

# Dharma Friends

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

June 2005

issue #101

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## **The DHAMMAPADA**

**The teachings of the Buddha**



### **Verse 19: Endowed with Dharma**

**Spoken in the Jetavana Grove:**

1. He who dispenses justice in an arbitrary manner could never be considered one who abides by the law. One who clearly ascertains both right and wrong is the one who is held as wise.
2. The wise are never arbitrary when leading others into harmony with the truth. Wise, they are guarded by truth, for they act in accord with the Dharma.
3. Though someone may be silver-tongued, one cannot call such a person wise. The one who is patient, free from anger, and fearless, this one is called wise.

4. Though someone may be silver-tongued, this does not mean he grasps the Dharma. Those devoted to the Dharma, never unaware of the Dharma, embody the Dharma, though they may have little learning.
5. One is not an Elder because the head is gray. Many are ripe in years, but called elder for nothing.
6. The one embodying truth and Dharma, harmlessness, restraint, and commitment, who is steadfast and undefiled, This one is called an Elder.
7. Though someone's face and form are handsome, and his words flow easily, do not consider him a man of distinction if he is jealous, mean, and brutish.
8. Those who have destroyed these traits, uprooted them and thrown them out, they are the faultless and wise. These are the ones of distinction.
9. Not just by shaving his head does the false and intemperate man become a monk. How can one be absorbed in desire and gain and be One Who Cultivates Virtue?
10. A monk is called a man of peace, One Who Cultivates Virtue, because he quiets all wrong-doing, both gross and subtle.
11. One is not a monk just because one asks for alms. Completely taking up the dharma is what makes one a monk.
12. Whoever has gone beyond good and evil, but acts with perfect purity while passing through the world, such a one is called a monk.
13. The ignorant person who behaves like a fool does not become a Muni just by keeping quiet. The sage is one who weighs both sides and embraces what is best.
14. The one who rejects all wrongdoing becomes a sage by weighing both sides of the world. This one is called Muni.
15. One does not become a hero by killing. The truly heroic person never harms a living creature.
16. I obtained the happiness free from action which no ordinary being can know, not just by spiritual practice, not just by great learning.
17. Not just by sleeping in solitude or even by obtaining samadhi. O Monks, do not rest easy until you have destroyed the defilements!





## Some Thoughts About this Dhammapada verse -

### Endowed with Dharma

Last month's **Dhammapada** verse was *Defilements*, and the last line in this month's verse, *Endowed with Dharma*, reminds us of how important it is to continue our ever-challenging work to rid ourselves of defilements, those inner obstacles that obstruct awareness of our true and sacred, essential nature. We read in *Endowed with Dharma*, the many attributes of a dedicated spiritual practitioner. It is good to read through the list and consider how we rate. Many of us might talk a good game, know lots of information, look the part, wear our religious names, have others think of us as teachers, but still we might get angry, impatient and are unkind in many ways.

We read in our verse the line that says, *"Though someone's face and form are handsome, and his words flow easily, do not consider him a man of distinction if he is jealous, mean, and brutish."* And then there is, *"Not just by shaving his head does the false and intemperate man become a monk. How can one be absorbed in desire and gain and be One Who Cultivates Virtue?"* It is very hard to actually live the qualities of the *one endowed with dharma* even some of the time. But it doesn't help to judge ourselves when we fall short. We can have compassion for ourselves when we remember that we also live in bodies and have psyches that are primitive and respond primarily to deep instincts that just want to survive in this life. In this aspect of our self, we are intent on self-serving because our biological and psychological survival instinct wants our species to have food and safety so that we can propagate.

All of those defilements that we talk about that obscure our wisdom view are motivated by the self-serving aspects of our biology and psyche. Defilements arise when ego or our primitive brain/body response feels threatened and we immediately try to protect our self, either by securing that which will fill our needs or protecting ourselves from that which we fear. Some

defilements are killing, slandering, lying, gluttony, jealousy, stealing, sexual misconduct, inflating ourselves and diminishing others, and on and on. Defilements are always the result of self-serving motivation - and spiritual wisdom only arises out of holding compassion for others. An interesting dichotomy of tasks between these two selves of ours, isn't it?

*"The truly heroic person never harms a living creature,"* says our verse. Defilements bring harm to beings, and, of course, this includes ourselves. Little by little, as we walk a spiritual path, ego can learn to relax and trust that we can gradually let go of self interest and still survive. When we want immediate gratification of our needs or relief from our discomfort, we can encourage ego to open to a bigger picture that knows that all of our needs will be met if we listen to our more subtle, inner wisdom self.

We can grow in our compassion for others and serve them rather than reacting to fears that they will take what we need. As we begin to walk a spiritual path, we realize that we have blinded ourselves to the pain that we cause everyone with our self serving actions when we act from defilements. With practice, we can expand our awareness and recognize when we are causing harm. If the goal of never harming a living creature becomes the measure of rightness when acting on thought, words, and deeds, our defilements will be rapidly purified and transcended. One who naturally and effortlessly acts to benefit all beings always and holds that motivation ever-present and primary is one that we would say is *"endowed with dharma."* In the Buddhist tradition, that person would be seen as a Buddha. In other traditions, that person would likely be recognized as a saint, great teacher, or wisdom being.

