

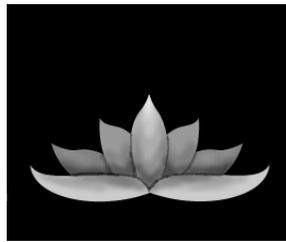
Dharma Friends

**Dedicated to Sharing the Dharma, Healing Each Other,
All Sentient Beings, and Ourselves**

June 2009 issue # 149

copyright 2009, Compassion Works for All

The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



Verse 15: Happiness

Translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita

Source: From The Dhammapada: The Buddha's Path of Wisdom, translated from the Pali by Acharya Buddharakkhita, with an Introduction by Bhikkhu Bodhi (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1985). Transcribed from the print edition in 1996 by a volunteer under the auspices of the DharmaNet Transcription Project, with the kind permission of the BPS. Copyright © 1985 Buddhist Publication Society. Access to Insight edition © 1996. For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted, and redistributed in any medium. It is the author's wish, however, that any such republication and redistribution be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis and that translations and other derivative works be clearly marked as such.

- 197.** Happy indeed we live, friendly amidst the hostile. Amidst hostile men we dwell free from hatred.
- 198.** Happy indeed we live, friendly amidst the afflicted (by craving). Amidst afflicted men we dwell free from affliction.
- 199.** Happy indeed we live, free from avarice amidst the avaricious. Amidst the avaricious men we dwell free from avarice.
- 200.** Happy indeed we live, we who possess nothing. Feeders on joy we shall be, like the Radiant Gods.
- 201.** Victory begets enmity; the defeated dwell in pain. Happily the peaceful live, discarding both victory and defeat.
- 202.** There is no fire like lust and no crime like hatred. There is no ill like the aggregates (of existence) and no bliss higher than the peace (of Nibbana).
- 203.** Hunger is the worst disease, conditioned things the worst suffering. Knowing this as it really is, the wise realize Nibbana, the highest bliss.
- 204.** Health is the most precious gain and contentment the greatest wealth. A trustworthy person is the best kinsman, Nibbana the highest bliss.

205. Having savored the taste of solitude and peace (of Nibbana), pain-free and stainless he becomes, drinking deep the taste of the bliss of the Truth.

206. Good is it to see the Noble Ones; to live with them is ever blissful. One will always be happy by not encountering fools.

207. Indeed, he who moves in the company of fools grieves for longing. Association with fools is ever painful, like partnership with an enemy. But association with the wise is happy, like meeting one's own kinsmen.

208. Therefore, follow the Noble One, who is steadfast, wise, learned, dutiful and devout. One should follow only such a man, who is truly good and discerning, even as the moon follows the path of the stars.



Some thoughts about this *Dhammapada* Verse:

Happiness

Raise your hand if you are happy. Hmm. Not a lot of hands going up out there. Why aren't you happy?

Let's start with a basic assumption that stumps most of us, at least some of the time. Without consciously being aware of it, our happiness seems to depend on external circumstances. If we are getting what we think we want, we are happy. If not, we are angry, disappointed, frustrated, betrayed, grief-stricken, or any other negative state of mind. But here are a few clues from Buddhist psychology that can truly grow us beyond this basic and rather primitive view of happiness. Remember that here we are talking about transformational psychology and not exploring those teachings for enlightenment that take us beyond all the psychological states of our ego self. But creating a happier life is helpful for many because most of us need a break from distress in order to focus on those much more subtle steps of our spiritual growth.

Here are some things to contemplate from Buddhist psychology:

First of all, we get what we want.

This is a hard one for me to even put down on paper because, for some of you, what you *have* is extraordinarily traumatic. To think that you wanted what you now have sounds like a terribly cruel statement. But it is true at various levels. Hold an open mind and a compassionate heart towards yourself and we will explore this idea.



Let's first pretend that Bob is our friend and we are helping him look at the happiness – or lack of it – that he has created in his life. Bob needs money to buy a house and to take care of his kids. He is happy when he thinks that his boss might give him a raise. He works hard, is usually on time, gives his boss the performance he wants, and he is kind to other employees. In all these ways, he optimizes the chances that he will get that raise. Of course, he does not have 100% control over what will unfold but he has assessed the situation well and does all that he can to create what he wants. The boss gives him a \$100 a week raise and he is happy. He got what he wanted.

But what if Bob has a blind spot in his assessment of how to please his boss? What if Bob has a personality disorder, or an addiction, or an underlying and sabotaging self-esteem issue, or has projected some old and skewed psychodynamic on his boss? Unconsciously, whenever we have a wound – a place of psychological or physical imbalance - that needs to be fully explored, expressed and resolved, that imbalance pushes to the surface of our life with a powerful energy for healing. The underlying desire for healing is stronger than the desire for whatever we think that we want. All natural systems, including our psyche and physiology, endlessly push to restore wholeness, balance, and homeostasis. That which is out of balance pushes to be seen by manifesting as dysfunction in our lives so that we can repair ourselves. Unconsciously, Bob wants

this healing more than he wants the raise - even if it means crashing into a wall as he tries to make conscious the psychological or physiological wound that upsets his internal balance. If he could see the wound when he first bumps into the wall, he could see that something is wrong and focus on healing it. If, with that first bump, he could change his behaviors, get medical help, or do what needs to be done to heal, he could then focus more successfully on getting that raise. That would be good.



