to discover the truth of them for ourselves. How else can you work with something if you don't propose it? Working with Buddhist ideas has nothing to do with believing it, squeezing it inside yourself, not like that at all. And it's got nothing to do with liking it or not liking it. It's either true or it's not. And we have to find out. That's the Buddhist approach.

Also, like Einstein, every word that Buddha says is from his own direct experience, his own findings. He didn't make it up; he's not speculating; he didn't have a vision or a dream about it; it wasn't revealed to him.

That's why you need to check the Buddhist centers carefully, check the Buddha's teachings carefully, check the authors of books, check the people who teach, check the Dalai Lama, that he's a valid person who represents Buddha's teachings. If not, be careful! Don't confuse yourself.

And why would we want to develop wisdom? Simply because our suffering is a consequence of believing in and acting upon the misconceptions.

We hear a lot about wisdom in Buddhism, but it's not some special holy word, all high and fancy. wisdom simply means being correct. If you say there are two cups on my table, that ain't wisdom, honey, that's ignorance. There's one.

Of course, the wisdom Buddha's saying we can accomplish is a pretty outrageous level of wisdom: seeing the universe as it exists without mistake. That's the level of wisdom we can accomplish; he calls it omniscience. I mean, my Catholic mother was shocked by that! It's quite radical.



The part of us that cognises how things exist is the mind, and that's Buddha's expertise. According to the Buddha's model of the mind in our mental consciousness we have positive, negative and neutral states of mind; there's no fourth category. And these are technical terms, not moralistic.

The negative states of mind have two main characteristics: they're disturbing and they're delusional. They're liars, they're not in sync with reality. They're the ones that decorate on top of what's already there layers upon layers of characteristics that simply aren't there.



The virtuous states of mind have the characteristic of being peaceful - just check the last time you were loving, kind, generous; you felt peaceful. And, there's a sense of interdependence there. You've got a sense of connectedness with others, which means you're in sync - to some extent - with interdependence, which is reality, which is how things are.

So, for the Buddha the job to be done is, one, to eradicate utterly from the mind the delusions, the neuroses - and we can because they're made-up nonsense, having no basis in reality; and, two, develop to perfection the virtuous states of mind, including wisdom that sees everything as it is.

That's buddhahood!

Venerable Robina Courtin, has generously imparted teachings and provided invaluable Dharma guidance to both inmates and staff at Long Bay Correctional Centre. Ordained since the late 1970s, Ven. Robina has dedicated herself tirelessly to Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama

Zopa Rinpoche's FPMT.

Throughout the years, she has assumed various roles, including serving as the editorial director of Wisdom Publications, acting as the editor of Mandala Magazine, leading as the executive director of the Liberation Prison Project, and fulfilling the role of a travelling Buddhist teacher.





NOTHING IS MORE EXCITING!

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

Lama Zopa Rinpoche says that the greatest excitement in our life is to benefit all sentient beings. Listening to teachings, doing prayers and meditations, taking precepts, and living our life—all that—we dedicate to their well being.

Rinpoche explains that we should listen to the teachings for numberless beings, in order to free them from samsara and lead them to enlightenment. *'Can you imagine? Do you understand? Rinpoche asks. If you are not excited for this, then what else is exciting? Other excitement is totally crazy, Rinpoche explains. It is over hallucination. There is hallucination and over hallucination. So here, can you imagine?'*

The reason we are doing meditation is to benefit all sentient beings, not leaving out one single tiny fly, not one single ant. There are numberless universes. But not one single ant is left out, because of all the kind mother sentient beings, Rinpoche explains. If you think of the details it's unbelievable! So bodhichitta—practicing

bodhichitta and benefiting sentient beings—is so great. What other excitement do you want? Something else is more exciting than this? Rinpoche asks. Nothing is more exciting and to think this is very strange, Rinpoche explains. It is like your mind is not right. I'm talking including myself, not only you, Rinpoche says.

Our reciting should be done with the thought that we are not leaving even the tiniest sentient being behind. We are reciting for everyone. *We get up for them in the morning, wash, and do the motivation, especially the Mahayana motivation, bodhichitta, wow! Rinpoche says. We need to be alive to practice Dharma, to be of benefit, so we have to eat. So we eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner for all sentient beings. We take precepts for them. We do meditation for them. Every prayer is for them,' Rinpoche says. 'Can you imagine?'*

This teaching was extracted from the Light of the Path teachings in August 2017, in Black Mountain, North Carolina, US.

