



# Dharma Friends

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

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Happy Father's Day to all you Dads out there!!

## The Dhammapada The teachings of the Buddha



### Chapter 13 - THE WORLD

**167 - By renouncing unworthy ways and by not living carelessly, by not holding to false views we no longer perpetrate delusion.**

**168 - Do not show false humility. Stand firmly in relation to your goal. Practice, well-observed, leads to contentment both now and in the future.**

**169 - Live your life well in accord with the Way – avoid a life of distraction. A life well-lived leads to contentment, both now and in the future.**

**170 - The King of Death cannot find those who look upon the world as insubstantial, as transient, a bubble – illusive, only a mirage.**

**171 - Come, view this world. See it as an ornate, festive carriage. See how fools are entranced by their visions, yet, for the wise there is no attachment.**

**172 - There are those who awaken from heedlessness. They bring light into the world like the moon emerging from clouds.**

**173 - One who transforms old and heedless ways into fresh and wholesome acts brings light into the world like the moon freed from clouds.**

**174 - If birds are trapped in a net only a few will ever escape. In this world of illusion only a few see their way to liberation.**

**175 - White swans rise into the air. Adept yogis transport themselves through space. Wise beings transcend worldly delusion by outwitting the hordes of Mara.**

**176 - For one who transgresses the law of truthfulness, one who has no regard for a future existence, there is no manner of evil that is impossible.**

**177 - Those who fail to value generosity do not reach the celestial realms. But the wise rejoice in giving and forever abide in bliss.**

**178 - Better than ruling the whole world, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over the universe, is an irreversible commitment to the Way.**

From a Dhammapada translation offered by The Forrest Sangha



### **A few thoughts about this *Dhammapada* verse: *The World***

This past month, many of us who are your fellow *Dharma Friends* readers - but able to travel - went to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to hear the Dalai Lama participate in a most remarkable panel discussion with fellow panelists, Sister Helen Prejean, who is one of our world's best known advocates for the abolition of the death penalty, and Vincent Harding, who is a powerful force in the civil rights movement and an inspirational voice for non-violence. In the afternoon, the XIV Dalai Lama gave a talk on non-violence.

For the past thirty years I have taken every opportunity possible to be present when His Holiness has given talks and teachings. Each time, I have come away with life-changing insights. This time was no exception. I felt that the 12,000+ people in the audience were blessed beyond our capacity to ever understand what had been given to us. I wish that all of you could have been there too but maybe, through those of us that were present, there will be a trickle-down miracle of Dalai Lama energy flowing right into you.

### **WE**

Here is the Dalai Lama gift that registered during this talk more strongly than I had ever heard it before. To empower it - and us - let's use this teaching as a template as we study this *Dhammapada* verse, *The World*. I will suggest that by using this vehicle that His Holiness gives to us, we can accomplish all of the teachings in this verse through his wisdom mind. What is this magic tool he gave to us? We will adopt his view - ***THE WORLD AS "WE"***

The Dalai Lama talked often about how it is important to transcend all those divisions that bring out our fears, our suspicions, our greed for what others have and we do not, our attachments, our self-serving, our religious, racial, ethnic, and identity prejudices, and all of those divisive personal judgments of others. And of course, to heal a massive societal divisiveness, WE especially must include all those in prisons and all those in the free world as equally a part of our one world of **WE**. Whenever we encounter an 'other' who is separated in our mind and heart from those we consider as **WE**, it is time to broaden our view so we can include them too. To embrace all those in prisons as integral in our world of **WE** would help to transform all the wrong views that perpetuate the entrenched social problems that shut individuals and

families out. A world of **WE** would make it imperative to accept that all people need to have essential needs fulfilled and no one should be isolated and denied what is needed for opportunities. In embracing a world of **WE**, there would be heartfelt compassion for children and families who need full participation in our social structures such as education, churches, strong family support, health care, addiction treatment, protection from violence, and businesses that extend employment and job training to all. Denial of critical resources isolates people and the result is often a direct path to violence and crime. The all-embracing support of a world of **WE** can stem the tide of all issues that lead some down a path to prisons.