Often, however, we bump into the wall and wonder whose fault it was that we crashed. We demand to know who put that wall there. And we are irate that that wall prevented us from getting the raise. We think that it wasn't our fault and we are most unhappy about the unfairness of it all.

If someone said to Bob, *"You created these circumstances because it is what you really wanted"*, Bob would not be very genteel in his response. But it is true. And because Bob did not fully explore the reason for his first bump into the wall, he probably continued to repeatedly bump into it. Soon those bumps were crashes because he was still not getting the real message. After he was black and blue, that wall was the source of perpetual exhaustion from his injuries. Until he knows that the wall is his teacher and he must look within for the clues to his own imbalance that is causing the confrontation and distress, the wall will continue to be what crashes all of his happiness goals.

So, just to be clear, let's exaggerate our fantasy of what the underlying problem is for Bob. Let's say that Bob had a domineering father who always criticized him. He was dependent on a father who never gave him support and that escalated his very understandable feelings of anger at a withholding dad. As a result, Bob felt like he was always falling short, felt generally unsuccessful and inferior, and was frequently angry with himself for not being what his father wanted. You can see that these are psychological issues that could get in Bob's way with a 'father figure' later in life if he does not resolve them. Bob's foundational beliefs about his competence and self-esteem are poor and when he projects those beliefs on others, Bob is likely to fail before he starts!

But let's also throw in a few more challenges for Bob since we are making this up as we go along. Let's pretend that Bob is a minority person – he can be African/American, Latino, gay, Muslim, overweight and short – it doesn't matter. He will probably get a message of incompetence and harsh judgments from many in society just as he did from his Dad, because such judgments are lived so fully and abusively in our culture. If he is already vulnerable to low self esteem, these hurt.

And let's say that Bob's Dad was a narcissistic personality disorder with addiction issues and that contributed to his anger and cruel treatment of Bob. Bob did not feel safe and loved because his Dad could not show it, and to complicate things, he too may have a possible genetic predisposition to a personality disorder like his Dad. Plus, he may have a genetic predisposition to handle his distress with anger, drugs and alcohol or just because his father modeled that for him.

Poor Bob –his blind spots are now huge!

So now Bob wants that raise but instead of creating the circumstances to receive it, he sets himself up for rejection. He is generally sullen and angry towards his boss because he believes that he can never please him. He is tempted to bend the rules and to think more of himself than others. Sometimes he is late or irresponsible because he is hung over. In all these ways, Bob has created the circumstances where he will not get a raise. When he does not get it, it is like running into our proverbial wall and that makes him feel cheated, wronged, and unsuccessful. Certainly, he is not happy. And, he thinks it is the fault of his mean boss.

But is he getting what he wants?

He is not getting the raise – that is what he thinks that he wants. But he is getting a chance to look at his wounds and his imbalance. He is getting a chance to heal - if he will. It is time for Bob to look inside.

Now, some of you that I know well are out there saying – *But, I'm in prison with a death sentence and I didn't do it. It certainly isn't what I wanted! I didn't set myself up. How can I possibly find happiness in such a dire circumstance?*

And then there is karma...

Do we create all that unfolds in our life? Yes – as the result of our past actions.

What if we are seemingly not playing a part in our tragic events at all? That happens to all of us too in greater or lesser degrees. You may have an unwarranted prison sentence. But then, there is the careful and excellent driver who is hit head-on by the drunk? Or, why is that healthy, fit, smart 30 year old the one decimated by a brain embolism? Or, why is the madly-in-love couple wrenched apart when the tsunami wave hits the beach and one of them dies? Or why is the young man walking down the street on a beautiful day, the one that is killed by the accidentally falling brick?

Of course, none of these people are *happy* with the tragedies in their lives. But at the level of the “circumstances” that created these events, it is not likely that they did anything to immediately contribute to them. But what if they are brought about by the cause and effect of karma? What if their past actions brought these events to fruition now? Always operative is the subtle energetic push to right imbalance and to restore homeostasis. This is true of karma. For every act that we initiate in this life or in past lives, the energy of that action will return to us with that same intention that we had in the beginning. That response may be immediate or it may occur eons later when conditions are right.

For example: Bob says something angry and belligerent to his dad, Joe, because he is fueled by rage at Joe's perceived judgments. Joe punches him out. Instant karma. Or, Bob murdered Joe in a past lifetime. In this life, Joe is Bob's Dad who brutally mistreats him.

Don't get too hung up on understanding the karmic scenarios but do consider that any negative event is the result of a thought, word or deed that set up an energetic force that remains active until it is spent. And these energies are never-ending in the realm of ordinary cause and effect.

This is true of all good actions as well. You create your beneficial future with the good acts that you do today. Your present has been created by your past actions. Karma is a law just as immutable as the law of gravity but the law of karma is not active in the realm of enlightenment.

So how can we be happy in a world where we think that external circumstances bring us happiness? When we live in a world with so much suffering over which we seemingly have no control? When we sabotage our success so constantly?



We remember that happiness is a choice.

