



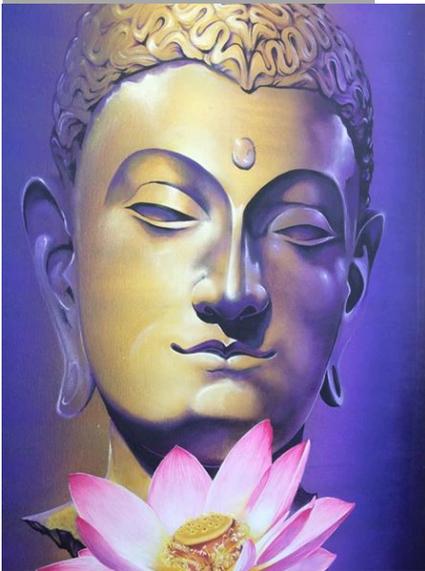
Compassion Works For All

Dharma Friends

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

The Dhammapada the teachings of the Buddha

Verse II Awareness



"Buddha" by Noah Baker, Colorado

About the guest contributor

Ani Tendron studied for 40 years with great Tibetan Buddhist Teachers His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Lama Tharchin Rinpoche and Khenrtrul Lodro Thaye Rinpoche, mainly in the Gelugpa and Nyigma traditions.

21. Appreciative awareness leads to life; heedless avoidance is the path to death. Those who are aware are fully alive, while those who are heedless are as if already dead.

22. The wise, being fully alive, rejoice in appreciative awareness, and abide delighting in this capacity.

23. The Awakened Ones, firm in their resolve, vigorously apply themselves, and know freedom from bondage: liberation, true security.

24. Those who are energetically committed to the Way, who are pure and considerate in effort, composed and virtuous in conduct, steadily increase in radiance.

25. By endeavor, vigilance, restraint and self-control, let the wise make islands of themselves which no flood can overwhelm.

26. Those who are foolish and confused betray themselves to heedlessness. The wise treasure the awareness they have cultivated as their most precious possession.

27. "Do not become lost in negligence, do not become lost in sensuality." Heeding such council, the contemplative discovers profound release.

28. Those Awakened Ones, who have tasted freedom from all distraction by cultivating awareness, view all who are suffering with compassionate perspective, as one on a mountaintop is able to view the plains.

29. Aware among those who are heedless, awake among those who sleep, the wise go forward like strong young horses, leaving the exhausted behind.

30. By way of diligent awareness the god Magha won his realm. Diligence is ever rewarded, negligence is ever scorned.

31. The renunciate who delights in vigilance and shuns heedlessness advances like a grass fire, consuming obstructions great and small.

32. The renunciate who delights in vigilance and shuns heedlessness is protected from regression: such a one approaches liberation.

Some Thoughts

about this verse: Awareness

By guest writer **Ani Tendron**

This *Dhammapada* verse, **AWARENESS**, is about developing the qualities of awareness or what we often hear referred to as "mindfulness". In line 23, it says "*the Awakened Ones, from their resolve, vigorously apply themselves, and know freedom from bondage; liberation and true security.*" What is this awareness of the Awakened Ones?

In a recent Harvard study, researchers found that, "Our default state of mind is that of wandering and that this mind wandering is a source of unhappiness." Even our contemporary science is exploring these ancient wisdom truths as we all search for our growth and healing. Throughout academia, medicine, and spiritual growth circles, we are encouraged to develop mindfulness and awareness.

Let's see how we can directly apply these teachings to our own lives.



Left to right: Anna Cox, Lama Tharchin Rinpoche and Ani Tendron, circa 1992

The Tree, The Tree by Jerome T., Florida

A tree is beautiful if you watch how it grows,
But what is a tree thinking, I don't know,
It probably wants friendships like most humans
do,
It probably wants safety whether false or true,
It probably wants love – just like you,
It probably felt cold when the wind blew,
I like this exercise, thank you compassion,
The tree is cool, without any fashion.

