



offers you **Dharma Friends**

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

July 2011 issue # 174

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The Dhammapada
The teachings of the Buddha



Chapter 14 - THE BUDDHA

179 - The Buddha's perfection is complete; there is no more work to be done. No measure is there for his wisdom; no limits are there to be found. In what way could he be distracted from truth?

180 - The Buddha's perfection is complete; in him there is no craving that could drag him down. No measure is there for his wisdom; no limits are there to be found. In what way could he be distracted from truth?

181 - Celestial beings treasure the Awakened Ones who have fully seen the Way, who are devoted to meditation and delight in the peace of renunciation.

181 - It is not easy to be born as a human being and to live this mortal life. It is not easy to discern profound wisdom and most rare for a Buddha to arise.

183 - Cease to do evil, cultivate that which is good; purify the heart. This is the Way of the Awakened Ones.

184 - A renunciate does not oppress anyone. Patient endurance is the ultimate asceticism. Profound liberation, say the Buddhas, is the supreme goal.

185 - Not insulting, not harming, cultivating restraint with respect for the training, modesty in eating and contentment with one's dwelling place, devotion to mindful intent: this is the Teaching of the Buddha.

186 -187 - Not in great wealth is there contentment, nor in sensual pleasure, gross or refined. But in the extinction of craving is joy to be found by a disciple of the Buddha.

188-189 - To many places beings withdraw to escape from fear: to mountains, forests, parklands and gardens; sacred

places as well. But none of these places offer true refuge, none of them can free us from fear.

190 - 191 - One who finds refuge in the Buddha in the Dhamma and in the Sangha sees with penetrating insight: suffering, its cause, its release and the Way leading to true freedom.

192 - The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha: these are true refuge; these are supreme; these lead to Liberation.

193 - It is hard to find a being of great wisdom; rare are the places in which they are born. Those who accompany them when they appear know good fortune indeed.

194 - Blessed is the arising of a Buddha; blessed is the revealing of the Dhamma; blessed is the concord of the Sangha; delightful is harmonious communion.

195 - 196 - Immeasurable is the benefit obtained from honoring those who are pure and beyond fear. Beings who have found freedom from sorrow and grieving are worthy of honor.

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A few thoughts about this Dhammapada verse: The Buddha

It is not easy to be born as a human being and to live this mortal life. It is not easy to discern profound wisdom and most rare for a Buddha to arise.

Dharma Friends is seeking to support you on whatever path to happiness, peace, and deep freedom feels right for you. We want you to find your own way to your deepest self, to change those patterns that bring suffering, and to then make the most of your life. Our **Dhammapada** teachings offer clues to living a life of your highest expression, Buddhist and non-Buddhist, that transcend religious boundaries and applies even to those with no spiritual affinity. These teachings are, in-fact, more like a science where we apply guidelines to our life and see what works for us.

And at the same time, these teachings offer to us the possibility that we are so much more than we can ever conceptualize that we are. *Dharma Friends* agrees with those teachings that tell us that there is a sacred essence to the universe which we might refer to as Buddha essence, but other traditions or non-traditions call this indescribable 'something' by a myriad of names. And we honor that all transcendent traditions have a glimmer of a path or a very developed means of leading us into some experience or knowing of the sacred. But for all of us, no matter how we experience the unknowable or if we experience anything at all, the challenge is to find the path and the words to express what is true for us and to attain the realization we seek. All paths have their own teachings with their own vocabularies to explore what it is to be human in the mundane and to awaken to the most profound dimensions of all that we are. For those who do not follow a 'spiritual path', your way may be music, art, poetry, literature, humanitarian service, dance or other physical movement, or one of the many vehicles that allow us all to explore the vast and subtle experience of life.

Some of you might be cringing. You are wondering if I have strayed from the very precious and very right teachings that you believe in as Buddhists. Or you might be cringing because I say that I am a Buddhist and you embrace some other Buddhist way. We all know well that history has been made bloody and horrible with the disagreements of what is the **right way** embraced by religions and all try to prove superior knowledge. Even among the same traditions, sects argue over words and concepts in a battle of egos as to who are the good guys and who are the bad guys. One would think that we would figure out that in the defense of concepts, breaking all of the precepts inherent in all of our traditional teachings as we prove our superiority is perhaps problematic to achieving our true goals. Even in our small community of *Dharma Friends* we see the reenactment of this human addiction of warring over concepts at the expense of acting in accordance with our highest vows as a compassionate family. And yet, that is in part, why it is

so very hard to be a human being sharing lives with other struggling beings. *The Dhammpada says: It is not easy to be born as a human being and to live this mortal life.* As practitioners and students, we are glad for the opportunity to look in the mirror at our human struggles and to see all of our many selves reflected back to us because that is how we learn. It may be a little embarrassing or humbling but that is our purification process from which we grow so that we might be more mindful in the next moment.