### **TOGETHER - we all must create a *World of WE*.**

**If everyone in our one world is seen as part of *WE*, our attitude and actions towards them would change dramatically. Every time we choose self cherishing or self interest over the benefit of any other being, human, animal or insect, or even our planet, we have made our self the one we choose to please and made those others separate and less important than self. At that moment we do not care how we are hurting them in the process.**

All those choices that we make towards others that deviate from our loving and supportive choices made towards those we love, show us how we have separated our self and made another unimportant or an enemy at that moment of choice. Our focus at that moment is to choose 'ME', or maybe 'US', or maybe 'MY FRIENDS, FAMILY, RACE, NATIONALITY' - but in such inclusion, we are leaving out many who we exclude from 'WE'. If instead, we feel in deep ways that all those 'others' are actually and equally a part of WE with no one at all left out, we would not wish them harm. We could not choose ME over any of THEM . Of course, integral in embracing WE, we must also love ourselves as our foundation. With love of me as solid, we grow beyond being overly invested in self, our fears of love, and open to all as WE.

**Let's read our verse, The World, again.** This time, consider how living as '**WE**' would naturally and easily transcend our self-cherishing impulses and purify our selfish motivation that causes suffering to others so casually.

**167 - By renouncing unworthy ways and by not living carelessly, by not holding to false views we no longer perpetrate delusion.** If we practice **The World as WE**, we are much more aware of the suffering we cause to others with careless acts and self-cherishing. It is quickly clear that there is no self and no other but we are all One.

**168 - Do not show false humility. Stand firmly in relation to your goal. Practice, well-observed, leads to contentment both now and in the future.** If we practice **The World as WE**, we intimately feel the indescribable suffering that everyone has at some time in their life. No one escapes. There is no room for ego dramas and we can only bring benefit to all when we realize in our clarity that each suffering being is our family member.

**169 - Live your life well in accord with the Way – avoid a life of distraction. A life well-lived leads to contentment, both now and in the future.** If we practice **The World as WE, instead of ME**, we know that there is nothing external to us that will ever bring us happiness or pain for very long. It is what we carry in our heart that brings us happiness, peace, equanimity or suffering and it is all of our own making.

**170 - The King of Death cannot find those who look upon the world as insubstantial, as transient, a bubble – illusive, only a mirage.** If we practice **The World as WE**, we recognize that we will each die - and maybe today. No one will take anything with them except their karma. This emphasizes for us that we must be fully aware of our highest goal and make it our highest priority to do those practices that allow us to realize the ephemeral nature of all that is. To know this state of awareness, is to know that we transcend all form as we leave our body behind.

**171 - Come, view this world. See it as an ornate, festive carriage. See how fools are entranced by their visions, yet, for the wise there is no attachment.** If we practice **The World as WE**, remember that everything we cling to will

dissolve sooner or later - either we will let it go or it will leave us. As practitioners, meditation takes us beyond our own addictions or attractions to form. Yet we feel our connectedness and compassion for the deep needs of others for survival.

**172 - There are those who awaken from heedlessness. They bring light into the world like the moon emerging from clouds.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we know we can never fix reality to be as we wish it to be - but we can rest in All that Is and have faith in the unfolding display of wisdom. As a being of radiance, we awaken the radiance and love of others. We become the light.

**173 - One who transforms old and heedless ways into fresh and wholesome acts brings light into the world like the moon freed from clouds.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we see the power of practicing compassion which is a powerful way to benefit others. But compassion always benefits us the most as it purifies our own pain and clarifies our vision.

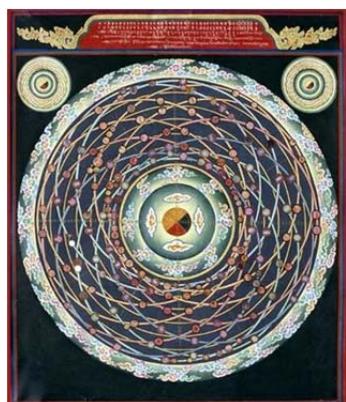
**174 - If birds are trapped in a net only a few will ever escape. In this world of illusion only a few see their way to liberation.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we know that a problem free life is never going to happen no matter how hard we work to make it so. In knowing that what is is what is and we can't avoid what arises, we are free of the net of illusion and we live to liberate others. We are more skillful, but we never cease using our skills to help others.