BODHICITTA

BODHICITTA REPRESENTS AN UNWAVERING, UNIVERSAL COMPASSION FOR ALL SENTIENT BEINGS. IT GOES BEYOND ORDINARY EMPATHY AND EXTENDS TO THE GENUINE DESIRE FOR THE WELLBEING AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF EVERY LIVING BEING, REGARDLESS OF THEIR BACKGROUND OR CIRCUMSTANCES

BODHICITTA IS DRIVEN BY AN ALTRUISTIC INTENT. IT'S NOT MOTIVATED BY SELF-INTEREST



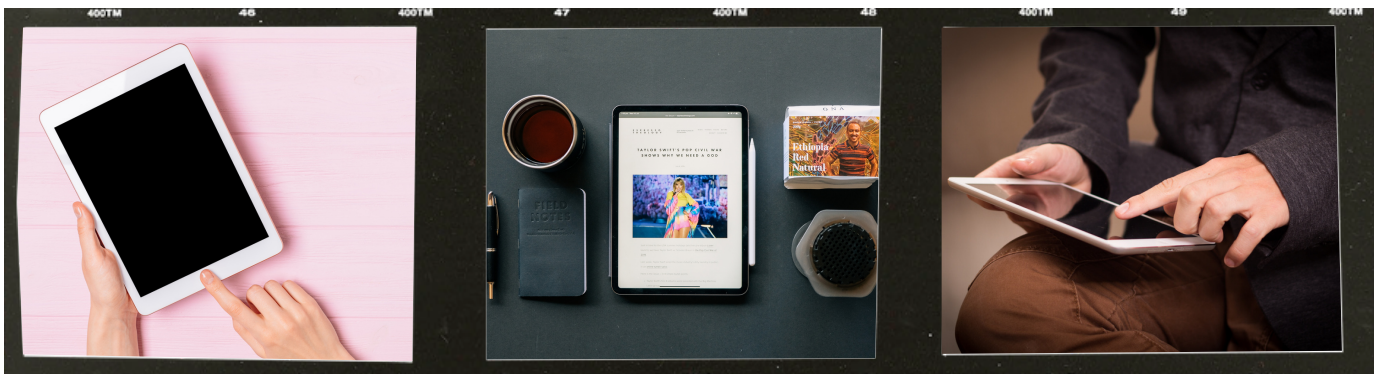
THE MEANING OF RINPOCHE

MY PRECIOUS TEACHER

Rinpoche is the Tibetan title meaning precious one or precious jewel and is usually applied to the recognised reincarnation of a great master or teacher.

Rinpoches may or may not be ordained, and can be male or female.

A teacher in both the Kagyu and Nyingma schools, Khandro Rinpoche, Mindrolling Jetsun Khandro Rinpoche, was recognised as the female reincarnation Ugyen Tsomo, the Great Dakini of Tsurphu Monastery, an incarnation of Yeshe Tsogyal.



ACCESSING BUDDHIST CONTENT

STEP-BY-STEP

1. Log onto the tablet with your MIN and pin code
2. Select *Standard free profile* and click *Start*
3. Open *L&D* app
4. Look for *Announcements: All* (tap on the *All*)
5. Select *Religious Information*, which is on the far right side of the page
6. Select from the list of religious information or go to the **search bar** and type **Buddhist** and also **Buddhism**

SUMMER READING

ANNA CARMODY



Dawn has just broken on the cool green water. On the sand a man is picking his way carefully through countless red starfish that lie scattered in untidy heaps to form a wide strip of reds and browns on the long and narrow beach. He does not know how they came to be there, but the tide is going out. When the clouds disperse and the sun climbs higher they will surely die.

He bends down to pick one up. If he throws it back into the sea, it will live.

But there are so many. If he chooses one, two-if he works all day-most of them will be left to die. Many-he can tell by the way their rounded points have turned inwards-are already dead. He wants to share this with another human

being. Too bear witness. To work out what it means.

Just then he sees an old man stepping through the red carpet at the other end of the beach, his hat and shoulders moving up and down, up and down. He hurries towards him, watching as the old man bends, plunges his hand into the sand around one of the starfish, then carries the prize with him as he walks one, sometimes two, or even three steps, and hurls the starfish over the breaking waves, into the sea.

By the time he reaches the old man he is surprised by the note he hears in his own voice. 'What are you doing, exactly?' He waves his arms despairingly. 'There are thousands and thousands. What difference will it make?'