Like so many truly noble aspirations, it hardly sinks in that it is a very hard thing to never harm another being. Here is a quiz to ponder that might help to give an honest assessment of how skillful we are in life situations. These are typical scenarios for us all. They are not incidents where we know beyond a doubt whether we cause harm or not. Read each one and contemplate what you would do. Then go back and think through them again and again to see how many layers of pain you might still be inflicting even in the most subtle ways. Remember that there is no right answer. The goal is to see how you might not harm other beings **at all**.

1. You are having a conversation with two friends One has a lot of opinions that he freely voices. The other guy is not saying much but looks like he might like to. You have some thoughts and interrupted the talkative guy a couple times to say your 2 cents worth. Then you remember your vow to not harm other beings. What do you do?
2. You are served deep-fried chicken for dinner. What do you do?
3. You are talking to four people you know fairly well. Another person arrives and says he just got a box of cookies and asks one of the four if he wants one. The other three enthusiastically say that they want some too. What do you do?

4. Someone with power over you, a boss or a security officer perhaps, is a bully. Today, he looks ill and is unusually quiet. What do you do?
5. Yesterday you dropped some crumbs on the floor and this morning you see a long line of ants marching from a crack in the wall to the crumbs. They pick up little bits of food and march back into their hole. What do you do?
6. A person in authority comes and thanks you sincerely and happily for something you did not do. You know that there is no way that he will ever find out who really did the good deed. What do you do?
7. You feel emotionally and sexually attracted to someone other than your committed partner. What do you do?
8. You have done something for which you could be arrested. No one knows about it. What do you do?
9. You were driving your car and a dog dashed out in front of you. Even though you were going slow, you could not stop in time and you hit him. What do you do?
10. A young man who is quite depressed and lonely seeks out your support and counsel. He sees you as a spiritual teacher and a parental figure. He is time consuming and emotionally exhausting. What do you do?

Now, the real work. Do your best to live as one “*Endowed with Dharma*”. Each day, examine your own little life scenarios to see where you caused harm and where you could have been kinder. Every day will get easier. You will see more clearly beyond ego’s motivations and you will be more successful and skillful in being kind each day.



### **A Meditation**

Every one of us, in prison or not, has done a lot to cause suffering to others. We have all had thoughts, said words, and carried out actions during times of anger, fear, greed, confusion, lack of information, and even in rage that have hurt other beings. Our intention at those times was self-serving and at some level, we meant to cause harm. Even if we were horrified the moment after the event occurred, it is important to take responsibility for that part of us that was willing to cause pain. Now, as a meditator, one aspiring to be “endowed with dharma”, and one vowing to not harm other beings, consider that we may offer kindness and healing even where we have caused pain. Think of one particular incident that you would like to turn into healing and benefit.

### **A TongLen Meditation**

Spend a few quiet minutes relaxing your body. Sit up straight but comfortably. When you are ready, follow your breath in and out until your mind is calm and balanced. As you can, rest in your calm mind. Develop the intention to heal the pain of others as well as your own. In your mind’s eye, replay the event in which you caused pain. See clearly how you created the situation and examine your willingness to harm others and your self. Don’t be critical or condemning of yourself or of them. Just watch with equanimity and feel compassion for everyone hurt by the event. Draw your circle of compassion as wide as you are able to.

See before you the being (it need not be a person) that you caused the greatest pain to in this incident, whether they are living or dead today. Imagine that you are breathing into your heart the pain that they feel. Believe that your heart has the capacity to transform that pain into love and healing energy. You might see this transformation as different colors or textures or symbols, or you might physically feel the change happen. Just trust that whatever appears to you is true. As you exhale, breathe that energy of healing and love back to the being before you and see them receive your love. Continue breathing at a normal pace but feel that you are breathing in the other’s pain and send back healing love until you see them transformed and then fully healed.

Expand your meditation. See all those others who were hurt by your actions. Breathe in their pain and let your heart transform it into healing love. Breathe that love back into their hearts. Slowly, breathe in their pain and breathe out love. Continue until you see in your mind’s eye that all of those beings are healed.

Now, place your self before you in your mind’s eye. Breathe in your pain and in your heart, transform it into compassion, love and healing. Breathe this love back into the heart of the you that is visualized standing before you. Continue your meditation until you see that visualized self responding and letting go of the pain. Forgive yourself and see your self filled with love.

And now, expand your meditation to all beings ever hurt and in pain. Of course, that is every being throughout all time - those hurt by mean words, angry acts, physical attacks, those robbed of their precious belongings or of their security or of their lives. It includes every squashed bug, every hooked fish, every slaughtered animal, every abused child, every being killed in war, every abandoned elderly, mentally ill, or imprisoned person, all those sick, all those wrongly punished, all betrayed lovers, and all murdered innocents. Breathe in their pain and suffering. Transform all that horror into love and healing. Breathe that energy back to all of those you hold in your vast view and watch. In whatever way your vision reveals itself to you, watch as they take in this love. See everyone receiving exactly what they need. Watch as they are healed and their pain is lifted from them.

Rest gently in this state of breathing in suffering and breathing out compassion to all for as long as you can. Dedicate your meditation to benefit all beings everywhere equally.

