



Compassion Works For All

# Dharma Friends

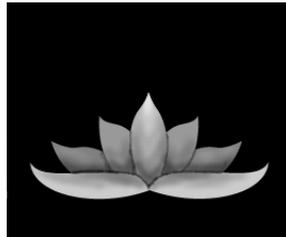
Dedicated to Sharing the Dharma, Healing Each Other, All Sentient Beings, and Ourselves

June/July 2015 issue # 207

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## The Dhammapada

### The teachings of the Buddha



#### **Verse XXI. *Miscellaneous* or sometimes translated as *Various***

290. It is wisdom that enables letting go of a lesser happiness in pursuit of a happiness which is greater.

291. You fail in the pursuit of happiness if it is at the expense of others' well-being. The snare of ill-will can still entangle you.

292. To leave undone that which should be done and to do that which should be avoided leads to carelessness and conceit. It will increase confusion.

293. Confusion ceases by maintaining a meditation practice focused in the body, by avoiding that which should not be done and by mindfully doing that which should be done.

294. By removing craving and conceit, eradicating wrong views, and by overcoming the deluded attachments of the sense realm, the noble being freely moves on.

295. Having cleared all the hindrances to the Path – greed, rage, dullness and laziness, worry, anxiety and doubt – the noble being freely moves on.

296. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake dwelling both day and night in contemplation of the Awakened One.

297. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake dwelling both day and night in contemplation of reality.

298. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake dwelling both day and night in contemplation of the communion of beings who have awakened.

299. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake dwelling both day and night in contemplation of the true nature of the body.

300. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake both day and night taking delight in compassion.

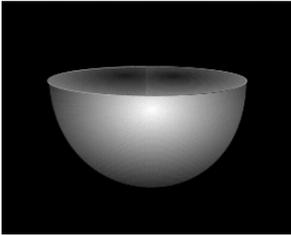
301. Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake both day and night taking delight in cultivating the heart.

302. It is hard to live the life of renunciation; its challenges are difficult to find pleasant. Yet it is also hard to live the householder's life; there is pain when associating with those among whom one feels no companionship. To wander uncommitted is always going to be difficult; why not renounce the deluded pursuit of pain?

303. A traveler possessed of virtue, disciplined and committed to right conduct, will be received with honor; such a one can be recognized and can travel with confidence.

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### Some thoughts about this Dhammapada Verse: Miscellaneous or Various



301. *“Disciples of the Buddha are fully awake both day and night taking delight in cultivating the heart.”*

## Cultivating the heart..

Deeply enriching our knowledge of ancient wisdom teachings are the powerful templates of the natural universe, nature, which is all around us. Everywhere we look, we see a multitude of patterns in nature that illustrate our many sacred paths as they unfold into our ultimate expression. We gravitate to those teachings that resonate with us uniquely. We find our own path that seems to magnetize us to pay attention and to be awestruck. We look and see afresh when drawn to the miracle of nature displayed before us. Why? Because we are nature's expression too.

There is a Buddhist teaching of deeply contemplating a tree in order to feel our own deepest nature, our body, our process of life evolving from seed to tree, and on to death. We can see this same teaching in all religions throughout history because trees are powerful archetypes. However, even as this teaching suggests hints of deeper knowledge to us, we often just listen. We don't really know the profound benefit of the experiential knowing of what it is to be a tree. How do we enter into the experience of not 'just a tree' but all these awakening paths of nature? How do we wordlessly let wisdom guide and unfold for each of us? When we sit and deeply contemplate a tree – when we let our self *be* a tree – a *tree speaking* to us - we know intuitively the great wisdom of a tree. And, in that, we know the wisdom within that it mirrors back to us.

### How do we meditate on a tree?

We may first rest gently looking at a tree. If there is no tree that we can see, we can look at a picture like this one above. Take a while to just be present to the tree. Then, feel our roots connect us deep into the earth. Feel our branches reach up to the sky. We have branches that are seen and roots that are deeply hidden. We are sprouting little tips of branches, leaves, and seeds or fruit. From tiny capillaries, water creeps and then flows as sap coursing through our center trunk. It is carried to all our roots, branches, stems and leaves throughout our entire being. We absorb the sunshine and rain. We rest in the elements. We connect profoundly to all nature around us. Birds and animals make themselves at home in us. Worms and insects nibble on us and weave their tunnels deep into our

flesh. Cycles of life repeat over and over. We make seeds, flowers or fruit that grow trees which make seeds, flowers or fruit that grow trees, and on and on for thousands of years. Through the decades, our one tree stands through storms, wind, rain, heat and cold. We give shelter to others. Our own unique expression allows people and animals to eat our fruit and nuts, to collect our flowers, and to be awestruck by our stately power and beauty. We stand through centuries.