The old man pauses, then smiles. He bends over and scoops up another handful of grit then stands holding the sand and its passenger as if he is the archbishop holding the pillow and coronation crown up to the young queen, although in truth, the old man is more a pirate than a cleric as he stands with his precious offering, laughing. For a moment the younger man imagines the sun has broken through, but perhaps the light is coming from somewhere else. Anyway, the spell is broken when the old man throws out his challenge.

'Difference?' He laughs again, then blows a kiss to the tiny fish. 'It makes all the difference to this little fella. His arm swings back, then tosses the gift into the sea.'

“

NOW, WITH REGARD TO ANIMALS, THEY NOT ONLY HAVE LIFE, BUT FEELINGS OF PLEASURE AND PAIN TOO. WE SHOULD TREAT THEIR LIVES WITH RESPECT, WHICH WE TIBETANS ARE ACCUSTOMED TO DO.

THE DALAI LAMA

”

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

AJAHN CHANDAKO.



The central teaching of the Buddha, around which all his other teachings revolve, is the Four Noble Truths:

1. Life involves suffering. All beings are subject to old age, sickness and death. They will inevitably experience some disappointment, discomfort, sadness, anxiety or pain.

2. The root cause of suffering is craving for sensual pleasure, for existence, for non-existence or for things to be different than they are. Craving is fueled by likes and dislikes, driven by the illusion of me and mine, which in turn is due to misunderstanding the true nature of reality.



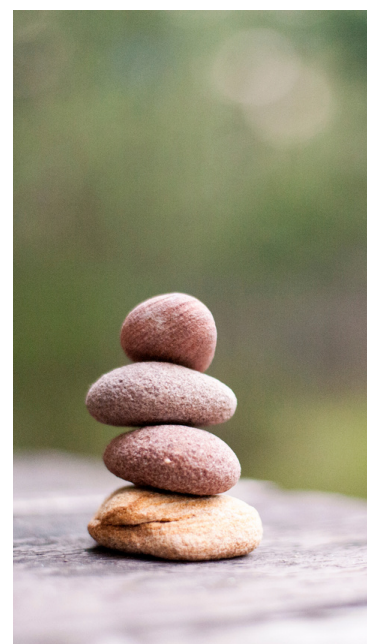
3. Suffering ends with the ending of craving. This is the attainment of enlightenment, Nibbana (or Nirvana). Enlightenment is the complete letting go of the illusion of a permanent and independent self or soul. An enlightened person is called an Arahant.