Let's reread again in *The Dhammpada: It is not easy to be born as a human being and to live this mortal life. It is not easy to discern profound wisdom and most rare for a Buddha to arise.* And we can reframe this thought as we reflect - it is not easy to live a human life with all that comes with our body, a brain, a psyche, and a society of other problematic beings to engage with. It is hard. We all struggle with the suffering that comes to each and every being who has ever been born. Those who reach the ultimate and transcendent experience that is beyond suffering are very rare. In Buddhism they may be called a Buddha, but the paths to transcendence and ultimate peace are many and each produces wise beings. We must find our own way. Listen to your own heart and know that all the guidance you need is within you.

But, no one has it easy and no one can say to another - this way is the best and only way. No one can say - I know how to lead all of you to the truth. To tell another they are wrong, even with a well-meaning belief that you know the RIGHT way, may be to undermine one who is struggling and lost. You might make their journey even harder. We can say: Listen to your own truth and I am supporting you all the way.

But there are some guidelines that most everyone can agree on. It is pretty obvious that if we can live these principles offered in *The Dhammapada* and many other ancient and proven wisdom teachings, we will have more balance and clarity in our lives. With stillness within, we are more likely to give that inner voice a direct channel to guide us. We remember the analogy we have used before: If we are out on a stormy ocean in our tiny boat, tossed about by the waves, we must do all we can to just stay upright. We have little time to contemplate our survival strategy much less a subtle inner voice. If we are on a calm sea, even in our tiny little boat, we can paddle along with the leisure to study the winds, the stars, the compass and maps, and to watch out for sharks. We are far more likely to complete our journey and make it to land.

It is usually we ourselves that create the circumstances that bring those stormy seas. Then we wonder why we are having such a tough time finding our way to shore. When we do all we can to create the calm seas, even though there are no guarantees that storms won't arise, we are more likely to have a sense of our course so that we will make it to port no matter what surprises come up.

Here are some of those **Dhammapada** guidelines that we can all apply to our lives. If nothing else, they calm our seas. In Buddhism, we are told that these guidelines will help us to create the circumstances to awaken to our highest realization of who we are, a Buddha. If we call this state of sacred, subtle or transcendent knowing God or Great Peace or "Being Cool", these same guidelines can likely facilitate our realization of attainment as we each walk our right path.

We also know that if we do not live such life-long practices of balance and wisdom, we are very likely to create horrific storms that will sink our boat.

Here are some of those 'suggestions' that will bring calm, peace, clarity, equanimity, and, if we want to call it that, Buddhahood. You already know that any one of these teachings is hard to follow as a life teaching. But try.

183 - Cease to do evil, cultivate that which is good; purify the heart. This is the Way of the Awakened Ones.

184-A renunciate does not oppress anyone. Patient endurance is the ultimate asceticism....Profound liberation, say the Buddhas, is the supreme goal....

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This is truly a tough path to follow for us human beings who try so hard just to make it through the day.



A MEDITATION on The Buddha

Among these teachings, and no matter what tradition we follow, we see consistently the admonition or even a vow to not cause harm to others. I bet we could all agree that those who achieve very high spiritual capacity are those who are kind to others. The most realized might be recognized as saints or called Christ-like, or bodhisattvas or Buddhas. We would all do well to let kindness and compassion be our practice in life. Just to attempt to follow such principles takes us far on a path to achieving all the goals of awakening to sacred awareness. Practicing kindness ensures that every time we consider a self-serving action, we remember: ***I practice compassion***. Then we must come to terms with and maybe even purify our more selfish intentions. More times than not, we might choose to let go of what we want and help another instead. Little by little, kindness becomes a habit and our ego-attachments fall away naturally.

But, practicing compassion is one of those “Fake it until you make it” Buddhist practices. This practice truly does help us to eventually make it to Buddhahood or sainthood or to becoming truly kind beings, but until then, it is often a matter of the little daily struggle between the angel and the devil on our shoulders battling it out. Purification comes as we develop awareness of our choices and deciding when to put our self first and when to put another first.

