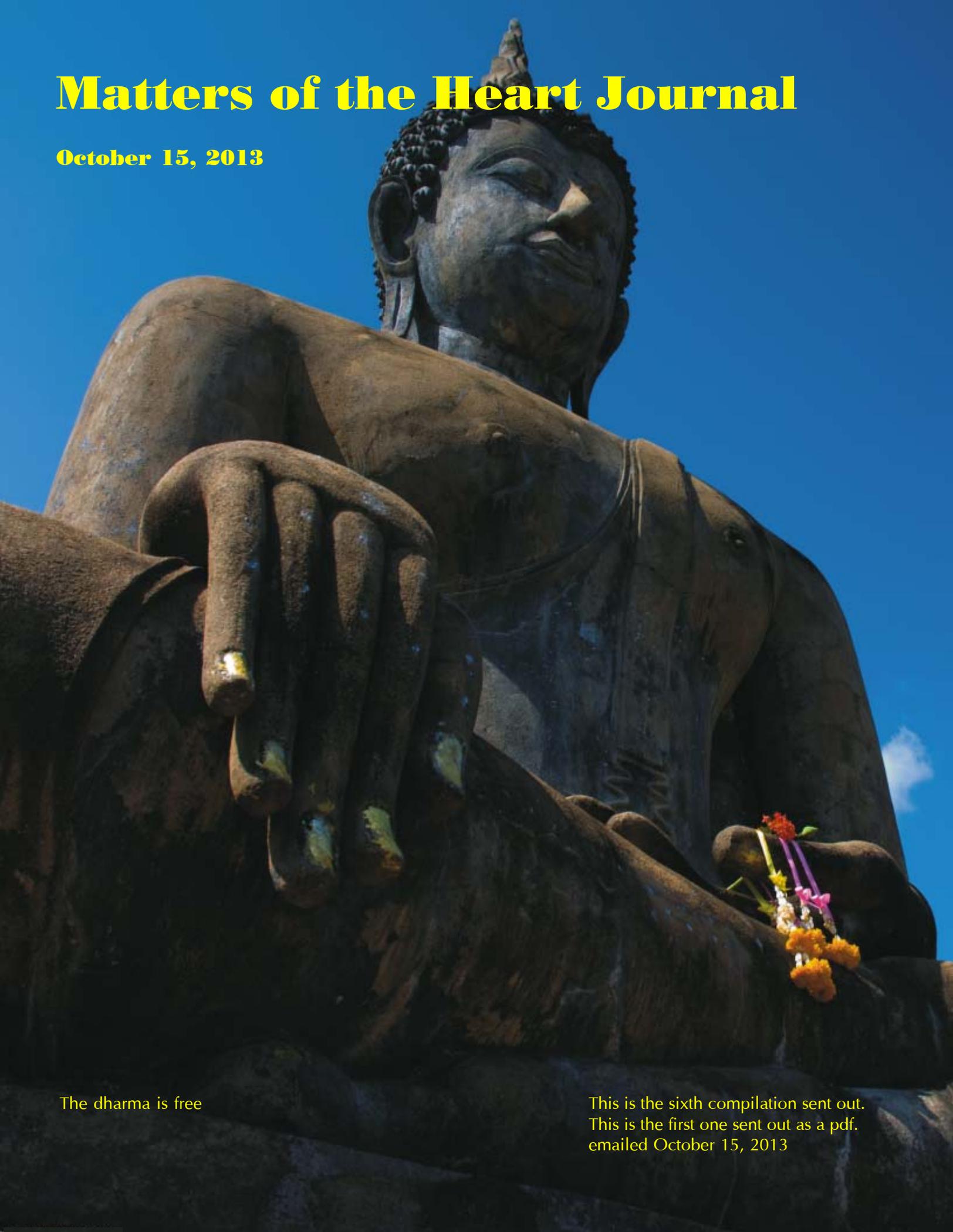


# Matters of the Heart Journal

October 15, 2013



The dharma is free

This is the sixth compilation sent out.  
This is the first one sent out as a pdf.  
emailed October 15, 2013

## Steve's Ramblings

This is my sixth compilation into a more journal-like format. It's the first one I formatted as a pdf. I have to admit I'm very pleased with this edition. That may change somewhat after all the typos show up - usually after I send it. I'm confident I will find better ways to break up the articles (*e.g. continued on page xx*) next time. Right now I'm just very pleased with the content. I hope you agree.

There are various ways of framing what this issue is about, but right now I'm seeing it as being about practice. Seeing "ourselves" as we actually are is the object of practice. The way of explaining or understanding what this means among the various Buddhist schools varies, but the practice of attaining it (whether we see it as our natural and real state or something we become is really a matter of semantics. Regardless of this, if we look at how the various schools practice, they look remarkably similar. In this issue there are articles by Zen masters, Theravada masters, a practitioner of *A Course in Miracles*. There are discussions and explanations of what practice is, what it is for, and how to go about it. These explanations are remarkably similar. But it's not the similarities that impress so much as the clarity and depth gone into in these articles.

In this issue we have articles by Soto Zen Sensei Geoffrey Arnold, Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh, Nagarjuna, who is considered the second most important voice of Buddhism, Soto practitioner John Behm who writes in free verse. His is a serious, but tongue-in-cheek story of a life and death experience he had recently gone through. Thai Vipassana master Ajahn Chah (his article is a transcribed talk given to a dying student), and Tara Singh, who was considered one of the most profound teachers of the lessons in *A Course in Miracles*. Tara spent 4 years as an ascetic in northern India and Tibet his early 20's, moved to NY decades later to guide the development of the United Nations program C.A.R.E. in its early years, and followed and became friends with Krishnamurti for a number of years before he became involved with *A Course in Miracles*.

There's also an article by Noah Levine. He was raised by parents Norman Levine and Kathie Fischer primarily at Green Gulch Farm of the San Francisco Zen Center. He thought of Green Gulch as home, but spent much time at Tassajara and City Center as well. He was very active in the Occupy Wall Street movement, and in this article he describes his experiences and motivations in that particular event. It's interesting to see what he went through while trying to maintain some degree of equanimity and compassion for those maintaining the institutions he was demonstrating against.

Barbara Kingsolver's commencement address to the graduating class of 2008 at Duke University is included. Titled *How to be Hopeful*. You might find this a useful skill in this time of political poison and global warming.

Finally interspersed among the articles you will find a few poems.

After I assembled the articles and re-read them it occurred to me to think about how does activism contribute to real change, and where does personal service belong. Where are these different and where are they the same, and what are the important attitudes and outlooks to bring to each of these. Most of the articles actually address each of these issues, at least tangentially,

Service is clearly important. I think it is much harder to practice activism lovingly and mindfully. I know it can be done, but it appears rare. The article by Thich Nhat Hanh is a talk given at a peace walk in Memphis in 2002, about one year after 911.

I really hope most of you find at least some articles and poems of value. I'd love to know what you think.

Steve

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## Mindfulness of Ourselves - Mindfulness of Others

by Thich Nhat Hanh

Peace Walk 2002

September 28, 2002

Memphis, Tennessee

Let us enjoy our breathing.  
Breathing in--I feel I am alive.  
Breathing out--I smile to life.  
To Life...smiling to life

Anger. There's a seed of anger in every one of us. There is also a seed of fear, a seed of despair. And when the seed of anger manifests, we should know how to recognize it, how to embrace it, and how to bring [ourselves] relief. When the seed of fear manifests itself as energy in the upper level of our consciousness, we should be able to recognize it, to embrace it tenderly, and to transform it. And the agent of transformation and healing is called mindfulness.

\*\*\*\*\*

Mindfulness is another kind of energy that is in us in the form of a seed also. If we know how to practice mindful breathing, mindful walking, mindful smiling, then we should be able to touch the seed of mindfulness in us and transform it into a zone of energy. And with that energy of mindfulness, we can recognize our anger, our fear, our despair. We practice recognizing and embracing.

When a mother working in the kitchen hears the cries of her baby, she puts anything she is holding down and goes to the room of the baby, picks the baby up and holds the baby dearly in her arms. We do exactly the same thing when the seed of anger and fear manifest in us; our fear, our anger is our baby. Let us not try to suppress and to fight our fear and our anger. Let us recognize its presence; let us embrace it tenderly like a mother embracing her baby.

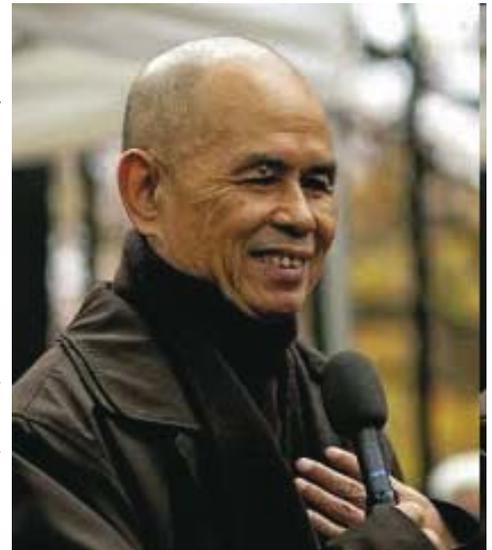
When a mother embraces her baby, the energy of tenderness begins to penetrate into the body of the baby. The mother does not know, yet, what is the cause of the suffering of the baby, but the fact that she is holding the baby tenderly can already help. The energy of tenderness and compassion in a mother begins to penetrate into the body of the baby, and the baby gets some relief right away. The baby may stop crying. And if the mother knows how to continue the practice of holding the baby mindfully, tenderly, she will be able to discover the cause of the suffering of the baby.

\*\*\*\*\*

When the seed of anger is watered, when the seed of fear is watered, whether by yourself or by another person or by the mass media--because the mass media in this country has watered a lot the seed of anger and fear in us--we should know how to recognize, embrace and bring relief to our anger and our fear.

The attitude is the attitude of non-duality, non-violence. Our fear, our anger are not our enemies; they are us. We have to treat our fear, our anger in a most non-violent way, the most non-dualistic way, like we are treating our own baby. So if you are a good practitioner of meditation, you will know exactly what to do when the seed of anger is watered and begins to manifest in the upper level of your consciousness. With the practice of mindful breathing or mindful walking, you generate the energy of mindfulness, and exactly with that energy, you can recognize the energy of anger, of fear in you.

Anger is... energy number one. By practicing mindful breathing or mindful walking, we generate the energy number two: the energy of mindfulness. We call it in Buddhist terms: mindfulness of anger. Mindfulness is always mindfulness of something. When you drink your water mindfully, that is called mindfulness of drinking. When you eat



mindfully, that is called mindfulness of eating. When you breathe mindfully, in and out, that is called mindfulness of breathing. When you walk mindfully, it is called mindfulness of walking.

So, when you recognize your anger, embrace your anger tenderly with that energy of mindfulness, it is called mindfulness of anger, mindfulness of despair, mindfulness of fear. We should be able to learn and help the young people to learn how to do it. It's very important.

The Buddha offers us very concrete and simple exercises in order to become mindful. The first exercise on mindful breathing is: Breathing in--I know I am breathing in. Breathing out--I know I am breathing out. You can reduce the length of the sentence to one word. In. Out. While you are breathing in, you just recognize that this is your in breath, and you use the word, in. And you are wholly concentrated on your in breath. Nothing else.

You become your in breath. You're not thinking of anything. You're not thinking of the past, of the future, of your projects. You release everything. You just follow your in breath, and you become one with your in breath. And the energy of mindfulness is generated together with the energy of concentration.

\*\*\*\*\*

If you are an organic gardener, you know that a flower is made of several elements that may be called non-flower elements: the sunshine, the cloud, the minerals and the seed. And among the non-flower elements, there is the element compost... garbage. The garden always produces garbage.

If you are an organic gardener, you know how to handle the garbage. You know the techniques of transforming the garbage back into compost and into flowers. You don't have to throw away anything at all. So, the energy of fear, of anger should be considered to be the garbage. Let it be produced, because it can become the art of mindful living

So, now we should learn how to handle the garbage in us, namely, craving, anger, fear and despair. We should not be afraid of the garbage in us if we know how to transform it back into joy, into peace.