4. Enlightenment is achieved through a gradual training, a path called the Middle Way, or the Noble Eightfold Path.

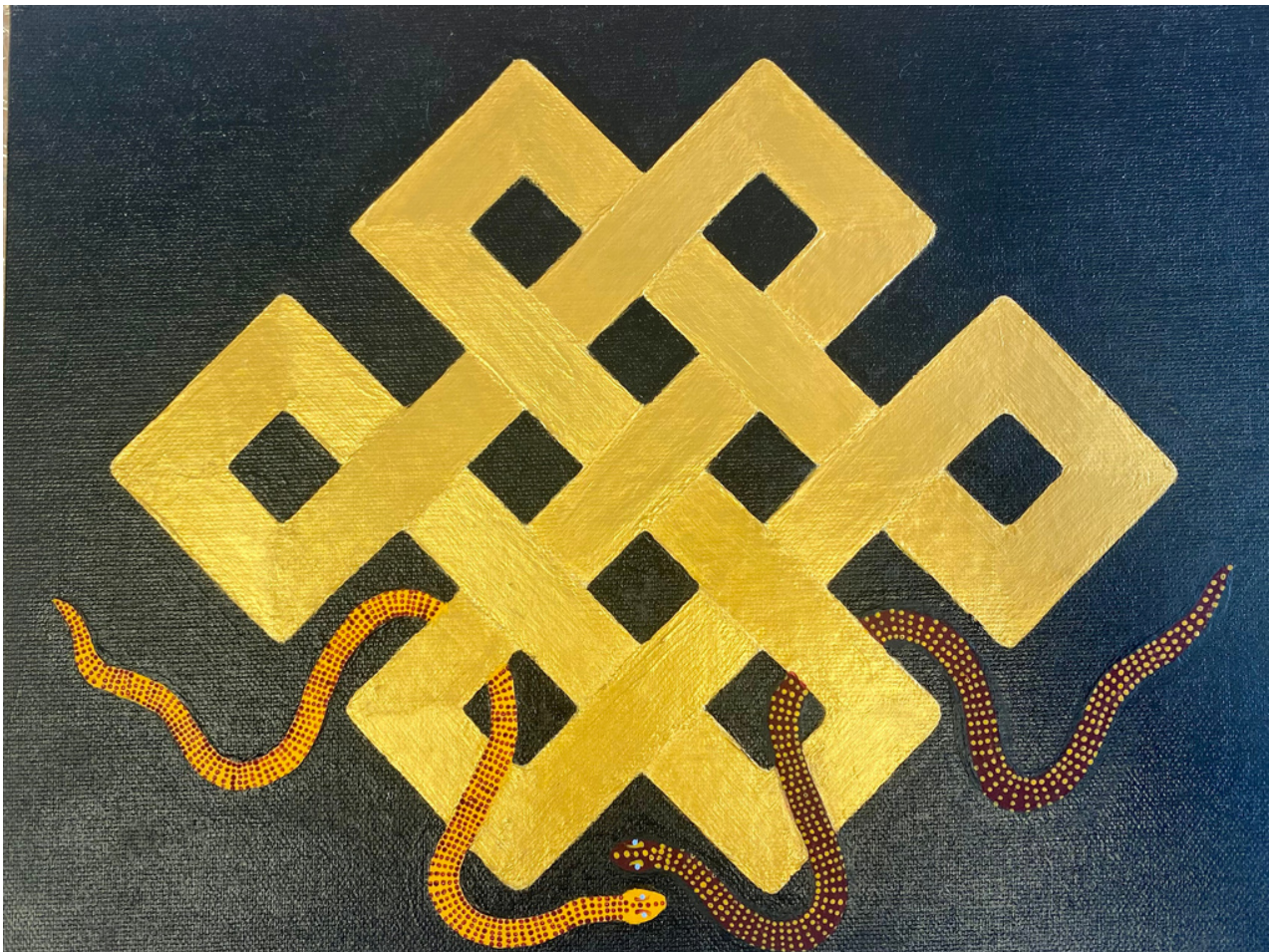
Buddhism is a realistic religion in that it faces up to the fact of life's many imperfections, and optimistic in that it offers a practical solution: enlightenment in this very life.

Because all things that arise from a cause are in a constant state of change, they are inherently unable to provide permanent happiness or reliable satisfaction. Grasping and clinging onto any aspect of experience leads to friction, stress or disappointment when those things, people or situations fade and disappear. As long as suffering is seen as something unnatural or abnormal that is to be feared, avoided or rejected, it will be impossible to uproot its causes

and live a truly happy life. To the degree that the subtle and all-pervasive nature of suffering is recognised, one can accept and be free from it. This is why the reflection on suffering is emphasized as the key to ultimate liberation, and those who have realized enlightenment are inspiring examples of profound happiness, loving-kindness and compassion.



From *What is Buddhism?* by Ajahn Chandako.



A FUSION OF BUDDHISM AND INDIGENOUS CULTURE IN ART

One of the eight auspicious symbols, the Glorious Knot, or *palpeu* in Tibetan, is also called the endless or eternal knot. With no beginning and no end, it is a dependent arising symbolising the unified, continuous, and endless wisdom and compassion of the Buddha.

In this particular artwork, the artist, currently an inmate in the South Coast Correctional Centre, has used acrylic paint and art board available from buy-ups to connected this ancient symbol with the rich cultural heritage of the land's custodians.

*May all the actions of my body,
speech and mind become expressions
of love, compassion and wisdom.*



DEPARTING FROM THE FOUR ATTACHMENTS

BY H.E. KYABGON CONGMA TRICHEN
RINPOCHE

If you have attachment to this life, you are not a religious person or a Dharmic person.

If you have attachment to the realm of existence you do not have the proper renunciation.

If you have attachment to the self you do not have bodhicitta or the enlightenment mind.

If grasping arises you do not have the view.

These four paragraphs contain the entire path of the Mahayana. It was given by Manjushri in a pure vision to the late Sakyapa Sachen Kunga Nyingpo, during a Manjushri retreat. Manjushri is the Buddha of wisdom.