Continue to live this meditation always. If you cause someone pain as you go through the day, immediately breathe in their pain and breathe out love and healing. Say or do what needs to be said and done just as quickly as you have the capacity to do so. If you sit in a cafeteria or a chow hall, or sit waiting for a movie to start, if you are standing at your cell bars watching others, or if walking down the hallway or the street, do this meditation continuously for everyone that you see - and all that you don't see - with every breath.





## FROM YOUR LETTERS

**Notice anything?** After 100 issues and 8+ years of being under the umbrella of the **Ecumenical Buddhist Society** in Little Rock, Arkansas, we have established our own non-profit entity called **Compassion Works for All, Inc.** We are still *Dharma Friends*, and still EBS sangha members but *Dharma Friends* newsletter has grown so much (over 800 members in our family and at least one of you from each state along with many foreign countries), that we need to constantly scramble for funding. When we were a Buddhist organization, even though there is a national push for 'faith-based initiatives' in the grant funding world, we didn't quite fit into the right categories to receive financial support - Buddhism and prisons. Hmmm. So, primarily for funding reasons but also for an expanded intention, we took on a new umbrella and a new tax status. We love our new name and truly believe in our stated mission: creating a supportive family to reach those most often disenfranchised and forgotten by the world. Compassion *does* work for all. It truly does bring healing. And, of course, we want compassion to be at the heart of all that we do in *Dharma Friends*.

So we are still *Dharma Friends* newsletter, but we have a new address (see the return address on the back). We are now a tax-deductible organization for those who would like to make much appreciated donations. We will still have donated books as we can get them. We have a web page, [dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com](http://dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com), but, other than that, we are exactly the same as we have always been. Welcome to our pureland - where COMPASSION WORKS FOR ALL.

*Just as a cow with a young calf keeps an eye on it even when it is eating the grass, so it's proper for a person to keep an eye on all that can be done for others who are following the path.*

-Majjhima Nikaya from "*Buddha Speaks*," edited by Anne Bancroft, 2000

**From JK.:** I have to step back (more and more often) and simply remind myself exactly how far I have come in two short years. It seems like forever, and yet time goes so fast. Two years ago, I had less than

\$100 to my name, and I couldn't find a job. Today, I have good friends, a decent job, a reliable car and my own home. I am being sworn in as a trustee of our city. In January I will represent my (large) neighborhood at

the city's priority board meetings. I have also completed training as a foster parent and my partner and I are also looking forward to helping someone less fortunate – because there is always someone less fortunate. That was what drew me to Buddhism in the first place: I sponsored a young monk in India. It was only a couple of years after my arrival at the U. S. D. B., and I could've used the \$300 (that represented a fortune in there!). But the friends and contacts I made through that gift were far greater than the gift itself. The awareness that there is always someone worse off than yourself has been a constant in my life.

Maybe you will smile when I tell you that every time I listen to my Tibetan chants, I think of you and Lama Wangmo. It's true. I did scare my neighbors a while back though. I was playing a cassette of the Drepung monks (Dance of the Skeleton Lords among the pieces) and I turned up the music quite loud so that I could hear it upstairs in my attic. People walking past actually stopped and stared at the house – I guess they thought it was haunted or something. Maybe they got some residual soul cleansing during the purification chant. You never know.

From Choying Dorje

*The Buddha was asked: "Is there only one summit of consciousness or are there several? He replied: "One and several. As one state of consciousness is realized, then the next is seen. Thus there are several and there is one." He was then asked: "Which is first, awareness or knowledge?" "Awareness arises first and then comes*

*knowledge. One can then say, 'Because of my awareness, I know this as a fact.'"*

-Digha Nikaya From "*Buddha Speaks*," edited by Anne Bancroft

**From M.B.:** I'm locked in a 7 by 9 ft. cell, 24 hours each day, so I have plenty of time. Everywhere around me are other inmates in their cells all trying to yell about the latest football game or other worldly obsessions. Needless, it gets loud and distracting sometimes. I've put together a routine that helps me through this noise. I start with a few yoga positions –sun bird, thunderbolt, tree pose, and salute to the sun. I've found it helps relieve the day's tension and prepare my body for meditation.

Then, I put my headphones on and tune to the white noise. It has been said that white noise or the static between stations is left over magnetic radiation from the big bang. I picture myself floating among the compassionate white light of creation, and that blocks the evil and darkness inherent in every prison. With pranayam controlled breathing, I focus on different meditations until I feel myself floating in my visualization. I was amazed the first time I heard the echo of the universe that is within us all. It didn't bring on an epiphany, but it was powerful nonetheless.

Tonight's meditation focused on healing. I imagined myself as an empty vessel being filled with the healing white light of the creator's love. It entered the top of my head and flowed throughout my body. With bellows breathing, focusing on the healing white light, I can actually feel my body tingling as the light heals my body. On the exhale, I send the light into the barracks hoping there is someone receptive that will

benefit from that extra compassion. It's a welcome feeling to finally be at peace with myself. I still wrestle sometimes, but I'm much farther along that I was even one year ago.

I have no idea if I'm doing the right thing or not, but I know that my mind gets still and my body very calm, so it must be working. Progress is slow, but it's been around for thousands of years. So I think I have a little time to practice.

I thank you for the encouragement of my writing. May this year be full of wonderful inner growth and spiritual awakening for you and us all.