\*\*\*\*\*

...Mindfulness has the power, has the capacity of helping us to recognize what is there in the present moment. When anger is there, we recognize the fact that anger is there. When fear is there, we recognize the fact that fear is there. And the practice is not to fight, to suppress, but to recognize and to embrace.

"Oh my little anger, I know you. You are my old friend. I will take good care of you. Oh my little fear, I know you are always there. I will take good care of you." That is the attitude of non-duality, the attitude of non-violence, because we know that mindfulness is us; love is us; but fear and anger are us, also.

Let us not fight. Let us only take care and transform. The organic gardener doesn't have to fight the garbage placed in (or created by) the garden. She knows exactly what to do in order to handle the garbage, in order to transform it back into cucumber, into tomatoes, et cetera.

The first function of mindfulness is to

recognize what is there, positive or negative. The second function of mindfulness is to embrace it and to get deeply in touch with it. If it is a positive thing like a blue sky or the beautiful face of a child, that becomes something very nourishing, very healing for us. And if it is something negative, like hatred or fear, we should be able to embrace it and bring relief to it.

The third function of mindfulness is to help us look deeply into the nature of what is there; in this case, fear or anger. The nature of something means the root of that something: how this fear has been created; how this anger has manifested. Look deeply into the nature of our fear and our anger in order to see their true nature. When we understand, when we have insight into the nature of our fear and our anger, that insight will help transform our fear, our anger into positive energies.

Looking deeply helps us to recognize, to realize things that we have not realized before. In the past three years, we have been bringing groups of Israelis and Palestinians to Plum Village (where we live and practice) to support their practice. We have learned a lot from them, also. When they arrive, they always bring with them a lot of fear, a lot of anger, a lot of suspicion. They could not talk to each other, because everyone has a lot of suspicion and anger and fear in himself or herself...

The groups of Israelis and Palestinians, when they arrive, they are introduced to the practice of mindful breathing and mindful walking right away. The practice helps to generate the energy of mindfulness so they can recognize and embrace their fear, their anger, their suspicion, their despair. We do it together with the support of the International Community of Meditation.

The Jews and Palestinians practice sitting together, eating mindfully and

silently together, walking together, breathing together for a number of days -- seven days, eight days, nine days. Every day they listen to a Dharma talk in order to receive the teachings on how to do the practice of mindfully recognizing their fear, their anger, their suspicion and their despair, how to embrace them and how to treat them with nonviolence and non-duality.

About ten days are necessary for each of them to be able to see more clearly, because anger and fear prevent us from seeing things clearly, especially when anger or fear has become collective.

### **Now I understand!**

Saigyo

Now I understand!

When to remember me

She vowed,

She said she would forget me,

But kindly!

### **limitations gone**

Saigyo

limitations gone

since my mind fixed on the moon

clarity and serenity

make something for which

there's no end in sight

When anger has become collective, when fear has become collective, it's extremely dangerous for our nation and for the world. That is why we should practice not only as individuals but also as communities, as nations.

With the support of the international community, the Jews and the Palestinians are able to come down, and now they are assisted in the practice of listening deeply with compassion to the *Thich Nhat Hanh: continued on page 26*

## Occupying Tension by Noah Fischer



The following is an expanded version of an article that appears in the Spring 2012 issue of *Inquiring Mind*.

After we were evicted from Liberty Park, I spent the early hours of the morning struggling in the streets of Lower Manhattan with a few hundred disoriented and angry people. Cops in riot gear were turning the streets into a maze of steel barricades. We tried to unify our scraggly numbers and rally, but it became gradually clear that the police had the upper hand. Toward morning, the tension in my body gradually eased into defeat.

Among my company that night was a Chinese man patiently trying to unify the hotheaded crowds. He had been a student protester in Tiananmen Square. He said to me, “Movements do not attract activists, they create them.” So even though we seemed to be losing, we were in fact learning. We were stumbling through the dark that night, searching for a path to walk together, and that’s why this is the beginning of my occupation story, not the end.

The story of my life began at the San Francisco Zen Center. My parents, zen teachers Norman and Kathie Fischer, transitioned from lay practice in Berkeley to a monastic life at Tassajara and Green Gulch Farm in the 1970s. We lived at Zen Center until my brother and I left for college. During these years, I absorbed the rhythms, smells, and tastes of monastic California-style zen. Interconnectedness, sangha, and non-duality formed the language and spirit of my childhood.

Coinciding with the miraculous changing of leaves, Occupy Wall Street began in New York on September 17th but was really sparked by demonstrations in Tahrir Square, Spain and Madison, Wisconsin, months before. The time for transformation was ripe. In the U.S., decades of exponential wealth disparity and war after war against brown people at home and abroad left our society fragmented and spiritually sick. It was not an optimistic time to be a young person.

In the 2000s, as I pursued an art career, I struggled, often painfully, with finding my place in a culture that appeared to revolve around cutthroat competition, celebrity and immense concentrations of wealth. I even felt that creative freedom—the impulse I was following in my art practice—had been confused with greed, privilege and fear of failure. The big picture seemed hopeless. But then, reading about the uprisings in Tahrir and Madison, I began to realize that resistance was possible. Maybe, just maybe, we could heal our world if we woke up and brought our silent

struggles into the strong sunlight—if we tried.

In June, I launched an art project called “Summer of Change: a series of numismatic rituals for Wall Street” and with my collaborator, Jim Costanzo, I chanted oratory at bankers and tourists, while throwing hundreds of dollars-worth of U.S. coins on the ground. For the first performance I chanted:

Oh, Wall Street! Your Great Wall is impregnable to marauding Justice, Equality, and Change!

Later, in another of the seven performances, arriving at the Stock Exchange in a wheelchair and wearing a silver mask resembling a giant FDR dime, I pointed at passersby and shouted:

The ship of our great democracy sinks in a rising tide of greed! Working-class Americans are the first to be cast off into the sea. Some stand by and watch this crime from afar. But who will be the next victim?

By the end of the summer, when the Occupy Wall Street protests started, I was all warmed up and right in the center of it.

What was I in the center of exactly? Something new—that was clear from the start. On that September Saturday, hundreds of people came together in Zucotti Park and didn’t go home. This was no ordinary protest. Rather, we were living change in our bodies. We were mending our connection to each other, mending the tender fabric of a society torn apart by emphasis on private space and money markets. We were re-embracing the right to occupy public space and finding our power as citizens in a shared world—the basic power of the people. It was anger that had awakened many of us. But in the park, love reigned. The beginning was wonderful!

There was a daunting task ahead. Inside the park, non-capitalist time and space prevailed: lost souls were meeting like crazy, creative plans were hatching and music rang out. Going a block away you

felt culture shock: everything was the same as before in the same old world. And we knew that to get this work done we had to push ourselves, like caterpillars struggling in the cocoon. We had to transform and develop wings. Every day, all day, we marched and shouted and organized, served and ate free food, held assemblies, and struggled with the police. And so we turned from “protestors” into “people acting freedom,” in search of unbroken physical and social space, free of boundaries.

Yet we can't live in this world without playing roles, like performers on a stage. In our occupy-opera, the NYPD play the role of protectors of the status quo, standing densely in their dark uniforms, with guns, stern expressions and menacing riot gear, or rolling up with trucks full of steel barricades. I know that these men and women are exquisite buddhas, perfectly imperfect as I am, but as the tension builds, they become monuments to un-freedom, following commands that lead them to bash heads against the pavement and to put non-violent people into little cells and slam the steel door shut behind them.

Meanwhile, we who gather together chanting and marching are “protesters.” We seem to be on the other side; we seem to be a menace, even to threaten social chaos. Passersby on the street are our audience. The stage is set and the curtains drawn. We sing our arias through the human microphone. Time and space contract and expand dramatically as these forces dance together.

These tense situations are the jewel of the movement, the master classes that turn us into activists, and we work hard to create them. We have a better chance of dissolving the boundaries that separate us if we first make them visible. But violence can begin here too, so it is important to not truly believe in the roles. I have tried to remember I am not separate from the cops and other actors, even while surfing the tension of these situations.

Early on in the protest I switched sides as an experiment, wanting to explore the limits of this new social space. As an Occupy Wall Street group marched from Liberty Park to the Wall Street Stock Exchange (a daily ritual in the first few weeks), I dressed in a business suit and waited with a small group at the Exchange. When the protestors arrived we heckled them as we imagined a group of young and entitled Wall Street investment bankers might (and sometimes do). I yelled “Get a Job!” loudly in the protestors’ faces, falling deeply into my new role. It felt a little transgressive too, like a man putting on a dress; I hadn’t realized how many unknowns were at play here.

The tension rose, emotions flared. All of a sudden, one of the drummers turned around at me and shouted, “I am a veteran of Iraq, I have PTSD and can't get a job! Fuck you!” He hit me, hard, with his drumstick, which I was not expecting. The sting on my arm told me that years of suffering, anger, hurt and aloneness were coming forth. Yes, this was theater, but it was also very real—as real as violence, as real our emotions and bodies. In retrospect, it was like the Shosan ritual in which zen practitioners expose their inner life and pain in ceremony, for the sangha to share and support. In my conflict with the Marine, we shared the sting of disempowerment. Later that day I found him and we both apologized. Now we hug every time we see each other.

A few weeks later, I found a way to protest from my core social and economic struggles as an artist. I helped to organize an action group called Occupy Museums, to bring attention to the ways that major cultural institutions disempower artists and benefit the wealthy. One day we marched to MoMA and found a large police force waiting for us. They herded us into the police pen they had prepared for us. We stepped into the cage, yelling, chanting and waving signs; the tension mounted as our outrage filled the enclosed space.

The police ushered away passersby who approached us in solidarity, creating a buffer zone around the magnetic human force of our voices and bodies.

In the midst of the tension, I found energy welling up within, but I let it happen, feeling it as energy not anger. I “mic checked,” invoking call-and-response from the group. “Policemen! (Policemen!) /We are watching you/ harass citizens peacefully walking/on New York City sidewalks!/What’s going on here!?” Then my body, compressed in tension, started to move, to stride out from behind the barricades to the sidewalk and into the no-go zone defined by the standing line of cops. This was the corridor of greatest tension, full of the possibility of violence. But I found space, air, and life here! I began to widen my movements—now I was almost dancing—and my language opened: “I am free—I know I can be on this sidewalk!” Pointing to the policeman: “You are free! We all are free, let’s march on this sidewalk, we can be here!” Somehow, all of a sudden, we could be here! A surprise reversal of plot! So we marched out from behind the barricades onto the vast sidewalk.

Two weeks after we were evicted from Liberty (formerly Zucotti) Park, we gathered at Lincoln Center Plaza, a vast open space in New York where protest is forbidden. Lincoln Center was showing Philip Glass’s opera, “Satyagraha,” which speaks about the life of Tolstoy, Gandhi and Martin Luther King—all non-violent protesters who have inspired Occupy Wall Street. Lincoln Center is partly funded by Michael Bloomberg, the very man who evicted us from Liberty Park.

Before the end of the performance, hundreds of protesters assembled on the steps of Lincoln Center, blocked off from the plaza by police barricades and heavy NYPD presence. Thus the private and public spaces, which on a normal day would be seamless, were clearly separated. When a few who dared to

**Nagarjuna's Mahamudra Vision**  
Homage to Manjusrikumarabhuta!

1. I bow down to the all-powerful  
Buddha

Whose mind is free of attachment,  
Who in his compassion and wisdom  
Has taught the inexpressible.

2. In truth there is no birth -  
Then surely no cessation or liberation;  
The Buddha is like the sky  
And all beings have that nature.

3. Neither Samsara nor Nirvana exist,  
But all is a complex continuum  
With an intrinsic face of void,  
The object of ultimate awareness.

4. The nature of all things  
Appears like a reflection,  
Pure and naturally quiescent,  
With a non-dual identity of suchness.

5. The common mind imagines a self  
Where there is nothing at all,  
And it conceives of emotional states -  
Happiness, suffering, and equanimity.

6. The six states of being in Samsara,  
The happiness of heaven,  
The suffering of hell,  
Are all false creations, figments of  
mind.

7. Likewise the ideas of bad action  
causing suffering,  
Old age, disease and death,  
And the idea that virtue leads to  
happiness,  
Are mere ideas, unreal notions.