**How is this meditation on a tree also a “Path” to guide us throughout our spiritual evolution and to awaken our heart?**

When we are on a path, we honor that we are at a beginning or perhaps going step by step through a long middle. Throughout, we have a push, a vision, that our self within is longing to be known. We don’t stop and leave the path, our self, until we are fulfilled and actualized. That push wants us to keep going, even if we take a break or a little detour for a while. The push is compelling. Perhaps that path and a push to walk it is a seed within you now. Just as a seed knows how to become a tree, you too know how to fully become the *you* that you are destined to become. How many millions of years has there been a seed that birthed a tree that grew a seed that birthed a tree – and on and on. That is true for us too. Our physical bodies are the results of millions of seeds birthing bodies forming those seeds that became our ‘family tree’ – and on and on we all go.

We see the seeds arising, falling to rich earth, planted, growing and actualizing in our spiritual and sacred realization as well. That is an inherent part of our *selves* manifesting. We evolve physically, emotionally, intellectually, psychologically and spiritually – all in that same way of seed appearing, seed growing, seed fully realized, seeds flowing on to planting in earth far and near. This is a path. It helps to see this path in nature as a template revealing how we will walk to fulfillment too. Rarely is our path little more than a dim light revealing a few steps at a time. That is why is it helpful to have someone who has already walked their path to the end who can give us support and feedback. And sometimes it need not be a person. It could be a tree.

Of course, some see the entire path revealed when they see the seed. They see the tree of the future in the seed, and they see the tree that created that seed, and they see the billions of trees going back throughout time all at once. In seeing this view of all that is present in the seed, they transcend the linear trees of the past and the imagined trees of the future. They know all that can be known just by holding the seed in their hand and its vision in their heart.

Now, your heart is open to deeply knowing wisdom. Know the wisdom of a tree and you know the wisdom of all you are. Know your path of becoming as you know the becoming of the tree: a stirring to become; creating a seed: becoming a sprout; being a slip of a young thing; growing stronger, taller. Your roots stretch down; your branches reach up. You grow leaves, your talents, and then maybe fruit, nuts or seeds, your unique gifts. You grow for decades and perhaps centuries. You live on and on in the hearts of others.

**How is this your open heart? How is this the open heart of all beings unfolding?**



**A MEDITATION – on Miscellaneous or Various**

Draw a tree. Write a poem or a story of a tree. Be a tree in meditation.

Start with a basic, foundational meditation. Someone recently sent a letter asking, what do I meditate *ON*?

So here is a short, basic way to start your meditation that you can do for each and every session. Begin by sitting comfortably. Scan your body to see if you are holding on to stress. Breathe normally. Relax those stressed out muscles. It might help to tighten them up and then let go. Breathe in and breathe out and relax gently. As you breathe, you can also imagine that you are breathing into those tight areas. Each time you breathe in, fill the tight muscles with light and oxygen, and then when you breathe out, envision that you are breathing all that tension out into space. Gently repeat breathing in and breathing out while you let go of everything that you are carrying: tensions, thoughts and dramas.

Now, notice your breath going in and out of your nose, or your belly rising and falling. Focus on your breath. Just notice breathing in and breathing out. Don’t rush or slow down. Just breathe normally and be aware of each breath. Thoughts will come. You will hear noises. You might have a pain or two. These things might distract you, but don’t worry. Just notice them and notice how you are distracted for a moment. Then, return to your breath. This pattern will likely happen a lot. You will focus on your breath. You will be

distracted. You will remember. You will go back to focusing on your breath. As you practice, your concentration will increase. Your clarity will grow. You will notice sooner when you are distracted. You will remember more quickly to return to your breath. This is your preliminary session for every meditation. If you can start out doing this basic meditation for 5-10 minutes maybe once or twice a day, that is a good start.

Today, let's add another piece. Before you start your meditation, have a paper and pencil or pen near you. After you do your preliminary meditation, while you are still relaxed, let's first imagine that you are a tree. Feel your branches and your roots. Feel the breeze blowing through you. Hear the birds singing in your branches. You might be tall or short, full or leafless. Don't think but just *be*. How is it to be *your* tree. Are you a fruit tree, a nut tree, a tree with long, sweeping branches or a fir tree? Just let the tree become an experience that presents itself to you.

When ready, pick up your pencil and spontaneously draw your tree. You might prefer to write a poem about your tree. Or do both. Don't struggle or fret about how capable you are at drawing or writing. Just let it flow out onto your paper. Draw or write until you feel complete.