*"Employing the faculty of wise discernment involves constantly checking our outlook and asking ourselves whether we are being broad-minded or narrow-minded. Have we taken into account the overall situation or are we considering only specifics? Is our view short-term or long-term? Are we being short-sighted or clear-eyed? Is our motive genuinely compassionate when considered in relation to the totality of all beings? Or is our compassion limited just to our families, our friends, and those we identify with closely?" -- The Dalai Lama*

**From RN:** I am serving a 10 year sentence for possession of marijuana, (growing in my backyard). My sentence is currently under appeal, .... And, pending the outcome, my parole date is April 3, 2009.

I was introduced to Buddhism only in October of this last year. Although I was raised in a Christian Church, and am a pastor's son,.....I can see now that I was a

Buddhist all along, and just didn't know it. (Ha ha).

I've done a lot of reading, (every waking minute when I'm not at work!) And am currently reading Dr. Edward Conze's, *"Buddhist thought in India"*. (This paperback is as old as me! – 1967). I have changed my religion on record to Buddhism, and have already encountered, (and cleared), several institutional/administrative obstacles. The Texas Department of criminal justice isn't exactly. "Buddhist – friendly". I'm encountering resistance at every opportunity, and discrimination limited only by one's imagination. At first, I felt a bit angry, but I quickly recovered and realized that this is a job for me. Someone has to tread this path and clear the way, or "blaze a trail" for future travelers. I can take most of the "pain" and difficulty out of the process, when it comes to dealing with the prison officials. You get the picture.

Peace and metta, yours in the Dharma,

### *A deep reflection from Rilke's Book of Hours:*

**She who reconciles the ill-matched threads of her life, and weaves them gratefully into a single cloth---  
it's she who drives the loudmouths from the hall and clears it for celebration**

**where the one guest is you.  
In the softness of evening  
it's you she receives.**

**You are the partner of her loneliness,  
the unspeaking center of her monologues.  
With each disclosure you encompass more  
and she stretches beyond what limits her,**

to hold you."

**From TB:** I've received my second issue of *Dharma Friends*. So far I've received issues number 94 and 95. They are excellent. Thank you. This path is a joy and the wisdom of the Buddha's teachings – perseveres. I used to think that it was difficult to study alone, to practice without having others to practice with, or that were also on the path – but with issues like *Dharma Friends*, it makes me feel more connected to a common thread. The articles are informative and teach the Dharma and that is exactly what I've been needing. Thank you. In the triple gem,

*If happiness hasn't been recognized when alone, a group of people will be a cause of distraction. -Adept Godrakpa, "Hermit of Go Cliffs"*

**From Neil: Friends,** just another little wake up call if you are ready....please read on, if you will...

I don't know about any of you, but personally I have fallen deeply asleep and into deep human denial once again in my life...in a specific context. This context I am speaking about is how I have fallen into deep denial about where my LEATHER PRODUCTS COME FROM!

Ya, ya, we have all heard it before, I know! I was a vegan for many years some time back. Then I got so tired of plastic shoes and cracks between my toes, that I just gave up on the whole idea of being "cruelty free." In the last 10 years or so, I have slacked off and been wearing leather jackets, leather

shoes, and because of a severe financial crisis, I even took an opportunity to make money selling highly popular leather 'taxi wallets' on ebay to support myself and my prison service.

So once again, as part of my personal and highly perverted form of modern day warrior training (not for the faint of heart), about a week ago, I stayed up late at night watching actual vidoes of Iraqi insurgents cutting the heads off of screaming human beings while they were alive and conscious. In addition, I also watched a DVD from an animal activist organization, showing screaming cows getting their necks sliced open, while alive, conscious and hanging upside down, in preparation FOR OUR FOOD AND LEATHER PRODUCTS!!! Don't stop reading yet....

I went to bed shaking inside, from seeing and allowing myself to deeply feel these realities....the ones that hardly any of us want to look at, nor do we want to believe actually exist. BUT THEY DO!!! THEY DO!!! THIS IS HAPPENING!!!

I said to myself, "THIS IS IT!" "THIS INHUMANE HUMAN AND ANIMAL SLAUGHTER CANNOT BE RATIONALIZED OR JUSTIFIED ANY LONGER IN MY PERSONAL LIFE! I don't even eat meat, but I am still supporting the most grotesque and inhumane slaughter on the face of the planet. And I don't know about your perception of reality, but my heart and mind tells me plainly that how we slaughter a warm blooded, highly sentient mammal for food, is completely related to how we can justify slaughtering and shedding human blood in war. It is not a far step from one to the other. This connection

is unmistakable if we are not asleep in this context.

And to go even further, animal cruelty and torture is not even the only factor we need to be concerned about in relation to eating and wearing animal products. It is a well known fact that our innocent but totally ignorant habit of eating and wearing animal products is causing the following environmental concerns as well:

\* **Deforestation:** Cattle ranching is the primary cause of deforestation in many parts of the world.

\* **Water Scarcity:** Nearly half of the total amount of water used annually in the U.S. goes to grow feed and provide drinking water for cattle and other livestock.

\* **Global Warming:** Cattle and beef production is another significant factor in the emission of three of the four global warming gases - carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, and methane.

\* **Soil Erosion and Desertification:** Cattle production is turning productive land into barren desert in the American West and throughout the world.