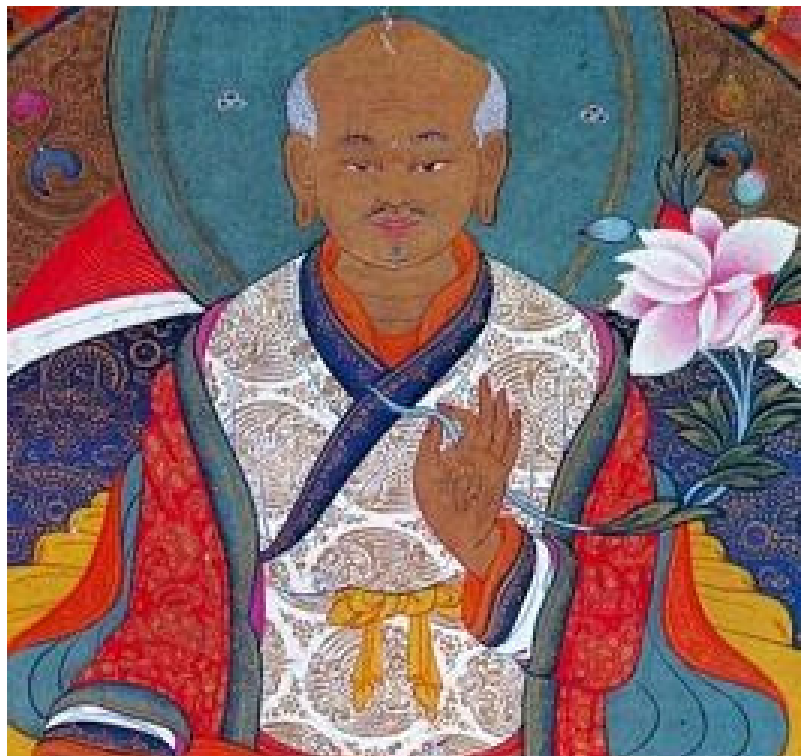
H.E. SAKYA TRIZEN

HIS HOLINESS KYABGON CONGMA TRICHEN RINPOCHE SERVED AS THE 41ST HEAD OF THE SAKYA ORDER OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM. SAKYA TRIZEN MEANS THRONEHOLDER OF SAKYA



WATCH THE VID

PARTING FROM THE FOUR ATTACHMENTS IS FOUND ON THE TABLET UNDER L&D



Sakyapa Sachen Kunga Nyingpo



CHAPLAINS NEWS

Stay informed of the most recent developments in Buddhist prison chaplaincy. Our goal, no pun intended, is to ensure you stay up-to-date on what is happening in Buddhist prison chaplaincy in Corrective Services across New South Wales.

LIBERATION PRISON PROJECT CALENDAR 2024

Chaplains are actively seeking funding to supply Liberation Prison Project Calendars to Buddhist inmates. Please accept our apologies for the late start. We aim to make the calendar accessible in early to mid-January.

Further information will be released as it becomes available.

MULTILINGUAL SUPPORT FOR CHINESE INMATES

Buddhist chaplaincy now offers a multilingual AVL service for Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking inmates. Please fill out an inmate request form specifying the need for a Chinese Buddhist chaplain.

CONGRATULATIONS CHAPLAIN ADA LEE

Having successfully completed both her training in clinical pastoral education and the required placement hours at Long Bay Correctional Centre, Ada Lee, a student of the Chan lineage of Mahayana Buddhism, is now a fully-fledged Buddhist chaplain.

In 2014 Ada attended Awakening Camp at Dharma Drum Mountain World Centre in Taiwan. Away from the distractions of everyday life, Ada was free 'to focus on the teachings and meditation practices'. Here she was able 'to have a glimpse of what actually lies in my mind, and the potential to change and transform within'.

Fluent in English, Mandarin and Cantonese, Ada will be able to extend the support and services currently offered to both English and Chinese-speakers. She will also offer support via AVL. [See above.]



'I am grateful to my Buddhist teacher, late Master Sheng Yen and Dharma Drum Mountain Sangha, who taught me the way to free myself from afflictions and sufferings through individual practices and by serving others.'

Ada continues to study and deepen her practice Buddhist meditation.

Her placement will begin early 2024 at Mary Wade Correctional Centre, Lidcombe.



BLISSFUL RECIPE

READER SUBMISSION

Creamy mushroom soup

Try relaxing with this easy-to-make soup after work, or after a workout in the yard. This recipe comes from Dillwynia Womens Correctional Centre. Go Girl!

