

普觉awaken



年味

何妨万物常围绕

活着…聆听

禅的枯木逢春之道

禅者，活泼、自然、率真，非枯木死灰。一切皆出自本心本性，决不矫揉造作，正如《大慧禅师语录》所说：“不用安排，不假造作，自然活泼泼地，常露现前。”

The Power and Blessings
of Loving-kindness

Why We Should Extend
Loving-kindness to
All Beings

Can You Tell Me More
About Loving-kindness
Meditation?

Reconnecting as a
Family

Practising the Dharma
with a Family Life

Saykong Mipham Rinpoche candidly
talks about practising the Dharma
while maintaining a family life

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5 - 8月 / may - aug

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88 Recycling Kiosk

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To find out more, visit www.awarenessplace.com or call 6336 5067 (11.30am – 6.00pm Daily. Closed on Public Holidays)



Editor's Note

Replacing Negativity With Loving-Kindness

In the previous issue, we talked about developing emotional balance through the energy of mindfulness. With mindfulness, we come to realise that all emotions, positive or negative, are useful to our being as they help us to grow. With negative emotions, we learn to see their true nature, to be patient and to understand that all things come to pass. We also learn to transform them, through contemplation and practice, into positive qualities like loving-kindness and compassion.

So what is loving-kindness? It is the wish that all sentient beings experience happiness and have the causes of happiness (pg 55). We extend loving-kindness to all beings because every single possession we have and enjoy, including our very life, is due to the kindness of others. All the happiness that arises in this world comes about as a result of others' kindness. Because of this, all sentient beings deserve to be respected and appreciated (pg 43).

The Buddha said 11 advantages can be experienced by one who practises loving-kindness (pg 54). This deep love has immeasurable qualities and is one of the most powerful weapons against negative forces (pg 51). Closer to Science, studies have shown that people who are kind are happier, healthier, live longer and have more productive lives.

So when a difficult situation presents itself today, see it as an opportunity to engage in practice instead of falling into habit by responding with negative emotions (pg 46 & 56). Carry out simple acts of loving-kindness, without any thought of repayment or thanks. Look for opportunities to lift the spirit of someone who appears dejected. Do something nice to brighten the day of people you encounter as you go through life, not just strangers but also friends and family.

Kindness uplifts and warms the hearts of both the giver and receiver. It is healing, fosters a deep sense of fulfilment and reflects the very best of human nature.

You can also learn to permeate the whole atmosphere with your radiant thoughts of *metta* or loving-kindness in the meditation Q & A on page 36. Or if you still would like to learn other techniques, read page 61 for other useful books.

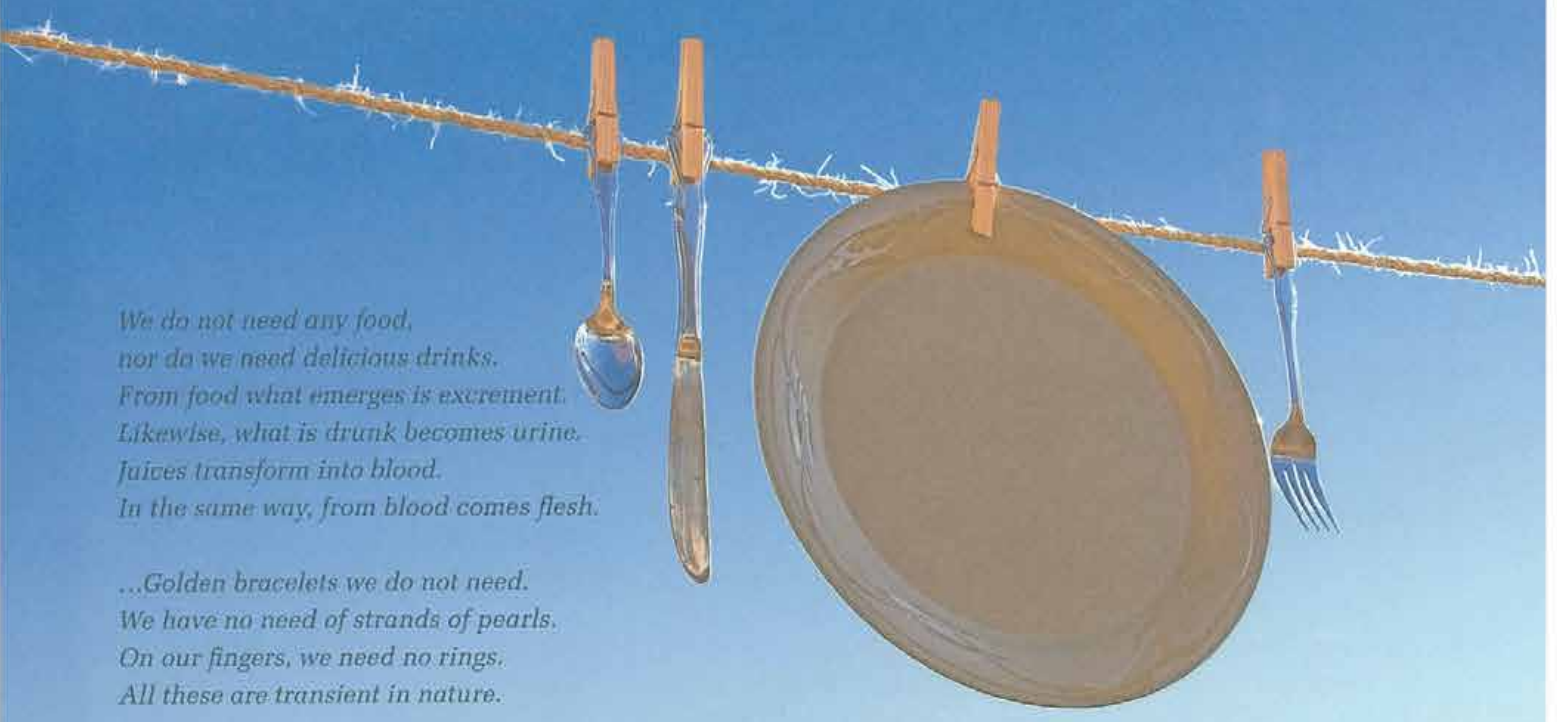
Elsewhere in this issue, Susan Kaiser Greenland gives a tip on reconnecting with our families (pg 41). Also read the contemplative piece on page 57 and ponder why you go to work everyday.



So go on, smile to that elderly neighbour and say 'thank you' to a sales person. Share the blessings you have received with those in need. We do not need disasters to strike before being reminded of the fragility of life, impermanence of wealth and of our duty for our lives to be an expression of loving-kindness.

Handwritten signature of Sister Esther Thien in black ink.

Yours in the Dharma,
Sister Esther Thien



*We do not need any food,
nor do we need delicious drinks.
From food what emerges is excrement.
Likewise, what is drunk becomes urine.
Juices transform into blood.
In the same way, from blood comes flesh.*

*...Golden bracelets we do not need.
We have no need of strands of pearls.
On our fingers, we need no rings.
All these are transient in nature.*

*Virtuous friends are what we need,
not to be wheel-turning kings.
Having left behind a lovely continent,
wheel-turning kings will also die.*

*Sons will not follow after them,
nor will wives or daughters.
The seven precious things will be left behind;
they will not follow after them.*

*...After being a king for just one life,
due to impermanence, they will wander.
Due to having done many wicked acts,
they will fall into the Howling Hell.*

*After being surrounded on all four sides
by seven jewels and by amazing power,
when the time for the Howling Hell ripens,
where will that amazing power be?*

*...Due to harmful actions one has done oneself,
one's life is short and one wanders.*

*They do not know death, but they know
kingdoms and the enjoyments they desire.
Those deceived by birth and death
do not know and have no fear.*

*...As they face death, they feel no remorse.
Again and again, they are reborn,
for a long time, overwhelmed with suffering,
...compelled by previous wickedness,
they are bound with the five bonds.*

*...We don't need kingdoms or property,
nor either wealth or even grain.
We do not need our own body;
those who act badly are not freed.
This being so, O Elder,
we do not have need for food.*

*Those who eat delicious foods,
even kings, will also die.
Those who drink the best of drinks,
deva sons, will also die.*

*Food and drink prepared with skill
and of many varied flavours,
are placed before the king, and then,
with his tongue, he touches them.*

*Then kings become attached to tastes
and commit not minor wicked acts,
attached to transitory tastes
that are lacking in essence.*

*We do not have need of drink,
nor do we have need of food.
What we need is such Dharma itself
that liberates us from suffering...*

*- The Buddha (The Arya Sanghata sutra
Dharmaparyaya)*

Can you tell me more about loving-kindness meditation?

Q: Can you tell me more about the meditation on loving-kindness? What is it about? — Anonymous

A: In loving-kindness meditation, we're wishing others to have happiness and its causes. And so we have to think deeply about what happiness means, because there are different levels of happiness. We are wishing others to have not only happiness in terms of good food, clothes and shelter, we are wishing them not only to have happiness in this life – good friends, career fulfillment, happy family, serene environment and so on.

We are wishing them to have the happiness that comes through internal spiritual development, also the happiness that comes through being free of grudges and belligerence and spite, the happiness that comes through being able to forgive and apologise, the happiness that comes through being able to open our hearts in affection to others no matter how they have treated us, the happiness that comes from recognising that all living beings have the potential to actualise, realise and expose the clear light nature of their mind and the internal good nature of their mind.



So as we are wishing others happiness, let's think deeply on the meaning of happiness on various levels: the short-term happiness, and long-term happiness that comes through internal growth.

First, let's start with ourselves. Let's wish ourselves to be well and happy, wishing ourselves to have temporal happiness, the good things of this life, as well as the deeper, long-lasting happiness that comes through spiritual development. Let's spend a minute or two wishing that kind of happiness for ourselves, imagining ourselves being happy, thinking in detail of the kind of happiness that we wish for ourselves.

Then let's expand that wish for happiness to include our friends and family, thinking again of specific people, and wishing them both the temporal happiness of this life, and also the long-term happiness that comes through spiritual growth. Make all these meditations very personal by thinking of specific people to generate these feelings towards - in this case, your own family and friends - and really imagine them being happy.

Next, wish this happiness for strangers, for all the people in the society, and on the planet, who contribute to our complex, interdependent world, from whom we have received benefit. All these people who we do not know, who want happiness, who want to be free of suffering with the same intensity that we do. Let's also wish them to be happy, both the happiness that comes from food, education, shelter and so forth in this lifetime, and the happiness

that comes through being free of ignorance, anger and attachment, the happiness that comes through spiritual development. Think of all the different people who contribute to our survival who we don't even know, let's imagine them being happy and really wish that for them.

Then let's think of the people with whom we don't get along very well, how they also want to be happy, and to be free of suffering. If they are happy and satisfied, if they are free from the neurotic tendencies that propel them to do the things that we find troublesome, if they have that kind of happiness, then we would all get along much better.

So when we wish others happiness, it's not necessarily wishing that they have everything they want, because sometimes people want things that in fact destroy their own happiness, for instance alcohol and substance abuse. So when we wish people happiness, we are not necessarily wishing that they have everything they want, we are wishing that they have the things they need to survive, and the

life circumstances that will lead them to recognise their own inner potential and the fruitlessness of their destructive behaviour. This helps generate a sense of positive self-worth and confidence, making their lives meaningful. That kind of happiness we can certainly wish for everybody, no matter whether they have helped or harmed us, or they are neutral towards us. So here, we concentrate especially on the people with whom we have difficulties, wanting them to be happy and free of suffering.