Rest for a few more minutes in meditation. Thank your inner wisdom for this teaching about yourself as a tree. Now, look at what you created. Read your poem or look at your drawing. What does it say to you in symbols or perhaps with a very clear message? It might tell you an important story. Let it share with you what its message means and how it is guidance for your life. Keep your drawing or writing and look at it again in a few days. See if there is more in this teaching for you. Ask, how am I this tree?



## From Your Letters

**If you write to us – here are a few thoughts:**

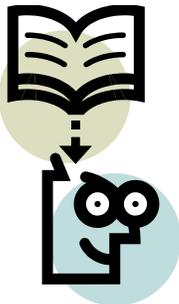
1. Our friend, Steven, saw our request for art. He thought it would be very beneficial to all to dedicate your art to your victims. **Your ART is greatly appreciated.** If you would like to send art to *Compassion Works for All* for calendars, art exhibits, or cards, we would love it. Know that you are giving us permission to use your art, and we cannot return it. There is great benefit for us, and you are contributing to letting the world know the talent and sensitive beings who live behind bars. We want to help make you visible to society! Please write your name and address on the back.
2. Many of you used to write to your friend Kristopher, one of our volunteers who answers letters. He wants you to know that after a bit of time away, he is now back. So, put his name on the envelope if you want to hear back from him.
3. **Please let us know your address changes as that costs us big \$\$\$ to send newsletters to those long gone.** Include both your old and new address.
4. **If you are a new subscriber**, please put that on an envelope. Also put on the envelope the person you are writing to, if you know, or what you are writing for. For example: NEW SUBSCRIBER. That saves us from reading every letter before passing it on to the proper person.
5. **ASK TIM** - Tim answers letters asking for help with those things that we know you cannot do in prison. Tim works hard for all of you but here are some things that Tim is not able to do: Tim is not qualified to counsel about personal and/or relationship problems. Money or 'things' will never be given to any writer. We will not provide addresses of individuals in the free world to anyone. We cannot provide information obtained from Facebook or other social media websites.
6. Would you like to be our **Quote Master** for your unit? We offer a quote to post on your bulletin board in your barracks. Who knows who might be inspired and their life is changed. Here is the quote for June/July.

**Board Quote for June and July 2015:**



Praise and blame, gain and loss, pleasure and sorrow come and go like the wind. To be happy, rest like a giant tree in the midst of them all.

Dharma Friends, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Ar. 72217-7708.



**Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream - our friend Omar dreamed of those in prisons being able to educate themselves as much possible so that each of you can become all that you were destined to be..**

John Muir Quotes (Author of **My First Summer in the Sierra**)

117 quotes from **John Muir**: *“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds that it is connected to everything else.”* A book that shares vividly how nature is one of our greatest teachers.

A challenge to all of you: Read at least one excellent book a week!! If you don't read well, see if you can find a tutor to teach you.

**Subscription information:** We have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. We are 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**, please email [annacoxar@gmail.com](mailto:annacoxar@gmail.com) and we will put your name on our email list. If you need a paper copy, and if you are a family member of someone in prison, we will put you on our paper copy list. Send your information to **Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708.**

**If anyone would like to make a donation that supports the almost 5,000 thousand paper copies that go out to those in prisons around the country, we are most appreciative of your help.**

We 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.**

**From KC Johnson:** I would like to share something with **Dharma Friends**. I am in the process of becoming a Trappist Monk (Cistercian Order of the strict observance) at Mepkin Abbey, SC. Even though I consider myself a “Buddhist Christian”, ie. (I'm a Christian but I use the Buddhist Path, such as the **8-Fold Path**, the **Five Precepts**, etc., almost like a vessel. There is something about Buddhism that is so unique since traditionally, Buddhism has no articles of Faith. Buddha himself made it clear that he was not a God,

demi-god, incarnation, etc. He was simply a human who attained enlightenment and taught others to do so. He made it clear he wasn't to be worshipped. That made it so any body, no matter what faith they follow, whether Judaism "Jubus", Muslim, Christians, could all follow the teachings without offending a God who condemns idolatry. There is very little in Buddhist teachings that conflict with the Bible, and the teaching of Buddha and Jesus are very similar. The Bible, for example, will tell you how to live, what to do, etc. Coupled with Buddhism you literally learn "how" to do it. Buddhism lays it all out almost step by step. Traditional Buddhism will not conflict with anybody's faith, unless their faith is evil and doesn't like morality. Buddhism by itself is not a religion, which is good because if it were, many people would miss out on a teaching that could change their lives.