**175 - White swans rise into the air. Adept yogis transport themselves through space. Wise beings transcend worldly delusion by outwitting the hordes of Mara.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we know that only through offering our highest gifts to all can we ever heal the great divisions that separate us from our earth, nature, and all beings. Along the way we may develop great and remarkable skills but they are only a part of all that we are and all that we can offer. We can't stop there, no matter how much acclaim and treasure we might gain in the ordinary world. To serve WE, we all must live those very clear states of wisdom and compassion.

**176 - For one who transgresses the law of truthfulness, one who has no regard for a future existence, there is no manner of evil that is impossible.** If we practice *the World as WE*, we know that a friend can turn into an enemy in a moment or an enemy into a friend - it is not the person but the circumstances and how we perceive them. We know to live to benefit everyone indiscriminately and to love all beings equally. We vow not to hurt anyone for any reason.

**177 - Those who fail to value generosity do not reach the celestial realms. But the wise rejoice in giving and forever abide in bliss.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we realize that anger and judgment always hurts us more than the person we feel the anger towards - they go rolling along while we are holding those hot coals of anger in our belly. The most powerful antidote to anger is generosity and compassion: trying to give so that others are able to rejoice.

**178 - Better than ruling the whole world, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over the universe, is an irreversible commitment to the Way.** If we practice *The World as WE*, we know that no matter what we do or say, some will be for us and some against us. Some will dislike what we say or do and others will applaud us. We can never rule the world, or others, and we will only create suffering with such a desire. In our awakening to wisdom, we become One with All, we become WE, and live harmoniously with all.



What a beautiful world we all share so intimately. But we must share it and applaud that every being everywhere inherently must have equal access to all resources in order that we all have the potential to be and to do all that we can. Those who are greedy, rob from us all, and cause enormous suffering to the planet.

Instead of grasping at those temptations in the world as MINE, simply think in terms of WE and we have a catalyst to letting go.



## A MEDITATION on The World

**Muse and meditate gently on this world of ours.** Scan the planet with your heart and your mind's eye. Feel the mountains and the seas. Feel the forests and grasslands and deserts. Feel where the vast populations of people are and where there are animals and sea creatures, and that there is hardly a place devoid of life. Feel where the places of trauma and violence are. Feel the great and peaceful beauty.

Feel your many experiences of relationship to the world in the same way that you might scan your body and feel each cell and organ and the subtle energy flow. Become the planet. Be all the beings - people and animals and fish. Be the earth and rocks and water and even the dynamic clouds, winds and rains traveling across the surface.

Now, just as when we are sitting in meditation, stirrings catch our awareness. We note these arisings. It may be a thought, or a pain in the knee, or a sound, or an itch. We merely notice without losing ourselves in that focus. In meditation, we need not agonize over our knee - although we could quickly enter into a "knee drama" and forget our meditation. (Oh, there is my knee again!! Yikes, maybe I need a knee replacement! Maybe I have something really wrong!) Instead, in meditation, we notice and let it go with a breath. Soften. Relax. Let go. In this way, body, mind and the environment around us are our teachers in growing our focus and equanimity.

For our WORLD meditation, allow your awareness to inhabit the planet, our world, just as you have long lived in your body. The world is you. As the world, rest gently in being mindful. Again, you may meditate in clarity and then Africa may stir in your awareness, or the war in Afghanistan, or the pain of those in Joplin. Notice the arising, open your heart, rest in balance, relax and return to your breath or your focus. Watch too if what arises stimulates a drama. Just notice and return to equanimity. Remember great compassion for all beings everywhere and the earth, our one home.

If possible, you can open into a living meditation on the WORLD. Do this meditation when you are able to see others. If this is not possible, you have many memories of others that will arise and so you may use such memories as your stimuli. Just sit or walk normally while you do the meditation, while you merely notice all the beings who are a part of your experience. As you walk or sit in chow or look out over your day room, meditate gently. It may be that some beings who you notice are easily welcomed into an energetic field of caring. You may find others who appear and you almost instantaneously close your heart to them. Hmm. Meditate meditate meditate for a while. Breathe, relax deeply, open your heart as much as possible, and be curious. Later you can examine your psychological dynamics as to the judgments that closed you up tight. While in meditation, just suspend all judgments.