8. Like an artist frightened  
By the devil he paints,  
The sufferer in Samsara  
Is terrified by his own imagination.

9. Like a man caught in quicksands  
Thrashing and struggling about,  
So beings drown  
In the mess of their own thoughts.

10. Mistaking fantasy for reality  
Causes an experience of suffering;  
Mind is poisoned by interpretation  
Of consciousness of form.

11. Dissolving figment and fantasy  
With a mind of compassionate insight,  
Remain in perfect awareness  
In order to help all beings.

12. So acquiring conventional virtue  
Freed from the web of interpretive  
thought,  
Insurpassable understanding is gained  
As Buddha, friend to the world.

13. Knowing the relativity of all,  
The ultimate truth is always seen;  
Dismissing the idea of beginning,  
middle and end  
The flow is seen as Emptiness.

14. So all samsara and nirvana is seen  
as it is -  
Empty and insubstantial,  
Naked and changeless,  
Eternally quiescent and illumined.

15. As the figments of a dream  
Dissolve upon waking,  
So the confusion of Samsara  
Fades away in enlightenment.

16. Idealising things of no substance  
As eternal, substantial and satisfying,  
Shrouding them in a fog of desire  
The round of existence arises.

17. The nature of beings is unborn  
Yet commonly beings are conceived  
to exist;  
Both beings and their ideas  
Are false beliefs.

18. It is nothing but an artifice of mind  
This birth into an illusory becoming,  
Into a world of good and evil action  
With good or bad rebirth to follow.

19. When the wheel of mind ceases to  
turn  
All things come to an end.  
So there is nothing inherently substan-  
tial  
And all things are utterly pure.

20. This great ocean of samsara,  
Full of delusive thought,  
Can be crossed in the boat Universal  
Approach.

Who can reach the other side without  
it?

The Twenty Mahayana Verses, were composed  
by the master Nagarjuna. They were translated  
into Tibetan by the Kashmiri Pandit Ananda and  
the Bhikshu translator Drakjor Sherab. They  
have been translated into English by the  
Anagarika Kunzang Tenzin on the last day of  
the year 1973 in the hope that the karma of the  
year may be mitigated.

May all beings be happy!



## To Make The Wound More Beautiful

by John Brehm

### George in New York

Inward, self-questioning, often unsure.  
Often clearly miserable:  
a kindred spirit, my nephew.  
Readerly and melancholy.  
The only other in my family  
thus afflicted.

and was seized by  
the same depraved  
exhaustion I always felt  
anywhere near the corner  
of Broadway and Canal.  
Coming in from LaGuardia,  
he'd tried to reason  
the cabbie out of  
a paranoid racist rant,  
tried—between my shouts  
and insults—calmly to  
change his mind,

*My first thought when my brother  
called was: This is going to happen  
and I am going to die.*

But the affliction is the way,  
so I fed him books—  
Salinger and Whitman,  
the Greeks and ancient  
Japanese poets,  
Saigyoo- particularly.  
Neruda of the odes,  
of the wild undaunted  
friendliness toward all things.  
So that soon enough  
he was taller than me,  
handsomer, wiser,  
gentler. When he came  
to visit me in New York  
I told him: "If I catch you  
staring at the sidewalk  
I'm sending you home."  
After which he  
noticed every bottle-  
shard sculpture  
in the East Village,  
every brownstone gargoyle  
in Park Slope,

unwilling to give up  
on anyone.  
After I praised  
his patience and intelligence,  
he said he disliked  
compliments, having inherited  
the midwestern  
clairvoyance for all signs  
of arrogance  
in himself or others.  
I knew that feeling well,  
but I told him, they're gifts,  
it's ungracious not to  
accept them.  
And he seemed to accept that  
and I complimented him  
for doing so.  
And then he shook off  
his shyness like a fine black dust,  
started talking to everyone—  
jazz players after a set,  
flea-market vendors,  
fellow travelers on the subway.

Took his place in the world,  
stepped into himself  
and found he fit.  
A wondrous thing to witness.  
That will have been five  
years ago this spring,  
back when death was just an idea,  
something to be spoken of  
now and again.  
\*\*\*

My first thought when my brother called  
was: This is going to happen and I  
am going to die. When he called  
from the hospital in Kyoto to tell me  
his son George was worsening,  
that his liver would fail,  
that he needed a transplant  
and I was the only viable donor—  
my first thought was: This  
is going to happen and I  
am going to die.

And then I was on my way—  
fearless and terrified,  
watching a movie about  
Dominican minor-leaguers  
somewhere over the Pacific,  
and life felt real, its strangeness  
no longer half-hidden.

Six months before, I'd read a novel  
about surgeons, its climactic scene  
a harrowing, high-wire live  
liver transplant between  
twin brothers that saves  
the recipient but kills the donor.  
Why did I read that book,  
why then? Past and future  
inseparable, yes, I know.

Mattlers of the Heart Journal  
But of all the books I might  
have read, why that book, why then?

### First Meeting with the Surgeons

It was as if the helpless gods had  
convened  
around a cluttered table to tinker  
with fate one more time. I remember  
how small the room seemed,  
how unequal to tragedy or heroism,  
the scuffed linoleum along the  
baseboards,  
bookshelves overstuffed,  
the unsteady chairs.  
I remember Dr. Ogura,  
the man who would cut me open  
and delicately detach half my liver,  
had a band-aid just above  
his left eyebrow, and I wondered  
had someone hit him, the parent  
of a child who'd died in a failed  
surgical procedure, a liver transplant  
perhaps, or had he fallen  
off his bicycle, or walked into  
a doorjamb, or been gashed  
by a low-hanging branch  
while out for a Sunday stroll  
in the hills above Kyoto?  
You never see adults, or gods,  
with band-aids on their faces,  
but there he was, the injured surgeon.  
And as he studied my blood tests  
and explained the operation to me,  
I couldn't stop thinking about it,  
that cut above his eye, what  
it looked like, how it happened,  
what it might portend.

\* \* \*

### What is the sound of fear?

At Nijo Castle  
the Shogun not only

surrounded him-  
self with thick  
walls and deep moats

he built the floors  
to sing like night-

ingales underfoot  
to warn him

of an enemy's approach.

\* \* \*

When they walked me into the surgical  
theater,

I thought: This will be a little foretaste  
of death, or possibly death itself.

I had told my brother, "If George lives  
and I die, I can live with that."

And the night before, after we visited  
him,

jaundiced and unconscious in the ICU

but still handsome enough to make  
the nurses fall in love with him,  
and had touched his forehead and  
said encouraging words to him, who  
knew

nothing of what was about to happen,  
unless the body always knows  
and the deep mind that listens even  
when the shallow mind is fast asleep—  
we passed Dr. Ogura in the hall  
and he asked me, "Are you ready?"  
"Yes," I said. "Are you?"

But when the moment comes,

all bravura vanishes, you just surrender.  
The last thing I remembered  
as they held the mask above my face  
to put me under, to induce "a reversible  
lack  
of awareness" (a fair description  
of the human condition), was a sweet  
young nurse smiling at me,  
pumping her fists into the air,  
as if in victory or exuberant bon  
voyage—  
such a strange and beautifully  
incongruous image  
before the world went dark.

\* \* \*

Deep silence held him  
and because he could not wake  
I joined him there.

Nine hours our bodies lay  
side by side, opened up,  
while our absent spirits

did what? What did they do?

I like to think they  
hovered together,

looked down on the carnage  
below, the soft flesh  
split apart, taken

and given, and that they forgave  
each other for whatever  
might happen,

held each other in the  
dark and weightless ether  
of the spirit world

before being called back  
to the bloodied, bodied, spinning

\* \* \*

When his surgeon came to tell me, I was  
fussing  
with a pillow, every move a whiplash  
of pain  
and irritation. I felt my feet hanging  
over the bed like two defeated fish, and  
thought:

This wasn't made for a six-foot-two  
Nebraskan.

And could the room have been  
designed so that

a person recovering from major  
abdominal surgery  
might turn the lights on and off without  
getting gingerly in and out of bed?  
Certainly not.

Miserable with my tiny unmanageable  
miseries

when Dr. Oiege came in, sat down and  
said:

"I have some very bad news. George  
suffered

a massive cerebral hemorrhage. I'm  
afraid

there's nothing we can do. He's brain  
dead."

\* \* \*

They couldn't control his blood,  
they said, though my liver started  
working immediately

in his body. His brain  
was swamped with blood,  
though my liver started working.

Nothing could be done, they said.

After all we did, nothing could  
be done. Because his brain

was swamped with blood.

Even with half a liver working  
perfectly, nothing could be done,

and nothing can be done  
now there is a bloody swamp  
where consciousness had been.

\* \* \*

Sleepless every night since the operation  
I wandered the halls of the transplant  
ward,

pushing the coatrack-like contraption  
that held my IV-drip, pain-med drip,  
and three electrodes affixed to my chest  
to track my untrustworthy heart.

My 3 a.m. walks became in time  
a kind of walking meditation.

Nothing like major surgery  
to keep you attentive to every step.

Of course my mind was still the darting  
school of panicked minnows it had

always been. But once, as I came  
to the end of the hall and looked out

the darkened window, I imagined  
a sleepless monk somewhere

in the hills beyond the city  
doing his own walking meditation,

making the same slow circles,  
he around some pond or towering  
pagoda

and I around 30 or 40  
wounded patients.

(In Japan an incision is a  
"wound.")

I imagined us mirroring each  
other,

like brothers, or like  
subatomic particles

split apart, apparently  
separate,

but spinning in perfect  
symmetry

no matter the space between.

I wondered if he was looking up  
toward the hospital windows wondering  
if someone there was thinking of him  
and of the suffering we couldn't help  
but share.

And then I rounded the corner to begin  
the long fluorescent journey  
back to my room.

\* \* \*

I wasn't there but my brother told me  
that after they cut him loose

from all the machines,  
let his body go like a small boat

drifting from the shore,

as my brother and his wife  
held vigil beside the bed,

the doctors and nurses

who had served and tried  
to save him came into the room

and stood in stillness for over  
an hour until it was over—

until the strong young heart  
stopped. He had been brain dead

for ten days but still with us,  
rocking gently on the surface.

And then they all rode

the elevator down together,  
the same elevator



Mattlers of the Heart Journal  
 we had taken up so many times,  
 big enough for gurneys and wheelchairs  
 and huge anxious silences.  
 And when his body had been  
 placed inside the hearse  
 that waited to enter the flurried stream  
 of Marutamachi Street, they  
 bowed a long low bow, held it  
 until the car was gone.

\* \* \*

I knelt beside his body the night before  
 we would consign it to the flames,  
 and read his journals, read his poems:

May my foot find your doorstep,  
 that is why I walk each day.

May my hand move with yours,  
 that is why I write.

May I come home to your knowing,  
 that is why I live.

How perfect and unlikely that death  
 should draw us together here in Kyoto,  
 where he'd come to teach and where  
 the poet we loved most, Saigyō,  
 lived and was cast out and wandered  
 these mountains in loneliness and  
 rapture,  
 Saigyō, the warrior turned monk, who  
 wrote:

"Detached" observer  
 Of blossoms finds himself in time  
 Intimate with them—  
 So, when they separate from the  
 branch,  
 It's he who falls...deeply into grief.

\* \* \*

So strange to think  
 a piece of me is already  
 buried in the air,  
 or exists as ashes  
 in an urn  
 mixed with his ashes,  
 and that when I'm ready  
 to make the final turn,  
 step through  
 the final wound  
 and leave this body,  
 part of me will be waiting there.

### **From One Place to Another**

We sat in the Yamatoya Jazz Bar,  
 such an unlikely place, dark  
 and soothing, deep in Kyoto,  
 its decor a cross between  
 a warehouse and a 1970s  
 American basement—  
 red lampshades with gold  
 tassels, mismatched  
 sofas and chairs,  
 and thousands of LPs  
 shelved along red velvet walls.  
 My brother asked for Ellington,  
 "Take the A Train," by the shy,  
 continuously inspired  
 Billy Strayhorn.  
 Can you make a song  
 from instructions on  
 how to get from one place  
 to another? Yes.  
 Beer and ginger ale  
 is what we were drinking,  
 New York City what we  
 were thinking of—  
 my brother and I at The Fez

to hear the Mingus Big Band,  
 George and I at Barbés  
 to hear a Django guitarist.  
 Weeping is what we  
 were not doing, no elbows  
 on knees, faces in hands,  
 shoulders heaving—no,  
 we were taking a break  
 from all that, taking the A train  
 uptown to Harlem,  
 we stepped right up onto it  
 laughing as it lurched away  
 from the station nearly  
 knocking us  
 down.