Let that feeling of love spread to all living beings throughout the universe, whoever they are, whatever they are experiencing. By feeling that affection, interconnection and love, wish them to be happy and free of suffering.

Hold those feelings in your mind. Let your mind and heart rest in it. Let those feelings become your nature. ☺

— Ven. Thubten Chodron

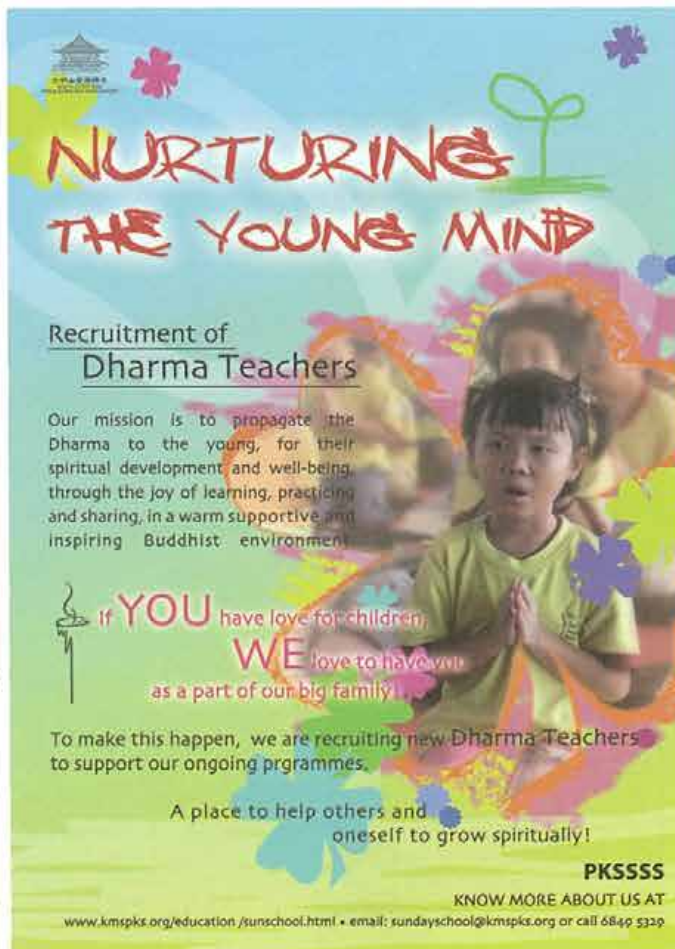
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www.sravasti.org

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Celebrate 2011 Vesak with the 2nd Asian Buddhist Film Festival

BY | Esther Thien

Singapore – Watching films is one of the most delightful ways to learn, so what better way to celebrate Vesak and express the diversity of the Buddhist way than to catch the inspiring films in the 2nd Asian Buddhist Film Festival.

To be held from 5 to 8 May at Golden Village Great World City, decide between introspective films from Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the United States. There are also three films on highly influential teachers. One of them is Neten Chokling's *Brilliant Moon: Glimpses of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche* (2010), a documentary about the life and extraordinary achievement of a monk who went into exile in 1959 but who, despite great difficulties, continued to practise and teach with dedicated intensity. The film, narrated by actor Richard Gere and rock star Lou Reed, does a beautiful job of showing how a sincere man can improve the lives of thousands of people around the world.

Uppalavanna (2007) is a strikingly original film set in war-torn Sri Lanka. This drama treats violence and the human passions that cause it insightfully, suggesting that the path of non-hatred is difficult but worthwhile in a society that very often promotes

the spirit of vengeance. The nun Uppalavanna faces a dilemma when an injured man who has committed political violence seeks her help. This film gives audiences an intimate glimpse into the lives of monastic nuns, who must balance spiritual discipline with ordinary community relations at all times.



The Thai animated film, *The Buddha*, also warrants a mention. Brought in by the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery to celebrate this year's Vesak, this world premiere of the English Disney-like animation portrays the struggles of Prince Siddhartha

before he finally attains Enlightenment as the Buddha, and his journey as one of the world's most famous teachers. A highly enjoyable film for the whole family.

Tickets are on sale at \$10 for regular films and \$20 for Opening and Closing Films. For updates on film programmes, synopses and film ratings, please log on to www.asianbuddhistfilmfest.org

A Fine Night of Cantonese Opera to Raise Funds for the Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic



Singapore –Take your parents to a fine night of Cantonese Opera for some post mid-autumn festival celebration. Presented by the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, the opera concert is organised to raise funds for the Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic (SBFC).

Scheduled for 17 September at the Esplanade Concert Hall, Cantonese Opera lovers get to savour a fine selection of quintessential opera pieces like *Dream meets Tai Lake*, *The Big Bridge* etc. These fine opera pieces will be performed to the accompaniment of SAF Music and Drama Company Chinese Orchestra and Tong Ann Chinese Opera Orchestra. Tickets are available from the monastery and Sistic at \$208, \$108, \$88, \$68, \$48 and \$38. Visit Sistic.com.sg from April to book good seats.

Project 11: Have A Leg Up For Charity This Vesak Day!

BY | Victor Lim

Singapore - To actualise the theme of "Universal Love, Peaceful Living" of this year's Vesak Celebrations, the Singapore Buddhist Federation and the Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery will be launching *Project 11*, in aid of The Prostheses Foundation. Established in 1992 by Thailand's Princess Mother, one of the Foundation's key objectives is to provide free leg prostheses to those who lost their legs through wars, accidents or diseases and could not afford to purchase the prosthetic legs.

This initiative is codenamed *Project 11*, because "11" looks like a pair of legs. By helping to provide prosthetic legs that are lighter, more comfortable to wear and cost-effective to produce, we hope that the recipients can lead normal lives with the artificial legs. As this year happens to be 2011, we would like to commence the year meaningfully with *Project 11* to help the physically-challenged.

Another benefit of this project is that it promotes recycling and is therefore environmentally friendly. The Foundation has researched extensively and now makes use of the aluminium pull tabs from the canned drinks to make components for the prosthetic legs. Examples of how these pull tabs are being used to help the physically-challenged include the following:

- Coupling equipment for the prostheses to be attached to the shank's axis
- Hip joint prostheses for hip disarticulation amputees
- Forearm crutches for disabled amputees who have yet to receive their prostheses
- Walkers to provide stability for the elderly with prostheses
- Special walking stick for patients with Alzheimer's disease

The choice of this project for this year's Vesak 2555 Celebration is to make it possible and convenient for everyone, both young and old, to play a part to promote universal love and compassion, and help the less-privileged.



Our target is to collect 5 tons (equivalent to 15 million pull tabs) by 30 November 2011. We understand

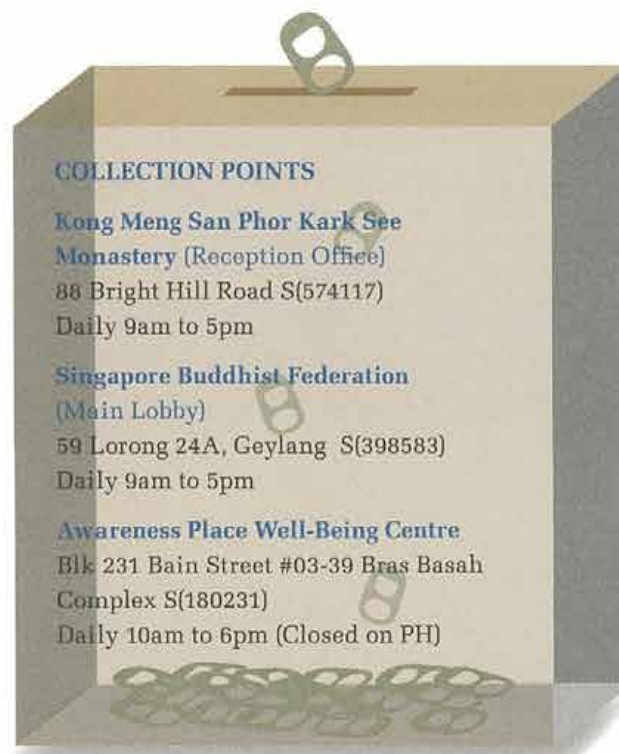
that 1kg of the canned drink tabs can be used to make the components for a pair of prosthetic legs. Upon reaching our target, the pull tabs can be used for the production of 10,000 prosthetic legs that can help to restore mobility and hope to the recipients. As such, we look forward to your support for our *Project 11* by starting to collect the tabs and helping to spread the message around.

From March 2011, members of the public can start contributing their canned drink tabs at the collection points indicated below from 9am to 5pm daily.

For more information and the latest list of collection points, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.prosthesesfoundation.or.th>

<http://vesakcelebrations.sg>



Long respected in the East for its medicinal properties, lotus root is traditionally used to treat various respiratory problems. Small doses of juice extracted from raw, finely grated lotus root is said to be helpful in treating heart disease and lung-related ailments, such as tuberculosis, asthma and coughing. Lotus root contains much iron, vitamins B and C. Besides increasing energy levels and neutralising toxins, lotus root is said to dissolve mucus accumulation in the body, especially in the respiratory system, stop diarrhoea, clear heat and improve appetite. The rich fibre content of lotus root also helps to improve digestion, reduce bad cholesterol level and relieve constipation.

Lotus Root Soup 莲藕汤



Photos: © Anutara Enterprises Pte Ltd

Ingredients:

Lotus root 600g, red dates 5, big red beans 30g, honey dates 5, peanuts 100g, dried mushroom stems 50g (soaked till soft), dried vegetables 20g, gluten 300g, water 20 bowls

Method:

1. Wash lotus root. Cut into pieces. Cut the gluten into pieces and deep fry till golden brown.
2. Add water to the ingredients. Simmer over slow heat for 3 hours. Season with salt before serving.

材料:

莲藕600克、红枣5颗、大红豆30克、蜜枣5颗、花生100克、冬菇脚50克(浸软)、菜干20克、面筋300克、清水20饭碗

做法:

1. 莲藕洗净切片, 面筋切块炸至金黄色。
2. 用料倒入清水, 以慢火熬煮3个小时。上桌前下盐调味。

Sweet and Sour Vegetarian Pork Ribs

酸甜素排



Ingredients:

Twisted cruller (you tiao) 2 (slightly fried, cut into 20 pcs), lotus root 100g (cut into short lengths), pineapple 1pc (fresh or canned, sliced), cucumber 1/2 (skinned, core removed, sliced), green peas 2 tbsp, red chillies 2 (sliced)

Seasoning:

Water 1 cup (or canned pineapple juice), sugar 1 tbsp, vinegar (or fruit vinegar) 1/2 tbsp, tomato sauce 2 tbsp, salt 1/2 tsp, sesame oil 1 tsp

Thickening:

Mix 1/2 tsp of potato flour with 1 tsp of water. Stir well.
Batter: Mix 5 tbsp of water with 3 tbsp of potato flour. Stir well. Set aside.

Method:

1. Stuff the lotus root into the twisted cruller. Coat with batter. Fry with oil till crispy. Vegetarian pork rib is ready.
2. Fry the cucumber, green peas, red chilli and pineapple with 2 tbsp of oil. Add seasoning and thickening. Pour over the vegetarian pork ribs.