Expand until you can hold all beings everywhere equally in love and appreciation.



We will call this meditation, entering our ***World of WE***. Rest there as long as possible both on the meditation cushion and as you go through your day. This may take more than one session to accomplish completely.



## FROM YOUR LETTERS

**#1 – The Mindful Money Book – If you would like a free copy of Linda's book, Mindful Money to help you get an excellent education in finances in this concise course, write to us (address on the back page) and put on your envelope- ATTN: Linda. For the **Money Book**.**

**#2 - Jeff's Kids and your heartwarming letters:** Jeff is our friend who counsels kids in a Juvenile Detention Center. He thought that sharing your thoughts or stories about your journey to prison might benefit kids that are in the same situation that you might have been in once upon a time.

Know how much your letters are all appreciated for your stories, your advice, and for being such a wonderful vehicle to reach broken hearts! The healing that is coming from these letters is extraordinary. **If you would like to write a letter to Jeff's Kids the address is CWFA, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708 and put JEFF'S KIDS on the envelope. Keep those letters coming. For those who have written to Jeff's Kids, thank you so much!**

**#3 -From Kristopher - The newsletter Freedom Inside that was mentioned in the January issue # 168 is not a good address and the requests are being returned, unfortunately costing you a couple of stamps for sending the letter to Canada.**

***Such human qualities as morality, compassion, decency, wisdom and so forth have been the foundations of all civilizations. These qualities must be cultivated and sustained through systematic moral education in a conductive social environment, so that a more humane world may emerge. - His Holiness the Dalai Lama***



## Tibet in the Ozarks by Mara Leveritt

*This article is adapted from the Arkansas Times, May 11, 2011*

There once was a log barn on property deep in Newton County, Arkansas. For close to a century, it stood its rocky ground in the mountains near the tiny town of Parthenon, slumping and rusting, like so many old Ozark structures.

But this particular barn, close to the Little Buffalo River, is coming back to life. Here, on the far side of the world from northeastern Tibet, it is being restored, rebuilt and repainted—for a

colorful rebirth as a Buddhist temple.

"That thing was dying," says Jim Westbrook, an architect and Buddhist who has helped work on it. "It was sinking into the ground."

Westbrook grew up in Arkansas. He says that when he and other Buddhists in the region heard that a monk from Tibet had selected Newton County as the site for a retreat center, "We were impressed he had the good taste to find Arkansas."

Now, Westbrook is one of several Buddhists—and a few non-Buddhists—who regularly attend Sunday meditation at the retreat center being developed by the monk Khentrul Lodrö Thayé Rinpoche (Rin'-pō-shā).

"Rinpoche has a real sensitivity to the amalgamation of the two cultures," Westbrook says. "And he has a gift for languages. He speaks Tibetan, of course, and Chinese. And now he's picking up colloquial English."

Rinpoche was not at the center when I visited. That's not unusual, as the monk travels almost constantly, visiting Buddhist groups across the U.S.

But teaching is not Rinpoche's only work. He is also the abbot of Mardö Tashi Choling, a 200-year-old monastery in the Amdo province of Tibet. Amdo province is famous for producing some of Tibet's most famous spiritual leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

Rinpoche's monastery was one of many sites of learning and scholarship destroyed during what Buddhists mildly call "the unrest" that has marked Tibet for the past half-century. Today, the monastery is slowly being rebuilt. It is home to more than 300 monks and 100 children. Rinpoche has taken care of the monastery since 1993 when he was enthroned as its abbot, while still in his early twenties.

Less than a decade later, Rinpoche's responsibilities expanded. An aging Tibetan lama, or teacher, in California was worried that traditional Buddhist teachings were being diluted in this country by inadequately trained teachers. The lama wrote to Rinpoche's monastery in Tibet, asking that they send a scholar from his tradition to deepen the understanding of Tibetan Buddhism in this country—and, ultimately, to replace him. Rinpoche's own spiritual teacher told him he must go.

Though he was still needed as abbot, he was also a natural choice for the task. He had studied dharma, the Buddhist path of discipline, since he was a young child with teachers in Tibet and India. Holding the Buddhist equivalent of two Ph.Ds, he was recognized as a scholar at the highest level.