\* \* \*

Hobbled up  
 narrow cobble-  
 stone lanes  
 to the Pure  
 Land Buddhist  
 Temple  
 its haloed  
 half-smiling  
 Amitabha Buddha  
 perfectly placed  
 at the edge  
 of the graveyard  
 his hands  
 forming the  
 teaching mudra  
 as if to say  
 take heed  
 wake up  
 death comes  
 without warning.  
 Yes it does  
 I thought as I

Mattlers of the Heart Journal  
 looked out  
 over Kyoto  
 its thousand  
 ancient temples  
 and million  
 cramped apart-  
 ments—a city  
 like all cities  
 of the living  
 and dying  
 living together  
 side by side  
 one and the same.  
 \* \* \*

Leaning over Sanjo Bridge  
 in mossy August light,  
 I imagine him  
 leaning here, looking  
 down on the lonely  
 Kamo River.  
 Maybe he saw the same  
 thin white crane  
 that stands and looks and  
 needles the shallow water.  
 Or another just like it.  
 Maybe he said to himself,  
 as I did: so they do  
 exist outside Zen paintings.  
 But where would he  
 have been going,  
 crossing this bridge from  
 one side to the other?  
 What thinking?  
 The smell of being  
 alone in a strange city—  
 would he have noticed that?  
 One more thing there  
 is now no way of knowing.  
 \* \* \*

At Kiyomizu Temple  
 tourists clown  
 for the cameras  
  
 line up to catch  
 in a long-handled cup  
 its falling healing waters.  
 \* \* \*

How I longed to be home—  
 Such a roomy word:  
 “home.” And here  
  
 I am

in this emptiness  
 with nothing to do but  
 rest and think and remember.

### Ultrasound

“Well,” she said, “your incision is huge.”  
 Yes, I wanted to say, I noticed that.  
 Or: You should see the other guy.  
  
 than other scars my scar must have been  
 to shock a sixty-year-old radiologist.  
 Then she greased my crucified torso  
 and slid the camera over me  
 to photograph the lightning storms of  
 pain  
 the 13-hour flight from Osaka  
 to Denver had unleashed again.  
 “The left lobe of your liver is gone,” she  
 said.  
 “There’s nothing there.” OK, I thought,  
 tell me something I don’t know.  
 And then she did: “Did you have  
 a gallbladder before this surgery?”  
 “As far as I know,” I said. “Well,” she  
 said,

“you don’t have one now.” “Jesus,” I  
 said,  
 my vast ignorance of the body surg-  
 ing up  
 into speech. “Can you live without  
 that?”  
 “Oh, sure,” she said, “you don’t need  
 it.  
 People have them taken out all the  
 time.”  
 But then I wondered what else  
 the good doctors in Kyoto failed to  
 tell me,  
 or I failed to hear. Did I still have  
 an appendix, for example, or my tail-  
 less  
 tailbone? Or any other ancillary  
 or vestigial organs the body  
 may have been born with?  
 And what about my totally superflu-  
 ous  
 sense of impending doom? Or the not  
 strictly necessary or useful everlast-  
 ingness  
 of all my wounds and regrets? Or my  
 feeling  
 that failure might be a natural element  
 like water or air? Those were not re-  
 moved,  
 were they? I don’t think I could part  
 with them just yet.  
  
 Six months later  
 it’s still the same:  
 I wake at 3 a.m.  
 my body hyper-  
 vigilant, as if  
 to say: Don’t  
 cut me again.  
 And the sleep  
 meds—Restoril,  
 Valium, Lunesta,  
 Ambien? Candy

Mattlers of the Heart Journal  
 to my fearsome  
 sleeplessness.  
 They only make  
 me wish I had  
 the job of giving  
 drugs their names—  
 (a poet should  
 have that job)  
 like Adam  
 in the pharm-  
 aceutical garden.

### Dr. Ogura

I'm glad I wasn't conscious  
 when they stapled me shut.  
 Do they use a staple gun?

No...and yet they must.  
 How else get them in?  
 I should have asked,

I guess, or possibly not.  
 But when Dr. Ogura took  
 them out, so skillfully

I could hardly feel it-  
 fifty-six of them clamped  
 along the incision

he'd opened-I asked him  
 why they used staples now  
 instead of stitches.

He paused, his hand poised  
 above my abdomen, then pulled  
 from his imperfect English

a perfect reply: "To make  
 the wound...more beautiful."

\* \* \*

One moment keeps drifting back  
 above all the others,  
 unloosened from time's illusory flow:

how he stood in the Met  
 mesmerized before Van Goghs

and Monets and Pissarros  
 -as if held by some distant signal  
 from the source of beauty itself-

and asked in a breathless whisper,  
 "Are those the originals?" 

### Two Views

by John Travis

Looking down again at the dusty road.

Why is it when one longs for home-  
 the backpack and the seedy foreign rooms appear  
 so limited?

Yet at home the closets, boxes, possessions,  
 seem so entangling.

Is it possible to look beyond this self - obsession?  
 A spinning dervish obsessed with tell-tale signs of  
 thinking /planning.

Remembering the place in the high mountains-  
 with the heart, unbounded and untroubled.

Where nobody knows who you are, or cares, not  
 even yourself.

True! A home awaits.

Unfettered by some possessive grasping,  
 allowing circling of the wagons to reflect  
 community vision.

A small Village Temple-intwined in the complexity  
 of details.

Calling again and again for simplicity,  
 pure heart - clear minds.

Actions chewed on - lasting for many generations.

Patiently waiting so the doors can open;  
 giving back to the thousands of years of  
 awakening.

Knowing somehow this will go on and on,  
 beyond you- beyond me..

## Our Real Home

by Ajahn Chah

Now determine in your mind to listen respectfully to the Dhamma. While I am speaking, be as attentive to my words as if it was the Lord Buddha himself

sitting before you. Close your eyes and make yourself comfortable, composing your mind and making it one-pointed. Humbly allow the Triple Gem of wisdom, truth and purity to abide in your heart as a way of showing respect to the Fully Enlightened One.

Today I have brought nothing of material substance to offer you, only the Dhamma, the teachings of the Lord Buddha. You should understand that even the

Buddha himself, with his great store of accumulated virtue, could not avoid physical death. When he reached old age he ceded his body and let go of the heavy burden. Now you too must learn to be satisfied with the many years you've already depended on the body. You should feel that it's enough.

Like household utensils that you've had for a long time - cups, saucers, plates and so on - when you first had them they were clean and shining, but now after using them for so long, they're starting to wear out. Some are already broken, some have disappeared, and those that are left are wearing out, they have no stable form. And it's their nature to be that way. Your body is the same... it's been continually changing from the day you were born, through childhood and youth, until now it's reached old age. You must accept this. The Buddha said that conditions, whether internal, bodily conditions or external conditions, are not self, their nature is to change. Contemplate this truth clearly.

This very lump of flesh lying here in decline is reality. The facts of this body are reality, they are the timeless teaching of the Lord Buddha. The Buddha taught us to contemplate this and come to terms with its nature. We must be able to be at peace with the body, no matter what state it is in. The Buddha taught that we should ensure that it's only the body that is locked up in jail and not the mind be imprisoned along with it. Now as your body begins to run down and wear out with age, don't resist, but also don't let your mind deteriorate along with it. Keep the mind separate. Give energy to the mind by realizing the truth of the way things are. The Lord Buddha taught that this is the nature of the body, it can't be any other way. Having been born it gets old and sick and then it dies. This is a great truth that you are presently witnessing. Look at the body with wisdom and realize this.

If your house is flooded or burnt to the ground, whatever the threat to it, let it concern only the house. If there's a flood, don't let it flood your mind. If there's a fire, don't let it burn your heart. Let it be merely the house, that which is outside

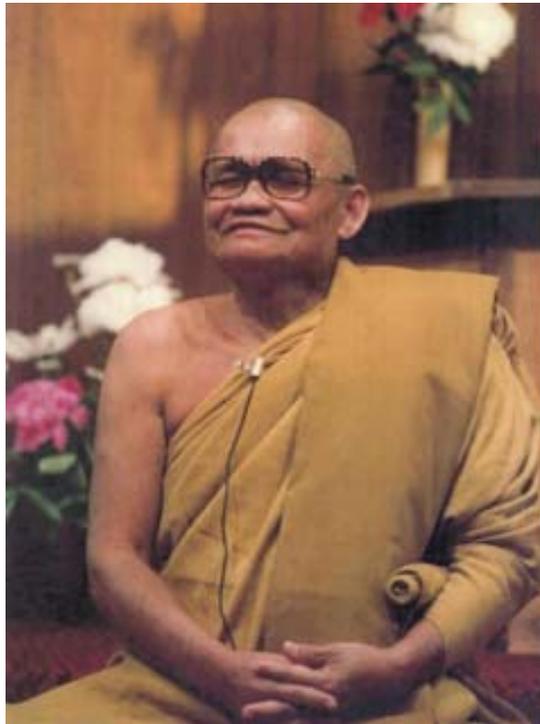
of you, that is flooded or burned. Now is the time to allow the mind to let go of attachments.

You've been alive a long time now. Your eyes have seen any number of forms and colors, your ears have heard so many sounds, you've had any number of experiences. And that's all they were - experiences. You've eaten delicious foods, and all those good tastes were just good tastes, nothing more. The bad tastes were just bad tastes, that's all. If the eye sees a beautiful form that's all it is... a beautiful form. An ugly form is just an ugly form. The ear hears an entrancing, melodious sound and it's nothing more than that. A grating, discordant sound is simply that.

The Buddha said that rich or poor, young or old, human or animal, no being in this world can maintain itself in any single state for long. Everything experiences change and deprivation. This is a fact of life about which we can do nothing to remedy. But the Buddha said that what we can do is to contemplate the body and mind to see their impersonality, that neither of them is "me" nor "mine." They have only a provisional reality. It's like this house, it's only nominally yours. You couldn't take it with you anywhere. The same applies to your wealth, your possessions and your family - they're yours only in name. They don't really belong to you, they belong to nature.

Now this truth doesn't apply to you alone, everyone is in the same boat - even the Lord Buddha and his enlightened disciples. They differed from us only in one respect, and that was their acceptance of the way things are. They saw that it could be no other way.

So the Buddha taught us to probe and examine the body, from the soles of the feet up to the crown of the head, and then back down to the feet again. Just take a look at the body. What sort of things do you see? Is there anything intrinsically clean there? Can you find any abiding essence? This whole body is steadily degenerating. The Buddha



Mattlers of the Heart Journal

taught us to see that it doesn't belong to us. It's natural for the body to be this way, because all conditioned phenomena are subject to change. How else would you have it? In fact there is nothing wrong with the way the body is. It's not the body that causes suffering, it's wrong thinking. When you see things in the wrong way, there's bound to be confusion.

It's like the water of a river. It naturally flows downhill, it never flows uphill. That's its nature. If a person was to go and stand on the river bank and want the water to flow back uphill, he would be foolish. Wherever he went his foolish thinking would allow him no peace of mind. He would suffer because of his wrong view, his thinking against the stream. If he had right view he would see that the water must inevitably flow downhill, and until he realized and

that you can cope with any painful sensations that arise. When you start to feel fatigued then bring all your thinking to a halt, let the mind gather itself together and then turn to knowing the breath. Just keep up the inner recitation, *Bud-dho, Bud-dho*.

Let go of all externals. Don't go grasping at thoughts of your children and relatives, don't grasp at anything whatsoever. Let go. Let the mind unite in a single point and let that composed mind dwell with the breath. Let the breath be its sole object of knowledge. Concentrate until the mind becomes increasingly subtle, until feelings are insignificant and there is great inner clarity and wakefulness. Then any painful sensations that arise will gradually cease of their own accord.