We can choose to focus on happiness out of all that manifests. We can make a focus on happiness a HABIT and we will naturally begin to create more beneficial circumstances. We will right the imbalances as we look for healing in all that unfolds. We can choose happiness even when the worst of our karma manifests and we say: ***How happy I am to expend this negative energy of my past!***

Happiness is the result of our inner response to what we experience rather than to what the external world gives to us.

No matter what happens, we have a choice about how to respond.



A MEDITATION –

I'm thinking of a friend that was a meditator. He also lived a life of pushing across lots of peoples' boundaries with the goal of filling his needs at the expense of others. He was a philanderer and contributed little to the relationship with his wife. However, when she finally left him, he was devastated. Somehow, he had thought he could have it all his way and there would be no consequences. But, of course, that day of reaping the consequences will always come. His best decision in his crisis was to turn to meditation as a way to handle his pain and to try to get a glimmer of happiness back into his life.

For sure, meditating to find relief from pain in a crisis or to try to be happy again is a long way from the much more subtle states of consciousness where we eventually rest in equanimity, or awaken to great compassion, or to know sublime joy. But, to find a bit of relief from overwhelming suffering is a very worthwhile goal when that is where we are in life. It is a good place to start and pain is a good motivator. Once we take a few steps on our path, we can keep weaving what we learn into our life. We can then make decisions which bring more balance to our lives and we may actually start to change and heal naturally. It would be good to meditate and bring about our healing before a crisis becomes our motivator – *but whatever causes us to start to heal, that is what is right for us.*

My friend would spend his entire day sitting in meditation just to get through it without feeling devastated and suicidal. Such intense meditation did help and he learned a lot. I hope if you are in a similar situation, you will find some relief from your suffering too. But I encourage you to keep up your meditation after the crisis lifts. Know that the ultimate goal has nothing to do with feeling comfortable and happy in your everyday life. It is to know who you are as one who transcends all those dramas and to eventually touch your true and vast Self that is beyond happiness or sadness. But most of us are more or less where my friend was, even though I hope you can say that you feel happiness today.

Since this is where we often are, we should start here, where we are NOW. A powerful meditation is to walk that tightrope of merely watching our selves lurch back and forth after happiness.

Our meditation

As in all meditations, begin by sitting quietly for a few minutes. Breathe. Get comfortable. Notice any tension and tightness in your body and flex those muscles a bit. Let go in all those places where you are holding on.

Dedicate your meditation to benefit yourself so that you might to find peace and happiness. Know that once you are balanced and at peace, you are better able to share your love with others. Remember too to dedicate all the good merit that you will gain from your meditation to all beings everywhere and pray that all beings find peace and happiness as well.

As you breathe in and out, we will meditate on the arising of emotions. Other experiences will arise too and we will merely note them all. Pay special attention though to the arising emotions which, I can almost assure you, will continue to churn up from the depths of your being without your having to do a thing. Those emotional experiences are stirring and floating or zooming to the surface of consciousness all the time and are often ignored or pushed back down. If we reacted to them all, we would be a whirlwind of emotional displays. But all we are going to do in this meditation is to note them and to let them go. The tendency will be to suppress them, or perhaps they will carry us away with their various dramas. You will recognize 10 minutes or so later that you have been hijacked by an emotion when you find yourself obsessing about who said what about that and what you should have said and why didn't they do this or that and what will you do about that next time you see them – and on and on.

Now – just notice and let go. Return to your breath. Notice the next emotion that arises.

The tightrope walk is to breathe. An emotion arises. Recognize it. Call it by name. Maybe it is: *Happiness*.

In a moment, it will float away and all you do is breathe. Another emotion arises.

Recognize it. Call it by name. Perhaps you say: *Sadness*.

And in a moment, that too will float away. Just breathe. And another emotion will arise.

Recognize it. Call it by name. Maybe say: *Anger*.

You fall off the tightrope when you get hijacked by the emotion. Instead of saying: *Anger* and then just breathing until it floats away, we say: *Anger*, and then, the drama begins. Off we go after it. We fuel it with our attention and in a moment we are flying off the tightrope and crashing to the ground below.

STEP #2: Here is a big step we can take towards equanimity with this meditation.

Add a moment of contemplation after your labeling of emotions.

We remember that eventually our meditation is to be effortless and we will allow all that arises to be recognized as sacred purity. But until we can do that effortlessly, we need to purify those emotions that anchor us into the dramas of our ego self. We can do that by planting seeds of a new view.

When we are meditating and we note the arising of an emotion, add this very brief contemplation.

Ask yourself: *What is here and NOW that is Happy?*



Then let that happy experience sink deeply into your heart, mind and body. Hold it. Rest there.

When the next moment arises and brings a new emotion or new experience, no matter what it is, note it. Then ask yourself again: *What is here and NOW that is Happy?*

Rest there. Let it sink in. Breathe it in deeply and relax there as long as possible.

If you can take these meditations off of your cushion and start to live them through the day, you will be more self-aware of your inner life. You will definitely be happier. And, you will be moving forward in a powerful way on your path of supreme joy.



From Your Letters

From a recent workshop participant –

Here's a gift to you from Mary Oliver for the mystery that you unfolded for us on Saturday, Anna:

MYSTERIES, YES

Truly, we live with mysteries too marvelous
to be understood.

How grass can be nourishing in the
mouths of the lambs.

How rivers and stones are forever
in allegiance with gravity
while we ourselves dream of rising.