Rinpoche arrived in the U.S. in 2002 and, with the help of an interpreter, began teaching Tibetan Buddhism to students around the country. His reputation as a clear teacher and a living example of the dharma spread quickly. Westbrook says: "There are teachers and there are teachers. Some present the dharma in such a way that you get, not just information, but understanding. Rinpoche is one of those."

He occasionally returns to his monastery in Tibet. But, though he remains abbot there, America has become his home—and this is where his story joins the story of the barn.

With some students' help, Rinpoche found a mountainous, wooded site in Arkansas nestled between a bluff and a creek. He liked the spot at once. Two students purchased the land and donated it for a retreat center.

A student who is doing carpentry on the barn for its use as a temple explained the monk's philosophy. "Rinpoche wants to keep this place simple," the carpenter said. "He wants only what's necessary to teach. If there's an old building Rinpoche can fix up, that's what he wants to do. He wants to preserve the cultural feel of what's here."

Last fall, Rinpoche and his students held a ceremony to bless the land. Students came from across the country to attend. Some local people who belong to a riding club came on their horses to wish their new neighbors well. It was a happy occasion.

During the ceremony, Rinpoche said that the land was perfect for a retreat center because it offered "a quiet and remote environment," complete with everything needed "for simple and unelaborate living." He said the place would meet the needs of people who came there to meditate, if they learn to "live with little desire and greater contentment."

*We should always live in the dark empty sky. The sky is always the sky. Even though clouds and lightning come, the sky is not disturbed. Even if the flashing of enlightenment comes, our practice forgets all about it. Then it is ready for another enlightenment. - Shunryu Suzuki, "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind"*

**From L.A.:** Dear **Dharma Friends**, I'm responding to you with the highest respect to all for sending the first issue (#164) which I was happy to receive. I've read it through and through and I must applaud for all the time and effort put into this newsletter in order to benefit others. The format is **GREAT!** And I must say that some of the writers submitting their works from the inside are very articulate; yet the answers they seek don't lay too far away. External comfort is impermanent. Whether we choose to believe it or not; "anyone" or "no one (as one writer exclaimed) on an intellectual level or spiritual level to kick it with" can be a very good teacher to learn from without incorporating the label "spiritual" on those we don't deem worthy of it. Loneliness in any setting, especially behind these walls, can become very much alive if we germinate those thoughts; hence, our feelings that allow us to work on an emotional level can keep us in a state of displeasure in any circumstance and predicament.

The ego strikes again when we allow or take offense at someone's misinformed opinion of the path we choose and take; especially when we label it **MY** faith. The faith? Indeed, the faith of the spiritual path awaits us all and is very much alive, that is our task! The passage by the Sufi Master Rumi goes: "*The master said there is one thing in this world which must never be forgotten. If you were to forget everything else, but were not to forget this, there would be no cause to worry, while if you remembered, performed and attended to everything else, but forgot that one thing, you would in fact have done nothing whatsoever. It is as if a King had sent you to a country to carry out one special, specific task. You go to the country and you perform a hundred other tasks but have not performed the task you were sent for, it is as if you have performed **NOTHING** at all. So man has come into the world for a particular task, and that is his purpose. If he doesn't perform it, he will have done nothing.*" The Prophet Mohammad taught others to practice tolerance and respect for other cultures and faiths. As much as it may be hard to believe, this practice is key for understanding much of the way we perceive the world through the eye of ignorance. Therefore, the "task" must not be forgotten nor the wise teachings of Mr. Abdul's Rahim Islamic path/faith when he feels a displeasure through other's misinformed opinion(s). To forget the teachings of any path toward our spiritual journey is to fail those in need of our compassion, kindness, love and equanimity . . . nothing can be closer to the truth. Everything else in between is just part of the drama toward the "task."

I don't wish to make this a platform for "ranting and raving," however, before anything else, I'd like to reply to someone in need; the guy who goes by S.W. who is on page 8 & 9 of issue # 164.

**Dear S.W.** During some point in our life, many of us have either felt like we've reached rock-bottom or opened ourselves up for the question(s) many of us seek: Why? Trying to answer the question can become a troublesome quest for us here on the inside. You've been able to paint a pretty clear picture of the what that have been the influences behind much of the scenarios of your life.