Finally you'll look on the breath as if it were some relatives come to visit you.

*There's no-one in the world who can escape this fate. The Buddha taught to lay down those things that lack a real abiding essence. If you lay everything down you will see the real truth, if you don't, you won't. That's the way it is. And it's the same for everyone in the world. So don't grasp at anything.*

accepted that fact he would be bewildered and frustrated.

The river that must flow down the gradient is like your body. Having been young your body's become old and is meandering towards its death. Don't go wishing it were otherwise, it's not something you have the power to remedy. The Buddha told us to see the way things are and then let go of our clinging to them. Take this feeling of letting go as your refuge. Keep meditating even if you feel tired and exhausted. Let your mind be with the breath. Take a few deep breaths and then establish the attention on the breath, using the mantra word *Bud-dho*. Make this practice continual. The more exhausted you feel the more subtle and focused your concentration must be, so

When the relatives leave, you follow them out to see them off. You watch until they've walked up the drive and out of sight, and then you go back indoors. We watch the breath in the same way. If the breath is coarse we know that it's coarse, if it's subtle we know that it's subtle. As it becomes increasingly fine we keep following it, at the same time awakening the mind. Eventually the breath disappears altogether and all that remains is that feeling of alertness. This is called meeting the Buddha. We have that clear, wakeful awareness called *Bud-dho*, the one who knows, the awakened one, the radiant one. This is meeting and dwelling with the Buddha, with knowledge and clarity. It was only the historical Buddha who passed away. The true Buddha, the Buddha that is

clear, radiant knowing, can still be experienced and attained today. And if we do attain it, the heart is one.

So let go, put everything down, everything except the knowing. Don't be fooled if visions or sounds arise in your mind during meditation. Lay them all down. Don't take hold of anything at all, just stay with this unified awareness. Don't worry about the past or the future, just be still and you will reach the place where there's no advancing, no retreating and no stopping, where there's nothing to grasp at or cling to. Why? Because there's no self, no "me" or "mine." It's all gone. The Buddha taught to empty yourself of everything in this way, not to carry anything around... to know, and having known, let go.

Realizing the Dhamma, the path to freedom from the round of birth and death, is a task that we all have to do alone. So keep trying to let go and understand the teachings. Put effort into your contemplation. Don't worry about your family. At the moment they are as they are, in the future they will be like you.

There's no-one in the world who can escape this fate. The Buddha taught to lay down those things that lack a real abiding essence. If you lay everything down you will see the real truth, if you don't, you won't. That's the way it is. And it's the same for everyone in the world. So don't grasp at anything.

Even if you find yourself thinking, well that's all right too, as long as you think wisely. Don't think foolishly. If you think of your children, think of them with wisdom, not with foolishness. Whatever the mind turns to, think of it with wisdom, be aware of its nature. To know something with wisdom is to let it go and have no suffering over it. The mind is bright, joyful and at peace. It turns away from distractions and is undivided. Right now what you can look to for help and support is your breath.

## How to Be Hopeful

Barbara Kingsolver - Duke University Commencement Address, 2008

DURHAM, NC - The very least you can do in your life is to figure out what you hope for. The most you can do is live inside that hope, running down its hallways, touching the walls on both sides. Let me begin that way: with an invocation of your



own best hopes, thrown like a handful of rice over this celebration. Congratulations, graduates. Congratulations, parents, on the best Mother's Day gift ever. Better than all those burnt-toast breakfasts: these, your children grown tall and competent, educated to within an inch of their lives.

What can I say to people who know almost everything? There was a time when I surely knew, because I'd just graduated from college myself, after writing down the sum of all human knowledge on exams and research papers. But that great pedagogical swilling-out must have depleted my reserves, because decades have passed and now I can't believe how much I don't know. Looking back, I can discern a kind of gaseous exchange in which I exuded cleverness and gradually absorbed better judgment. Wisdom is like frequent-flyer miles and scar tissue; if it does accumulate, that happens by accident while you're trying to do something else. And wisdom is what people will start wanting from you, after your last exam. I know it's true for writers - - when people love a book, whatever they say about it, what they really mean is: it was wise. It helped explain their pickle. My favorites are the canny old codgers: Neruda, Garcia Marquez, Doris Lessing. Honestly, it is harrowing for me to try to teach 20-year-old students, who earnestly want to improve their writing. The best I can think to tell them is: Quit smoking, and observe posted speed limits. This will improve your odds of getting old enough to be wise.

If I stopped there, you might have heard my best offer. But I am charged with postponing your diploma for about 15 more minutes, so I'll proceed, with a caveat. The wisdom of each generation is necessarily new. This tends to dawn on us in revelatory moments, brought to us by our children. For example: My younger daughter is eleven. Every morning, she and I walk down the lane from our farm to the place where she meets the school bus. It's the best part of my day. We have great conversations. But a few weeks ago as we stood waiting in the dawn's early light, Lily was quietly looking me over, and finally said: "Mom, just so you know, the only reason I'm letting you wear that outfit is because of your age." The alleged outfit will not be described here; whatever you're imagining will perfectly suffice. (Especially if you're picturing "Project Runway" meets "Working with Livestock.") Now, I believe parents should uphold respect for adult authority, so I did what I had to do. I hid behind the barn when the bus came.

And then I walked back up the lane in my fly regalia, contemplating this new equation: "Because of your age." It's okay now to deck out and turn up as the

village idiot. Hooray! I am old enough. How does this happen? Over a certain age, do you become invisible? There is considerable evidence for this in movies and television. But mainly, I think, you're not expected to know the rules. Everyone knows you're operating on software that hasn't been updated for a good while.

The world shifts under our feet. The rules change. Not the Bill of Rights, or the rules of tenting, but the big unspoken truths of a generation. Exhaled by culture, taken in like oxygen, we hold these truths to be self-evident: You get what you pay for. Success is everything. Work is what you do for money, and that's what counts. How could it be otherwise? And the converse of that last rule, of course, is that if you're not paid to do a thing, it can't be important. If a child writes a poem and proudly reads it, adults may wink and ask, "Think there's a lot of money in that?" You may also hear this when you declare a major in English. Being a good neighbor, raising children: the road to success is not paved with the likes of these. Some workplaces actually quantify your likelihood of being distracted by family or volunteerism. It's called your coefficient of Drag. The ideal number is zero. This is the Rule of Perfect Efficiency. Now, the rule of "Success" has traditionally meant having boatloads of money. But we are not really supposed to put it in a boat. A house would be the customary thing. Ideally it should be large, with a lot of bathrooms and so forth, but no more than four people. If two friends come over during approved visiting hours, the two children have to leave. The bathroom-to-resident ratio should at all times remain greater than one. I'm not making this up, I'm just observing, it's more or less my profession. As Yogi Berra told us, you can observe a lot just by watching. I see our dream-houses standing alone, the idealized life taking place in a kind of bubble. So you need another bubble, with rubber tires, to convey yourself to places you must visit,

such as an office. If you're successful, it will be a large, empty-ish office you don't have to share. If you need anything, you can get it delivered. Play your cards right and you may never have to come face to face with another person. This is the Rule of Escalating Isolation.

And so we find ourselves in the chapter of history I would entitle: Isolation and Efficiency, and How They Came Around to Bite Us in the Backside.

Because it's looking that way. We're a world at war, ravaged by disagreements, a bizarrely globalized people in which the extravagant excesses of one culture wash up as famine or flood on the shores of another. Even the architecture of our planet is collapsing

under the weight of our efficient productivity. Our climate, our oceans, migratory paths, things we believed were independent of human affairs. Twenty years ago, climate scientists first told Congress that unlimited carbon emissions were building toward a disastrous instability. Congress said, we need to think about that. About ten years later, nations of the world wrote the Kyoto Protocol, a set of legally binding controls on our carbon emissions. The US said, we still need to think about it. Now we can watch as glaciers disappear, the lights of biodiversity go out, the oceans reverse their ancient orders. A few degrees looked so small on the thermometer. We are so good at measuring things and declaring them under control. How could our weather turn murderous, pummel our coasts and push new diseases like dengue fever onto our doorsteps? It's an emergency on a scale we've never known. We've responded by following the rules we know: Efficiency, Isolation. We can't slow down our productivity and consumption, that's unthinkable. Can't we just go home and put a really big lock

on the door?

Not this time. Our paradigm has met its match. The world will save itself, don't get me wrong. The term "fossil fuels" is not a metaphor or a simile. In the geological sense, it's over. The internal combustion engine is so 20th Century. Now we can either shift away from a carbon-based economy, or find another place to live. Imagine it: we raised you on a lie. Everything you plug in, turn on

*As we track the unfolding disruption of natural and global stabilities, you will be told to buy into business as usual: You need a job. Trade your future for an entry level position. Do what we did, preserve a profitable climate for manufacture and consumption, at any cost. Even at the cost of the other climate - the one that was hospitable to life as we knew it. Is anyone thinking this through?*

or drive, the out-of-season foods you eat, the music in your ears. We gave you this world and promised you could keep it running on: a fossil substance. Dinosaur slime, and it's running out. The geologists only disagree on how much is left, and the climate scientists are now saying they're sorry but that's not even the point. We won't get time to use it all. To stabilize the floods and firestorms, we'll have to reduce our carbon emissions by 80 percent, within a decade.

Heaven help us get our minds around that. We're still stuck on a strategy of bait-and-switch: Okay, we'll keep the cars ut run them on ethanol made from corn! But - we use petroleum to grow th corn. Even if you like the idea of robbing the food bank to fill up the tank, there is a math problem: it takes nearly a gallon of fossil fuel to render an equivalent gallon of corn gas. By some accounts, it takes more. Think of the Jules Verne novel in which the hero is racing Around the World in 80 Days, and finds himself stranded in the mid-Atlantic on a steamship that's run out of coal. It's day 79. So Phileas Fogg convinces the Captain to pull up the decks and throw

them into the boiler. "On the next day the masts, rafts and spars were burned. The crew worked lustily, keeping up the fires. There was a perfect rage for demolition." The Captain remarked, "Fogg, you've got something of the Yankee about you." Oh, novelists. They always manage to have the last word, even when they are dead.

How can we get from here to there, without burning up our ship? That will be central question of your adult life: to escape the wild rumpus of carbon-fuel dependency, in the nick of time. You'll make rules that were previously unthinkable, imposing limits on what we can use and possess. You will radically reconsider the power

relationship between humans and our habitat. In the words of my esteemed colleague and friend, Wendell Berry, the new Emancipation Proclamation will not be for a specific race or species, but for life itself. Imagine it. Nations have already joined together to rein in global consumption. Faith communities have found a new point of agreement with student activists, organizing around the conviction that caring for our planet is a moral obligation. Before the last UN Climate Conference in Bali, thousands of U.S. citizens contacted the State Department to press for binding limits on carbon emissions. We're the five percent of humans who have made 50 percent of all the greenhouse gases up there. But our government is reluctant to address it, for one reason: it might hurt our economy.

For a lot of history, many nations said exactly the same thing about abolishing slavery. We can't grant humanity to all people, it would hurt our cotton plantations, our sugar crop, our balance of trade. Until the daughters and sons of a new wisdom declared: We don't



Matters of the Heart Journal

be, if you don't attempt it in isolation. The ridiculously earnest are known to travel in groups. And they are known to change the world. Look at you..

I'll close with a poem:

**Hope: An Owner's Manual**

Look, you might as well know, this thing  
is going to take endless repair: rubber bands,  
crazy glue, tapioca, the square of the hypotenuse.  
Nineteenth century novels. Heartstrings, sunrise:  
all of these are useful. Also, feathers.

To keep it humming, sometimes you have to stand  
on an incline, where everything looks possible;  
on the line you drew yourself. Or in  
the grocery line, making faces at a toddler  
secretly, over his mother's shoulder.

You might have to pop the clutch and run  
past all the evidence. Past everyone who is  
laughing or praying for you. Definitely you don't  
want to go directly to jail, but still, here you go,  
passing time, passing strange. Don't pass this up.

In the worst of times, you will have to pass it off.  
Park it and fly by the seat of your pants. With  
nothing  
in the bank, you'll still want to take the express.  
Tiptoe past the dogs of the apocalypse that are  
sleeping  
in the shade of your future. Pay at the window.  
Pass your hope like a bad check.  
You might still have just enough time. To make a  
deposit.