\* **Water Pollution:** Organic waste from cattle and other livestock, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and agricultural salts and sediments are the primary non-point source of water pollution in the U.S.

\* **Depletion of Fossil Fuels:** Intensive animal agriculture uses a disproportionate amount of fossil fuels.

So, here is what I have chosen to do so far in my personal journey in case any of you might be interested. I took a deep breath and I gathered all of my expensive, high quality, European leather shoes out of my closet and sold them on eBay. I put in quite a number

of hours educating myself on the internet in terms of non-leather alternatives. As you can see in photos below, I sold my leather Birkenstock sandals (oh sooo comfortable!!!) and replaced them with the rather cool Keen hiking sandals (no leather). I sold my incredible pair of Born leather boots and replaced them with the funky looking brown Merrill hiking boots, no leather, purely synthetic and really comfortable. I also found out that Birkenstock does make a fully non-leather shoe with micro fiber straps and a fake suede bottom that looks and feels just like leather! So this transition can work with a little investigation, willpower, and action.

Now, just to let you know that this non leather, cruelty-free decision is not an easy one for me because it strikes right in the deepest part of my survival! I make hundreds of dollars a week selling quality leather taxi wallets on eBay! I will not put myself out of food and home by getting fanatic all at once and dumping my leather taxi wallet business. But now I am working hard to find alternatives. So far, I have found an Australian company called "Vegan Wares" who makes super high quality wallets and purses out of a micro fiber material that looks like leather and will last about 3 times longer! So I made a \$350 wholesale order from them to see if I can replace my leather wallets on eBay and still make a living. This is not easy, but thinking about a warm\_blooded mammal hanging upside down, alive, conscious and getting its throat slit open in preparation for our food and leather products is not easy either! And participating in the destruction of the environment does not feel too good to me personally.

I would ask each of you, if you are willing, try to see and sense where you can take a few steps in this same direction in your own life. We are not in the days of the Native American any longer, where this sort of thing was natural and in harmony with life. Modern day factory farming, animal torture, and global environmental destruction are not in harmony with life. Wearing leather is no longer an option for me. Hopefully very soon, selling leather will also not be an option for me. I ask you to look and feel within as well.

If any of you non-faint-hearted people would like to see the DVD of actual footage of animals being prepared for our food, leather shoes, cool leather jackets, daytimers, and so forth, please email your address. I purchased well over 100 of these DVDs from the organization to pass out at the local university here in Boulder and to put other places where people might watch it and choose to take action!

Neil

PS. If any of you would prefer not to receive these sweet, easy-going emails, please let me know and I will take you off my list.

**From Neil at Naljor Creations: Dharma Teaching Altar Cards for Prisoners – We have three precious dharma teachings presented on beautiful altar-size cards for easy study and inspiration. Teachings include: Eight Verses for Training the Mind, The Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path, and The Four Immeasurables. The cards are free. Mail your request with three first class stamps for mailing if possible. We also offer an excellent 28-page Resource Directory for Prisoners. Mail your request with four first**

**class stamps. Naljor Prison Dharma Service, P.O. Box 628, Mt. Shasta CA 96067.**

*It is essential in Zen study that you do not cling to a sitting cushion for practice. If you sink into oblivion or distraction, or plunge into ease and tranquility, totally unawares, not only will you waste time, you will not be able to digest the offerings of donors. When the light of your eyes falls to the ground one day, in the end what will you rely on? - Kao-feng from "**Teachings of Zen**," edited by Thomas Cleary, © 1998.*

**From BG:** A while back I had written concerning my anger and confusion on being returned to prison. I had done 17 ½ years and was only out for three months. The January issue of **Dharma Friends** helped me to overcome a lot of my confusion. There was especially a letter by **RW** that really says it all. When I got out, I just wanted to be with my family. I didn't take into consideration the fact that they only know me from 17 ½ years ago, and vice versa. Also, like **RW** states, there were a lot of people who were drawn to me. It made me feel that I was fitting back into society. I was like a kid in a candy store! I wanted to help people but the time was not right. There is still work that I need to do on myself. When I get out the next time I'll be prepared. I want to thank you and **RW** for helping me see the error. Thank you!  
In peace,

*"All day I think about it, then at night I say  
it.*

*Where did I come from, and what am I  
supposed to be doing?*

*My soul is from elsewhere, I'm sure of that,*

*And I intend to end up there.*

*This drunkenness began in some other  
tavern.*

*When I get back around to that place I'll be  
completely sober.*

*Meanwhile, I'm like a bird from another  
continent, sitting in this aviary.*

*The day is coming when I fly off,*

*But who is it now in my ear, who hears my  
voice?*

*Who says words with my mouth?*

*Who looks out with my eyes?*

*What is soul?*

*I cannot stop asking.*

*If I could taste one sip of an answer,*

*I could break out of this prison for drunks.*

*I didn't come here of my own accord,*

*and I can't leave that way.*

*Whoever brought me here*

*will have to take me home!"*

Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi trans. by Coleman  
Barks in his remarkable book, "**The  
Illuminated Rumi**"

**From KB:** Thank you for sending  
**Dharma Friends** newsletter issue number  
95. Thanks to our friends that share their  
experiences in our Dharma newsletter.