材料:

白油条2条(略炸过, 切成20件)、莲藕100克(切条状)、黄梨1块(新鲜或罐头, 切片)、黄瓜半条(去心去皮, 切片)、青豆2汤匙、红辣椒2条(切片)

调味料:

清水1杯(或黄梨罐头汁)、糖1汤匙、醋(随意, 可用水果醋)1/2汤匙、番茄酱2汤匙、酸梅膏1汤匙、盐1/2茶匙、麻油1茶匙、生粉水适量(1/2茶匙生粉加1茶匙清水)

粉水:

5汤匙清水与3汤匙生粉拌匀。待用。

做法:

1. 1条莲藕放进油条中间再蘸粉水, 用油炸脆, 即是素排。
2. 以2汤匙油炒黄瓜、青豆、红辣椒及黄梨, 加调味料及勾芡, 淋在素排上。

Reconnecting as a Family

Family life can be very, very busy. So busy that sometimes it's hard to clearly see what's happening in our children's and spouse's lives and clearly hear what they are trying to tell us.

With mindfulness we take a moment to slow down and stop what we're doing in order to reconnect with ourselves, with each other and with the world around us. A good place to begin is by choosing a time each day to make mindfulness your family's top priority. Here are just a few of countless opportunities available daily to slow down and experience mindfulness together:

Snack time


We slow down and enjoy being together as we pay close attention to the tastes, smells, sights, sounds and sensations of eating and drinking healthy snacks.

Nature time

We slow down and enjoy being together as we take a walk (or lie down on a blanket) and appreciate the smells, sights, sounds and other sensations of being outdoors.

Slow and silent walking

We walk back and forth (either indoors or outdoors) and pay close attention to the sensation of the bottom of our feet against the earth with each step.

Make sure you set aside some time to share your thoughts and feelings with each other when practising mindfulness together. This is a great time to ask your children about what's happening in their inner and outer worlds and tell them about what's happening in yours! 

By Susan Kaiser Greenland, author of *The Mindful Child*, and Founder of the Inner Kids Foundation which developed the Inner Kids mindful awareness programme for children, teens and families.
(www.susankaisergreenland.com)





Loving-kindness... an expression of its natural face

Loving-kindness may arise when we view the world as it really is.... as the outer display of a pure and infinite expanse of perfection. Like the surface of that essential state extended as colours, shapes, forms and sounds, we may recognise all beings — from plants to insects, animals to humans — as its jewels. With this attitude, we cannot help but treat all children of this same mother with respect and adoration. Sharing ensues, a loving feeling remains, along with the wish to cooperate with our brothers and sisters everywhere. So do we partake fully in the great system as one family.

— Susan M. Griffith-Jones, 37, Author

To me, loving-kindness is the supreme experience of all love — the love that treats all sentient beings with equanimity. Applying loving-kindness in my life has enabled me to eliminate the ultimate harbinger of suffering — the dualities of life.

Loving-kindness has given me peace of mind and I am able to see things just as they are.

There are many ways to practise loving-kindness. From my personal experience, I start by contemplating emptiness and the fact that our thoughts create our reality. Understanding these calms my inner state of mind.

It is also important to continue practising reflection regardless of our life circumstances. This allows us to express regret for the mistakes we have made so as not to commit them again. We should then identify our vulnerability of making mistakes and understand that others are likewise vulnerable and make mistakes too. This brings about forgiveness towards others and ourselves, thereby bonding all of us together. By this point, we are able to complete the last step to generate loving-kindness — seeing the sufferings of others through our eyes. We are able to do that because of the preceding steps.

Only when we have reached this stage are we able to finally soothe our hearts and look upon others with benevolence, which is the very essence of loving-kindness."

— Patrick Tay, 33, Editor



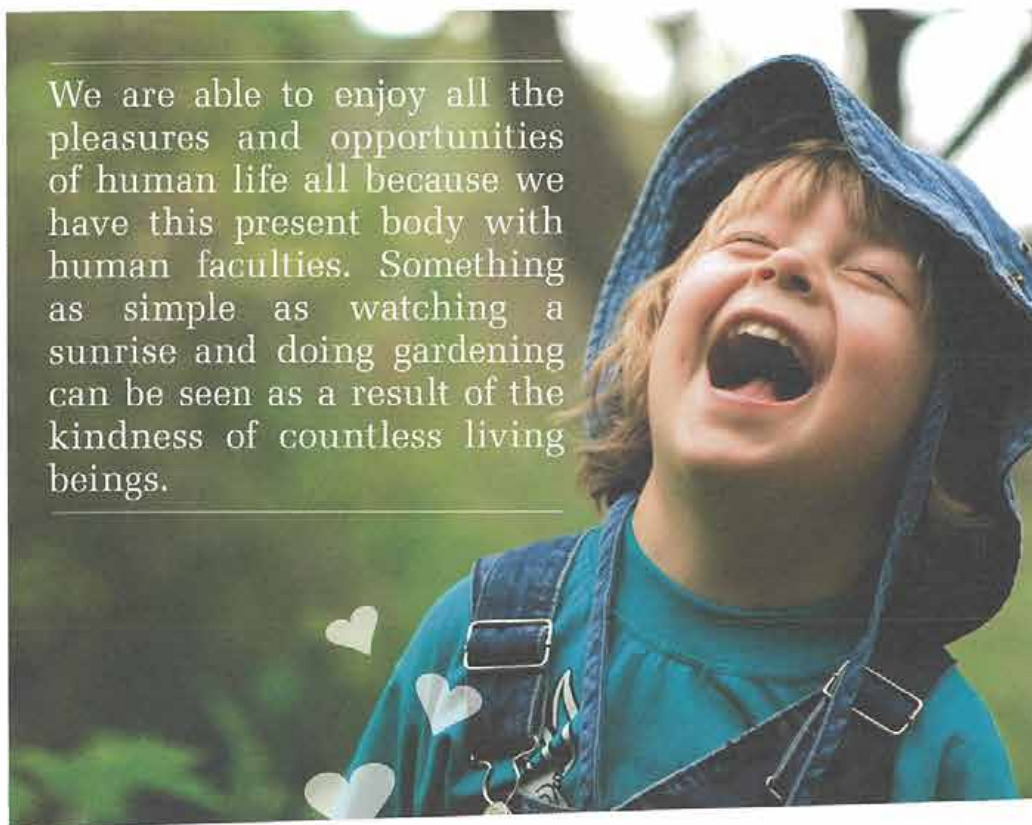
Why We Should Extend Loving-kindness to All Beings

Kindness of countless living beings

All sentient beings deserve to be respected and appreciated because of the wonderful kindness that they have shown to us. All of our happiness, whether temporary or ultimate, arises out of their kindness. For example, even the body we presently have is the result of the kindness of others. It is borne out of the union of our father's sperm and mother's ovum. Upon our conception, we depend on the kindness of our mother in allowing us to stay in her womb and in nourishing our body with her blood and warmth. For our sake, our mother has had to bear great discomfort and suffer the excruciating pains of childbirth. When we were helpless as a baby, our mother protected us from danger, fed us, cleaned us and loved us. If not for her kindness, we would not be alive today. Therefore, the very fact that we are alive and well now is a testimony to the great kindness of others.

Getting a continuous supply of food, drink, care and concern, we slowly grew from a little helpless infant to an adult with the body we have right now. All the nourishment that we received was provided directly or indirectly by innumerable living beings. Thus, every cell, muscle and part of our body is the result of others' kindness. Even those who may have never seen or known their mother have received loving care and nourishment from other people.

We are able to enjoy all the pleasures and opportunities of human life all because we have this present body with human faculties. Something as simple as watching a sunrise and doing gardening can be seen as a result of the kindness of countless living beings.



All our skills, abilities, training and professionalism also come from the kindness of others. When we were young, we had to be taught how to eat, walk, talk, and how to read and write. Even the language we speak is not our own creation but the end result of many generations. Without language, we would not be able to communicate with others or share ideas. We would not have been able to read this magazine or other Buddhist books to learn the Dharma, contemplate deeply and develop spiritually.

All the facilities we take for granted – houses, shops, schools, hospitals, banks, roads and vehicles

– are built solely through others' kindness. When we travel by car or bus we take the roads for granted, but many people worked very hard to construct them and make them secure for our use.

The fact that some of the people who help us may not have the intention of doing so is irrelevant.

We receive practical benefit from their actions, so from our point of view this is kindness.

Contemplating in this way, we see that everyone who contributes in any way towards our happiness and well-being is deserving of our gratitude.

“But, when we go shopping or eat in restaurant we have to pay,”

you say. “When we need a house, we have to first pay for it, including tax and insurance. Nothing comes free,” you argue. But think about it, where and how do we get money in the first place? Although it is true that most of us have to work for our money, if we do not have others who employ us or purchase our merchandise, would we still be able to receive money? So indirectly it is others who provide us with money. Moreover, we are able to be skilful at a particular occupation because we have received the necessary training, education or mentoring from other people. So wherever we look, we see only the kindness of others, and realise that we are all interconnected in this web of kindness from which it is impossible to separate ourselves and others.

Every single thing we have and every single thing we enjoy, including our very life, is due to the kindness of others. In fact, all the happiness that arises in this world comes about as a result of others' kindness.


Spiritual development depends upon others

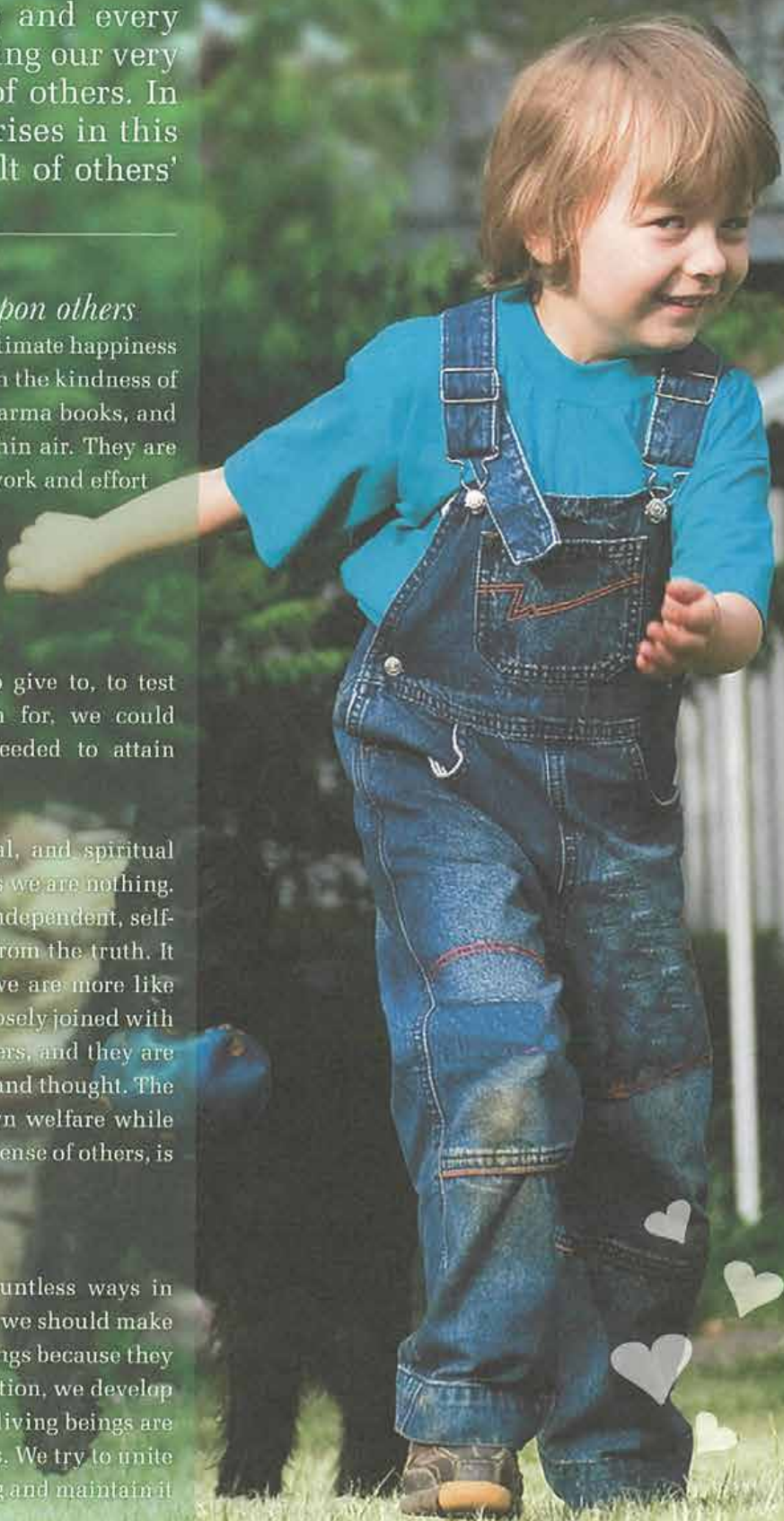
Even our spiritual development and the ultimate happiness of full enlightenment depend entirely upon the kindness of other living beings. Buddhist centres, Dharma books, and meditation courses do not appear out of thin air. They are the end products of the dedication, hard work and effort of many people. We have the chance to read, reflect and meditate on the Buddha's teachings all because of the kindness of others.