As conscious beings, we know we are generally aware of our surroundings, like our needs for food and shelter and our environment. But in this teaching, the Buddha is speaking of a mindfulness of a more subtle, vast awareness, and an awareness that we all have at several levels but that we are often not attending to. It is the mindfulness of what has been called in Buddhism our three doors: our body, speech, and mind. We can imagine that they were called the 'doors to awareness' because it is through noticing the experiences of our body, speech and mind that we gain insight into all that is within us and in our universe. When we are being truly aware, we are continuously watching our minds, our thoughts, our speech and our actions. We are mindfully guarding ourselves from doing and saying things which will lead to more suffering for ourselves and others. We are mindful because we desire the benefits of more understanding, wisdom, happiness, peace and compassion in our lives. This helps us to live a better life, but it is the path itself if we want to become fully awake and aware.

Meditation IS OUR FIRST STEP

The most powerful way to reach this awareness or mindfulness is through meditation. The Tibetan word for meditation is *Gom-* meaning *to become accustomed to* or *familiar with*. We meditate to become familiar with our minds; to still and quiet them enough to see the innate, pure nature of the mind. At first, when we begin to meditate, we find that we have a very busy mind. Our minds are often a non-stop chatter of thoughts and emotions. We are so used to these busy minds that we rarely notice this

constant inner dialogue. When we first focus on our mind, we find a mind disturbed and stirred up with the delusions of jealousy, pride, desire, hatred and aggression. These qualities are often called the five poisons because they cause so much of our emotional distress and problems in the world. We also find that our thoughts are mostly centered on “*me, me, me.*” There is a constant drama about what we want and need, or what we like and dislike. In ancient teachings, this is called our self-grasping and self-cherishing mind.

Actually, the mind is essentially pure and clear. Its characteristics are clarity and knowing. The mind at rest is peaceful, relaxed, open, spacious and naturally compassionate. Sometimes it is likened to a glass of clear water with dirt at the bottom. When stirred, the water becomes cloudy and dirty. But if the stirring stops and the water is allowed to sit still for a while, it becomes clear again. Our minds are like this. If we stop stirring them up, they will become quiet and clear again. And that is what we do in meditation. We stop stirring. We allow the mind to just be, to rest, and it settles back into its true nature.

Another metaphor is using the clear sky as an example of mind. On a cloudless day, we see the clarity and endless nature of sky. But on a cloudy or stormy day, the sky fills with clouds that obscure its vast, pure nature. If we did not know better, we might think the sky was only a ceiling of low-lying storm clouds. We would forget its true nature.

When we get discouraged or forget why we are meditating, we can remember that just as the clouds in the sky will pass and reveal the vast sky, and just as the

muddy water will settle revealing pure water, our thoughts and delusions are not permanent or a part of the mind either.

They too are just passing through. There is no basic permanent reality to them. In meditation, we learn to watch all of these obscurations to our mind and in our life arise and pass away. We learn to let go and watch as they dissolve, leaving our pure mind just as it is. In this way, we learn that everything changes. Everything will appear, in some way or form, and then everything will eventually fall away. There is no inherent, permanent, unchanging reality to anything or anybody, including ourselves. Everything is always changing, including each of us.

When we begin our meditation, we can remember the teachings of clouds in the sky as our thoughts parade by. We can remember that our pure mind is like the vast sky. The thoughts and emotional dramas are like the clouds obscuring our mind. If we do not attach to them, or “follow the story,” but instead, we mindfully rest in awareness, we learn to cultivate the quiet, concentrated mind. This is called the mind of “calm abiding”. In such a state of relaxation, rest, and awareness, we will surely glimpse the pure, clear nature of the mind. Then we realize what our verse predicts: “**know freedom from bondage, liberation, true security.**” This is a very important lesson and it does not come easily.

Living AWARENESS

Our AWARENESS teaching continues in stanza 24, as it states: “**those who are committed to the way, who are pure and considerate in effort, composed and virtuous in conduct, steadily increase in radiance.**”

These teachings ask us to live the

Awareness through our virtuous conduct, and our efforts. All actions and words begin with intention held in the mind. Our mind is the source of all of the actions of our speech and body. Our minds, if clouded by our total focus on our own self, are usually trying to get what we want or like. Or, we are equally trying to avoid what we do not want or that which we dislike.