Here is a short meditation on compassion that we can read slowly, contemplatively, and with heartfelt opening to the experience of sending out love. First, we must send love to our self, and then to others. Do it often so that it becomes the foundation of our new habit for compassion. This is especially helpful to have built our new habit when the hard times come. Our impulse then is to yell and curse. We can then rely on our new and strong habit because that is not the time we can say - ***but I practice compassion!***



the meditation.....

Compassion Works to transform us into Buddhas

Begin by relaxing as you take softening and releasing breaths. Breathe in, then breathe out and let go. Notice your levels of stress and tension. With each breath, let go of all that tightness. Again and again, just let go. Compassion begins by remembering to treat our bodies gently. We want to allow them to feel comfortable and safe. We want our bodies to find balance and the potential for our healing and healthiness.

Compassion is acceptance of ourselves for who and what we are in every way. To have compassion and unconditional love for others, we must first open to that same love for ourselves. We cannot love others more than we are capable of loving our own self. Breathe gently. Let go of judgment, old hatreds, feeling ashamed, disappointed in who

we are, or unworthy. Let go of all that we have held against our self for not being who we or others thought we should be. Let it all go. With every out breath, imagine that all those old and dark energies are leaving us. The feelings and thoughts float out of our body and dissipate into space. Everything that we have held against us and used to hurt us – let it all go. Each in-breath brings in clean and purifying fresh air. Each out breath washes us free of old pain. Breathe in and breathe out. Let it all go.

Now, as we breathe in, visualize breathing in love and deep acceptance for who we are – for all that we are. Unconditional acceptance – forgiveness- and love for us no matter what we have said, done, or are. We breathe in love knowing that in compassion there are profound lessons and eventually wisdom for all those qualities and events that we once judged. All that we have held against us was once a way of protecting our self in a harsh world. All that we have held against us was likely a way of surviving until we could feel stronger and validated. All that we have held against us was likely the strengths that contributed to our survival so that we can now take new steps. Breathe in love and acceptance. Breathe in compassion and feel your heart open and receive it all. Feel your self full of love and compassion. Let it in as much as possible. Let it fill your heart and fill your entire body. Rest in compassion for as long as you can.

Now consider compassion for all those that you know and love around you who are suffering. Maybe you think of your children, or your family members, a partner, a friend, your pets, or someone you know who is longing for love. As though starving children are lining up in a soup line desperately hungry for food, see those that you love coming up to you one by one. See you filling them with love and compassion in whatever way this appears to you in your visualization. You might breathe compassion into their heart or give it to them in a bowl that they drink down. Just see what you see in your mind's eye. Then, as you see compassion entering into these beings that you love, watch and see compassion go to work. See each one who receives your compassion become healthy, happy, and free of suffering. Visualize them being happy for the rest of their lives. Take all the time you like and, in between, send some compassion to you too so you do not ever get depleted.

Compassion for All – as you continue your meditation let all those you have been sending compassion to, gather around you. Together, all of you see those throughout our world who are suffering. Meditate on all those who are dying somewhere – perhaps alone and in pain. You, and all those around you, send them compassion. Meditate on all those who are in the throes of a war right now. You and all your friends and family, send them compassion. See all who are old and lonely. Send them compassion. See those who are dealing with abuse or violence, addictions, abandonment, mental illness, homelessness, cancer or other painful illness – see them all struggling with the great challenges of being a living being on this planet. You know how hard it is because you've been there too. Send them all compassion. Send them healing and hope. Send them love. See each one touched by your kindness. See them respond. See them all free of suffering. And see our planet too - a dynamic organism resting in space. Send all life forms and send our planet compassion so that all might thrive and manifest all their gifts.

Rest gently in the clouds of compassion that you have sent forth. Breathe compassion into you. Breathe out compassion to all those you know and love, and then to all those everywhere who are filled and sustained by your kindness. Effortlessly stay in this breathing in and breathing out. No thought, no need to do anything. Know you are breathing in compassion and breathing out compassion with every breath.

When you finish your meditation, appreciate that later, when you might forget that you are breathing in and breathing out compassion, you will still continue to nurture yourself with loving acceptance. You will endlessly offer out love to all who see you, who hear your voice, or even to those who just hear your name.