My family in Laos and Thailand  
doing fine. I saw a terrible happening in  
South East Asia. I felt very deep upset to  
those who went through a lot of suffering. I  
got a little mad that I cannot help them. I  
put my head down and closed my eyes,  
started to prayer for those in silence.

If I have \$10 or \$20. I was going to  
send to help them. All I can say is I love  
them, I hope that I could help them in the  
near future. I also thanks to you as  
government and other nations that help  
them.

So many blessings to all of you.

*"The fixed idea that we have about  
ourselves as a solid and separate from each  
other is painfully limiting. It is possible to  
move through the drama of our lives without  
believing so earnestly in the character that  
we play. That we take ourselves so  
seriously, that we are so absurdly important  
in our own minds, is a problem for us. We  
feel justified in being annoyed with  
everything. We feel justified in denigrating  
ourselves or in feeling that we are more  
clever than the rest of the people. Self-  
importance is like a prison for us, limit us to  
the world of our likes and dislikes. We end  
up bored to death with ourselves and our  
world. We end up very dissatisfied. We have*

*two alternatives: either we take everything to be sure and real - or we don't. Either we accept our fixed versions of reality - or we begin to question them. To train to stay open and curious - to train in dissolving the barriers that we erect between ourselves and the world - is the best use of our human lives. When we train in awakening, we are nurturing the fundamental flexibility of our being. In the most ordinary terms, egolessness is a flexible identity. It manifests as inquisitiveness, as adaptability, as humor, as playfulness. It is our capacity to relax with not knowing, not figuring everything out, with not being at all sure about who we are - or who anyone else is either."*

-- Pema Chodron in **The Places That Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times**

(Shambhala Publications, 2001)

**From LD:** ***Dharma Friends*** has given me much help and inspiration on my relatively recent walk along the Buddhist path. I have read many books and publications and yours is one of my favorite. It's always nice to get views from different angles. Helps to bring it all into focus and obtain a clearer picture. And ***Dharma Friends*** is easy to read and understand without the need of an interpreter, which I found with some Buddhist teachings. So, thank you for making the Dharma accessible to all of us in prisons everywhere, who otherwise may not have such an excellent opportunity to walk in the footsteps of the Buddha.

*One should not imagine oneself to be one with the eye or independent of it or the owner of it. The same with the ear and all the other senses, including the mind. Nor*

*should one imagine oneself to be identical with the world or contained in it or independent of it or the owner of it. In this way, free from imagining, one no longer clings to the things of the world. When one no longer clings, there is no more agitation, insecurity, and worry. Being no longer worried, one can reach into the depths of oneself and understand that where there has been loss there is now fulfillment.*

-Samyutta Nikaya From "**Buddha Speaks**," edited by Anne Bancroft

**From DR:** Dear Anna, and Dharma friends,

Thank you so much for the ***Dharma Friends*** newsletters. They really mean a lot to me and really help me with understanding in my walk for Buddhahood. Thank you so much!!

I spend 23 hours a day in lockdown and have been like this for the past 13 years. And most likely it'll never change. There's nobody here who can help me in my walk. So you and ***Dharma Friends*** are my lifeline. So thank you!

*Having drunk the sweetness of solitude and also the sweetness of tranquility, one becomes free from fear and wrongdoing while drinking the sweetness of the joy of truth.*

-Sutta Nipata

**From Chokyi Lodro**

**Words are only words**

Before I knew better,  
words bounced around in  
my monkey mind  
holding me captive  
in a bind  
running b – l – i – n – d  
until awareness hit me  
telling how empty words  
can be when you react.....  
Just be calm and sit.

Times like now or the  
dilemma I'm living proves a  
lesson about how empty words  
can be  
because

words are only words --.  
You give them power  
when you choose to react.  
Words are like clouds drifting  
across the beautiful sky.  
Just be calm and sit.....  
This is right effort, concentration,  
and right mindfulness in practice

*And a note from Chokyi Lodro - Let me tell you that the book, **Mind over Mood**, is exactly what I need to continue working on myself. I bought the book, **Life Strategies** by Dr. Phil McGraw. It is a tremendous help too.*

**From TC:** A belated “thank you” for the October issue of *Dharma Friends*. It’s always fun, and sometimes educational, to read the letters from our fellow travelers on the path. We do try so hard, don’t we? :-)

I also enjoyed your thoughts and comments on dying. When I first began a study of the Lam Rim, and began to do the meditations, I thought I would just skip over the meditation on death and dying. After all, I’ve been waiting 17 years to die – of course, I am aware of the inevitability of death! Who could be more aware that I am? I try to make the most of every day, simply because I am aware of the fact that death could come at anytime.

You know what? I lied! I was “aware” of others being executed, of others dying of heart attacks and AIDS and suicide and (apparently) of no particular reason at all. Maybe they just got tired of it all. I don’t know.

But, although I’ve been here on death row long – or because here on row for so I’m still everyone “knew” I



for so maybe I’ve been death long – just like else. I. still had

“plenty of time” left because my appeal hasn’t yet reached a legal conclusion!

When I wrote you and told you that my appeal had been denied, and I was expecting an execution date in January, I was still certain that “others” may die today and tomorrow and the day after that – but I still had a few more months left. And because of that “certainty” I was inclined to be lax in my practices, thinking that I could get more serious after a date had been set and I was closer to being executed.