Congratulations, graduates. 

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**Lines for an Anniversary**

by Judy Curtis

Come, take my hand and we will walk  
through silver night luminous with light  
from moon and city

There a shadowy nighthawk  
shivers by and veers  
away from sight.

We will talk of common things,  
of tasks and children, as we have  
these thirty years and more.

Inca doves moan themselves to sleep in citrus soaked air;  
a widow scurries back against the wall;  
her shimmering web reflects an ominous glow.

When love first touched our hearts,  
it touched our tongues;  
days passing in a clutter of words.

Now, mundane conversation conveys  
a silent language, ours alone,  
explains a touch, a glance, a smile

and we acknowledge with this secret speech  
the fused flesh and mind  
we have become.

A rabbit flushes white against the prickly pear.  
Overhead, high on that wooden pole,  
see, it is the outline of an owl.

# The True Revolution

Dharma Discourse by

Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Sensei

*Book of Serenity, Case 3*

The Invitation of the Ancestor to India

Geoffrey Shugen Arnold Sensei is the abbot of the Zen Center of New York City: Fire Lotus Temple and the Head of the Mountains and Rivers Order.

## Pointer

The state before the beginning of time—a turtle heads for the fire. The one phrase specially transmitted outside of doctrine—the lip of a mortar bears flowers. Now tell me, is there any “accepting and upholding, reading and reciting” in this?

## Main Case

A Raja of an East Indian country invited the 27th Buddhist ancestor Prajnatarā to a feast. The Raja asked him, “Why don’t you read scriptures?” The ancestor said, “This poor wayfarer doesn’t dwell in the realms of body and mind when breathing in, doesn’t get involved in myriad circumstances when breathing out—I always reiterate such a scripture, hundreds, thousands, millions of scrolls.”

## Verse

*A cloud rhino gazes at the moon, its light engulfing radiance.*

*A wood horse romps in spring, swift and unbridled.*

*Under the eyebrows, a pair of cold blue eyes.*

*How can reading scriptures reach the piercing of oxhide?*

*The clear mind produces vast aeons,*

*Heroic power smashes the double enclosure.*

*In the subtle round mouth of the pivot turns the spiritual works.*

*Hanshan forgot the road by which he came—*

*Shide lead him back by the hand.*

This koan contains the most profound truth of the buddhadharma—the personal experience of awakening that has been transmitted mind-to-mind since the time of the Buddha. This direct realization is what all of Zen practice and training are for. This is why we sit; indeed this is what zazen, liturgy, working with a teacher—what all of the upaya, or skillful means of Zen—is ultimately for. This koan also takes us back to the beginning of the Zen school in the person of Prajnatarā, Bodhidharma’s teacher. Bodhidharma, whom Zen credits with having founded this school, was whole-heartedly dedicated to seated meditation as a path to awakening.

In this koan, the Raja asks Prajnatarā, “Why don’t you read scriptures?” Studying the direct teachings of the Buddha and other enlightened masters has always been an essential practice within Buddhism. It would be unimaginable that a sincere practitioner, including an awakened master, wouldn’t study the sutras. Prajnatarā responds, “This poor wayfarer doesn’t dwell in the realms of body and mind when breathing in, doesn’t get involved in myriad circumstances when breathing out. I always reiterate just such a scripture, hundreds, thousands, millions of scrolls.” Breathing in and breathing out—what sort of scripture is this?

Throughout his teachings, Dogen presents zazen as the one true dharma gate. During his lifetime, just as in our time, people often misunderstood zazen. When we don’t understand zazen clearly, we’re unlikely to practice it clearly. Zazen, like every other aspect of our lives, can become a practice of extremes; indulging in our desires or being lost in passiveness. In *Bendowa*, or *The Wholehearted Way*, Dogen speaks to this, saying, “If you think that the samadhi of all buddhas, their unsurpassable great method of zazen, is just sitting uselessly, doing nothing, then you do not understand in the most serious of ways.”

What is zazen? When genuine trust in practice is present, then genuine practice becomes possible. We tend to naturally trust what we experience with our senses; they determine what we accept as the “real” world. We rely on the apparent solidity of things to assure us that things are just as they appear. But when we leave that behind and enter into a realm beyond the reach of our senses, we have entered into a kind of wilderness. It’s a realm that we have not traveled before, where every step is

*Dogen taught, “The zazen of even one person at one moment imperceptibly accords with all things and fully resonates through all time.” Really take that in. He’s talking about you.*

truly unknown and we have no idea of what’s ahead. To go there takes profound trust. You can’t rely on what is familiar, on what you know. And so that trust, in and of itself, becomes our guide. To arrive at the state before the beginning of time—this is not an ordinary journey.

Prajnatara says, “When I breathe in, I don’t dwell in the realm of body and mind.” What does this mean? Breathing in is the original revolution; but this is not just taking a breath of air. When we spend our whole lives turning away, seeking outside, looking to others, and then one day we turn our attention inward, stop wandering and cease comparing—this is the first revolution. “The answer lies within.” We’ve all heard this before. But what does it actually mean? Where, exactly, is “within”? How do you get there? And then, what is “the answer”? This question appears endlessly in books and movies, poetry and late night conversations, but what’s typically found in these places doesn’t actually transform our view. The fact is that there is no answer. Just like there’s no answer to a koan. What is the answer to the question of a breath? What is the answer to the challenge of love? The

answer is not in this realm, and it’s not an answer in the way we typically think of one. But that doesn’t mean that there’s no resolution. The resolution comes through one’s whole mind and body, the student’s entire self. That’s what the koan does—it helps to bring the student to the experience of that resolution, the realization that there never was a hindrance.

Dogen speaks of self-fulfilling samadhi as the “self fulfilling the self through the self.” But he’s not speaking of the personal self; he’s not speaking of the one we call “I.” In fact, when I sit zazen and I develop samadhi and I gain realization, this is just furthering the trap of the illusory self. So when Prajnatara says, “I don’t dwell in the realm of body and mind when breathing in,” this is most important. To observe, to clearly see body, mind and breath, without dwelling in that realm or in any realm—how do we do that? When we don’t dwell in those realms, when we’re not attached to our body, not identifying or clinging to it, then suddenly we discover our body. When we’re not attached to our breath, suddenly we discover our breath. Letting go of our

*When we let go of our attachments and our ideas, when we don’t dwell in our usual perceptions and assumptions, we discover that the form we identify with, the boundary we call our body is, in reality, boundless.*

emotions, not attaching to feelings, suddenly we come back to life and begin to experience those emotions and feelings. How can we be intimate, turn toward, see clearly, and not dwell?

In Prajnatara’s, “I do not dwell in the realm of body or mind,” he is pointing to a realm where there is no form or boundary. Body and mind are just ideas we talk about—there is a reality here, but it’s not what we think. When we let

go of our attachments and our ideas, when we don’t dwell in our usual perceptions and assumptions, we discover that the form we identify with, the boundary we call our body is, in reality, boundless. Turning around, breathing in, whole body and mind, we find everything—breath, universe, karma, past, present, and future. Everything is there when we turn inward.

What is it to genuinely “not dwell”? Dogen says, “In stillness mind and object merge in realization and go beyond enlightenment.” There is a stillness in which every perceivable experience, every sense of distance, of alienation, of subject and object, of “I”, drops away. Not because we have induced some mental state or brought forth some sort of drug-free acid trip, but because we have thoroughly let go of all of those hallucinations—we’ve released every deluded, self-serving, other-serving, intentional action. This is the great effort of no effort. Pure, complete being. Mind and object merge. Even saying it that way is too active. It’s more like mind and object are realized as having always been unified. This is turning inward, turning the light around. It’s the first revolution because most of us pour our energy outwards. We go forth, to where all of

the good stuff is, to where the answers are, to where we believe we’ll find what we’re seeking. Everything around us is saying, “acquire,” “hold on,” “defend,” “build up,” but this is delusion. It is not a sin, but it is wearisome and trouble-making.

The practice of zazen, the revolution of the backward step, requires extraordinary trust because it contradicts all we thought we knew. In

the beginning, it can even seem crazy. I remember in the early years of my practice I would sit there by myself, practicing the breath day after day, month after month, year after year, and sometimes say, “What is this? What am I doing? What does this have to do with the dharma I’ve read about? How is this a trustworthy response to my yearning?” I couldn’t see it. Not because it wasn’t there, but just because I could not yet see it.

*So we come back to the fundamental question: How to be in this world? How to live this life? How, fundamentally, to be this person? If we take care of this, what is not addressed?*

To breathe in without dwelling—this too, is a revolution, the second revolution. Don’t dwell. Come to rest, desist, turn toward, with your whole body and mind, and don’t grasp. Practice as though there’s a fire on top of your head. As though your life depends upon it. Summon this urgency and yet release all expectation. This runs completely counter to all our conditioning, and when we begin to practice, it is inconceivable. And so most of us hear this guidance of having no expectation and think, “Yeah, whatever.” Or, “Okay, I got it, I’m doing it,” and all the while we grasp and expect. Because how could we not? I mean really—how could we not look forward to something? It’s all we know. It is, to a large extent, what we understand life to be.

This is why when Bodhidharma began teaching Huike, his first disciple, he said, “How can you, of your small virtue and self-conceited mind, expect to aspire to this great dharma?” He was preparing him for the difficulties ahead. Huike was a great general who had marched into terrifying battles, risking almost everything. He had great courage and bravery in this respect, but could he face himself? This is what

Bodhidharma was preparing him for. In this practice I’ve seen many men and women who have faced frightening circumstances and had the odds stacked against them, people who have shown tremendous courage and bravery in many areas of life, yet who crumble when they encounter themselves. To simply face our own mind takes a different kind of courage.

Breathing in, the first revolution. Not dwelling, the second revolution. Then there is breathing out, the third revolution. Prajnataras says, “I don’t get involved in the myriad circumstances when breathing out.” This is being on the busy street, not having left the mountain. In breathing out he is not disturbed, and yet there are the myriad circumstances. To face our lives without “getting involved”—what does this mean? It’s easy to stay mired in the stuff of our life, our responsibilities, connections, relationships, and feel caught. And it’s relatively easy to avoid circumstances—just don’t step forward, don’t answer the phone, don’t volunteer. Cut a neat and narrow path and stay away from it all. There are those who make that choice. But this koan is pointing at the supreme truth, which is not about avoiding complication. What is not getting involved?

In our training, we’re consistently urged to engage in what Dogen speaks of as “undivided activity.” Total immersion in whatever we’re doing—whether it’s work, liturgy, taking a meal, sitting zazen. This is another way of saying that we have to be willing to risk everything, to hold nothing back. But how do we actually allow ourselves to care that deeply, how do we put ourselves on the line and say, “I’m here. I am doing this”? That’s what a vow is. We commit to practice. We take our seat and we don’t move away. And then the period ends. But what about the vow? We breathe out and step forward into

the myriad circumstances, committed to our life, taking care of the people and situations before us. We let ourselves be totally immersed in the activity of living. There is risk here, too.

Stepping forward means that sometimes we fail. So be it, fail. I often remind students that there is a standing up practice and a falling down practice. There is a stepping forward and the gate falls away practice, and there is a stepping forward and the gate stops you practice. The more it matters, the greater the risk. This is why some people respond by practicing, “I just won’t let it matter. I’m cool. Easy come, easy go.” But is this “not dwelling”? How do we know when we’re still grasping? Grasping always reveals itself. But we have to be able to recognize this ourselves.

*A cloud rhino gazes at the moon, its light engulfing radiance.* Ultimately, there’s just this cloud rhino, gazing at the moon. A rhino is a huge, formidable, hulking animal. It weighs thousands of pounds. But its substance, its nature, is like that of a cloud. Sometimes clouds are beautiful, sometimes they’re menacing, sometimes you can see through them, sometimes they’re black as night. But what happens when we step closer? In stillness, mind and object merge. This is why zazen is so essential, because in that stillness, we can see what is very difficult to see, what cannot be perceived with the senses. Language can’t convey it, which is fine. That’s what the language of Zen is doing. In a sense, it’s using plain English to speak a different kind of language.