Say to yourself in the mornings, ***I live compassion***. Think for a moment of what you would like to offer out today. At night, assess your day, and ask yourself-***How did I live compassion today?***

Tomorrow you will be a Buddha. Compassion Works.



FROM YOUR LETTERS

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

#2 - If you have a Meditation Group that would like to receive our love, prayers and support, write and give us your group name, the name of your institution, and the participants' names, if you wish. We will send your group a Compassion Works for

All/Dharma Friends CERTIFICATE affirming that you are a part of our sangha too. We will be sending prayers out daily to all of you (of course we do that to all of you already...) Write for your group certificate and put *Attn. Linda - Meditation group* on the envelope.

#3 - Jeff's Kids and your heartwarming letters: Jeff is our friend who counsels kids in a Juvenile Detention Center. He thought that sharing your thoughts or stories about your journey to prison might benefit kids that are in the same situation that you might have been in once upon a time. Know how much your letters are all appreciated for your stories, your advice, and for being such a wonderful vehicle to reach broken hearts! The healing that is coming from these letters is extraordinary.

If you would like to write a letter to Jeff’s Kids the address is CWFA, PO Box 7708, Little Rock, Arkansas 72217-7708 and put JEFF’S KIDS on the envelope. Keep those letters coming. For those who have written to Jeff’s Kids, thank you so much!

#4 -From Chelle – I want to extend a Big Thank You to those of you who have sent in your thoughts and ideas as we develop a post-release program. While this project is still in its very early stages, the letters I’ve received will serve as important building blocks in the future in developing this program. I want to encourage all of you to continue sharing with me about how you think such a program could work, and how you think a person or group could best help you upon release. When you write in, be sure to put on the envelope Chelle’s REACH project. Again, thank you so much for participating and being a part of developing this program.

Loss of mindfulness is why people engage in useless pursuits, do not care for their own interests, and remain unalarmed in the presence of things which actually menace their welfare. - Buddha

Visualization – in our meditation we talked about visualization.

Some of you have requested an explanation of what we mean by visualization. This is one of those things that the harder we try to do visualization with concepts and thinking, the less successful we are. Instead, remember back when you were a kid. Think of those days of fantasizing long stories as you lay looking up at the sky, or playing with your toys and imagining yourself a soldier or a super-hero. These fantasies were complete with vivid pictures, dialogue, and active unfolding that you watched with as much attention as a movie.

Visualization is not much different than that. Plant the suggestion for your visualization and then just watch in your mind’s eye as the pictures, the stories, and the dialogues unfold. Depending on your ability to just let go, you will see colors, activity, and figures known and newly imagined, all coming and going in the unfolding before you. Take the cues that we might give in a meditation, and then just watch. Have no agenda but just enter into the same curiosity that you would if reading a good book or watching a TV show. There you know that you don’t and can’t direct the plot. Give up being director and let your deeper consciousness take over as the storyteller. The plot will unfold and tell the story of YOU. Enjoy and see what appears to you.



Never Give Up

**No matter what is going on
Never give up
Develop the heart
Too much energy in your country is spent developing the mind instead of the heart
Develop the heart
Be compassionate
Not just to your friends but to everyone
Be compassionate
Work for peace in your heart and in the world
Work for Peace
And I say it again
Never give up
No matter what is happening
No matter what is going on around you
Never give up**

His Holiness the XIVth Dalai Lama

Doorways to the Truth written by James Halbirt

The truth is we fear pain but we tend to never manage it well. Suffering is related to pain and we cause it. Obviously, we fear pain and its management; we fear the loss of all that is precious to us, including our capacities, our possessions, and our relationships. We tend to give up our dignity of our life, and of course we fear the unknown, and the annihilation of the self.

Ultimately, to face ourselves and to help others, we must relate with kindness toward our own rage, helplessness, and frustration, our doubt, bitterness and of course fear. Through accepting our suffering, sharing it, we can begin to be with others in a more open, kind and understanding way. We learn not to reject difficult situations on people. Rather, we meet them exactly as they are and where they are.

The guides for the truth are the tenets that have helped me remember some humility of how I can be more intimate with and transparent to whatever is unfolding in the present moment. They help me act more skillfully as I spend time with those who are in much the same boat as me. They guide me toward inclusiveness, and toward my practice of meditation, contemplative practices that are the heart and bone of being humane. Mindful contemplation deepens our capacity for concentration, openness, and insight, so that we gradually expand our horizons of our hearts and minds until they are big enough to include everything, the life and death of each passing moment.