I wasn’t really conscious of all that until a couple of weeks ago, when the US Supreme Court sent my case back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit for “further consideration”. The day after hearing that news on the radio, instead of picking up the Dharma book after breakfast – I picked up a novel. And I was several chapters into it before it dawned on me that the only reason I chose a novel was because I had subconsciously decided that the study of Dharma was no longer as pressing as it had been because the Supreme Court had given me maybe as long as another year to live, depending on how things go with the 5<sup>th</sup> Cir. I still had “plenty of time” left!

Well, Anna, guess who’s gone back to the basics?! Oh, I know each step of the path. I know the teachings and the practices, but I hadn’t experienced the teachings and I’d kept the practices – I guess I should say I’d kept the theory of the practices – in my head, where they were not doing me or anyone else much good.

We’ve all heard, “it’s never too late.”, but I think where the Dharma is concerned that’s not necessarily true. No, where Dharma is concerned, “it’s never too early!” .....

*(And..)*

I have also begun the “**Discovering Buddhism**” correspondence course from Liberation Prison Project, starting – step-by-step – from the beginning.

But I have also started the course offered by **Shambhala Prison Community**, which is based on Chogyam Trungpa’s book “**The Myth of Freedom.**” I read the book once before and enjoyed it, so when I learned of this course I decided to give it a try.

I’ll be attempting to balance the mainly intellectual and scholastic approach of the Geluk tradition with the mainly practice oriented approach of the Kagyu tradition. We’ll see how it works out.

I’ve also been supplementing my studies with the teachings of the Kadampa Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. So far I have read and studied four of his books:

**Introduction to Buddhism. The Meditation Handbook. Eight Steps to Happiness** (a commentary on the eight verses of thought transformation) and **Heart of Wisdom** (a commentary on the “Heart Sutra”). Geshe Kelsang has a very clear and direct manner of writing and his books really helped to clear up a lot of my confusion when I come across teachings that don’t quite make sense to me. I get the books from Kelsang Tekchog, a monk of the New Kadampa Tradition, and he has asked that I pass along his name and address to anyone who is interested in Buddhism. At one time there was a free correspondence course but due to a lack of funds, it has been discontinued. Geshe Kelsang’s books are available though, and Tekchog is happy to answer any serious questions on the teachings. Maybe you could pass his address along to your readers?

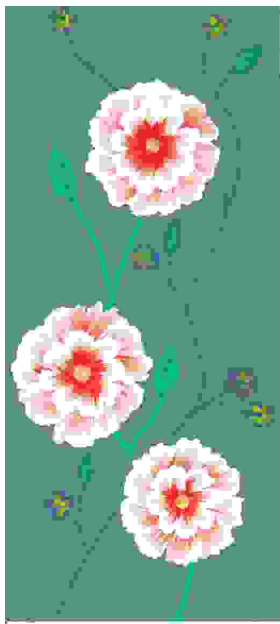
Kelsang Tekchog  
 Saraha Buddhist Center.  
 P.O. Box 12037.  
 San Francisco, CA 94112

Since you seem to be the only one who is able to tolerate my desperate attempts to write poetry, I thought I would send you my latest one. I almost feel guilty, claiming it as my own. I really don't know where it came from. I was laying here one night, just resting off to sleep, and I "heard" two children's voices in my head. The next morning I wrote down what they said, only adding the title and the last two lines.

It's really simple, but if you read it with the understanding that it's two young children, each of whom wants to be the one who loves "the mostest", and one of whom finally says, in effect, "OK, you can loves me more", maybe it's not so simple. I like it.. Maybe you will too.

*T  
to end*

"I  
you."  
"I  
more."  
"...  
you  
"...  
love you...  
"...  
I love you  
"  
"O  
win. I  
."



*he war  
all wars*

love  
love you  
but I love  
most!"  
so....? I  
moster."  
. well.....  
mostest!!  
K, you  
surrender

"Yeah, me too."

**And another poem by T.C.:  
 Beggar Man**

"Nobody loves me," I hear you say,  
 "Nobody cares at all.  
 Nobody knows that I live and breathe,  
 No one cares if I stand or fall..."  
 But –

If I love you and never say the words,  
 Will you feel small and hated?  
 And if I feel no love, but say I do,  
 Will your heart then feel elated?  
 You see –

You live for empty shallow words,  
 When the only love you ever know  
 Is that which flows inside yourself,  
 That which you're afraid to show.

Tell me this, my precious friend,

What difference does it make?  
Will you become less special.  
If you give the instead of take?

Would a rich man become a beggar?  
I think not, so why have you?  
Don't ask for me – just give your love,  
Even if only to a few.