Unconsciously, this is the foundation of most of our efforts throughout our life. We want what we want and avoid what we don't want. Hardly do we pay attention to the needs and wants of others until we become more self-aware of how we are causing suffering. Clearly, though, as we ponder this teaching, you can easily see how this is a problem and can hurt us, others, and our relationships. So first, we have the very subtle intention to cause benefit or harm. Out of that, a thought arises, either positive or negative. From that thought springs words and actions. If we have a negative thought, such as a thought about disliking something or someone, that thought might become the angry words that pop out of our mouths. We might even express that thought in a physical action and we harm that person. Or a positive thought will bring about a kind word and this will bring benefit to others and to us as well. This is why we need to remember to be "**pure and considerate in effort, composed and virtuous in conduct.**" Only by developing awareness of our self-cherishing can we notice the self-grasping thoughts that birth the words and actions of our self-serving motivation. We can become aware of the thoughts and then, we have the capacity to choose our words and actions as we learn to be kinder to others.

Living Awareness is a non-stop, forever assignment

We can work on these efforts 24/7, whether in our formal sitting meditation, or when we're living our lives, doing our tasks, and seeing others. We can continuously apply stanza 25, which says: "**by endeavor, vigilance, restraint, and self-control**" we can "**increase in radiance.**" Meditation on the cushion is 'Practice' and then we continue to put this practice into our days around the clock. Our life becomes a practice in awareness as we watch our minds with vigilance for

those purely selfish thoughts. As we notice this attachment to self, we are motivated to '*be pure in conduct*', which means to not harm and to, instead, help others. We learn to guard our words and actions and keep them positive. When negative thoughts and impulses arise, we are diligent and ever-watchful. We make a decision to not act on them. We watch our minds and then decide to only act on what is beneficial to our self and others. We can do this!

Accomplishment of Awareness: "Let the wise make islands of themselves which no flood can overcome."

In this teaching, we are told that we can each become a place of calm and kindness, even when chaos reigns around us. By meditating and training our mind in awareness, by being committed in our effort, by being composed, virtuous, diligent, and restrained, we can attain what the last line of the verse states: "**Let the wise make islands of themselves which no flood can overcome.**" To get to that calm, safe island of awareness and mindfulness, we first need to experience the pure nature of mind – this experience of peaceful, clear and calm abiding. Even when we have a tiny taste of our calm mind, we can then know its innate clarity. It is like knowing that the sky is vast and pure even when covered over by clouds. With this knowing, we remember that our way to clarity is to meditate and let the clouds clear; let the dirt settle to reveal the clear water.

As Geshe Thubten Jinpa (the Dalai Lama's skilled translator) writes in ***A Fearless Heart***, "*To quiet the mind is to relax the mind. We learn to unhook our awareness from the restless, tiresome activity of habitual thought patterns and from our instinctive and automatic reactions to these...A quiet(er) mind is a place in which we can more readily be present, presence that makes us available to care for ourselves and others... We put ourselves in the courageous position of being with things as they actually are, since we know there's a calm place within ourselves where we can stand...*"

So whenever we can, we need to meditate as our everyday practice to remember the true and vast nature of our mind. Each time, we might taste a bit more of our clear mind. And to do that, we only need to remember to first quiet the body and mind. Then, when we get off our cushion, we continue to rest in awareness as we live, being mindful of our intention, our thoughts, our speech and our actions. Little by little, we become ***the island which no flood can overcome.***



"Pam Grier" by Lonnie Franks, Arkansas

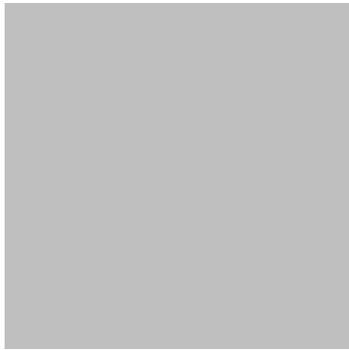
From Your Letters

A letter from Gino V., California Dear Dharma Friends,

Hello, Namó Amitabha! I have been a Buddhist on and off when I was younger and still free. But since I have been in prison (for the last 23 years) since I was 20 years old. Now I am 43 years old since December 30, 2015. I go to Buddhist service every Sunday.

And I practice being mindful and showing lovingkindness as best I can. I have taken a vow to myself of non-violence. I have 23 years of non-violence. By the bless'd Buddha's teachings I am humbled by Buddha's

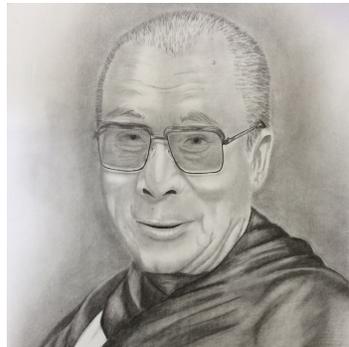
more on **4**



non-violent nature. I can only strive to continue on my path. And hope to share what I have only begun to really understand. And continue to share in the sangha with my small group.