I am most impressed with the Pure Precepts of remaining in the ordinary world as we are now, to continue to the work of not-knowing, bearing witness, and compassionate action. ALL the other precepts become much more easier to follow when we adhere to the Pure Precepts. The third tenet, compassionate actions, asks us to make a whole cloth of all the pieces of our lives, to include everything that has happened and to reflect nothing. As we serve in our practice, our generosity, we experience by doing what needs to be done, for ourselves as well as others. Healing means letting go into the unknown as we well as for others. I would not be in prison had I let it go, but I could not because I was fully, unmanageably so attached to an object I thought was love, and I owned it. How sad, we can't seem to let go of our attachments.

I have since learned letting go into the unknown, being with the rich inevitability of elemental dissolution, and knowing the singular taste of mental freedom for all cares and burdens, including those of body and mind. Then we find our humility, faith, and tenderness we hold it with patience and respect, and find a sane relationship with our sadness without being overwhelmed.

When we practice being present in non-knowing and bearing witness we do well to nurture trust so that the knot in the weave of things can be opened to reveal intricacy. We will find ourselves humbled and enriched by being fully present to the unacceptable, the unexplained, the unjustified, and the unknowable. We can begin to see and experience a rich meaning and value, a developmental phase in our maturation process, and even a preparation for deathless enlightenment.

When we become free of our deepest fears the level of realization that there is no suffering, no birth, no death. Each moment is new and complete, right now being born, right now dying. Each moment of non-knowing is new and a constant state of flux, riding

the wave of impermanence, the elements come together as form and dissolve into formlessness. In some sense we are never born; we will never die. We live in the fullness of our being to the doorways to the truth.

These tenets have helped me remember with some humility how I can be more present and intimate with and transparent to whatever is unfolding in the present moment of NOW. When I stay present, they help me act more skillfully as I practice the contemplative practices that are the heart and bone of being and dying in the moment. Mindful contemplation deepens our capacity for concentration, openness and insight, so that we gradually expand our horizons of our hearts until they are big enough to include everything including the reality of oneness. Can we meet ourselves and each other now?

Those of us who have studied the precepts will readily understand the Pure Precepts. What I mean by not-knowing, bearing witness and loving action is that we do not bring the past or the future to any present situation or event. We do not add our judgments, our stories, our drama or our spin on what is existing, we just observe and learn from the present. We do not add our duality of like and dislike, good and bad on any other concept that hinders the present. We observe, and if we see suffering, we have compassion, and empathy for those who are in this pain. If possible, we try to be of assistance or to help in an appropriate way. In this way, we demonstrate our loving action, kindness to those who are suffering, troubled or in need. We abandon our fixed ideas of outcome. We are not investing in the future, but in the present moment, free of design. Only a radical optimist can bear to bear witness. We learn to be open, vulnerable, and undefended in our relationships. Sure it is . . . Questions.

From Brian Farmer: *Do the spiral structures of the galaxies and the spiral structures of molecules exist in relative resonance? Is man a mirror of the macrocosm? Spherical music, magical sound. Spiraling in and spiraling out. Search the stars for what we are, and find we need not look so far. Inside us all, deep down inside, are kept the secrets of all time. We come from the stars but spring from the Earth.*

From S. E.: Hello Dharma Friends !!! I'm not sure exactly who it may have been, but someone sent me a book called Being Dharma by Ajahn Chah. Anyways, I just wanted to give a big thank you !!! to whoever it was. Thank you also for the newsletters. I think all of you are doing a great job for us. A lot of inmates need support and someone to guide them. This is one crazy place to practice and yet I can also say that the difficulty in doing so only makes us stronger in the end. But for those who need constant help along the way, it's the folks like you who are greatly appreciated. Thank you again, and may you guys be at peace and free from suffering,

--and a response from Kristopher: Dear S, Thank you for writing and sharing such kind words about us. When we get requests from you guys, I'm the one who gets them, figures out what might meet your needs, packages them and sends them. I maintain a library of donated books so that we have them on hand. You can imagine how much space they take up after a good book drive and they are very heavy for an old man like me to move around, but I guess I manage okay. It sure is expensive to ship them out and so that is why it is so very important that you all send the shipping instructions / rules with your requests. It's very disheartening to get these jewels returned to us, but we are here to help and try to do so the best that we can. May you be abundantly blessed by each and every breath that you take,

From contact comes feeling. From feeling comes reaction. This is what keeps us in the cycle of birth and death. Our reactions to our feelings are our passport to rebirth. - Ayya Khema, "Being Nobody, Going Nowhere"

From V.M.: Dear Kristopher, I just want to share a funny little story. My friend here, who I share my newsletter with, got into a fight with somebody about something really stupid as I was walking over to hand her the newsletter. It was the issue that was discussing anger. She looked at the front and said "Oh well, that makes friggin' sense." Well timed guys!