You will need:

- 1 bottle of cream
- 1 can of mushrooms in butter sauce
- 1 can of champignon mushrooms
- 1 sachet of vegetable cup a soup

Directions:

1. Drain champignon mushrooms, then chop.
2. Combine mushrooms in butter sauce and vegetable cup a soup in a container.
3. Add champignon mushrooms.
4. If too thick, add milk to get the consistency right.
5. Heat in the microwave for 2-3 minutes, stirring halfway through or in a pot on medium heat, being careful it does not catch.



INGREDIENTS

CREAM

MUSHROOMS IN BUTTER SAUCE

CHAMPIGNON MUSHROOMS

VEGETABLE CUP A SOUP





MESSAGE TO THE LIBYAN PEOPLE

THE 14TH DALAI LAMA

Thekchen Chöling, Dharamsala, HP, India—His Holiness the Dalai Lama has this morning, September 13, 2023, issued a message expressing his deep sadness over the devastating floods in Libya.

I pray for those brothers and sisters who have lost their lives, and offer my heartfelt condolences to their families, as well as to others affected by this catastrophe.

I am aware that the Libyan authorities and the international community through several international organisations are offering support to the rescue efforts and providing relief to the affected people. Such a show of international concern and assistance will go a long way towards mitigating the effects of this calamity.

As a mark of my solidarity with the people of Libya, the Gaden Phodrang Foundation of the Dalai Lama, is making a donation towards the relief and rescue efforts.

DHARMA QUIZ

Answers on the last page

- Q1. Where was the Buddha born?
- Q2. Where did the Buddha gain Enlightenment?
- Q3. What is Enlightenment?
- Q4. Where did the Buddha give his first teaching?
- Q5. What did he teach?
- Q6. Where did the Buddha pass into parinivana?
- Q7. What is parinivana?





DEAR AUNTIE MEEYU

LETTERS FROM THE INSIDE

Dear Auntie Meeyu,

Bad enough on the floor, but now the cockroaches are crawling over my bunk, in my blankets, my towel... and helping themselves to buy-ups. Disgusting! Please, say it's okay to kill them. Please.

Filthy

Dear Filthy,

In your towel! Don't you hate that? I've got that too. You go to dry yourself, and out scuttles a cockroach. It runs off, finds a spot, and then stops very still. Dark and glimmery, mine waits like the company car parked under a street lamp on a wet, half-lit street. I don't know if it knows I am watching, or if it's thinking that standing still means it cannot be seen. It doesn't look as if it is challenging me, although it could be. It has some authority. Sometimes it's a baby. A baby, for goodness sake! The babies don't hang about, they hurry back to their hang-out, or wherever they live.

Then there are the mosquitoes—they actually bite. I always feel super conflicted about them. Rinpoche used to open his robes and let them feast on his blood. They were hungry, needed to eat. He had compassion for them.

According to the law of cause and result, every being we meet, we've met them before. And we'll meet again. Who knows? The roles could be reversed. Thank goodness we all have the potential to be perfect. We all have Buddha nature. Make sure you shake your towel before you use it. You don't want to squash a future Buddha.

Auntie Meeyu.

PS I wonder if cockroaches are attached as we are to our living conditions. Perhaps you, or any other reader—I'd like to hear from them—could write and let me know. I am interested in your views. Auntie M.





THIS IS DHARMA

THE BUDDHA DHARMA. ANYTHING TO DO WITH DHARMA SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CARE AND RESPECT.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. IN THE GARDENS OF LUMBINI IN PRESENT DAY NEPAL.
2. IN BODHGAYA, INDIA.
3. ENLIGHTENMENT IS THE ELIMINATION OF ALL AFFLICTIONS AND OBSCURATIONS AND THE PERFECTION OF EVERY GOOD QUALITY.
4. SARNATH, NORTHERN INDIA.
5. THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS.
6. KUSHINIGAR, NORTHERN INDIA.
7. PARINIVANA OCCURS WITH THE DEATH OF THE PHYSICAL BODY OF SOMEONE WHO HAS ATTAINED ENLIGHTENMENT



As you breathe in,
cherish yourself. As
you breathe out,
cherish all beings.

THE DALAI LAMA



If you want to contribute short articles about your Buddhist journey, send your submissions to:

Internal Mail
Buddhist Chaplaincy
Long Bay Correction Centre

The editors take responsibility for any mistakes in this publication.

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We gratefully
acknowledge
the assistance
of BCNSW