The ego strikes again! S.W., you have let your ego identify your attitude, character and everything else about you. You may be a good person underneath all that walk, fixed scowl, etc., but how much attention in a positive light are you really trying to perceive. Is there a solution to all the staring, whispers and attention you want, but don't want? Don't take off your shirt if you know the result; and being that, the result has a certain click in your mind it would be reasonable from a different perspective to analyze what's really going on here.

The click in your head is that switch that turns off and on, telling you as soon as you go out to the yard you're taking off the shirt (exposing the swastika) and actually proclaiming something that others associate that symbol with (hate). You said it yourself, you've made things so hard for yourself, not to mention caused a lot of destruction to the people you love, etc., etc. These are your words. But, it doesn't mean that you're unworthy of peace, love, kindness and compassion. Without getting too into the deep functions on karma, you can actually see that most of the things happening to us are of our own and no one else's. Even the ones we think are not possibly our fault such as that ever so question, "why me?" Our karma is ripening and everyone else in it is a part of that function due to their own karma and their own past action(s). The main thing here is you must accept responsibility and work with what you have instead, like most of us, of working around it or running away from it.

Another thing is, the more we allow ourselves to engage in what others think about us or want other's not to perceive in us, then we are to blame alone because we're so trained in just what I call simply as "mindless thinking." Sooner than you know it, you're entertaining these thoughts that give greater rise to what you're trying to get away from. What does it matter what others think of you? Your problem is not them or vice-versa. The real issue is how can you control your mind; to familiarize yourself with it. That is what meditation is for. It works great if you're honest with yourself about changing and benefiting from it.

Now, attitude and responsibility seem like something you may want to take a look at. Because, honestly, a 22 year old shouldn't be in any relationship with a 15 year old, no matter who approves! All you have to do is connect the dots between the action and the current predicament and you'll see much of what you're missing or denying. Another thing that I'm not sure that may help you is that no matter what you think people or yourself may question, it still doesn't identify you. Don't take that lightly or in the wrong way by misinterpreting the point. The point is whether we believe it or not, karma is working everyday in our lives. We must work with its function; understand our mind's potential, root out the garbage, practice tolerance, humility, and not have expectations and **meditate, mediate, mediate**. If you really want to change, want help and seek the happiness you want, then there are people in the Sangha who are willing to give you the proper material to do so. Likewise, you mustn't forget the small steps it will take to change: **attitude and responsibility**.

As for your questions, I think it's best to realize that your answers don't lay outside where most of the world's decisions are based on the senses. My purpose, meaning and all the above may have a different taste for you, but it shouldn't keep you from encouraging yourself to develop the mental discipline in trying to practice Dharma remedies. There's always going to be a time when things don't seem right or are chaotic. Impermanence works here because life isn't always as it was a few years ago, last week or moments ago, although at times it seems so. Not even the mind, as we speak, can elude impermanence. Know what it is you want,

make effort and be honest with yourself and others. Don't be a doormat but be truthful; we all start somewhere. Why not now? Why later? Later will still be now! I wish you the best and may you continue along the Path. Best wishes,

*But then it came to me as an insight that I should teach this truth, for it is also happiness. There are people whose sight is only a little clouded, and they are suffering through not hearing the reality. They would become the knowers of the truth. It was in this way I went forth to teach. - Majjhima Nikaya*

**From B. D.: Dear Kristopher,** I just wanted to write a short note thanking you guys for the books “**Mindful Money**” and “**Essential Tibetan Buddhism**. ” I read “**Mindful Money**” fairly quickly and am keeping it in my collection for use when I’m released. It seems to be a good source for practical advice, written in an easy to read manner. I’m working my way slowly through “**Essential Tibetan Buddhism**” slowly because I want to absorb every word. I read a small section and then spend the rest of the week meditating on its meaning and/or message. I’m greatly enjoying it. Once I’m finished with it, I plan to donate it to the library here so that others may benefit from it. Once again, thanks to you, the entire team, and all those who donate money, time, and materials to **Dharma Friends**. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to learn to grow while we’re in here. Sincerely,

*Neither from itself nor from another, Nor from both, Nor without a cause, Does anything whatever, anywhere arise. - Nagarjuna,  
"Mulamadhyamaka-Karika"*

**From L. R., Dear Kristopher,** I would like to take this time to share some insight and commentary on Tim Lathrop’s contribution on, “The Evolution of Self” found in issue # 167, December, 2010 of **Dharma Friends**. I feel that Western Buddhists have a difficult time assimilating and living day to day with what is labeled “Self.” This is especially true in cultures such as our own when “Self-Esteem” is a focal Point for many of us since we first learned to be cognizant and placed value on what we could tangibly experience. Whether this, or that, is “right” or “wrong” or “skillful” or “unskillful” is all a matter of our individual perception.