Standing or walking, sitting or lying down, during all these waking hours, let him establish mindfulness of good will, which men call the highest state! - Buddha

From Jason McDonough: Dear CWFA, I read, re-read and studied the "Punishment," March 2011 issue # 170, of the Dharma Friends newsletter very carefully. I found myself contemplating: When did punishment and profit become synonymous? I wonder, at what point did we, as a society, discover that there was a profit in the systematic disenfranchising of American citizens, particularly the children?

I think about Jeff's Kids every day. I personally had an intact home as a child and only recently realized how lucky I am for that, as I am now fully aware of the fact that I had a behavior problem. The real kick in the pants is that the United States, as a whole,

is a fundamentally Christian organization. Isn't the premise of that philosophy FORGIVENESS ??? Isn't the basic concept of the Constitution of the United States FORGIVENESS ??? How do we, as a society, explain disenfranchising a child for LIFE, for a profit in a private prison, or private food service, or job security for a prosecutor, judge or courtroom clerk?

Punishment is meant to correct a wrong. Punishment can be used as a tool to redirect an errant way or behavior problem. But punishment for profit? We, as a society, are paying for something, making an investment in something and getting absolutely no return on that investment. Our current punishment system has an 89% failure rate. Recidivism is out of control. No one in their right mind would invest in anything that failed 89% of the time, yet the American taxpayer does just that every day when we invest in prisons, private or public, State or Federal, Adult or Juvenile.

The Teachings of the Buddha say:

129 Having empathy for others, one sees that all beings are afraid of punishment and death.

130 Having empathy for others one sees that all beings love life and fear death – knowing this, one does not attack or cause attack.

I think we can add to this: OR PROFIT FROM THAT ATTITUDE OR PUNISHMENT. The American Society could learn much from the Sangha. Would it not be better to teach, redirect, to spend some of these billions of dollars on teaching people how to avoid punishment, how to avoid coming to or returning to American prisons and punishment farms? Until there is a monetary profit in enlightenment, a monetary profit in healing a sentient being of the pains of Samsara, and there IS a profit in punishment, we are doomed to incarcerated America, a systematic disenfranchising of American Citizens for profit. I pray enlightenment for ALL.



The Macaroni and Cheese Box Postcard Incident By William Adams

(note from anna: Kristopher often is ecologically impeccable and cuts up food boxes to make the post cards on which he writes to you, our readers!)

When the mac & chz card arrived, the corrections guy really had some fun with me concerning it and my inner spirit was strengthened by that moment. Thank you. He was sorting all the mail and he see's it, knows what it is and so on, but then he calls me over in an authoritarian tone and says "Adams, What's this, HUH ? !" From my observation, I told him exactly what it appeared to be . . . He roared some more and I just had the courage to smile and say "Is that all, Sir?" I was able to experience the beginning of fear, but I grabbed it mentally and took control of it instead of it taking control of me.

So, Kristopher, are you reaching out for help? Is this a sign that your addiction has really and truly taken you over? Is this your bottom? I used to have a habit of four cans of ravioli per day. It almost killed me !!! I hope and pray that your addiction to mac and chz has been removed and maybe, just maybe, you can now indulge in some Spaghetti "O's" or gourmet peanut butter and jam / fruit preserves on a croissant. I do see that the pull of the chz and noodle is strong in you, but I do hope you may be free from your pasta problem someday.

I could be way off and this use of food packaging as postcards is a unique and creative way to recycle. Or perhaps, in a subtle way, you're letting us know just how much the office is over budget and that you can't afford to buy paper.

* This has been a test of the emergency humor system. If this had been a true emergency, you would have been instructed where and when to laugh !!!