How two hands touch and the bonds
will never be broken.

How people come, from delight or the
scars of damage,

to the comfort of a poem.

Let me keep my distance, always, from those
who think they have the answers.

Let me keep company always with those who say
"Look!" and laugh in astonishment,
and bow their heads.

-- Mary Oliver (Evidence)



Plate 2: Ye-shes mTsho-gyal

From Doc Dani: Dear Dharma Friends, Thank you for sending me the back copies of issues I did not receive. I am most grateful. I would also be grateful if you would print my letter in an upcoming issue. I am responding to issue #139, Aug. 2008, which included a letter from T.R.R.M. and the use of Buddhist Doctrine regarding sexuality.

I had to read the letter over again to make sure I was reading it correctly. And what I read concerned about M's perception of the Dharma of Buddha Guatama. I wish to address the letter, but make it very clear that I, as a Buddhist practitioner, do not sit and judge M as being right or wrong, good or bad. These are concepts that one who truly comprehends the path does not do! I do truly comprehend what you, M, are attempting to express, but please do not look to the Dharma to push your point of view on others. Otherwise, you have become just as those whom you ran away from because they could not accept you as you have chosen to become.

I did get out "The Seekers Buddhist Glossary" and looked up **sexual morality** and **homosexual** in it. They were not listed anywhere in my copy of the 2003 edition from the Sutra Translation Committee. In fact, I could not find anywhere in that book to back up your opening paragraph of your letter. It may be true that, "At no point has it been stated that sex is to be only heterosexual or for the sole purpose of procreation." But it must be equally stated that, "At no point has it been stated that sex with a dog, cat, horse, cow, goat or pig or any animal is permissible." I believe that you are missing the whole point here if you cannot see that you have

become what you hated most about Christians. You have taken the Dharma and twisted it to fit your own perception as to have it please your viewpoint.

Buddhism is a doctrine that teaches the seeker how to see the truth in all things and my friend, my brother M, please don't take the Holy Dharma and twist it to fit your needs and push your perception upon others. It is taught that each of us must come to see the truth in our own time. Buddhism is never forced upon another, it is hoped that one who hears the doctrine (Dharma) can become a Bodhisattva and someday a Buddha. I caution you against putting your own perception first by explaining what the Buddha taught. For truly there are none who were there when Buddha Gautama spoke, that are alive today. Of course, there are many Great and Wonderful Masters that exist today to assist us on our path to become a Buddha.

M, it appears that you carry with you still, the anger and hatred of those you have been harmed by in your past. Please my brother, "Everyone does not have the right to live their life as they see fit." That is not a part of the Dharma and if life was truly to be lived as such, it would be lawless, uncivilized, and savagely lived. For what would stop anyone from violating the "golden rule?" - "First, **Do no harm.**" Ending suffering would be something we'd read in a book in a world where people did as they please. It is only when people come to see that all actions have a cause and an effect (Karma) that we are all interconnected (harmonious).

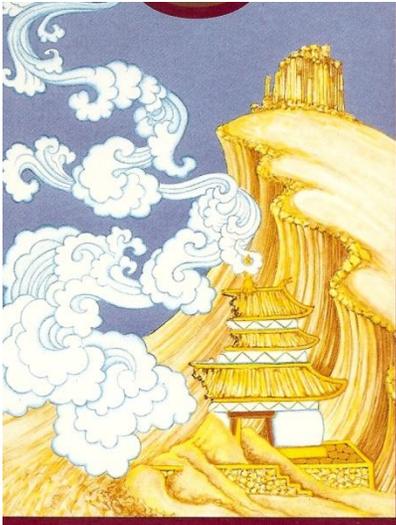
M, what you do with your life is your choice. Let go of the right and wrong issues (perceptions), the anger and hatred, and look again within yourself for the light of Buddha is there for you. Don't worry about others! It is you who must stop your preaching and seek your answers within. Meditate on why you feel as you do in this matter. You say some things in your letter that are Dharma based, but you add to it even if it is a little tweak, it is your own perception that you are attempting to push on to others.

Now, I say this to you because I perceive there are issues within yourself you still have not resolved. Please, M, meditate on letting go of those issues. You will see things differently when you let go of them. I do want you to know that in the Dharma, as well as Buddhist life, sex is perceived differently than it is in the Western religions. It does appear that you still harbor beliefs of the

Western religions and seek to condemn them through Buddhist doctrine. This cannot be done M. The Dharma is quite clear as to not do that, no matter what is being done to you, present or past. Let it go. Karma must unfold upon your path, it cannot be stopped, only experienced and understood if one follows the Buddha's path.

You, as a human being, are so special just as you are! See it for yourself, see it within yourself! Be content and peaceful within M; meditation is the key that unlocks the door to the path. Buddhists love you for who you truly are, not for what you or others perceive that you are. There is a difference. Stay on the path and meditate daily M. Buddha is always within you, seek it first within! I truly wish you peace within for I only wanted you to see that your letter was not truly the Buddha Way. It would be unfair to not have pointed this out to you. Your brother,

Don't be discriminatory; don't keep a grasping and rejecting attitude. For this reason it is said, "Truth has no comparison, because it is not relative to anything." -Hui-chung



From D. W.,

I really do enjoy reading "Dharma Friends". It really helps me to think things through that are bad for my life: that is trying to get my life on track. It's real hard when you don't have any type of family support. But I have (DF) family by my side and I'm very honored for that. Why do I keep on making it back to prison!?! I'm really sick of this place. Every time I go around my so-call-family I end back up in here by myself. I'm 42 years old and I'll be 48 when I get out with no kids. Is prison what my life all about!?! Do you know of any studying organization that can help me get my life on track please?