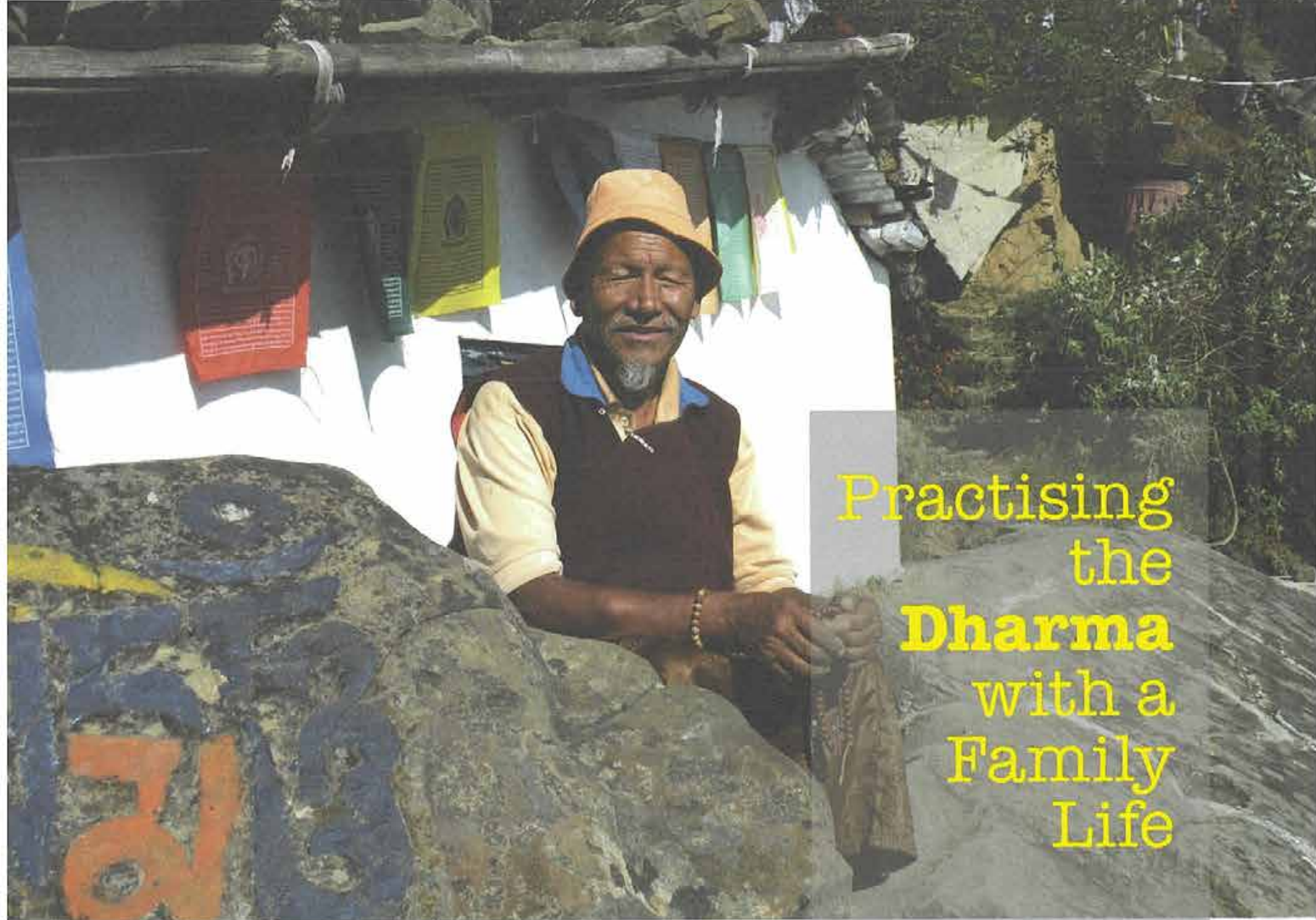
Also, if we do not have living beings to give to, to test our patience, or to develop compassion for, we could never develop the virtuous qualities needed to attain enlightenment.

In a nutshell, for our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being, we need others. Without others we are nothing. Thinking that we are each an island, an independent, self-sufficient individual couldn't be further from the truth. It bears no relation to reality, for in truth we are more like cells in the vast body of life, distinct yet closely joined with one another. We cannot exist without others, and they are in turn affected by our every action, word and thought. The notion that it is possible to secure our own welfare while neglecting that of others, or even at the expense of others, is completely unrealistic.

Loving-kindness Meditation

Contemplating in this manner on the countless ways in which others help us, with determination, we should make a strong aspiration to cherish all living beings because they are so kind to us. Based on this firm aspiration, we develop a feeling of cherishing all, a sense that all living beings are important and that their happiness matters. We try to unite our mind single-pointedly with this feeling and maintain it for as long as we can without forgetting it. 





Practising the Dharma with a Family Life

Awaken: How is it like being a Dharma master and having a family?

Sakyong: You try not to separate family life from the Dharma. In Vajrayana, there are two pinnacles of Buddhism being transmitted. One is through the *Tulku*, or incarnation line and the other is through the family line, which I belong to. So you have a family and you practise at the same time. It's about striking a balance. There is a tendency to think that to have spirituality, you must leave your family. But in the modern world, it's quite difficult to do that. Therefore we try to show another way. However, it is important that you and your spouse share the same views on the approach to life so you can support each other in your journey towards enlightenment.

Awaken: So your wife is also a practitioner?

Sakyong: Yes she is. Her father is also a Rinpoche and her family comes from a line of practitioners. She practises every day.

Awaken: What kind of practices do the both of you do?

Saykong Mipham Rinpoche speaks to Esther Thien about practising the Dharma and proactively engaging in practice while maintaining a family life.

Sakyong: Sometimes we practise together but we also do our individual practices. Her family is Nyingma and mine belongs to the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions, and we also do Shambhala practices. At times, I also do meditation and Guru Rinpoche practices with her family.

Awaken: How do you balance teaching with your practices and at the same time your responsibility as a husband?

Sakyong: To balance, I think you need to spend time together as a family. And for practices, it is important that you maintain continuity even if what you are doing is just a very brief practice. The problem with most people is they say their practice is too short, so when they are busy, they don't make time for it, then one day turns into one week, then one month, and eventually they stop doing it.

Awaken: What is your advice towards cultivating a more spiritual heart and developing practice in our daily life?

Sakyong: I think it has to do with priority. If people regard their personal and spiritual development as the most important thing in their lives, then they will put everything in perspective and make time for it. They will understand that one works to live but that to live well, the most vital thing is the development of one's heart and mind. On the other hand, if people feel that it is not important, they just forget or stop doing their practice when things get busy. Therefore it is about prioritising and managing time, because as the entire world gets busier and busier, naturally one starts weeding out what is not important. I think it is good to meditate or do a short chant even if it is just a few minutes, every now and then. It keeps you connected to the Triple Gem.

Awaken: How should we deal with the times when we feel that our practice is not going too well, and we are experiencing a lot more distractions?

Sakyong: Meditation is just like a journey on a wheel. When it goes forward, it also has to go backwards. Sometimes you may feel like you are getting worse and a lot more distracted, but as long as you are consistent in your practice, knowing how the practice works and you are applying it correctly, you will continue to move forward. You must be

patient and pro-active, putting effort into engaging the practice. When you are doing the practice, you are developing your mind, and progressing towards cultivating a sense of strength and clarity. And that is helpful to our lives. If during meditation, you sit there, spaced out the whole time, you are just wasting time because then it is no different from the time you are spaced out while waiting for a bus.

Awaken: Can Rinpoche explain how we can be more pro-active in engaging in our practice?

Sakyong: You can use thoughts to contemplate your actions. So if you are trying to be mindful, to be compassionate, try to see what is the right thing to do.

A lot of times, we got ourselves into difficult situations because we made poor decisions and did the wrong things, or gave in to our negative emotions like anger. Each and every moment or occurrence is an opportunity to engage in practice, instead of falling into habit by responding with negative emotions.

When most people experience difficult times, they do just that. We need to take a positive habit, build it into our meditation and use it, instead of waiting for mindfulness or compassion to happen.

Awaken: What are the problems you encounter when you teach Dharma to the masses?

Sakyong: Perhaps it is because Dharma is a lot more widely taught now, in books and films, I find that there arises this situation in which people gather and hear the Dharma but do not make the shift to applying it internally. When we don't apply it, we will not see the results.

Awaken: How can we tell if a Buddhist teacher, monastic or lay is a good teacher for us? Do perfect teachers even exist?

Sakyong: It depends on the level of practice one is on. Basically you must feel good about the teacher, and know that the teacher has the knowledge

and experience you are seeking. You must also be confident that the teacher did not make it up but went through a process of training. Sometimes, a good teacher may say something you do not want to hear but helps you in your spiritual development. It is also important to understand that the student shares half of the responsibility and one needs to be aware of one's objective of finding a teacher.



The Buddha mentioned that in this time and age, there is no perfect teacher. In Vajrayana Buddhism, we try to see the teacher as perfect but what we are really doing is to look at the Buddha qualities in the teacher. When one looks at the whole world and only sees faults, it brings out the faults in one. Therefore, find a teacher in whom you can see good qualities and learn those good qualities.

It takes time to understand and be connected to a teacher. You can easily count on and depend on those teachers who are already realised, established and have great trust from many people. But there are also those whom you do not know much about. For these teachers, you have to go through a process of seeing and checking. The teacher represents not only the temple but also the Dharma, therefore the

teacher must be transparent and responsible in his actions. The student must also probe healthily and clarify any doubts to understand the teacher well.