***Some of my teachings to others:***

- To love another is to love your self,
- If you hate others you hate your self.
- A heart that cannot be broken is indeed weak, but a heart that is breakable is strong.
- What is truth? Even as God is, it is a mystery, having no label. But it can be found.

***The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched - they must be felt with the heart.***

Helen Keller

**From our letter to Damian:** I am so sorry about your parole being turned down. You have accepted things courageously and we know well that you will use that time well. It is sad but we never know why, do we? Your story is one of growth and finding teachings in all that comes your way.

You asked about whether those with a record can volunteer to help in many ways and where that might be. I think that help is something that many organizations and religious groups are happy to have. When you get out, go to the place you might like to volunteer and share your history. Express a willingness to work with others. Be encouraging of others joining together with you while you are working on projects, and they will get to know you, trust you and appreciate you. Most organizations now ask that any adult in an organization work in teams, especially if there are children involved. That way, there is that extra protection for everyone. So that is not something to feel they are offering as a precaution just because of your incarceration.

You might check with any of the religious advisors/volunteers that come to your unit for services or counseling and let them know of your wish. If some of them represent a group or a church that you would like to be a part of when you get out, ask if there is a place for you as a volunteer. Arrange a plan before you leave prison so that you know how to follow up.

***There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it. -Edith Wharton***



***“The Light is the Only Thing I see” by Joseph Williams***

The light is the only thing I see.  
 If Sun was as bright as darkness  
 The Buddha shadow was singing.  
 I just wonder if the Buddha himself is following me.  
 If smile brings many faces.  
 But the shine took over.  
 I went into a building with the light.  
 Meet Buddha and my Buddhist brother and sister  
 Smile at the light  
 A blind person could see this light  
 A man approaches, only want to talk and walk.  
 He had a Walkman for me.  
 He look like I know him from somewhere.  
 The music of Jazz took over.  
 A women went past me holding the sun.  
 A Buddha baby was crying.

She had the sun in the light.  
 I only began to take notice of these things  
 There a song I used to sing was  
 A song of old mist blue  
 The light of the sun looks at me  
 With a look of sickness  
 The light of the Buddha seems all right to me  
 There was no harm for the sun I could only see  
 I read my newspaper with the sun

The Buddha and the light sing  
 The song of the Blue  
 I work on my math, with a friend  
 The light is the only thing I see  
 Only to hear a voice of silence  
 Me and the Buddha keep meditate”

**From Rick L. Best –  
the People’s Poet**

**From the Darkness to Light**

From the darkness to light  
While angels sing  
Gabriel still brings  
From darkness to light...  
Once in darkness  
Drugs, women, and money

Brings darkness to light...  
Seeing with a naked eye  
Gabriel still standing  
Hope and pray for a better way  
From darkness to light..  
Eyes full  
Surprise lies

Ghetto boy can’t get by  
From darkness to light...  
Wondering if Gabriel can see  
This ghetto boy like me  
From darkness to light...

*I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.' -Muhammad Ali*

**“I Only Wish”**

It’s always like a movie  
Playing on and on  
Sometimes it’s one of Horror,  
Sometimes from dusk to dawn,  
Although it’s not as bad now  
As it use to be,  
Some nights I just lay there  
And in my mind I see,  
So many wasted chances,  
So many broken hearts,  
So many lives destroyed,  
By me, all torn apart;  
I only wish I could undue,  
Everything that I’ve done,  
That I could be a Father  
To my only son,  
Just for another chance  
To live my life again,  
It would all be so different,  
So very different then;  
At least now I can see  
All I couldn’t see before,

I was like a blind man  
Who couldn’t find the door;  
I only wish to see  
My father soon one day;  
I failed him very badly  
In so many ways,  
I failed as a father  
And also as a son,  
I only wish I could undue  
All the hurting I’ve done

**“Why”**

Why did I have blinder on for so many  
years?  
Why did I have to be the cause of all  
those tears?  
Why others live their lives and  
everything is good?  
Like it’s all so perfect, I’ve never  
understood.  
Why am I still Here? I don’t deserve  
to be.  
Instead of hurting others, I wish it had  
been me.

Why couldn’t I see then the things I’m  
seeing now?  
If only I could have, I’d change it all  
somehow.

Why can’t I be a father to my one and  
only son?  
I want to ask forgiveness for all that I  
have done.  
My father has forgiven me and he has  
nothing but love,  
And I know I’ve been forgiven also  
from above.

Why then is it so hard to forgive  
myself?  
But is seems so easy to forgive  
someone else,  
Why do I have to do 5 more after  
more than 10  
I guess I could go on and on asking  
many ways  
And when I run out of why I will start  
asking when.