I did take my vows back in 2013 when I was in Chuckawalla, California’s state prison...I was transferred due to medical issues. But will continue to do my best to be worthy to follow Buddha’s mindfulness and lovingkindness. I will close for now.

“His Holiness the Dalai Lama”, by Don W. (Thubten Jangsem)



A Letter from Brandon A., Illinois

I have been practicing Buddhism for over a year now and have noticed a big change in how I look at things. I’m not so quick to anger or blame. I feel genuine love and concern for everybody. Including animals and insects. For so long I have killed every insect that came into my cell. Now when I see a roach, fly, mosquito, etc...I simply catch it and let em go outside. I’ve now become a strict vegetarian. I had tried numerous religions and nothing seemed to work. But Buddhism has.

A meditation: On Awareness

This meditation is from Ani Tendron, based on teachings by **Khentul Lodro Thaye Rinpoche**. Rinpoche is of the Nyingma lineage of Jigme Phutsok Rinpoche and Moktsa Rinpoche in Tibet and Penor Rinpoche of Namdroling Monastery in India. Rinpoche is called Khentul because he is a Khenpo – a great scholar. E is also a Tulku – a recognized reincarnate Lama. He is the Abbot of a monastery in Tibet and at Katog Choling in the USA.

First, gather the causes and conditions for meditation. We focus on quieting the body (called ‘quietude of body’) by sitting silently, allowing the mind to settle. You can sit on the floor cross-legged, or in a chair with your feet flat on the floor, not crossed. The important thing is to keep your back straight, not slumped, but not rigid either but relaxed and straight. You can keep your eyes open but unfocused, or close them slightly, so you can barely see about 2 feet in front of you. Relax the eyes. You can place your hands in your lap (right hand on top of left, thumbs barely touching or put them palms-down on your knees. Breathe gently, deeply and quietly. This is ‘quietude of the body’.

Then, to achieve quietude of mind, start by developing a mind of contentment, of no desire, remembering the impermanence of all. Think, “I’m okay, and for today, I have enough”. This quiets the mind from distractions, from chasing after objects. Cultivate a mind of contentment. Now develop a positive intention or motivation to meditate. This good intention or motivation

is sometimes called Bodhicitta, the mind of enlightenment that wishes to benefit all beings. This is the motivation of love and compassion that we, through our meditation and our practice, can be of benefit to all. If you can, spend a few moments on developing this wish to benefit others. This completes the quietude of mind.

Next, you can pray to or invoke all the supporters, the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and Teachers, or God, Allah, Jesus – asking them to be present with you as you practice and meditate. You can do a mantra, or a prayer, and, as you recite, imagine them coming and gathering to help you.

The Main Practice – *Shamatha* or Calm Abiding

Now, sit silently in the practice of calm abiding, where we may glimpse the peaceful, clear nature of mind. You can use one of many objects for concentrating the mind: your breathing, a mantra, a sound, a picture of Buddha or Jesus, or a loved one. If using your

(continued)

breath, breathe in through the nose and exhale through the nose (or mouth, slightly open, gently). On the exhale, you can count “one”, then, on the next exhale, “two”, and so on, up to 5 or 10. Then start over. Or, you can use the mantra Om Ah Hum (Hum rhymes with ‘room’), or Om Ah Hung (Hung sounds like ‘whoong’). With this, as you inhale, **imagine** that you hear the sound of Om (not the actual sound- don’t say it or visualize it) Just breath in... **Om**; then, as the breath pauses, imagine hearing **Ah**; then on the exhalation, imagine hearing **Hum**. The three syllables ride on the breath, Om- inhale, Ah- pause, Hum- exhale. This is a powerful way to focus the mind on the breath (and you don’t have to keep count!) This method brings the blessings of the sacred syllables Oh Ah Hum.

As you meditate, don’t fight thoughts that come or think you’re doing something wrong. You’re not. Thoughts will always come, and go- if you don’t attach your thinking to them and follow them. Just like clouds, let them go by. Bring your mind back to the breath, or the Om Ah Hum, and keep going.