The main point of the teacher is to help us along the path, either inspiring us or literally teaching us knowledge. The teacher acts as a guide, providing structure and instructions on the path, so we won't deviate, and at times inspiring us through his exertions. Also the teacher must have the karmic connection with us. Not every student will connect with every teacher.

Awaken: How do we know if our practice is going the right way?

Sakyong:

If you notice that you are developing in a more positive way, your practice is working.

If you find that you are becoming prouder, getting angry or jealous easily or developing extreme ideas, clearly the result is not going in the right direction. Dharma practice is supposed to help you develop more positive qualities, which translates to one being able to get along well with others. ☸

His Eminence (H.E.) Sakyong Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche was born in 1962 in Bodh Gaya, India. He is a lineage holder in the Kagyu and Nyingma Lineages of Tibetan Buddhism and is the head of the Shambhala Buddhist lineage. He is also the spiritual director of Shambhala, a global network of meditation and retreat centres, and the lineage holder of Naropa University. He has published over 15 texts, four books, two on poetry, and the other two titled *Turning the Mind into An Ally*, and *Ruling Your World*, as well as a CD of modern music. He has studied extensively with His Holiness Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (who was like a second father to him), His Holiness Penor Rinpoche (who enthroned him as the Sakyong of the Shambhala lineage), Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche, Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche and a number of other teachers. In 2007, he gave a public talk and meditation workshop in Singapore. Visit www.shambhala.sg and www.shambhala.org for more information.

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2. One will be protected by devas, and be unharmed by natural and man-made disasters.
3. One will always be free from the suffering of hatred and vengeance.
4. One will be unharmed by yaksas, evil spirits and wild beasts.
5. One's mind will be at peace, free from harm and nightmares.
6. One's complexion will be radiant.
7. One will be full of auspicious energy.
8. One who practises the Dharma wholeheartedly will have adequate living necessities.
9. One's family will be harmonious and be blessed with fortune and wisdom.
10. One who practises what one preaches will be respected and loved by all.
11. One who is dull-minded will gain wisdom.
12. One who is ill will gain health.
13. One who is poor will gain wealth.
14. One will be free of being reborn in the negative realms.
15. One will be able to help others grow in wisdom and gain great merits in doing so.
16. One will always be able to learn the Dharma, till one's wisdom and spiritual penetrations are fully grown and one becomes a Buddha.

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HOW the Discourse of Loving-kindness or *Metta Sutta* Came About

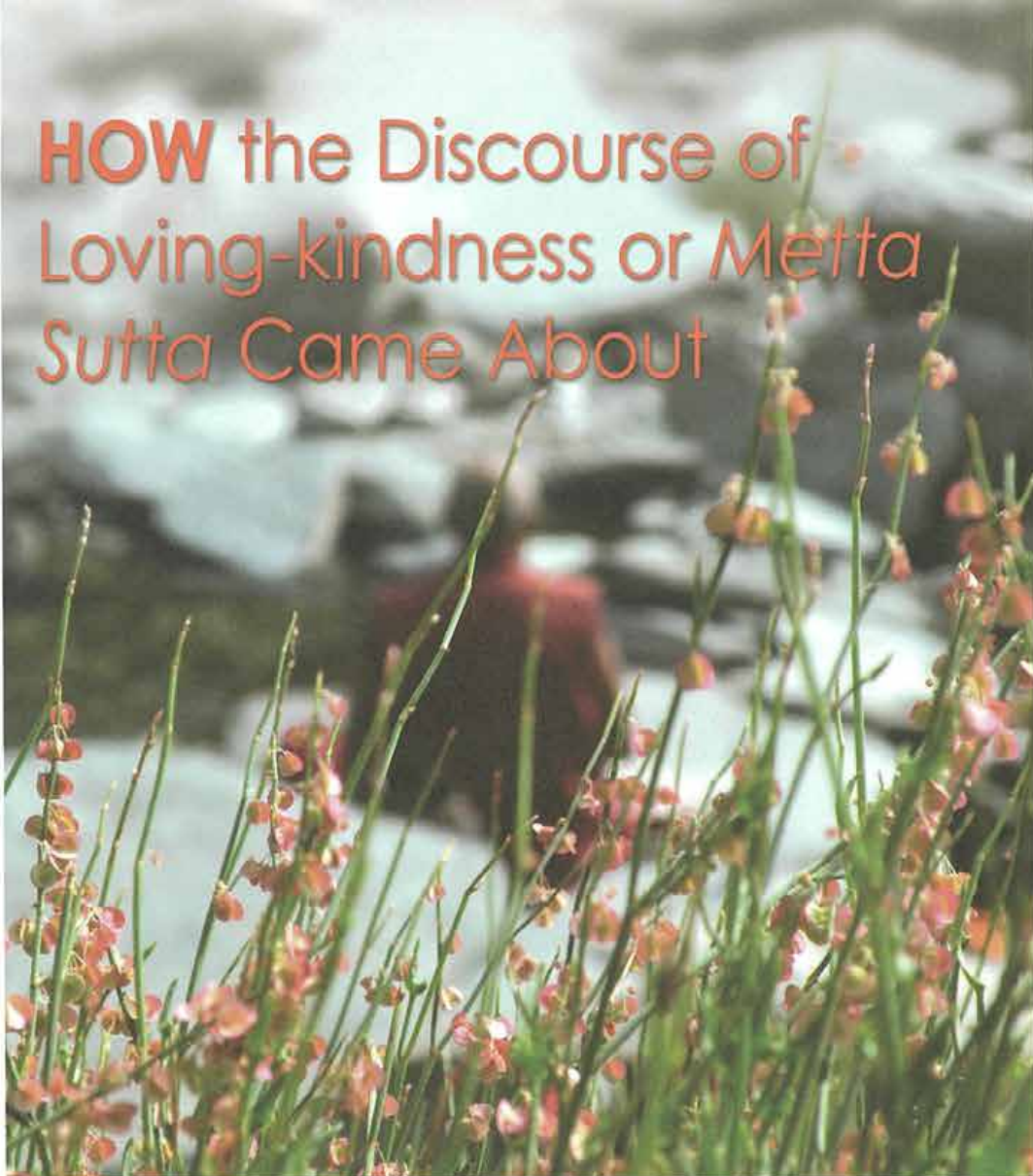
The historical background which led the Buddha to expound the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* is explained in the commentary written by Acariya Buddhaghosa, who received it from an unbroken line of Elders going back to the days of the Buddha himself.

It is told that five hundred monks received instructions from the Buddha in the particular techniques of meditation suitable to their individual temperaments. They then went to the foothills of the Himalayas to spend the four months of the rains' retreat by living a life of withdrawal and intensive meditation. In those days, a month or two before the rains' retreat started, monks from all parts of the country would assemble wherever the Buddha lived in order to receive direct instruction from the Supreme Master. Then they would go back to their monasteries, forest dwellings or hermitages to make a vigorous attempt at spiritual liberation. This was how these five hundred monks went to the Buddha, who was staying at Savatthi in Jeta's Grove in the monastery built by Anathapindika.

After receiving instructions they went in search of a suitable place, and in the course of their wandering soon found a beautiful hillock at the foothills of the Himalayas. This, according to the commentary, "appeared like a glittering blue quartz crystal: it was embellished with a cool, dense, green forest

grove and a stretch of ground strewn with sand, resembling a pearl net or a silver sheet, and was furnished with a clean spring of cool water." The bhikkhus were captivated by the sight. There were a few villages nearby, and also a small market-town ideal as alms-resort. The monks spent a night in that idyllic grove and the next morning went to the market-town for alms.

The residents there were overjoyed to see the monks, since rarely did a community of monks come to spend the retreat in that part of the Himalayas. These pious devotees fed the monks and begged them to stay on as their guests, promising to build each a hut near the grove on the sandy stretch so that they could spend their days and nights plunged in meditation under the ancient boughs of the majestic trees. The bhikkhus agreed and the devotees of the area soon built little huts in the fringe of the forest



and provided each hut with a wooden cot, a stool and pots of water for drinking and washing.

After the monks had settled down contentedly in these huts, each one selected a tree to meditate under, by day and by night. Now it is said that these great trees were inhabited by tree deities who had a celestial mansion built, appropriately using the trees as the base. These deities, out of reverence for the meditating monks, stood aside with their families. Virtue was revered by all, particularly so by deities, and when the monks sat under the trees, the deities, who were householders, did not like to remain above them. The deities had thought that the monks would remain only for a night or two, and gladly bore the inconvenience. But when day after day passed and the monks still kept occupying the bases of the trees, the deities wondered when they would go away. They were like dispossessed villagers whose houses had been commandeered by the officials of visiting royalty and they kept watching anxiously from a distance, wondering when they would get their houses back.

These dispossessed deities discussed the situation among themselves and decided to frighten the monks away by showing them terrifying objects, by making dreadful noises and by creating a sickening stench. Accordingly, they materialised all these terrifying conditions and afflicted the monks. The monks soon

grew pale and could no longer concentrate on their subjects of meditation. As the deities continued to harass them, they lost even their basic mindfulness, and their minds seemed to become smothered by the oppressing visions, noise and stench. When the monks assembled to wait upon the seniormost Elder of the group, each one recounted his experiences. The Elder suggested, "Let us go, brethren, to the Blessed One and place our problem before him. There are two kinds of rains' retreat — the early and the late. Though we will be breaking the early one by leaving this place, we can always take upon ourselves the late one after meeting the Lord." The monks agreed and they set out at once, it is said, without even informing the devotees.

By stages they arrived at Savatthi, went to the Blessed One, prostrated at his feet, and related their frightful experiences, pathetically requesting another place. The Buddha, through his supernormal power, scanned the whole of India, but finding no place except the same spot where they could achieve spiritual liberation, told them, "Monks, go back to the same spot! It is only by striving there that you will effect the destruction of inner taints. Fear not! If you want to be free from the harassment caused by the deities, learn this sutta. It will be a theme for meditation as well as a formula for protection (paritta)."

Then the Master recited the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* — the Hymn of Universal Love — which the monks



learned by rote in the presence of the Lord. Then they went back to the same place.

As the monks neared their forest dwellings reciting the *Metta Sutta*, thinking and meditating on the underlying meaning, the hearts of the deities became so charged with warm feelings of good-will that they materialised themselves in human form and received the monks with great piety. They took their bowls, conducted them to their rooms, caused water and food to be supplied, and then, resuming their normal form, invited them to occupy the bases of the trees and meditate without any hesitation or fear.

Further, during the three months of the rains' residence, the deities not only looked after the monks in every way but made sure that the place was completely free from any noise. Enjoying perfect silence, by the end of the rainy season all the monks attained the pinnacle of spiritual perfection. Every one of the five hundred monks had become an *arahant*.

Indeed, such is the power intrinsic in the *Metta Sutta*. Whoever with firm faith will recite the sutta, invoking the protection of the deities and meditating on *metta*, will not only safeguard himself in every way but will also protect all those around him, and will make spiritual progress that can be actually verified. No harm can ever befall a person who follows the path of *metta*. ☸

(excerpted from *Metta: The Philosophy and Practice of Universal Love*, by Acharya Buddhārakkhita. ©1989 Buddhist Publication Society.)

The Karaniya Metta Sutta

The discourse is divided into two parts. The first detailing the standard of moral conduct required by one who wishes to attain Purity and Peace, and the second the method of practice of *metta*.

He who is skilled in (working out his own) well-being, and who wishes to attain that state of Calm (Nibbana) should act thus: he should be dexterous, upright, exceedingly upright, obedient, gentle, and humble.