Your true friend. With love and respect always. May god keep y'all safe

Wisdom does not mean knowledge but experiential understanding. Wisdom helps you to change radically your habits and perceptions, as you discover the constantly changing, interconnected nature of the whole of existence. -Martine Batchelor, "Meditation For Life"

From Rick L. Best

Observing me from a distance

Once I'm a sun in the sky

I'll get smaller but the freedom to search around the suns of
yesterday

I will observe you from a distance

As you notice me.



The life story of Yeshe Tsogyal is very powerful. Her picture is always on our back cover and in this issue, on page 7. She was a Tibetan woman in app. 400 BC and a student of the great saint, Padmasambhava, who brought Buddhism to Tibet. Yeshe Tsogyal was a devoted student who did the meditation practices given to her, but she did not have an easy time on her journey to enlightenment. She realized however that with every instance where she suffered, the teachings of her life event were vital to her awakening.

At one point as she traveled alone between Nepal and Tibet (quite a hike, I assure you!), she met up with a gang of seven bandits. They attacked her to rob her of her gold. She said to them with great kindness: ***How happy I am to meet you today!*** She told them that they were connected to her by their past karma and that she would give them teachings. Quickly they realized their true nature and became her students. It was no accident that they had met up with her and they themselves became peaceful and great teachers for others.

From A.S.: Meditation - Does it Work?

Have you ever sat still long enough to get to know who you truly are? All along I thought I was getting to know me through meditation, but now I realized that was not the case. While I was concentrating on my breath and allowing my thoughts to arise then completely dissolve, I ignored those crazy, uncomfortable core feelings that are innately me. The feelings are shame, guilt, anger, helplessness, and unworthiness. Who wants to embrace these types of feelings; in fact, some spend their entire life running away from them.

Where did these feelings come from and why do we allow them to have so much control over how we relate to the world? The origin of my feelings mostly derived from the childhood trauma I experienced by being molested. Not to sound as if my experiences excuse any of my behavior: however, I did develop a trauma based belief system that became my comfort zone in dealing with others in relationships, at work, even with family members. If I felt as if my comfort zone was violated in the least way, I struck out violently in order to protect my emotional pain. We all develop and experience emotional pain. To feel completely free within, I knew I had to meet these feelings head on and walk a path towards healing my wounds.

I began my journey seeking answers to the question, Why? I wanted someone to explain why me? The only answer I got was a response from a prison psychologist who nonchalantly said, "You were there." At the time I thought she was being rather cruel and callous, but after I began extensively reading books authored by Pema Chodron and Miguel Ruiz, I finally got the meaning of the psychologist's answer and learned I was still taking my experience very personal as well as playing the victim role at the age of 40.

Our thoughts are not supposed to be driven away through meditation or overlooked. It is encouraged that meditation is a time allowed to provide a safe space to entertain these thoughts and really get in touch with our scary feelings. In turn we will get to know our true self. It is impossible to completely release my past experiences after all, they make up the uniqueness of me. Now, I accept my feelings for exactly what they are and the more I do, the less uncomfortable I feel. The less uncomfortable I feel the more self love I express. The more expression of self love, the more healing takes place. Miraculous!

Meditation works! It is not a onetime shot of wellness. Like exercise and eating healthy, meditation must be part of one's daily life style. Meditation teaches me awareness and patience, giving me a sense of power over how I choose to lead my life. In all cases, I now choose to respond with the truth and work towards a peaceful outcome. For the last eight years I have been incarcerated and never in my life have I ever felt such self love and inner freedom than I do today

I am measured as a true human being by the manner in which I responded to the challenges I encounter, not necessarily how I act in times of joy.

In the same way that someone in the midst of a rough crowd guards a wound with great care, so in the midst of bad company should one always guard the wound that is the mind. - Santideva, "Bodhicaryavatara"

Book of Knowledge –in memory of Omar Muhammad, we now call this section Omar's Dream

**Reach your worldly goals and gain effectiveness in bringing about change.
Help us find great books to recommend in short, crash courses to excellence in life skills.**

On this spiritual life journey, it is also good to be as skillful as possible in our worldly functioning. Do you have suggestions for books that you recommend for great crash courses in worldly skills? We'll try to examine them and then feature those that look like they could help us all to a path of worldly skillfulness. Here are areas we want to cover, but you can suggest others on other topics if you feel they would be helpful. English language, writing, grammar, computer skills, math skills, world history, an overview of world religions, arts history of the world, psychology and the brain, physiology, illness and healing, geography.

This month: Many people want a good, simple book that tells us about all religions. There is a book called **The World's Religions** by Huston Smith, a renowned authority on the history of religions. It's in paperback, for sale in bookstores, and probably at libraries. Check out your library to see if it is there. You will get a great overview and massive education of world religions.