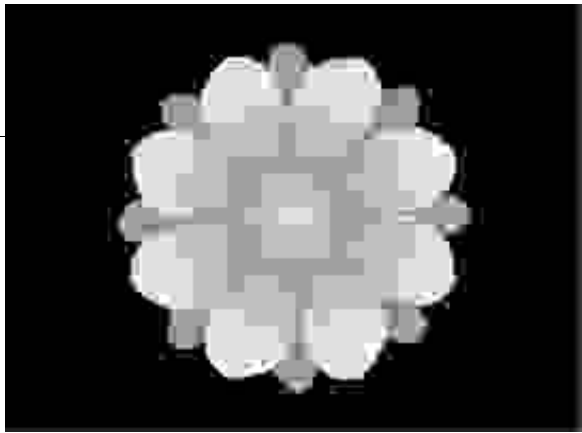
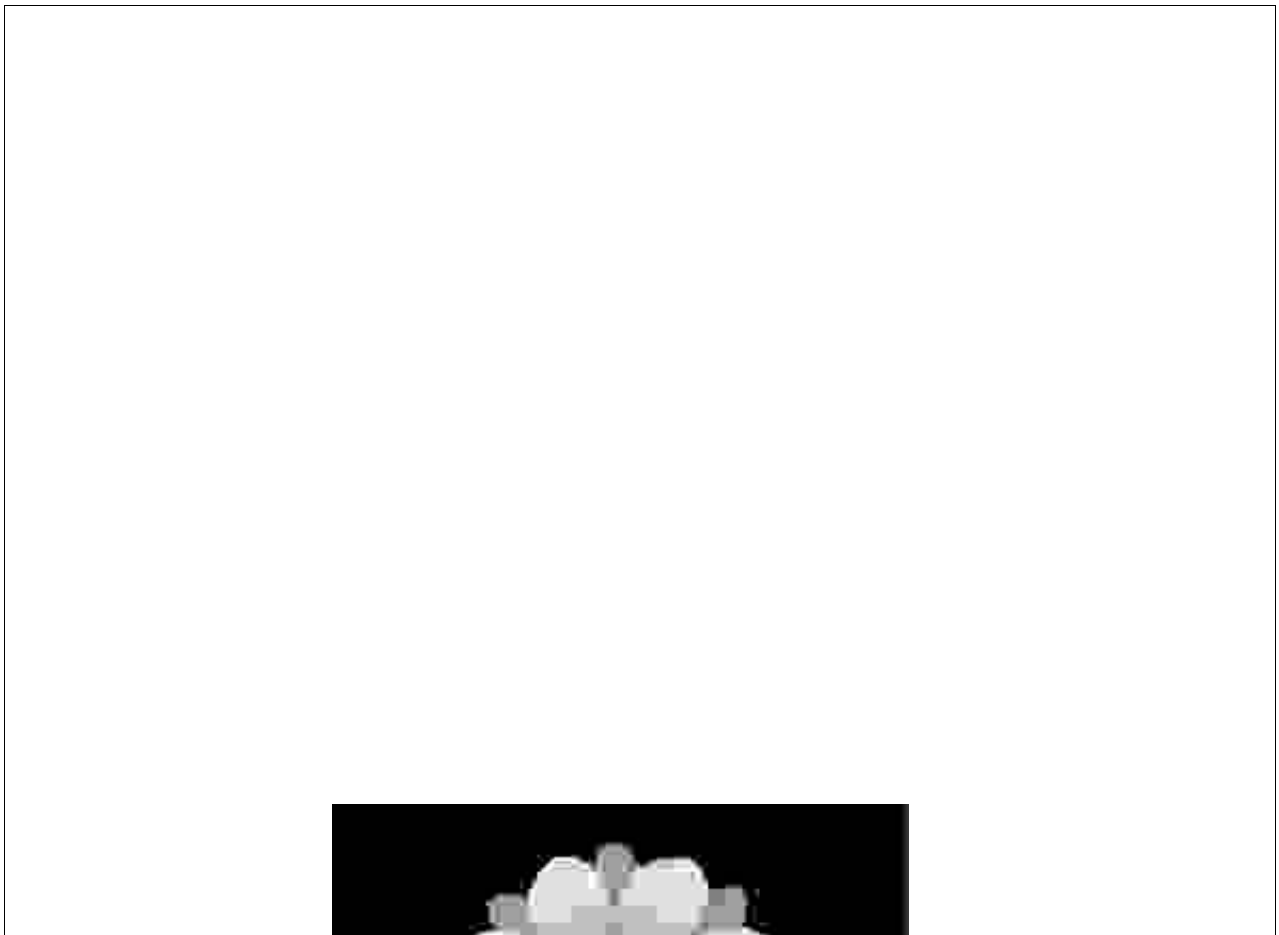
I can see the love behind your eyes,  
And I can hear it in your voice.  
You can sit and cry, or share the wealth

such a very simple choice!

Give it all away, my friend,  
Just give, then give some more,  
And pretty soon the Lord of Love  
Will knock at your heart's door.

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**Subscription info:** I have gladly been offering this newsletter free of charge to those in prisons. I am so happy to have a vehicle for those who have little dharma support to feel united with others who identify with their life situation. It is truly important to remember that we are all mirrors of each other. We are all one with each other. And we can recognize that samsara is suffering for us all whether behind the bars of a prison or behind the bars of our own ego structure. For anyone who is not in prison and who would like to subscribe to Dharma Friends, here is what to do. The fee is \$15 for six months or \$30 for one year. Mail a check or money order made out to **Dharma Friends: Dharma Friends subscriptions, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, AR. 72217-7708.** This amount covers the subscription for you and also for one and a half free subscriptions for prisoners. I also want to acknowledge the enormous generosity of many of those in prisons who have sent stamps and letters of support and appreciation. Far more important than anything material are the letters and notes that say that you are benefitting from being part of this sangha of *Dharma Friends*. I think that many feel less alone on their journey because we are connected beyond all time and space to each other.





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