Contented, easily supportable, with but few responsibilities, of simple livelihood, controlled in the senses, prudent, courteous, and not hanker after association with families.

Let him not perform the slightest wrong for which wise men may rebuke him. (Let him think:) 'May all beings be happy and safe. May they have happy minds.'

Whatever living beings there may be — feeble or strong (or the seekers and the attained) long, stout, or of medium size, short, small, large, those seen or those unseen, those dwelling far or near, those who are born as well as those yet to be born — may all beings have happy minds.

Let him not deceive another nor despise anyone anywhere. In anger or ill-will let him not wish another ill.

Just as a mother would protect her only child with her life even so let one cultivate a boundless love towards all beings.

Let him radiate boundless love towards the entire world — above, below, and across — unhindered, without ill-will, without enmity.

Standing, walking, sitting or reclining, as long as he is awake, let him develop this mindfulness. This, they say, is 'Noble Living' here.

Not falling into wrong views — being virtuous, endowed with insight, lust in the senses discarded — verily never again will he return to conceive in a womb.

A King called Power of Love

ADAPTED BY | Esther Thien

ILLUSTRATIONS | Bee Li

1. Once upon a time, before Shakyamuni Buddha became a Buddha, he was a bodhisattva who was born into a royal family. He grew up to become a king named "Power of Love".



2. At that time, five fierce rakshasas or ogres with sharp nails and iron-like teeth entered his kingdom.

They were about to kill some shepherds and their sheep, when they realised they could not inflict even the slightest injury on both humans and animals.

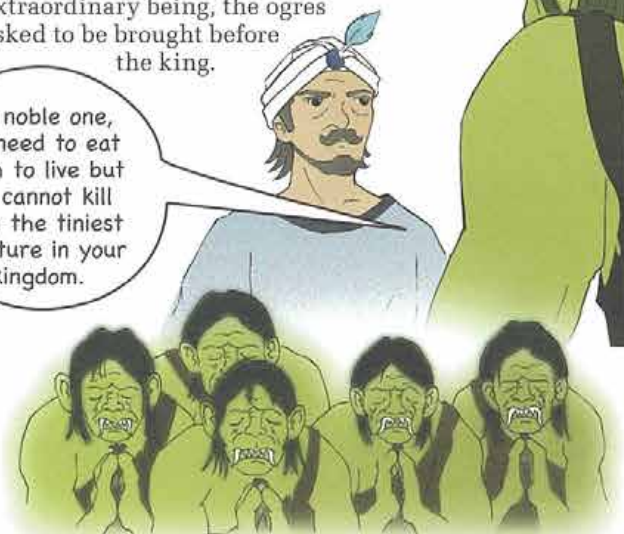


5. Amazed to hear of such an extraordinary being, the ogres asked to be brought before the king.

Oh noble one, we need to eat flesh to live but we cannot kill even the tiniest creature in your kingdom.



7. The moment the ogres savoured the flesh of the virtuous king, great love for those around them welled up in their hearts and all desires to harm others vanished.



If these rakshasas find nothing to eat, they will die. But I don't want to sacrifice any lives. I can only feed them with my own flesh

6. And so this was what he did.

Loving-kindness is the wish that others will experience happiness and find the causes of happiness. Loving-kindness has immeasurable qualities. If you have this deep love within your being, you naturally benefit others, putting the welfare of others before your own. Because of this, there is no way any kind of evil influence can harm you, for loving-kindness and compassion are the most powerful weapons against negative forces.

— Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche

The Power and Blessings of Loving-kindness

ADAPTED BY I
Esther Thien



A long time ago, there lived a landlord named Visakha. One day, he decided to travel to Sri Lanka and spend the rest of his life there as a monk. Leaving his great fortune to his wife and children, he left with a single gold coin in his possession. At the port, he struck a business deal with that one coin while waiting for a ship and made a thousand gold coins. When he reached Sri Lanka and was about to be ordained, he gave all his money away saying, "Let no one who has come to witness Visakha's ordination depart empty-handed."

After spending five years with his teacher, he decided to go to the jungle-monastery of Cittalapabbata. On his way, he came to a junction and was wondering which route to take when a certain deity who lived in a rock there pointed the road to him. He was able to see the deity as he had been practising loving-kindness meditation diligently.

Time passed and he had been staying at one of the monastery's huts for four months. One day, he was thinking of leaving the next morning when he heard someone weeping. "Who is that?" he asked.

"Venerable sir, I am Maniliya," answered the deva who lived in the manila tree at the end of the walkway.


"Why are you weeping?"

"Because you are thinking of leaving this place. Venerable sir, as long as you live here, the devas

and other non-human beings treat one another with kindness. But once you are gone, they will again start their squabbling and quarrels."

"Well, if my presence makes all of you live peacefully together, it is good."

So he stayed on for another four months, and when he thought of leaving the second time, it is said that the deity wept yet again. Thus the Elder stayed on permanently and attained Nirvana in the jungle-monastery of Cittalapabbata.

Such is the impact of loving-kindness on others, even among invisible beings. 

Monks, eleven advantages are to be expected from the release (deliverance) of heart by familiarising oneself with thoughts of loving-kindness, by the cultivation of loving-kindness, by constantly increasing these thoughts, by regarding loving-kindness as a vehicle (of expression), and also as something to be treasured, by living in conformity with these thoughts, by putting these ideas into practice, and by establishing them. What are the eleven?

1. One sleeps happily;
2. One wakes happily;
3. One does not suffer bad dreams;
4. One is dear to human beings;
5. One is dear to non-human beings;
6. The gods protect one;
7. No fire or poison or weapon harms one;
8. One's mind can concentrate quickly;
9. The expression of one's face is serene;
10. One dies unperturbed without being confused in mind; and
11. Even if one fails to attain higher states, one will at least reach the state of the Brahma world.

These eleven advantages, monks, are to be expected from the release of heart by familiarising oneself with thoughts of loving-kindness, by cultivation of loving-kindness, by constantly increasing these thoughts, by regarding loving-kindness as a vehicle (of expression), and also as something to be treasured, by living in conformity with these thoughts, by putting these ideas into practice and by establishing them.

— The Buddha (AN 11.16)

My loving-kindness is exceptional!

BY | Toh Sze Gee

Sitting comfortably on my meditation cushion,
I radiated loving-kindness to all beings in every direction:
“May they be free from animosity.”
“May they be free from oppression.”
“May they be free from trouble.”
“May they look after themselves with ease.”

Ahhh... that felt good! How I love all beings, nameless dots out there —
Well ... except for that old lady gossiping loudly on her phone in the bus this morning; why couldn't she keep her mouth shut and let me take a nap?

And... except for that co-worker who almost put me in a bad light at the meeting; when I become his superior one day, I'll show him my true colours!

And... except for that woman who thought she could jump queue right under my nose at lunchtime; didn't she realise that she was asking for trouble?

And... except for that young man pretending to be asleep in what would otherwise be my seat on the MRT; couldn't he be a little more caring and try to look after others?

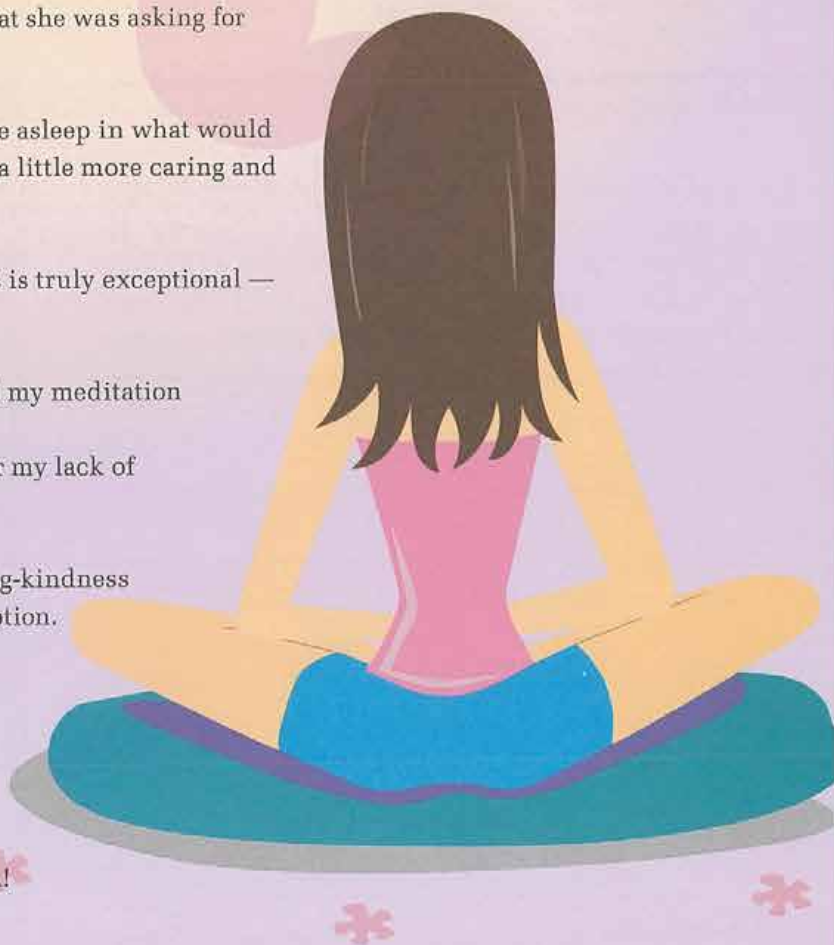
As you can see, my loving-kindness for all beings is truly exceptional — since it has quite a few exceptions!

To be honest, I haven't had too much luck beyond my meditation cushion.
Of course, I wouldn't dare to blame any of you for my lack of success so far.

But believe me, I really want to develop the loving-kindness that encompasses all of you beings without exception.
So do me a favour, won't you?

When our paths cross I'll really appreciate you behaving nicely to me.
Do you think you'll be able to do that?

I thank you in advance for your kind cooperation!



Why Do You Go To Work Everyday?

The Dragon Tribe of Long Island —
The State that Needs No Money

BY | Zhu Lan



Walking along seemingly familiar streets, the blue skies and sweet air revealed that this was a foreign land. Looking around, I found the whole street covered with lush green trees and fresh flowers while images of buildings and vehicles all felt very pleasing to the eyes. There was not the slightest tinge of luxurious extravagance. Everything was simple, pleasing and natural. Although passers-by were of different ethnic groups and skin colours, they all looked happy and delighted. One could not help but smile upon seeing such overflowing joy and happiness. Though I did not know where I was, intuition told me this was a good and beautiful place.

As I walked on, I felt a little thirsty so I leisurely strolled into a coffee shop round the corner. After drinking a cup of thick, fragrant and delicious coffee, I left my seat, intending to pay for the beverage. The genial service personnel who seemed a little stunned, asked, "What is money?"

Even more stunned, I decided to check which country I was in. I walked into a bookstore not far away and went straight to the map section. I discovered that this was an enormous state but it did not match any of the countries on Earth. "Is it not on Earth? But I have never heard of any findings on human habitation on any other planets," I thought.

I returned to the streets, totally confused. I took a deep breath of fresh air, reorganised my thoughts and arrived at a supermarket. The first thing I did

upon entering was to check for any cashier counters. I saw many customers carrying their goods waiting in queue near the exit. This familiar scene greatly set my mind at ease. I conveniently picked a few daily items and went to queue at the end of a waiting line. When my turn was near, I noticed a strange phenomenon. The working staff only focused on organising and packing the customers' items swiftly and did not operate any cash register. My mind felt blank. I put my items down and left the supermarket quickly. Once again, I stood lost in the street.