What is the self or ego? From a very conventional standpoint, the self is the attachment that we place on the group of mental and physical aggregates that make up this life that we are living. These mental and physical attributes are interconnected and co-dependent upon one another. Thus being so, they conventionally exist, however, due to their interdependence, it is also correct to say that although the ego exists arbitrarily, it also does not exist on an ultimate or inherent level.

This inherent emptiness or “no self” can be viewed as a contradiction to the view of “one with all that is” if the individual perceives that what is empty or has no self does not exist either conventionally or inherently. This is a nihilistic and dualistic viewpoint which is incorrect from a Buddhist perspective.

Sunyata, or emptiness, is based on the practitioner’s direct experiences and not upon his intellectual cognition of mental concepts. So, the self and no self are nothing more than mental formations. They exist conventionally but lack inherent value. The realization of the true nature of these mental concepts can only be directly experienced by an individual. Once experienced, an individual will acknowledge their own “sacred self” and will not have to deny any experiences that he /she has achieved. They will come to realize that there neither is nor isn’t a “sacred self” to confirm or deny anything. This is mirror-like, reflecting all that arises without aversion or attachment. This is true and total freedom.

Sunyata can be a misleading and detrimental concept for many. Especially when we are taught from a young age that black is black and white is white. However, emptiness is not a suppression or elimination of the ego or self. Emptiness is an embrace of the ego or self without fear. You cannot let go of something without first embracing or acknowledging it. From the Zen perspective, the ego is not to be despised for it is what first brings us to the Path. For many Buddhists wanting to become “better” people or wanting to save numerous beings from suffering is very noble but can be viewed as very egotistical at the beginning of the journey. So yes, our “altruistic characteristics” are part of the ego until, through wisdom, our practice becomes more subtle. To me, living with an over-developed sense of self is de-evolving and reverting back to an animalistic state where “might is right” and it’s the law of tooth and claw. It’s the development of insight into Sunyata that balances this aspect of the human condition.

We must observe and become, not become what, just become. Questions will remain until one becomes the question itself. It's our attachment to the concept of the ego that creates fear, anger, and delusion as well as equanimity, loving kindness, and wisdom. The ego is not who we are, but more who we believe we are. Inherently speaking, there is neither self nor other so how can it be stated that we are one and the same as everyone else? Gassho

## PORK CHOPS - sent by an internet friend, CC



In a zoo in California , a mother tiger gave birth to a rare set of triplet tiger cubs.  
Unfortunately,  
Due to complications in the pregnancy,  
the cubs were born prematurely  
and due to their tiny size,  
they died shortly after birth.

The mother tiger after recovering from the delivery,  
suddenly started to decline in health,  
Although physically she was fine.  
The veterinarians felt that the loss of her litter  
had caused the tigress to fall into a depression.

The doctors decided  
that if the tigress could surrogate  
another mother's cubs,  
perhaps she would improve.

After checking with many other zoos across the country, the depressing news was that there were no tiger cubs of the right age to introduce to the mourning mother.  
The veterinarians decided to try something that had never been tried in a zoo environment.  
Sometimes a mother of one species will take on the care of a different species.  
The only orphans' that could be found quickly, were a litter of weanling pigs.



The zoo keepers and vets wrapped the piglets in tiger skin and placed the babies around the mother tiger...  
Would they become cubs or pork chops?