Just doing this for 10 minutes or so can help you to tame and quiet your mind, to prepare for more understanding and realization. This brings great calm and peace just by concentrating on an object. It tames and rests the mind.

You can end your meditation by simply dedicating it and yourself to benefit others, that you can help them and yourself be free from suffering and find happiness. This is very important - to dedicate the good you’ve created through your meditation to benefit all.

Compassionate Communication Column

by Morgan Holladay

I think most of us know that listening is important. Probably most people believe that they do listen. After reading the teaching on awareness, I encourage you to

scrutinize your own concepts of listening, and challenge yourself to be fully aware of others when they are expressing their needs (which was our topic in the last issue).

Actively listening means making a conscious effort to hear the words that another person is saying and understand the complete message that they are expressing. It requires careful attention and presence.

In order to open ourselves to the possibility of fully hearing what someone is expressing to us, we must also listen *emphatically*. This means understanding another person’s condition from their perspective.

Empathizing with someone does not mean that you agree with him or her. When you empathize with someone, you acknowledge that they are experiencing a need that you have had at some point in your life, and a need that you will continue to have throughout your life. In other words, actively and empathetically listening means making an effort to put yourself in someone else’s shoes.

TECHNIQUES

Small Encouragements

When someone is talking, it helps for him or her to hear cues that say, “I’m still listening.” Sounds such as, “Oh?,” “When?,” and “Really?” are examples of these verbal cues. They are questions, comments, or sounds that do not interfere with the flow of conversation, but do let the speaker know that the listener is present and alert. They help build rapport and encourage the speaker to continue talking. Use these small encouragements sparingly, but do use them to keep the speaker engaged.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is a summary in your own words of what you were told. This technique demonstrates listening, creates empathy and establishes rapport because it is evident that you have heard and understood the speaker. Usually, paraphrasing begins with the words, “Are you telling me...” or “Are you saying...” Paraphrasing also clarifies content, highlights issues and promotes give and take between you and the subject. This technique tests our skills as a listener by asking us to engage and demonstrate that we are fully hearing the content.

Mirroring (or Reflecting)

This is the technique of repeating the last word or phrase and putting a question

mark after it. This provides very exact responses because you are using the speaker’s own words. Reflecting or mirroring asks for more input without guiding the direction of the subject’s thoughts and elicits information when you do not have enough information to ask a pertinent question.



A beautiful thing happens
when we start paying
attention to each other. It
is by participating more in
your relationship that you
breathe life into it.

- Steve Maraboli

Open-Ended Questions

The primary use of open-ended questions is to draw out more information, especially when the speaker is shy or unsure about what they are saying. Asking open-ended questions encourages the person to say more without the listener actually directing the conversation. They are questions that cannot be answered with a single word such as “yes” or “no”. Open-ended questions usually begin with how, what, when and where. Note that “why” questions are not asked directly. “Why” questions tend to steer the conversation toward blame and shut down communication. “Why” questions also tend to pass judgment.

Effective Pauses

Silence can be very effective on a number of levels. Most people are not comfortable with silence and will fill it with talk. As you learn to be an active listener, you can explore the depth and beauty of silence as a way to give the speaker a chance to collect his or her thoughts and fully express those thoughts to you.

Happy listening!