The most valuable learning is not about memorizing facts and figures. It is not about higher grade point averages and accumulating degrees. It is about life itself, and its impact is on the heart.- Rodney Smith, "Lessons from the Dying"

Subscription information: I have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. I am so happy to have a vehicle for those who have little dharma support to feel united with others who identify with their life situation. It is truly important to remember that we are all mirrors of each other. We are all one with each other. And we can recognize that samsara is suffering for us all whether behind the bars of a prison or behind the bars of our own ego structure. For anyone who is not in prison and who would like to subscribe to **Dharma Friends**, here is what to do. The fee is \$30 for one year. Mail a check or money order made out to **Compassion Works for All:** and send to **Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708.** This amount covers the subscription for you and a partial subscription for a prisoner. I also want to acknowledge the enormous generosity of many of those in prisons who have sent stamps and letters of support and appreciation. Far more important than anything material are the letters and notes that say that you are benefiting from being part of this sangha of **Dharma Friends**. I think that many feel less alone on their journey because we are connected beyond all time and space to each other.

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.

SOME NEW OPTIONS: I shared in past issues of **Dharma Friends** that we are trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we scramble to get additional funding.

Here are some ways that you can help us.

- Keep us apprised of your address changes. Most of you have been very good at this and we hardly have any returned issues.
- If you are receiving **Dharma Friends** but do not read it or know someone else who does not read their issues, either donate them to your library, or write and tell us to take you off the **Dharma Friends** list. Now, some have written and said that others need them more than they do so take their name off. Don't be too generous!! **WE WANT YOU TO KEEP GETTING DHARMA FRIENDS IF IT IS HELPFUL TO YOU!**
- If you have family or friends, tell them that you receive support from **Dharma Friends** and we would be very grateful for any donations that they might make. I know that most of you have very little money but we are enormously appreciative when some of you have made donations as well, and for the stamps many of you have sent.
- If you know of anyone who funds philanthropic programs that are rehabilitative or supportive of those in prisons, send a copy of **Dharma Friends** to them and ask if they would consider reading a funding proposal from us. If so, connect us to them!

Also: *We are encouraging those who are not in prison and who have the ability to receive their issues by Email to let us know.* Of course, we can send these issues for no printing and no mailing costs, while generating more interest and support in the newsletter. Most of you in prison cannot do this, of course, but if you are a chaplain reading this who has email and can print copies off for your library, that would be helpful. Or – if you have family or friends who might like to receive **Dharma Friends** as well, they can send a donation of \$30 or more to us and receive **Dharma Friends** by email plus get a tax deduction receipt because we are not mailing a paper newsletter. It is important for us to keep those in prisons connected to society, and most especially to their families and friends. We greatly value the opportunity to bring a loving community of support to those who are connected to people in prison as they are often made to feel uncomfortable by society. If those you love receive **Dharma Friends** too, think of the common growth that you would share and the bond that could develop. So, you might suggest **Dharma Friends** as something your friends and family might like to donate to and receive via email.

Know that we are continuing non-stop efforts to secure funding so that we can all benefit from the loving and supportive Dharma Friends community you have all created. Thank you for all that you give to all of us.

Adopting an attitude of universal responsibility is essentially a personal matter. The real test of compassion is not what we say in abstract discussions but how we conduct ourselves in daily life.

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "Imagine All the People"



Also from Yeshe Tsogyal's life story, she met a man with no knees. He said he suffered greatly and asked if she would please alleviate his pain by giving him her kneecaps. He knew this would cause her great pain, but she agreed to do so. Her happiness came from being of benefit to others.

In memory of June Cox, my mother, who died last month on May 7, and who lived a life of service to all.

From John Zaffino: Dear Dharma Friends, I'm not a subscriber to your Newsletter. A friend provided me with 12 issues. He seemed to be distressed over some of the articles within Dharma Friends and he asked me to review some of the Newsletters to "see if he was misunderstanding" the content. I realize that very few understand reality, and it seems like a difficult subject to teach. It is also apparent that a large number of Religious individuals seem to avoid and even negate using modern language and terminology in their spiritual practices. That is very limiting indeed. Issue #134 had a very valuable article inside. One that should be studied, understood and accepted by all spiritual students: **"Sometimes we can see things more clearly when we know the extremes of who we are"...** (Read entire article including the Merck Manual.)

A naked and profound truth has been exposed to your readers. I suggest everyone studies and tries to come to an understanding of what this article is explaining. Brain Physiology and the Psychology of the mind 'are' very important when it comes to the ability to comprehend and understand "Spirituality." The article lays out all the major impediments (as did the Buddha, only using different terminology) to reaching higher levels of Awareness/Consciousness. The purpose of practicing spiritual principals is to transcend ones defects, namely, the ego/mind, which is the seat of all suffering and mental disorders.

Many Spiritualists are against mixing Psychology with Spirituality. That is most unfortunate. What do they think the Buddha taught? The Buddha taught self-psychoanalysis. The Buddha taught the path to Enlightenment, via transcendence of the mind (ego/mind). There are many variations to Buddha's teachings and there are times when the core purpose of Buddha's teachings seem to be either ignored, forgotten, or not known. Buddha taught transcendence, transcendence of the "ego/mind/self." Transcend the ego/mind/self, and the Self/Mind bursts forth ending the wheel of physical birth, suffering and death. This should be common knowledge to Buddhists.