*A wooden horse romps in spring, swift and unbridled.* It’s playful. Vibrant. Completely immersed, but not involved. This is not the same as not caring, or keeping your distance, or turning away—and it’s very important that we understand this. The commentary says, “This eulogizes not being involved in myriad circumstances,” and goes on to say that, “One might say that skillful action has no tracks.” When we’re

skillful, we don't leave a trace. When we get involved, our self gets in the way. One of the things that senior students are taught is how to give instruction—if it's skillful, which means it's meeting that person, then there's no self being brought into it. When the senior moves away, there's no trace.

The commentary says, "If you want both eyes to be perfectly clear, then you must not dwell in the realm of the body and mind, but you cannot negate body and mind. You must not get involved in myriad circumstances, but don't turn away from anything. To realize this you must hang the moon and the sun high in the shadowless forest, implicitly discern the spring and autumn on the budless branches." Why is it a "shadowless" forest? Shadows are cast when there's a point of light illuminating an object, casting a shadow. But what if everything is light? Then there is no

shadow. Don't obstruct the light that illuminates in all directions. Don't dwell, don't negate; don't get involved, don't turn away. This is our practice of zazen.

When we let things rest, what's unleashed is a *heroic power [that] smashes the double enclosure*. The "double enclosure" is everything that opposes, every thing that stands in opposition to every or any other thing—an object, a force, an idea, an energy, a feeling. Anything. It's here, in this resting—in this non-effort—that our self-centered, deluded activity can yield to what Dogen describes as "vast Buddha activity." All of it comes down to how to be in this world without hindrance, in complete harmony and equanimity, using all of our ability and our skill and our living and our joy to smash that double enclosure for everyone.

So we come back to the fundamental question: How to be in this world? How to live this life? How, fundamentally, to be this person? If we take care of this, what is not addressed? How do we take this up? Zazen. We turn inward. We breathe in. And then we turn around, we breathe out. Ultimately, we see that breathing in and breathing out are unified aspects of one complete truth. Inner and outer, you and I, no distinction.

Dogen taught, "The zazen of even one person at one moment imperceptibly accords with all things and fully resonates through all time." Really take that in. He's talking about you.

*The Book of Serenity* is a collection of one hundred koans compiled during the 12th century and commented on by Master Wansong with poems by Master Hongzhi, both teachers in the Caodong (Soto) school of Zen. 



## On Cremation of Chogyam Trungpa, Vidyadhara

Allen Ginsberg, May 28, 1987, 2:30-3:15 A.M.

I noticed the grass, I noticed the hills, I noticed the highways,  
I noticed the dirt road, I noticed car rows in the parking lot  
I noticed ticket takers, I noticed the cash and checks & credit cards,  
I noticed buses, noticed mourners, I noticed their children in red dresses,  
I noticed the entrance sign, noticed retreat houses, noticed blue & yellow Flags—  
noticed the devotees, their trucks & buses, guards in Khaki uniforms  
I noticed crowds, noticed misty skies, noticed the all-pervading smiles & empty eyes—  
I noticed pillows, colored red & yellow, square pillows and round—  
I noticed the Tori Gate, passers-through bowing, a parade of men & women in formal dress—  
noticed the procession, noticed the bagpipe, drum, horns, noticed high silk head crowns & saffron robes,  
noticed the three-piece suits,  
I noticed the palanquin, an umbrella, the stupa painted with jewels the colors of the four directions—  
amber for generosity, green for karmic works, noticed the white for Buddha, red for the heart—  
thirteen worlds on the stupa hat, noticed the bell handle and umbrella, the empty head of the cement bell—  
noticed the corpse to be set in the head of the bell—  
noticed the monks chanting, horn plaint in our ears, smoke rising from atop the firebrick empty bell—  
noticed the crowds quiet, noticed the Chilean poet, noticed a Rainbow,  
I noticed the Guru was dead, I noticed his teacher bare breasted watching the corpse burn in the stupa,  
noticed mourning students sat crosslegged before their books, chanting devotional mantras,  
gesturing mysterious fingers, bells & brass thunderbolts in their hands  
I noticed flame rising above flags & wires & umbrellas & painted orange poles  
I noticed the sky, noticed the sun, a rainbow round the sun, light misty clouds drifting over the Sun—  
I noticed my own heart beating, breath passing thru my nostrils  
my feet walking, eyes seeing, noticing smoke above the corpse-fir'd monument  
I noticed the path downhill, noticed the crowd moving toward buses  
I noticed food, lettuce salad, I noticed the Teacher was absent,  
I noticed my friends, noticed our car the blue Volvo, a young boy held my hand  
our key in the motel door, noticed a dark room, noticed a dream  
and forgot, noticed oranges lemons & caviar at breakfast,  
I noticed the highway, sleepiness, homework thoughts, the boy's nipples in the breeze  
as the car rolled down hillsides past green woods to the water,  
I noticed the houses, balconies overlooking a misted horizon, shore & old worn rocks in the sand  
I noticed the sea, I noticed the music, I wanted to dance. 

**When the mind is at peace**

P'ang Yun (Layman P'ang)

When the mind is at peace,  
 the world too is at peace.  
 Nothing real, nothing absent.  
 Not holding on to reality,  
 not getting stuck in the void,  
 you are neither holy nor wise, just  
 an ordinary fellow who has completed  
 his work.

**Admit Something**

Hafiz

Admit something.  
 Everyone you see, you say to them  
 "Love me."  
 Of course you do not do this out loud:  
 Otherwise,  
 Someone would call the cops.  
 Still, though, think about this,  
 This great pull in us to connect.  
 Why not become the one  
 Who lives with a full moon in each eye  
 That is always saying,  
 With that sweet moon  
 Language  
 What every other eye in this world  
 Is dying to  
 Hear?

**5 O'clock**

by Mary Helen Fein

The minute I closed my eyes  
 I knew this was someplace  
 Altogether wholly new.

The small strands of my breath  
 Were singing to me,  
 Singing me  
 A song so lovely  
 Careful  
 And kind.

Everything but that loveliness  
 Had melted away.  
 Mr. Sciatica sounded a few bass notes,  
 But then decided the song was too high  
 And that he'd sit this one out.

I felt my own brevity.  
 It felt just perfect.  
 All the best things are brief.  
 Yellow clouds of Mexican butterflies,  
 Fields of Dutch irises,  
 Bubbles atop a wave breaking on the sand.  
 I broke on the wet sand.

Inside my body it was a sainted chapel.  
 Dim and candle lit, glowing, and the very air  
 Suffused with that loveliness  
 As the song of my breath soared.

When the person in front of me moved,  
 The sound was a miracle of fabric scraping on fabric.  
 I felt the delight of every rubbing thread.

Finally you rang the bell.  
 I saw the concentric circles of the bell sound.  
 And Again.  
 And Again.

The minute I opened my eyes  
 I knew this was someplace  
 Altogether wholly new.

## Goodness Is Who You Are

### Awakening the Heart of Service

Tara Singh

ONE HAS TO MAKE CONTACT with who one really is. Whatever we really are would have to be intrinsic. It is not something learned, it is who you are. Goodness is something that you and I are. It is impersonal and absolute; all of us have it. Yet we have not really made contact with it. Goodness may not conform another. Goodness may have no conditions. Can you see the good in the other person, irrespective of what they do? It would be a wholly different relationship when I no longer acknowledge your reactions - when I am rooted in my own goodness.

How do I become rooted in my goodness? I see the good in you. And my goodness may awaken the goodness in you. Then my nonreaction introduces you to who you are. For instance, Jesus says if someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other also. The person who turns the other cheek has done one of the most noble, powerful things upon the planet. Such a person no longer reacts. He just sees that you have become a victim of your anger, your vested interests, your assumptions. But he is not affected by them. Then you have a better chance of knowing the power of that goodness.

You may say, "Well, I am greedy, I am selfish, I am reactive." But that is your opinion. Your opinion is not basic. Goodness is basic. So is gratefulness basic. Gratefulness is the adoration of creation; it has touched upon the Divine Intelligence of compassion - that everything is sustained by life. The rivers flow and they flow timelessly. The snow falls, the seasons change, and my circulation continues. There is another order of the universe. There is another rhythm in life which is not personalized. And in this non-personalized life, there is goodness. When a child is born, there is an involuntary tenderness in the mother, and the milk appears in the breast to feed the child. That is a different action, an action of goodness that sustains life.

But we are spending more money on armament to destroy one another. Self-destruction is at work. What we need is some contact with the sanity of goodness. It does not need a cause. It does not need to organize. You and I are responsible for our own goodness. You say, "Well, I will get cheated./ I wonder. Whether you are a typist, a lawyer, or a bus driver, you can still be good and kind. Kindness is never wrong. So the question is, what prevents us from being our true selves? Fear. And insecurity. Our whole culture is based on insecurity from the outset. I think I may not have shelter or enough food to survive. Someone else owns the house; someone else owns the land. Possessiveness and insecurity have become one. Possessiveness is the expression of insecurity. And now it can not give.

Goodness and gratefulness and love know only giving. The water knows only to give, the tree knows only to give. Everything that is created gives. So there is the world of creation that is eternal, impersonal. There is nothing you can do about it. The sun is going to rise, your heart is going to beat. You are not in control. It is outside our reach, but it sustains life. As long as I am related with the manmade world, I am insecure. But what if I were related with creation? I think it would take insecurity away. What would it be like never to be insecure? To recognize that there are other forces at work? Now I am totally oblivious of them. I think it is just the Congress that works, or the mayor, or the police. These are our projections and inventions.

*Tara Singh continued on page 34*

*Thich Nhat Hanh: continued from page 4*

other groups.

Listening to our own suffering, our own fear, our own anger is the first thing we have to do as a person and as a community. After that, when we have some insight about the roots of our fear, our anger, our despair, then we can listen to other groups of people.

While listening, you have to practice mindful breathing in order to keep calm, to maintain compassion in you, because that practice of deep listening is also called the practice of compassionate listening.

Compassionate listening means to listen with one purpose: helping the other side, the other person to express himself or herself and to get relief. You don't listen to criticize. You just listen in order to give the other person a chance to empty his heart; to empty her heart in order to get relief.

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When you can listen like that for one hour to the other person, he or she will get relief. During the whole time of listening, you keep your practice of mindful breathing, in order to maintain compassion. If these two things do not exist during the time of listening, your listening will not have a good effect.

Even if the other side says things that are full of wrong perceptions, blaming and judgment, you are still capable of listening with compassion. This is extremely important. And that is possible only with the practice of mindful breathing and the maintaining of compassion during the whole time of listening. We have to train ourselves for at least one week in order to be able to do it and to help our beloved one get relief.

When you are the person who speaks, you practice gentle speech, loving speech. You have the right, and you have a duty to tell the other group of people, the other person, what is in your heart. But you have to use the kind of language

that can convey your feelings, that can convey your insights, your suffering to the other person; namely, the language of love and kindness.

If you do not use the language of love and kindness, then you touch off the energy of anger and hatred in the other person, and he or she will not be able to listen to you. That is why it is very important to practice loving speech, gentle speech. That is the subject of the fourth mindfulness training in the Buddhist tradition.

So, with the assistance and the support of the Plum Village community, the two groups sit down and practice listening to each other and using gentle speech. It works very well always. Listening like that in the presence of many, many other practitioners, you realize-- maybe for the first time-- that on the other side they are human beings also, and they have already suffered very deeply because of anger, of hatred, of violence, of despair.

The moment that you realize they are human beings who have suffered deeply also, compassion begins to arise in your heart, and now you are able to look at them with the eyes of compassion. You have become a Bodhisattva, capable of using the eyes of compassion in order to look at other living human beings.

Fourteen days or twenty-one days can produce a miracle. There are people who say, after having been in Plum Village, "I believe that peace is possible in the Middle East." Both groups want to bring home the practice; to organize sessions of practice among friends. Now they have set up Sanghas, communities of practice--a little bit everywhere in the Middle East. And they want to maintain their practice, because their practice helped them maintain compassion and insight, [and allowed them] not to be drowned in the ocean of despair.

It is our conviction that if their leaders come together and practice the same kind of practice, they will be able to bring peace and reconciliation to the Middle East.