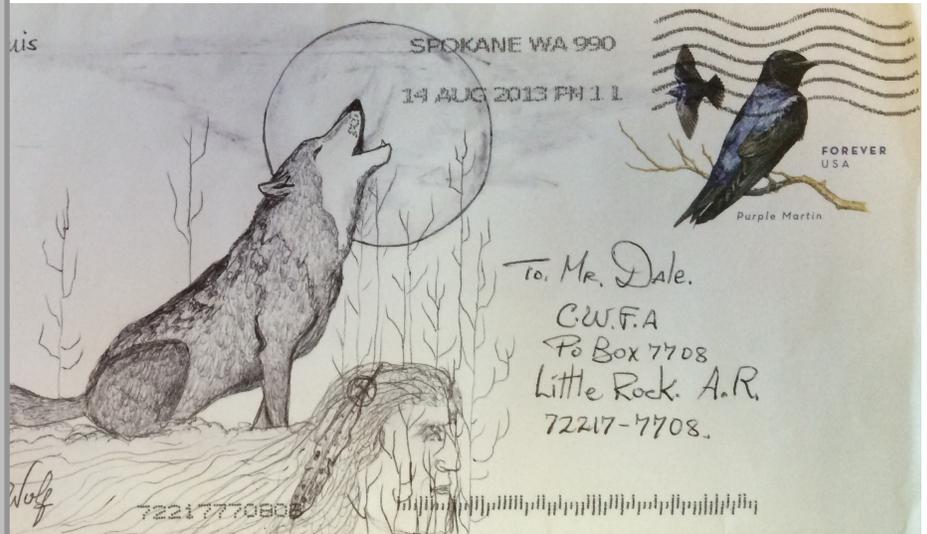
Poems from your Letters

No Mail, by Michael Z, Florida

As shadows of darkness fill my cell
I receive pain and hurt to much to tell
I sit here and wait for a letter to come to me
I wipe away the tears no one can see
I pray every night to the Lord above
Lord I need encouragement and a letter full of
love

I long to notice words on pages so dear
With riches of thought that seem so near
A pen of diamond and ink of Gold
A message from heaven as your story unfolds
I miss and love you and can't wait to be free
A treasured envelope just for me
Reminiscing on memories of joy I once knew
To have it all back only if you knew what I'd
do

The darkness and pain in this cell will prevail
The mail man just walked by and still no mail
Better luck tomorrow!! :)



"Howling Wolf" envelope art by Camejo L., Washington

Untitled Poem, by Willis B., Missouri

You are who you are for a reason
You're part of an intricate plan.
You're precious and perfect unique design,
Called God's special woman or man.

You look like you look for a reason.
Our God made no mistake.
He knit you together within the womb,
You're just what he wanted to make.

The parents you had were the ones he chose,
And no matter how you may feel,
They were custom-designed with God's plan
in mind
And they bear the Master's seal.

No, that trauma you faced was not easy
And God wept that it hurt you so;
But it was allowed to shape your heart
So that into his likeness you'd grow.

You are who you are for a reason.
You've been formed by the Master's rod.
You are who you are, beloved,
Because there is a God!

A Visitation, by Geoff O., *free world sangha member*

In the hush of dusk, I sat by our garden, empty-handed, waiting
for nothing, relaxing into that greying time between day and night
when silence seeps up around sounds, and sounds drift deeper
into silence. I was singing to encourage a tomato plant.

I was loving the darkening land. As stillness filled the garden,
I sensed a seeing, swept my gaze, and spied a watchful little owl
perched on a cedar fencepost. I recognized its compact silhouette
and could vaguely make out tufted ears and grey feathers fading
into dusk obscura. It was an Eastern Screech Owl, *otus asio*.
Our eye-beams intertwined. I became aware that I'd been hearing
but not listening to successive low-toned owl wails coming from
behind the fence in our backyard. Some curtain of attention
had now parted to reveal soft tremulous calls, rising from
a parliament of owls in fluttering motion. My body relaxed further
as I rested my attention on the calls, and exchanged head-swiveling
glances with the sentinel. Low whinnies ventilated out from each
unseen owl body, a sound like feather shutters being blown open
by sudden winds from within. Then sound became visible, as one
scout owl ghosted past the fence, lofting over our garden
down the slope into the dark arms of a huge Post Oak
with its branches spreading out in all directions. And now
came floating over two three four more weightless little owls,
as the sentry owl kept his watch. The four glided to the oak
and flittered in the tree's great middle branches, their songs
revolving 'round and 'round its trunk. Now they were joined by owls
five and six, who flew suspended in the hush, which they plied
with shivering wails, settling then fluttering in a vibratory dance
among the branches. All this was witnessed by the solitary sentry,
now repositioned on a broken limb of the old oak, as the owl troupe
continued its ecstatic song and dance in the shy grey fading twilight.