"Where is this place exactly?"

"How is it that all the things here do not have a price?"

"How can a society possibly not have money?"

Totally mystified, I could no longer think but only stood blankly where I was. Suddenly, a smiling, well-dressed gentleman came towards me. He introduced himself as my guide and welcomed my arrival. Seeing the bewildered look on my face, he smiled even more deeply and enquired about my needs and what I would like to see, understand or experience.

Calming myself, I sat down with my guide and fired off my questions.

"Don't you have something called money here?" I asked.

"Money? What is money?" asked my guide in return.

I took some notes and coins out from my wallet and placed them in the open. The gentleman studied them in detail for a while, before he asked, "What is the use of these little dirty pieces of paper and small tinsels?"

How do you explain money to another person who lives in a country state, where money is not required? I really don't know where to start, so I briefly sorted out my thoughts and answered, "In the country I live in, we do some work and we get paid in the form of money. Everything has a price. To buy things or food, we have to pay with money. So without money, one cannot live."

The gentleman asked, "So in your country, work is for money."

"Yes. Isn't work for the purpose of earning money?" I answered.

"We want to work for other people, for the society and also for making useful personal contributions. The things that we need in life, the society and people in it would cater them for us," replied the gentleman.

"But with money, you can save it for future need. More savings can also bring about a more luxurious lifestyle which many people in my country find delight in," I said.

"What is luxury?" queried the gentleman.

I answered, "One can buy and eat all that one desires."

"Oh, we are also able to get all that we desire."

"Obtaining your ordinary daily needs is not called luxury. Luxury refers to the possession of things that are very costly; or having far more than what is required for our daily needs," I explained.

Completely missing the point, the gentleman displayed an expression of disbelief.



He exclaimed, "What is the use of having more than what is required? Won't the start of such pursuits bring about an endless cycle?"

I felt that the gentleman's reasoning had been most logical but I could not concede defeat so easily, thus I answered, "Well, if one has savings, one would be able to feel more secure in old age or when one can no longer work, right?"

The guide who was becoming even more puzzled said, "Over here, we are happy to present gifts to the elderly and people who are unable to work. In your country, if these people have no money, they would get nothing?"

Hearing this, I could no longer continue with my heaps of questions on topics such as annuity and retirement planning, so I changed the topic of discussion, "But how is a society to function without money?"

The gentleman replied, "Even in your country, no one eats or uses money directly right? Money is just a recognised common tool of measurement for value by your people. Suppose money disappears totally from your country and everyone still continues to do what they are supposed to do, then how can a society not function?"

Although I could share his logic, I still did not think that realistically such a situation was feasible, "If money does not exist, then nobody would be working, our world would collapse."

The guide laughed, "The world collapsing for these pieces of paper and small metal tinsels is indeed a very interesting view. However the possibility of an immediate change in your country's entire system is truly very small. What is most important and essential now is the spiritual growth of your people. You are the ones to decide fully how the future social system will look like. When you do not need money to obtain that which you want, would you be able to control your desires? Will you still go to work knowing that you will not receive any direct remuneration for all your hard work and efforts?"

I did not know how to reply. He continued, "If the majority of the people in your state still holds the idea of working only for money, then there can be no real progress of higher consciousness."

"The purpose of work is to give, not to receive. If work were only done for the reward, many problems would certainly arise. For example, no matter how much effort one has put in, one would always hope for the reward to be higher and better. In addition, whether one's work is essential or not, one would never give it up as one seeks to secure one's self-interest and advantages.

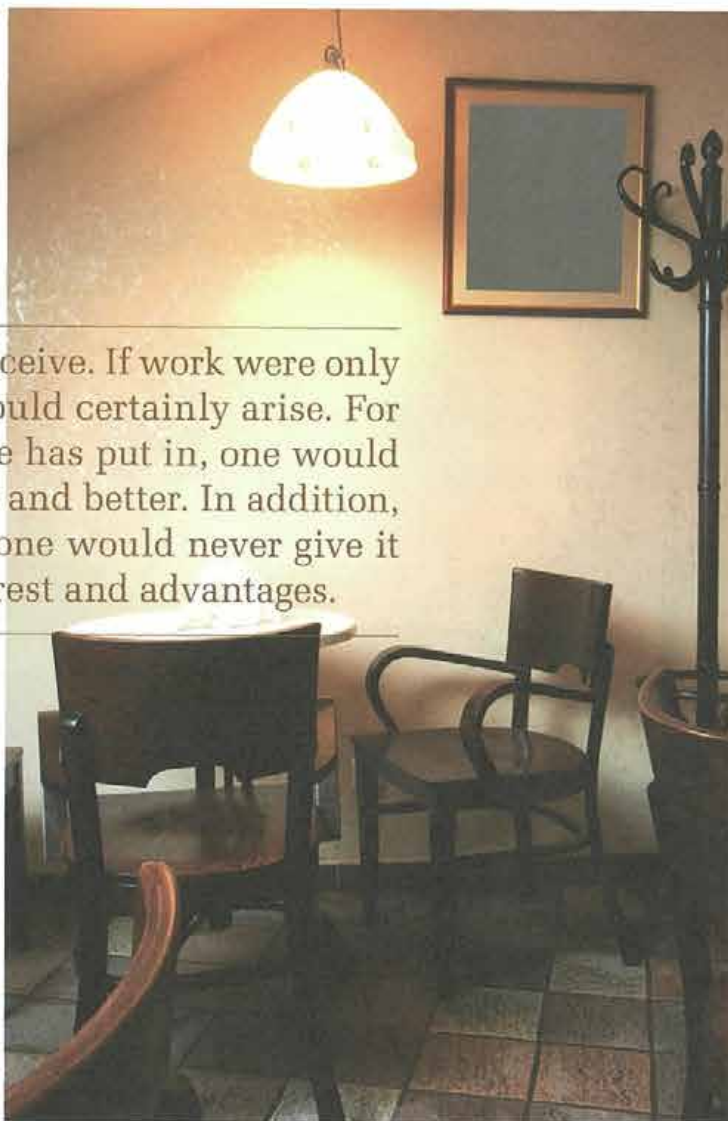
Only when there is no longer such a thing called money would the various professions, crises and problems derived from money naturally cease to exist, and resources such as manpower, time and raw materials be restored to society for more productive uses."

As our conversation continued, the picture of the money-less state was revealed even more clearly. Here, all transactions are based on good-will. The people are more concerned about how one can serve the community and others better, rather than matters pertaining to an individual self. One's job lies in where one's abilities are. There are absolutely no wastages. One takes only what is needed. Although the standards of living, culture and technology are highly developed, our notion of so-called "luxury" does not exist in their world. Their wisdom is sufficient for them to realise what truly matters. They cherish natural resources, hence garbage is kept to a minimum. There is no peer comparison and pressure of "what you have, I must also have".

Neither can you find the competitive streak of "I

want to have more and be better than what you do". Nor is there the desire of "making one's mark, to become outstanding".

Whether it is material or spiritual life, all possess a certain calmness and joy. We, who are lost in our endless pursuit of what is unimportant and unneeded, are a far cry in comparison to them.



Is such a society created because there is no requirement for money? Or is it because there exists such groups of people in the society, thus making the 'monetary system' totally unnecessary?

Perhaps the most direct and important question is, "If money is not involved, would you still go to work tomorrow?"

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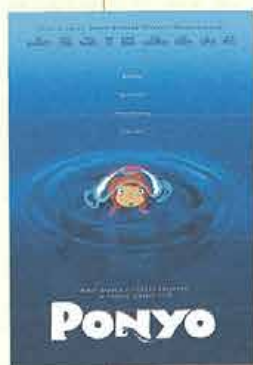
SEEN

The Ponyo Paradox of Change & Acceptance

> Pony on the Cliff by the Sea

Directed by: Hayao Miyazaki

Starring: Cate Blanchett, Matt Damon and Liam Neeson



This is a retelling of 'The Little Mermaid' minus the tragedy; as an uplifting story about love, sacrifice, acceptance and change. The boy Sosuke rescues Ponyo, a small mermaid of sorts, though he doesn't release her back to the sea immediately, hinting of infatuation with a newfound 'pet'. Does domestication of animals save or trap? Is it natural or forced evolution? Does the security of a 'prison' protect or harm? Does love necessarily set the beloved free?

Pollution is a theme too. Ponyo was stuck in a jar when a ship dredged the seabed for heaps of trash. Her father laments that humans' very breath is poison, that they have robbed the sea of life. He is the strict parent and ocean conservationist. However, the line he draws between ocean and human life is too long and broad. His sea goddess wife is more liberal and understanding and mediates to reconcile the conflict instead.

A superstitious old lady is shocked when she sees the human-faced Ponyo in a pail, exclaiming that she is an ill omen of an oncoming tsunami. What if all ocean life forms have human faces? Would the Japanese, many of whom love seafood, hesitate to eat them? Would there be more 'positive' fear of enraging the forces of nature with overfishing? All major fishing seas are already over-fished!

On the plus side, Ponyo can heal (though she does it only once) and upsize stuff. She's 'designed' to be cutesy, cheery, generous and innocent. But it's hard to say innocence as a virtue; it's more of a neutral trait, as she literally caused a storm due to her reckless attachment to Sosuke. On the down side, she is fussy over food, hyperactive, throws tantrums and causes needless worry for her parents. Sosuke is actually more lovable. He is sensible, responsible, protective and conciliatory. In a way, he is her opposite. If we love someone for the complementary qualities missing in us, do we really love the person?

It's easy to see why Ponyo loves Sosuke - for his selfless compassion, for being her 'personal Bodhisattva' (though true Bodhisattvas have compassion for all), while it is mysterious why Sosuke loves her. He doesn't seem sure too. Does he love her as a pet or person? Or both, or as one who can transform to and fro? Does he love the changes? Is it protective brotherly, friendly or romantic love? Is it purely altruistic spiritual love? Perhaps it's purposely portrayed as an open-ended mix- like the shape-shifting love we have at times.

The ultimatum that the little couple faced is that if he accepts her as she is out of true love, she would transform into a human girl forever and lose her powers forever. A test of the ability to sacrifice out of love too. If his love isn't true, she would turn to foam. (In real life, it isn't so straightforward or risky to prove love!) If Ponyo were a Bodhisattva with true love for all, would she forgo her healing power just to be with one person? Would it not be selfish? Then again, she has no obligations to sacrifice for all if she isn't ready, while her willingness to risk her life for Sosuke might already be part of her path towards cultivating Bodhisattva love.

There's an intriguing paradox. Sosuke is challenged to accept Ponyo as she is - a mermaid. However, if he did, she would become a non-mermaid (a human)! How then, is he supposed to accept her as a mermaid, without accepting her as a non-mermaid too? Since we constantly change, how do we accept anyone? The test of true love is whether we are able to accept not just the beloved as they are in the moment, but who they might become later - for better or worse. If we are able to love despite changes in the beloved, we would be likelier to unconditionally love every being since everyone changes. This is how our limited love can grow to be the immeasurable love (loving-kindness, compassion, rejoice and equanimity) that Bodhisattvas have for all!