One might ask "How does one reach the state/condition termed Enlightenment in this day and age when one seems to be constantly bombarded with negativity by the media and one's surroundings?" It is said that there are ten-thousand pathways to Enlightenment. This may be true, but there seems to be only two directions:

1. Straight up the Mountain
2. The scenic route.

You can imagine a path winding around a huge mountain corkscrewing its way to the top thousands of miles away (lifetimes). The straightest way to the top is through understanding the ego/mind/self and becoming more sophisticated. Once you learn its mechanics and propensities, one can subdue the ego/mind/self rather easily. This takes a lot of explanation. If anyone would like an in-depth explanation/instruction, feel free to contact me.

Understanding Psychology/Psychiatry is very helpful to the spiritual student. All practicing spiritual students are actually using Psychology techniques in their practices. That may upset J.H. from issue #145, but that is reality. J.H. should be relieved after reading the above article. For he should now understand that most if not all his obstacles can be treated and overcome through education, counseling and /or medication.

The Brain is linear/physical. The ego/mind/self is non-linear/non-physical. The mind works 'through' the brain via induction. If the brain is not functioning optimally, let's say the Prefrontal Cortex area is impaired, the person will lack the capacity for reason and logic. The prefrontal cortex in the psychopath seems to be off-line, and not in use. Brain scientists claim to know what parts of the brain do what. Their problem isn't that they don't understand the brain, it's that they don't understand 'what' the mind is and /or where 'it' is.

If one looks at the brain as a receiver, let's say a television, it may be easier to understand why when certain areas of the brain are not active or have low activity the individual may seem less than normal or even have a serious psychological problem. Let's say the brain is the antenna for our human television. If one's television isn't receiving a clear signal there is static and /or disturbance. The wise human says, "I need to adjust my antenna to get a better signal." Yes! Exactly! This is what Psychiatrists do; they help us adjust our antenna so we can see a clearer picture. It may take drugs, or it may not. It depends on the impairment. Without a properly functioning Prefrontal Cortex, one's life is run by and dominated by emotions and poor judgments.

I say to you all; calm down, relax and pay very close attention to the speaker and movie producer in your mind. Don't allow negative thoughts to live in your mind. Stop them as soon as you can. Thoughts have no value, discard them. De-energize the mind. When you have drained the mind of all its energy, 'it' dies. Reality shines forth.

"Karma": It appears that some of your readers think Karma is bad. If you didn't have some "good" Karma, you would not be here. Karmic merit brings us all to this physical realm where we can pursue Enlightenment. When Karma is understood, it is apparent that there are no accidents or victims in reality.

Dharma Friends may make my address available to its readers: John Zaffino #443498, Box 80033, Toledo, OH 43608-0033



from De Rerum Virtute

*...I believe the first living cell had echoes of the future in it
And felt direction and the great animals
The deep green forest and whale's track sea.
I believe this globed earth not all by chance and fortune
Brings forth her broods
But feels and chooses.
And the galaxy, the firewheel on which we are pinned
The whirlwind of stars in which our sun is one dust grain
One electron, this giant atom of the universe
Is not blind force
But fulfills its life, and intends its course.*

- Robinson Jeffers

Going through old photos ..

Guess who?????

**Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends
PO Box 7708
Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708**

Webpage:dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com

RELIGIOUS MATERIAL

Permit NO. 160
Non-Profit organization

US Postage PAID

Little Rock, AR.

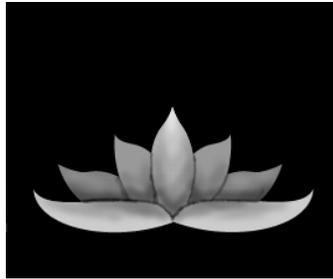


"That which created all this now desires our creativity, commitment and labor, our delight in entering with full awareness the cosmic story. We are the creative, scintillating, searing, healing flame of the awesome and enchanting universe." ~ Brian Swimme

Dharma Friends

June 2009 issue # 149

copyright 2009, Compassion Works for All



Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

"There is in all visible things... a hidden wholeness." -- Thomas Merton



Our friend, Yeshe Wangmo and a number of our *Dharma Friends* are right now on a pilgrimage journey around Tibet! They will be returning soon, and in July, Lama Wangmo will be coming to Little Rock where she will give a talk at the Unitarian Church here about their travels. She will also be offering teachings at the Ecumenical Buddhist Center. I'll give you more information as soon as we have it.

AND on Saturday June 13 at 4:00pm, the Prodigal Daughters will hold a concert at St. Peter's Episcopal Church at located at Prince and Mitchell Streets in Conway. The Prodigal Daughters is a quartet of inmates from McPherson Women's Prison in Newport, AR. They will be singing hymns and gospels songs with power and beauty. The concert should last about an hour.

We are not allowed to advertise this concert publicly but you can send this email to anyone who may be interested in attending and being a part of this wonderful ministry that these women have to offer. This information **can be posted** in a church bulletin but **CANNOT be posted** on a flier or published in a newsletter/newspaper. So please give this information to whoever puts together your church bulletin and email this announcement to all you know. From Camille LaGrossa

NOW –if you live in the central Arkansas area, please print off this poster (next page) for Joel and Michelle Levey's workshop for June 20 and post it at your place of business, school, local Starbucks or any place where it will be seen.