Take a look...you won't believe your eyes



**Now, please tell me one more time ... Why can't the rest of the world get along?**

**Subscription information:** We have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. We are 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. Sent us an email and you may have your monthly issue free. EMAIL [dharmafriends@comcast.net](mailto:dharmafriends@comcast.net). If you want a paper copy, 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.**

*Kristopher says that he is getting many requests for back issues. Some of these are because of mail room errors but some are because we are behind on current addresses. If you change your address, please send a note to LINDA to give us your new address and she can send your next issue to your new location. That saves us money and you from having to write for your back issues.*

*Thanks so much for your help!*

**SOME NEW OPTIONS:** We are always trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we are always in search of additional funding. **Here are some ways that you can help us.**

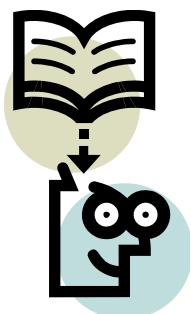
If you are receiving **Dharma Friends** but do not read it or know someone else who does not read their issues, either donate them to your library, or write and tell us to take you off the **Dharma Friends** list. Now, some have written and said that others need them more than they do so take their name 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 who might like to receive **Dharma Friends** as well, they can just let us know and we will put them on the list. 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.

*In the gloom and darkness of the night, when there is a sudden flash of light, a person will recognize objects; in the same way, the one with a flash of insight sees according to reality-- "This is how sorrow works; this is how it arises; this is how it can come to an end; this is the path leading to that end."*

*- Anguttara Nikaya*



**Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream -**

*our friend Omar dreamed of a process of education so that all of us can become all that we can be*

Daiji says - Have you ever read THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS by Venerable Ajahn Sumadho? I don't usually recommend books but this one, in my opinion, is the best, mostly plainly written 73 page booklet on this subject that's I've ever read. as a prisoner and due to the large buffet of sufferings that are available to prisoners at the various CrossBar Hotel & Resorts throughout the country - I would suggest that this book would be especially beneficial. I just received a new copy. My other well-worn and constantly read copy is nearly 10 years old!

Write to: The Buddhist Association of the United States, Book Circulation Department, 2020 Route 301, Carmel, NY. 10512 Ask for ISBN 1 870205 10 3

*But what makes these 'experts' preach their own opinion and call it truth?" asked the inquirer. "Is it an inheritance of humankind to do this, or is it merely something they gain satisfaction from?"*

*"Apart from consciousness," answered the Buddha, "no absolute truths exist. False reasoning declares one view to be true and another view wrong. It is delight in their dearly held opinions that makes them assert that anyone who disagrees is bound to come to a bad end. But no true seeker becomes embroiled in all this. Pass by peacefully and go a stainless way, free from theories, lusts, and dogmas." - Majjhima Nikaya*

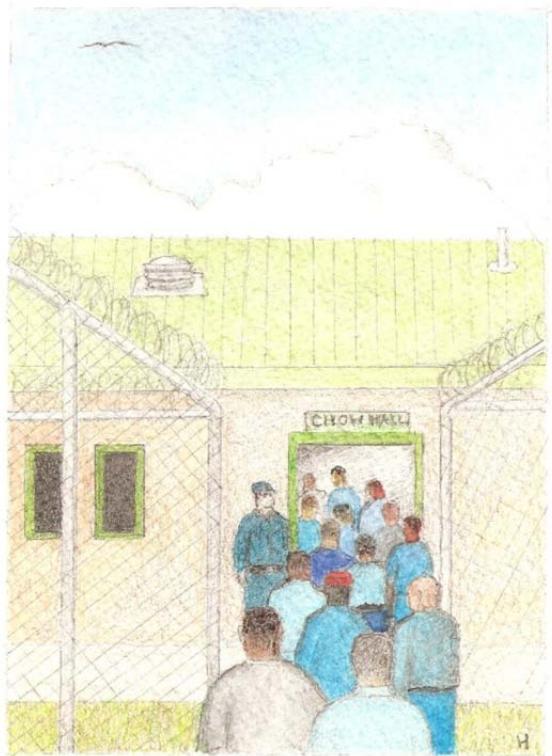
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*"Power properly understood is nothing but the ability to achieve purpose. And one of the great problems of history is that the concepts of love and power have usually been contrasted as opposites - polar opposites - so that love is identified with a resignation of power, and power with a denial of love. We've got to get this thing right. What is needed is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love. It is precisely this collision of immoral power with powerless morality which constitutes the major crisis of our time."*

Martin Luther King, Jr.

This Dharma Friends issue was sponsored by the kind support of M.A.M. THANK YOU!