Seriously though, your cards mean the world to me. Really, I love your message and I love you and the whole staff for including me in the sangha. Your kindness and love = loving kindness. Your peace from within is exemplary. You have taught me volumes. All of you from CWFA **Dharma Friends** hold a special place in my life. Gassho

Another shortcoming of desire is that it leads to so much that is undesirable. - Lama Zopa Rinpoche, "The Door to Satisfaction"

From Louis Rocco, Dear Kristopher, I would like to take this time to share some insight and commentary on Tim Lathrop's contribution on, "The Evolution of Self" found in issue # 167, December, 2010 of **Dharma Friends**. I feel that Western Buddhists have a difficult time assimilating and living day to day with what is labeled "Self." This is especially true in cultures such as our own

when “Self-Esteem” is a focal point for many of us since we first learned to be cognizant and placed value on what we could tangibly experience. Whether this, or that, is “right” or “wrong” or “skillful” or “unskillful” is all a matter of our individual perception.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOUR ADDRESS CHANGES.

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

Thanks so much for your help!

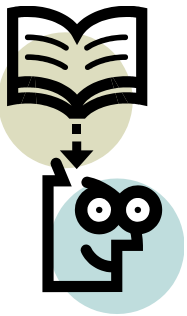
SOME NEW OPTIONS: We are always trying to be mindful of \$\$\$ in order to keep publishing our newsletter, as we are always in search of additional funding. **Here are some ways that you can help us.**

If you are receiving ***Dharma Friends*** but do not read it or know someone else who does not read their issues, either donate them to your library, or write and tell us to take you off the ***Dharma Friends*** list. Now, some have written and said that others need them more than they do so take their name off. Don't be too generous!!

WE WANT YOU TO KEEP GETTING DHARMA FRIENDS IF IT IS HELPFUL TO YOU!

If you have family or friends who might like to receive **Dharma Friends** as well, they can just let us know and we will put them on the list. It is important for us to keep those in prisons connected to society, and most especially to their families and friends. We greatly value the opportunity to bring a loving community of support to those who are connected to people in prison as they are often made to feel uncomfortable by society. If those you love receive **Dharma Friends** too, think of the common growth that you would share and the bond that could develop. So, you might suggest **Dharma Friends** as something your friends and family might like to donate to and receive via email.

The Mahanagaraja Conundrum by Mark Goguen: The serpent king's wisdom is only for those who have passed beyond rebirth without essence of an independent substance. He dwells in the freedom that is free from self-nature. The fruit of the Mahanagaraja is but a single seed to which is called the mahabodhi. He is within you who governs the nadis streams within your body. Go listen to the energy that channels deep within your being. That's where the Mahanagaraja resides.



Book of Knowledge - Omar's dream

Here is an invitation to contribute to a book ...

A request from Lawrence King: Hi Anna and Dharma Friends readers,

I hope this finds you doing well. It's L.J.King from Book Talk Radio,
<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/lawrence-j-king>

I have some very important people involved in my 5th book called **The Eye of Truth...** i.e. professors, doctors, lawyers, politicians, judges, musicians, authors, scientists, religious people, spiritual advisers, people that matter, very important people, etc,etc,etc. Maybe you can do me the honor of participating in my 5th book called **The Eye of Truth** by Lawrence J. King Thank You, Thank You, Thank You....

Below are the questions that are being presented to a lot of very important people to make up the book content. If any Dharma Friends' reader is interested in responding, please send me your picture and your biography (if possible) along with the answers to the following questions. **Mail to: Lawrence King P.O. Box 1831 Boulder Colorado 80306**

- 1.How would you define the word God ?
- 2.Does God really exist?
- 3.Who is God ?
- 4.What does God look like?
- 5.Do you believe in Guardian Angels?
- 6.How would you define the word Devil?
- 7.Does the Devil really exist?
- 8.What does the Devil look like?
- 9.Do you believe in Demonic spirits?
- 10.Where do we go when we die?
- 11.Is there life after death? If so then please explain how that works.
- 12.Do you believe in reincarnation? If so then please describe what reincarnation means to you.
- 13.What does the word Good mean?
- 14.What does the word Evil mean?
- 15.Is there a Heaven?
- 16.Is there a Hell?
- 17.What does the word Heaven mean to you?
- 18.What does the word Hell mean to you?
- 19.What is the difference between being of the light and being of the dark mean to you, religiously speaking?
- 20.What is our life's purpose?
- 21.Do you believe your mind causes you to believe a certain way? and behave a certain way? or is it your heart that causes you to believe a certain way and behave a certain way? or is it both your heart and mind that causes you to believe a certain way? and behave a certain way?
22. What would you say would be the ultimate sacrifice in life?
23. Would you say that our lives are pre-destined? for example: No matter what we do or not do in life we are destined the end up where we are at anyway.
24. Would you say that we control our own destiny and fate? for example: When we put our time, energy, and effort into something then we have controlled our own destiny and fate thus are arriving somewhere else.