THANK YOU SO MUCH for you help – and by all means, come if you can. They are fabulous teachers!



Joel and Michelle Levey

Joel and Michelle are foremost teachers of the integration of ancient wisdom teachings and modern life. This is an opportunity that *Compassion Works for All* is thrilled to bring to you.

Exploring Heart-Essence Teachings:

A Summer Solstice Celebration of our True Nature and Highest Potential

Saturday June 20th - 10 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

This gathering will inspire us with ways to deepen the peace, wisdom, courage, reverence, and compassion that we weave into the fabric of our lives, work, relationships and world. Summer Solstice is an especially auspicious time to join together with kindred souls for celebration, meditation, dialogue, and discovery.

Cost –the offering for this workshop is on a sliding scale of \$50 to \$150 for the day.

Registration: Send a \$25 deposit made out to Joel Levey and include your name, address, and an email address. Mail to: *Compassion Works for All*, Attn. Manal – retreat registration, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708. Manal will email you back with retreat information, the location, parking, what to bring, etc. Her email will have the address: *Traveling Valentina* so you will recognize it!

Lunch will be provided for an additional \$10 donation or ability to pay, so that we may all stay together.

Go to www.WisdomAtWork.com to learn more about Joel and Michelle Levey and their work

FOR MORE INFORMATION about this Little Rock visit: Call 501 348 5168



Mindfulness Center for Healthy Living

P. O. Box 7708, Little Rock, AR 72217

501/940-9244

www.bemoremindful.com

September 8-Week Mindfulness Courses

The Fall 2009 8-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Programs are scheduled beginning in September!
We're offering only 2 courses and class size will be limited, so be sure to enroll early.

The 8-week MBSR course trains individuals in a class-like setting in the daily discipline of mindfulness and its application to everyday life. Participants learn relaxation, meditation and gentle yoga techniques which assist us in being more aware of the present moment, allowing us to make conscious choices and live a more fulfilled life.

Choose from 2 course times:

Mondays from 6 - 8:30 PM, September 21 - November 8, 2009 OR

Saturdays from 9 - 11:30 AM, September 19 - November 14, 2009

The all-day session for both courses will be from 9 AM to 3:30 PM on Saturday, October 24.

Classes will be taught by Phebe Duff with Peggy Scranton assisting. Sandy Pope will supervise and co-teach several of the classes.

****Continuing education credits available for most mental health providers****

And, our friend Cedar Barstow offers powerful and wonderful trainings in ethics in cutting edge ways. Go to her web site to become familiar with all that she does. One may receive CEU's in many professions for these trainings, or one may become a teacher of her programs in her workshop trainings. Here is a list of what is coming up and more information. See: <http://www.rightuseofpower.com>

At Compassion Works for All - We have BOOKS FOR SALE:

MINDFUL MONEY by LINDA BESSETTE

Mindful Money allows us to be fully present and aware of our money issues. Mindful Money teaches us to be conscious and responsible stewards of our resources so that money is a healthy vehicle to reach life's goals rather than our captor.

ENJOY! --as Linda says to us each month as we receive our current Dharma Friends issue! Linda has graciously offered to donate a portion of the proceeds of all books sold through Dharma Friends back to Compassion Works for All. Email Linda (lbessette33@comcast.net) if you want a copy of MINDFUL MONEY. **Or send your check \$15 – plus \$5 handling fees, to: Compassion Works for All, Mindful Money, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708**

Also Remember Mara Leveritt's books!

The Boys on the Tracks: Death, Denial, and a Mother's Crusade to Bring Her Son's Killers to Justice

And

Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three

Email Linda (above) and she can give you more information about prices, mailing, etc. for all books.

And anna's books –

Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com for a free download – but donations are always appreciated! Or you can order a hardcopy book for \$15 plus shipping (\$5) at my email address: anna@aristotle.net

On Monday, June 8, we launched our absolutely wonderful new web-based initiative,

www.JustUsFriends.org.

Check us out and help spread the news by emailing the site to your friends!



INSIGHT. ACTION. HEALING.

JUSTUSFRIENDS.ORG

JOIN US at www.JUSTUSFRIENDS.org

"There is an important link between deep change at the personal level and deep change at the organizational level. To make deep personal change is to develop a new paradigm, a new self, one that is more effectively aligned with today's realities. This can occur only if we are willing to journey into unknown territory and confront the wicked problems we encounter. This journey does not follow the assumptions of rational planning. The objective may not be clear and the path is not paved with familiar procedures. This tortuous journey requires that we leave our comfort zone and step outside our normal roles. In doing so, we learn the paradoxical lesson that we can change the world only by changing ourselves. This is not just a cute abstraction; it is an elusive key to effective performance in all aspects of life." – Robert Quinn in Deep Change



***If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising lunch,
Please let us know and we will plan details with you!!***

This is a friendly and informative way to raise money for our efforts.

You invite those who you think would appreciate the philanthropic opportunity. We will supply the food and I will gladly give a talk to your guests.

You may forward any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them. If someone has sent this Dharma Friends issue to you as a gift and you would like to join us each month, please email anna@aristotle.net for more information about Compassion Works for All, our Dharma Friends newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive Dharma Friends by email for a \$30 tax-deductible donation. If you would prefer a hard copy, the subscription fee is also \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation.