A Letter you can send to your loved ones

Dear

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 and sign up for the emails that will bring you **Dharma Friends** newsletter and other news about prison issues. There are lots of healing videos on the website 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,

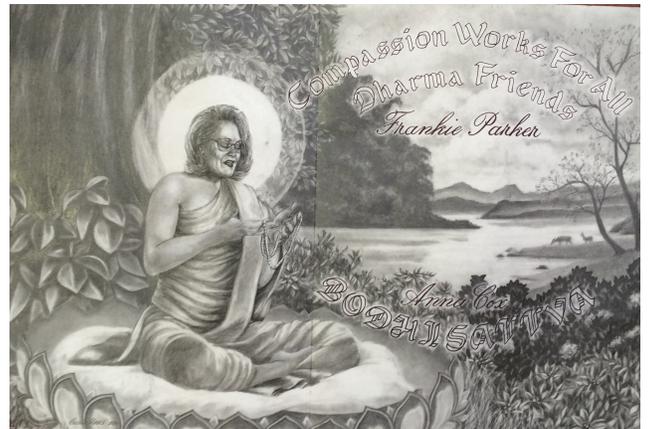
If you write to us – here are a few thoughts:

We greatly appreciate your art donations! If you would like to send art to us for calendars, art exhibits, cards, or to be displayed in Dharma Friends, we will cherish 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 of your art piece.

ASK TIM - Tim answers letters asking for help with those things that we know

you cannot do in prison. Tim looks up resources, but there are a few things he cannot 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.

Become the **Quote Master** for your unit! We offer a quote in each **Dharma Friends** to post on your bulletin board in your barracks. Who knows who might be inspired?



“Compassion Works for All |
Dharma Friends | Frankie Parker
| Anna Cox | Bodhisattva”

By Curtis M., Georgia

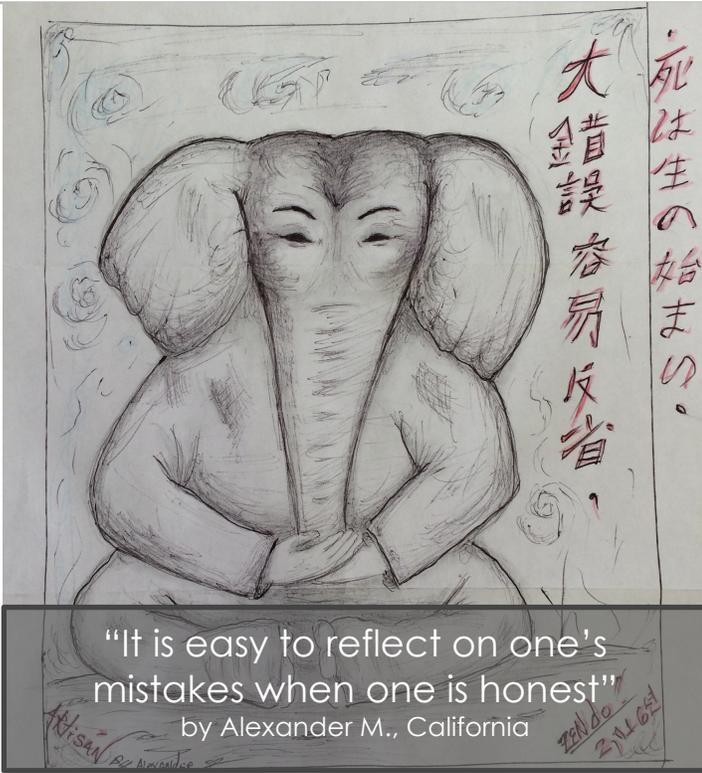
Subscription information for *Dharma Friends* newsletter

We are encouraging people to sign up for this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons and jails. Please write to us at:

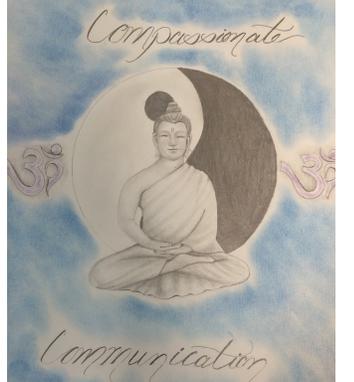
Compassion Works for All, attn.: Dharma Friends Subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR 72217-7708 to join our mailing list. It is truly important to remember that we are all mirrors of each other. We are all one with each other. And we can recognize that life is suffering for us all whether behind 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 mholladay@compassionarkansas.org.

*** Please let us know if your address changes ***

Include your old and new address



Below: **Marcus H.**,
Indiana
Top: **Sergio V.**,
California
Bottom R:
Jonathan M.,
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