*Suzuki Roshi was asked, “How much ego do we need?” His answer: “Just enough to keep from getting hit by a bus.”*



**Here is a letter that you can send to your loved ones if you wish.**

Here in prison, I receive a monthly newsletter from Compassion Works for All called **Dharma Friends**. It offers support from ancient wisdom with which we explore our spiritual path, no matter what tradition someone follows. We learn meditation teachings, psychological and emotional healing, and we build a community between those in prison and those out in the world through letters. Compassion Works for All encourages communication and healing of old family patterns and relationship issues with those I have left behind - like you. If we are both reading **Dharma Friends** issues, one way to support such discussions between us is to use the issues as a basis for our discussions. I welcome this opportunity to share such healing and growth talks and letters with you and would like to ask you to go to [www.CompassionWorksForAll.org](http://www.CompassionWorksForAll.org) and sign up for the twice monthly emails that will bring you **Dharma Friends** newsletter and also the Compassion Works for All web site updates. There are lots of healing videos on the web site as well, some especially for those with family members and friends who are in prison. I greatly regret that we are spending this time apart and the challenges that it imposes on our relationship. I also look forward to being able to use all of these traumatic events as a way to grow beyond the issues of our past and find a stronger healing that will benefit not only me and you but all those that we love. Thank you for considering sharing **Dharma Friends** and this part of my life with me. I hope it helps you as much as it has helped me. Love,

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

Webpage: [www.CompassionWorksForAll.org](http://www.CompassionWorksForAll.org)

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**FREE RELIGIOUS MATERIAL**



Courage is fire, and bullying is smoke.  
*Benjamin Disraeli.*

*Prison mailroom: Please return issues if inmate is no longer in your institution*



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

June/July 2015 #207

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### **Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of Dharma Friends**

Please come and visit [CompassionWorksforAll.org](http://CompassionWorksforAll.org) web site!

We have an archive of [Dharma Friends](#) issues and teachings to help with life problems, to open our minds and hearts, and to meditate with our many meditation videos.

We also have a wonderful gallery of prison art, our Time Out radio programs, our children's story, 'A Story of Friends', "Letters from the Inside" and many ways that you can get involved with Compassion Works for All.

This is all for you. Enjoy!



***We have classes at the public libraries in Little Rock that focus on an Introduction to Meditation.***

***These too are open to all, free, sponsored by the libraries, and everyone is welcome whether you are a beginner or an advanced meditator.***

***The classes will be at the downtown, main library in Little Rock on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, in the Lee Room.***

***We also meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday at 6PM at Fletcher Library at 6 PM each month.***

***Check our calendar schedule at our web site: [www.compassionworksforall.org](http://www.compassionworksforall.org)***

# COMPASSION WORKS

Join us for our monthly **Compassion Works** sessions if you are in Arkansas.

The sessions are the first Thursday at 6 PM and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 1 PM at Fletcher Library

Sessions last one hour. They are free, non-denominational and open to everyone.

We will add you to our email reminder list if you want information on times, dates and place, or you can go to [www.CompassionWorksForAll.org](http://www.CompassionWorksForAll.org) and check out the calendar schedule.

**Compassion Works** sessions offer a quiet experience of compassion. With a few gentle and guiding prompts, we will let go of the struggle, renew, heal, and send compassion into the world.

Then we head out again to live our question - How can I live compassion for myself and for all beings today?

We also offer a short session on Compassion on video so that you can have an individual practice or you could start Compassion Works sessions in your locality. You can find the video on our [www.CompassionWorksForAll.org](http://www.CompassionWorksForAll.org) web site



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

***Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends are available.***

***You can order a book for \$15 plus shipping (\$5) at my email address: [annacoxar@gmail.com](mailto:annacoxar@gmail.com)***

***Compassion Works for All is a non-profit interfaith organization that supports personal and spiritual healing for those who have experienced trauma and isolation, including outreach to those in prison. For more information, visit [www.CompassionWorksforAll.org](http://www.CompassionWorksforAll.org).***

***We teach compassion to change the world.***



Mail your gift or pledge to COMPASSION WORKS FOR ALL

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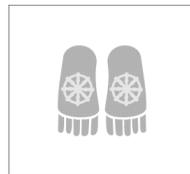
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Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*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 [annacoxar@gmail.com](mailto:annacoxar@gmail.com) for more information about Compassion Works for All, Dharma Friends newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive Dharma Friends by email for free but donations are always most welcome.*

*If you would prefer a hard copy, the subscription fee is \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation. You may make a donation via Paypal on our web site as well.*



***The whole of humanity is one human family. This planet is our only home. -  
His Holiness the Dalai Lama***