Compassion Works for All/ Dharma Friends

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Remember the clear light, the pure clear white light from which everything in the universe comes, to which everything in the universe returns; the original nature of your own mind. The natural state of the universe unmanifest. Let go into the clear light, trust it, merge with it. It is your own true nature, it is home. - Tibetan Book of the Dead

Dharma Friends

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Additional Pages for EMAIL VERSION of *Dharma Friends*

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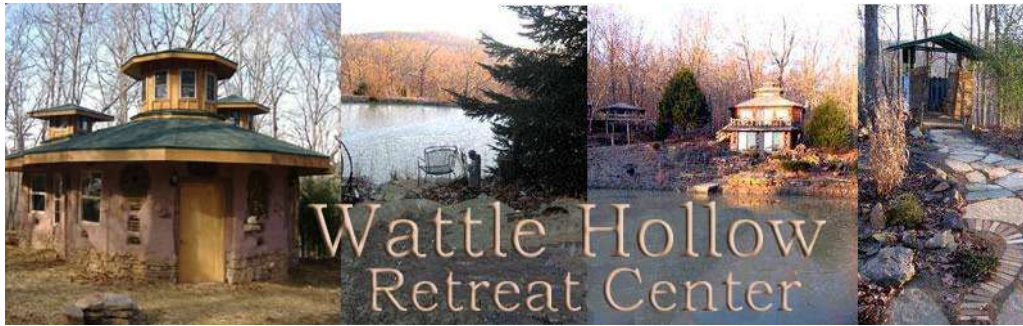
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To see our schedule, times and locations for Compassion Works contemplative sessions go to: www.JustUsFriends.org/Action

If you students of the Way wish to become Buddhas, you need study no doctrines whatever, but learn only how to avoid seeking for and attaching yourselves to anything. - Huang Po, Zen Teaching of Huang Po



**THE NEXT STEP ON YOUR SPIRITUAL PATH -
a meditation retreat facilitated by Anna and Joy at Wattle Hollow**

Many of you have regularly attended the Wattle Hollow twice a year meditation retreats facilitated by Anna with Yoga by Joy Fox at Joy's Fayetteville, Arkansas fabulous and lovely retreat center.

This fall we will meet over the weekend of October 28 - October 30. The retreat is now almost full. If you would like to join us, please go to: www.wattlehollow.com/schedule/ and sign up. We want you to come.

and p.s. - Joy has many other excellent events scheduled throughout the fall at Wattle Hollow.

Join us at www.JustUsFriends.org.

Check us out and help spread the news by emailing the site to your friends!

Along with informative and inspirational articles –

there are many videos in our video archive to lend a little support in difficult life issues.

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

*We now have more of **Linda Bessette's** Mindful Money book – order here by emailing Linda.*



Mara Leveritt's books!

The Boys on the Tracks: Death, Denial, and a Mother's Crusade to Bring Her Son's Killers to Justice

And

Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three

Email Linda (lbessette33@comcast.net) and she can give you more information about prices, mailing, etc. for all books.

And anna's books –

Just As the Breeze Blows Through Moonlight, and Dharma Friends and the Healthy Living pamphlet are on our old Compassion Works for All web site – www.dharmafriendsprisonoutreachproject.com for a free download – but donations are always appreciated! Or you can order a hardcopy book for \$15 plus shipping (\$5) at my email address: anna@aristotle.net

***If you would like to host a Compassion Works for All fundraising lunch or coffee,
Please let us know and we will plan details with you!!
This is a friendly and informative way to raise money for our efforts.
You invite those who you think would appreciate the philanthropic opportunity.
We will supply the food and I will gladly give a talk to your guests.***

You may forward any past Dharma Friends newsletters, or this newsletter, on to anyone who you believe would benefit from them. If someone has sent this Dharma Friends issue to you as a gift and you would like to join us each month, please email anna@aristotle.net for more information about Compassion Works for All, our Dharma Friends newsletter, and our prison outreach program. You may receive Dharma Friends by hard copy. The subscription fee is \$30, but unfortunately it is not tax deductible because you receive a paper publication for your donation.