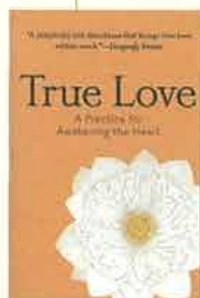
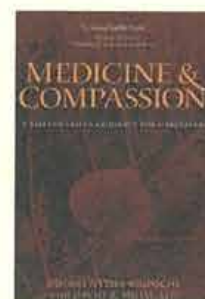
READ

Awaken your Heart with True Love and Compassion

> **Medicine & Compassion: A Tibetan Lama's Guidance for Caregivers**

By Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche with David R. Shlim, M.D.

A highly valuable book for caregivers and healthcare workers who would like to help the terminally ill without burning out. It provides practical guidance to anyone who seeks to become more compassionate. A very practical, easy-to-read and much needed book. Priced at S\$25.40 from Awareness Place.



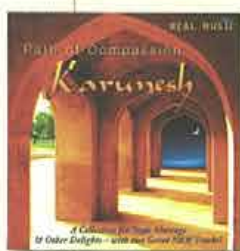
> **True Love: A Practice for Awakening the Heart**

By Thich Nhat Hanh

This little book offers timeless insight into the nature of real love. Written in a warm and direct manner, the renowned Zen master explores the four kinds of love described in Buddhism – loving-kindness, compassion, joy and freedom – and explains in a clear, straightforward way how we can experience them in our everyday lives. To truly love, you have to be there and to recognise the presence of the other person, says Thich Nhat Hanh. He gives simple techniques from the Buddhist tradition to breathe love into one's heart, untie inner knots and heal relationships. Get it from Awareness Place for S\$10.80.

HEARD

The Path of Compassion is realising that Love is Space without Borders and Boundaries



> **Path of Compassion**

By Karunesh

A collection of 11 beautiful tunes to harmonise the frequency of the body. Our bodies vibrate with the rhythmic notes, awakening memory and wisdom to bring about balance and harmony. Some pieces are gentle and melancholic, others delightful and uplifting. As you listen to the pleasant music, you may find yourself breaking out in a graceful dance in your mind's eye. Retail at S\$22.90 from Awareness Place.



> **Love is Space**

By Bernward Koch

In this New Age album of seven tracks that blend mantra-singing with the unique music produced from instruments around the world, discover the compassion mantra - *Om Mani Padme Hum* - sung in a liltingly sing-along tune with an interesting mix of strumming guitar music. Track one is inspiring. Also hear the final verse of the Heart Sutra like you have never heard before in track six! Available at Awareness Place for S\$24.90.

So long as there is one single person whom
you can console by words,
whom you can enliven and cheer by your presence,
whom you can relieve with your help,
however insignificant or unimportant
it might be,
you are a precious possession
to the human race,
and you should never be
disheartened or depressed.

Search for someone less fortunate
or less healthy than yourself.
Extend any help or assistance
you can within your means and ability.
Make sympathy, empathy and
loving-kindness
keep pace with your capacity
for self-development.
– Dr. K. Sri Dhammananda

Let not *metta* be mistaken
as a mere sentiment.
It is the power of the strong.
If the leaders from different walks of life
were to give *metta* a fair trial,
no principle or guideline to action
would be found to possess greater efficiency or
fruitfulness in all spheres.

In everything man is the ultimate unit.
If man decides to substitute *metta*
as a policy of action for aggression and ill-will,
the world will turn into
a veritable abode of peace.
For it is only when
man shall have peace within himself,
and boundless good-will for others,
that peace in the world
will become real and enduring.
– Ven. Acharya Buddharakkhita

Every word, every sentence of the sutras
reveal the same kind of truth,
interbeing, the *here* and the *now*,
the nature of connectedness of everything,
everything is inside of everything else,
the one contains the all,
the all contains the one.
If you are able to observe,
to look deeply and to touch the kind of nature,

you will become birthless and deathless,
and you will be able to touch
the Buddha at any time you want.
– Thich Nhat Hanh

You have to look at yourself closely.
The Buddha taught about having
mindfulness and self-awareness
in all situations.
Wrong-doing arises in
bodily, verbal and mental actions.
The source of all good, evil,
well-being, and harm lies with
actions, speech and thoughts...
See if your conduct is faulty or not.

Giving up the bad, practising the good –
this is the heart of Buddhism.
If our mind is good and virtuous,
it is happy.
There's a smile in our heart.
When the mind is at ease,
then you can smile.
The minute you become
averse to something,
the mind goes bad...
Building your mind
into something good
is the best way.

If you have wisdom,
wherever you look
there will be *Dhamma*.
– Ajahn Chah



Attachment: Attachments are what keep us turning on the wheel of rebirth. In the Four Noble truths, Buddha Shakyamuni taught that attachment to self is the root cause of suffering; From craving [attachment] springs grief, from craving springs fear; For him who is wholly free from craving, there is no grief, much less fear. (Dhammapada) Becoming enlightened is nothing other than severing all our attachments. What is meant by "attachment"? It is the investing of mental or emotional energy in an "object". We can become attached to people, things, experiential states, and our own thoughts and preconceptions. In Buddhist teachings attachments are usually divided into two general categories: attachments to self and attachments to dharmas. For the seasoned practitioner, even the Dharma must not become an attachment.

Arahant: Foe or Enemy Destroyer. One who has destroyed the enemy of dualistic ego-grasping/clinging, and thus accomplished liberation of cyclic existence. There are three types of Arhats: Shravaka, Pratyekabuddha, Buddha.

Bodhisattva: One who aspires to save all beings from suffering, while saving oneself.

Buddha: An aspect of the Triple Gem - The Awakened or Enlightened One. A Buddha is one who has attained liberation from all suffering, attaining True Happiness, Perfect Wisdom and Perfect Compassion, among all other virtues for the sake of helping all sentient beings. "The Buddha" refers to the historical Shakyamuni or Gautama Buddha, who is the founder of Buddhism in our world.

Compassion: The quality that makes us aspire to help others with no selfish intention; the ending of selfishness.

Dharma: An aspect of the Triple Gem - the teachings of the Buddha or the general teachings of Buddhism.

Emptiness: The truth of all mind and matter constantly changing, thus being empty of any fixed self.

Enlightenment: The realisation of the reality of all things as they truly are. True Happiness is the result.

Equanimity: The calm and balanced state of mind of not being affected by attachment or aversion to anything.

Five Precepts: The basic guidelines of moral conduct - not killing, not stealing, not having sexual misconduct, not lying and not taking intoxicants.

Four Noble Truths: 1. Life is full of dissatisfactory experiences - ageing, sickness, separation, death etc 2. Causes of dissatisfactory experiences - craving, aversion and ignorance 3. Life can be without dissatisfaction - by attaining Enlightenment or Nirvana 4. The path leading to the end of dissatisfactions - The Noble Eightfold path.

Geshe: A scholar who has attained a doctorate in Buddhist studies. This usually takes fifteen to twenty years to achieve.

Ignorance: The quality of lacking Wisdom, not knowing the reality of all things. Same as 'delusion'.

Impermanence: All compounded things are constantly changing, as a result or effect of changing causes and conditions. All living and non-living elements are thus subject to decay and renewal.

Interdependence: Also called dependent origination or conditioned arising. The principle that nothing exists independently, but comes into existence only on dependency of various previous causes and conditions. In other words, a phenomenon exists on condition that the other exists; it has on condition that others have; it extinguishes on condition that others extinguish; it has not on condition that others have not.

Karma: The moral law of cause and effect which states that what we experience is the result of what we had done, that what we do will result in what we will experience.

Koan: A brief anecdote recording an exchange between master and disciple or a master's enlightenment experience. Koans are used to bring a student to realisation or to help clarify his enlightenment.

Lama: Spiritual teacher. An honorary title in Tibetan Buddhism given to one who has completed particular scholastic and yogic training. It is possible to renounce one's monkhood without renouncing one's lama status, for the purposes of marriage.

Liberation: State after removing the defilements and karma which cause uncontrolled rebirth in cyclic existence.

Loving-kindness: The quality which makes us wish for the happiness and well-being of others. 'Metta' in Pali language.

Mahayana: The dominant Buddhist tradition of East Asia that emphasises on the Bodhisattva ideal.

Mantra: Prescribed syllables (in Sanskrit) to protect the mind from defilements. They express the essence of specific energies. Recitation of mantras is always done with specific visualisations.

Meditation: A practice to habituate ourselves to positive and realistic states of mind.

Mindfulness: An aspect of the 'Noble Eightfold Path' - the quality that enables us to remember, and keep our awareness and attention on what is beneficial to one and all in terms of thoughts, speech and actions.

Merits: Blessings, positive potential. Imprints on the mindstream of positive actions, leading to future happiness.

Nirvana: Nirvana is a Sanskrit term that is interpreted in various ways: 1) cessation, or extinction, referring to the elimination of the afflictions at the time of enlightenment, 2) freedom from desire; and 3) no longer either coming into being or ceasing to be, 'Nibbana' in Pali language.

Noble Eightfold Path: A systematic and complete formula to rid dissatisfaction and attain true happiness and peace by following Perfect Speech, Perfect Action, Perfect Livelihood, Perfect Effort, Perfect Mindfulness, Perfect Meditation, Perfect Understanding, Perfect Thought (pls read Be A Lamp Upon Yourself published by KMSPKS for detailed info).

Perfection: Refers to the six practices, the perfection of which ferries one beyond the sea of suffering and mortality to Nirvana.

Puja: Ceremony/act of worship, offering.

Pureland: A world without defilements created by a Buddha out of Compassion, for sentient beings to seek birth in, to perfect the practice of the Dharma. The best known being Sukhavati Pureland created by Amitabha Buddha.

Rebirth: The continual cycle of birth and death.

Refuge: In the Buddhist context to take refuge means to accept the Buddha and the Buddhist teachings as the path one wants to take.

Rinpoche: An honorific used in Tibetan Buddhism to mean "precious one".

Samsara: This world of rebirth and suffering. Also known as Saha world.

Sangha: An aspect of the Triple Gem - the holy community of monks and nuns.

Sentient Beings: Living beings with feelings in the six Samsara realms of hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods and gods.

Shamatha: Tranquility meditation. This is basic sitting meditation in which one usually follows the breath while observing the workings of the mind while sitting in the cross-legged posture. The main purpose of shamatha meditation is to settle or tame the mind so that it will stay where one places it.

Six Realms of Existence: Also called the Six Paths of Rebirth, it refers to the six categories of living beings who are not enlightened. They are 1) Gods, 2) Humans, 3) Asuras, 4) Animals, 5) Ghosts, 6) Hell-dwellers. The particular category that one finds oneself reborn in depends upon one's karma at the time of rebirth.

Stupa: A pagoda for the remains of the Buddha, whether relics of bones or scriptures.

Suffering: The physical and mental feeling of dissatisfaction.

Sutra(s): The recorded teachings of the Buddha. Spelt as Sutta in Pali language.

Threefold Refuge: Taking refuge in the Triple Gem.

Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha.

Vajrayana: Tibetan school of Buddhism.

Venerable: An honorific addressing of a member of the Sangha.

Vesak Day: Wesak in Pali, it commemorates the Birth, Enlightenment and Nirvana of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Wisdom: The understanding or discernment based on the direct realisation of the Four Noble Truths, Impermanence, Interdependent Origination, Non-self and Emptiness. The Buddha taught that all things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that knowing this — not in a rational, but empirical manner — is wisdom.

Zen: A school of Buddhism. Also known as Chan.