If we practice, if we organize a peace conference supported by many nations, and if we organize so that the two parties have a chance to try this kind of practice, then the peace conference will bring a wonderful result. Because if you still have a lot of anger, a lot of suspicion, a lot of hatred, it would be extremely difficult for you to come to an agreement that will really bring peace and well-being to the two nations, the two people.

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I would like to tell you the story of a couple who live in California. They have practiced in this mindful way. The lady, who is a Catholic, wanted to commit suicide, because she had suffered so much. There was no joy in her life anymore. Her husband was like a bomb, ready to explode at any time. He had a lot of anger, a lot of bitterness, a lot of frustration, a lot of violence in him. The three children, who attended university, were very afraid of coming close to their father. Their father would get angry at anything--would explode at any time. He believed that his wife and his three children were boycotting him, and that made his anger and frustration grow bigger and bigger every day.

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The lady had a friend, a Buddhist practitioner, who was aware of her situation, and who had tried to persuade her to listen to a Dharma talk given by her teacher. The title of the Dharma talk, in the form of a cassette tape, is "How to Diffuse a Bomb."

Noah Levine: *continued from page 6*

cross the line were arrested, there were shouts of "shame, shame, shame!" from some of the protestors. We took off our shoes—a Gandhian symbol of dignity—and stood barefoot on the cold pavement, conducting our assembly.

As "Satyagraha" ended and the elegantly dressed audience finally exited into the plaza, they came upon this strikingly theatrical scene: real life protest at the foot of the grand steps! We called out to them in unison to join us, but the sight of the NYPD barricades seemed to paralyze them.

Then all of a sudden Philip Glass, who had been at the performance that night, popped up in the Occupy Wall Street crowd—he had come to read a statement on the people's mic. We sat down so that people could see him, and the lights from a video camera illuminated his face. He called out the last lines of the opera, a passage from the Bhagavad Gita:

Mic check!

When righteousness withers away

And evil rules the land

We come into being

Age after age

And take visible shape

And move

A man among men

For the protection of good

Thrusting back evil

And setting virtue

On her seat again.

Chanting along with Glass, whose music had been the soundtrack to my childhood, I melted into the crowd, my body vibrating to the shared voice, deeply encouraged by this ancient text. When

When you contain within yourself too much violence, too much anger, you become very tense. You become like a bomb. You suffer very much, and you spill your suffering all over the people who live with you, and people are afraid of you. They don't want to approach you, and then you believe that everyone is boycotting you. You are extremely lonely.

The Buddhist lady believed that if her friend listened to the Dharma talk, she would know how to help diffuse the bomb in her husband. But that lady considered herself a Catholic. She said, "I am a Catholic. Why should I listen to this kind of stuff?"

But the morning that [the lady] called and announced that she was going to die, her Buddhist friend asked her to come over right away. She wanted to see her for the last time, and this time she tried her best to convince the lady to listen to the talk. She said, "You always said that I am your best friend, and the only thing I ask you to do is to listen to the Dharma talk of my teacher. I don't think that you are truly my friend." That challenge helped. The lady told herself, "Now, I am going to die. Why don't I satisfy the person I consider to be my friend." So she agreed to listen to the Dharma talk.

The Buddhist lady withdrew in order to allow her friend to be alone in the living room, and she began to listen to the cassette tape. As she listened to the Dharma talk, insight came to her. She recognized the fact that the suffering in her had not been created only by her husband, but by herself. And the suffering in her husband had not been created by her husband alone, but she had participated in creating the suffering in him.

When she listened to the Dharma talk, she realized that in the last six years, she never used the kind of language that is called loving speech. She always blamed him. She always used a very sour language, full of blaming and judgment. She realized she had made the situation worse every day, and she felt that she was partly responsible for her own suffering and the suffering of her husband.

When you suffer, you have the tendency to blame the other person as the only source of your suffering. You don't recognize that you are responsible to some extent for your suffering, and you have also created the suffering of the other person. That was her insight during the time that she listened to the talk, and her heart opened, and for the first time in so many years, she felt sorry. She felt compassion for herself and for her husband.

She was animated, inspired by the idea of going home and helping her husband by practicing listening deeply, listening with compassion. She became very enthusiastic. But her Buddhist friend said, "No, my friend. You are still very weak. You have to train yourself at least one week in order to be able to do so. Because if you listen to him, and if his language is full of blaming and wrong perceptions, you will interrupt him and spoil everything. You have to train yourself first. Let me propose to you this. My teacher is coming from France, and he is going to offer in the Bay area two retreats, one for the Vietnamese-speaking people and one for the English-speaking people. Why don't you sign up for the first retreat?"

The Catholic lady accepted, and during the six-day retreat, she practiced with all her heart, because for her it was a matter of life and death. That is why she invested herself entirely into the practice. She learned how to breathe, how to walk, how to embrace the suffering in her, how to use the kind of loving speech that will be able to open the heart of her husband. And with the support of other practitioners, she went very deeply into the practice.

Thenight that she came home, she put into practice what she had learned on the

*Noah Levine: continued*

I looked up, the opera audience had joined us. The buffer zone was gone. We were one big crowd—the 100%! The physical NYPD barricades still stood among us, but they were no longer barriers, absorbed now into our big warm body. Until late into the night we held our general assembly. The police stood offstage, now relaxed. Two separate spaces had flowed into one, protesters had become people again, and the police could then be people too.

After the first day of the occupation in Liberty Park, I went home thinking that the scraggly core protesters would be gone the next day, booted out by the NYPD. But miraculously, this was not so, and from that moment on, I learned to suspend disbelief—to not kill off this unfolding moment in my mind. I learned to trust my body, which was responding to a desire for freedom and connection. I learned to trust hundreds of strangers. When we lost the park, this was only a stage in an unfolding movement. A few weeks later, we were all standing euphorically on the steps of Lincoln Center Plaza, 100% human, pointing with our hearts toward each other, and finding freedom in this way. Who knows what happens next?!

Noah Fischer is a Brooklyn-based artist activist who grew up at Green Gulch Farm, run by the San Francisco Zen Center. He has exhibited art installations and performances in New York and internationally. Since the beginning of Occupy Wall Street, Fischer has completely committed his work to this movement. He is the curator of the No-Eyes Viewing Wall at Brooklyn Zen Center.



retreat. She was very silent that night, practicing mindful breathing, mindful walking. And, finally, she came and sat down close to [her husband], and she began to speak. She said, "My husband, I know that you have suffered terribly during the past six or seven years. I have not been able to help you, and I have made the situation worse. I am sorry. I did not know how to listen to you. I didn't know what was going on in your heart, in your mind. I was blind. I was unable to see. And that is why I have made the situation worse. I didn't want you to suffer. I wanted you to be happy, but because I did not know how, I have made the situation worse. So, please, my husband, please help me. Please tell me what is in your heart. I want to understand so that I will not repeat the unskillful things I have done. I am very sorry. You have to help me; alone I cannot change."

She was very surprised to see him begin to cry like a little boy. Seeing that, she knew that the door of communication had opened. So she practiced mindful breathing, deeply, and she insisted, "Please, my husband, please tell me what is in your heart. I will try to listen. I will try to understand. I want you to be happy. I don't want you to suffer."

It turned out, that that night was a very healing night for both of them. She was very successful in her practice of deep listening and using loving speech, and she was able to restore communication. She was able to convince him to sign up for the second retreat of mindfulness. And during the last day of the second retreat, he stood up and he introduced his wife as a bodhisattva. (A bodhisattva in Buddhism means an enlightened being who is able to help other people to be enlightened, also.)

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It is my conviction that the practice of the Israeli and Palestinian groups, the practice of that couple in California can be applied as the practice in the international political scenery. The

principle of the practice is to go home to yourself and listen to your own suffering and raise your own suffering and despair and fear. That is what I proposed last year after 9/11.

Two days after the 9/11 event, I spoke to four thousand people in Brooklyn. I proposed that America should go back to herself, practicing mindful breathing and embracing the pain, the suffering, the fear, the anger, and listening to the suffering of America. On the 25th of September that year, I spoke at the Riverside Church in New York City with Ambassador Andrew Young. We went to Ground Zero the day after, and I again proposed that [America] should embrace this practice of going home to herself, listening to her own suffering; that she must bring relief to herself before she can do something to help the situation in the world.

In the United States of America, there are people-- sections of the population-- who feel that they are victims of social injustice and discrimination. They feel that they have never been listened to. Suffering is there in America, and America has to practice listening to her own pain and suffering.

This is the first step. There are vast resources of peace in this country. There are those of us in America who have the capacity to listen deeply and with compassion to the suffering of America. We should be able to look around, to identify them, and to invite them to come in order to form a parliament for deep listening, a kind of counsel of sages, in order to practice listening to the suffering of our own nation, of our own people.

Then we should be able to invite those people who have felt that they're victims of social injustice and discrimination to come in order to tell us about their suffering. We should have people who come and help them to practice calming, embracing their suffering, help them use the kind of language that can convey the suffering, the feeling within themselves, exactly like in the case of that couple,

exactly like in the case of the Palestinians and Israelis in Plum Village....

America can act compassionately within her frontiers in order to heal the wounds, to mend the wounds within America first. This is the first step. We cannot do the second step before we can make the first step. If you want to help other countries, other groups of people like Afghanistan and the others, we have to help ourselves first, ...all of us know that this has to begin with one's self. So, acting with compassion and wisdom within our own frontiers is the first step.

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Then bringing that practice into the international levels, America can ask other nations to help create sessions of deep listening where America can participate.

Around the world there are those who are capable of being compassionate, of being attentive, of being able to listen deeply. You shall invite them to come and listen. Other groups who believe that they have been victims of injustice, that they are mistreated by America and other big nations, they are invited to come and to tell the world about their suffering, their fear, their anger.

If we have not been able to listen to our fear, our anger, we cannot listen and understand the fear and the anger of other nations and people. Then there are those of us who can come as volunteers to help these people to breathe, to walk, to calm down, to use the kind of language that can convey what is deep in their heart.

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...Looking deeply, we realize that hate, violence, anger, and terrorism are born from wrong perceptions. [Others] may have wrong perceptions of themselves,

and they may have wrong perceptions of us, and they have acted on the basis of these wrong perceptions.

In order for them not to continue, the only way is to help them remove these wrong perceptions of themselves and of us, and that work cannot be done by the Army. That work cannot be done by bombs and guns. That can only be done with the practice of deep listening, compassionate listening, and loving speech. We have to support our political leaders in this practice.

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One of the deepest teachings given by Buddha is that you should not be too sure of your perceptions. You have to practice looking deeply in order not to be fooled by your perceptions. If you are a doctor, you have to be very careful. Even if you are sure, check again. This kind of practice should be applied in our political life also.

The mass media has the duty of informing the people about what is happening. Journalists, reporters should be able to be calm, not to be carried away by their emotions, their feelings, their anger, their despair, in order to report well, to reflect the situation with more accuracy.

Our political leaders have to train themselves in order not to be carried away by fear, by anger. They should be able to retain their lucidity for the sake of the nation and of the world. When fear and anger has become collective, the situation becomes extremely dangerous for everyone. That is why we have to bring a spiritual dimension to our political life.

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You have elected your government. You have elected your House of Representatives and your Senate. You should continue to support them. You should continue to give them the kind of

This is your own work, no-one else's. Leave others to do their own work. You have your own duty and responsibility, you don't have to take on those of your family. Don't take on anything else, let it all go. This letting go will make your mind calm. Your sole responsibility right now is to focus your mind and bring it to peace. Leave everything else to the others. Forms, sounds, odors, tastes... leave them to the others to attend to. Put everything behind you and do your own work, fulfill your own responsibility. Whatever arises in your mind, be it fear of pain, fear of death, anxiety about others or whatever, say to it, "Don't disturb me. You're no longer any concern of mine." Just keep this to yourself when you see those *dhammas* arise. What does the word *dhamma* refer to? Everything is a *dhamma*, there is nothing that is not a *dhamma*. And what about "world"? The world is the very mental state that is agitating you at the present moment. "What are they going to do? When I'm gone who will look after them? How will they manage?"  
This

is all just the "world." Even the mere arising of a thought fearing death or pain is the world. Throw the world away! The world is the way it is. If you allow it to dominate your mind it becomes obscured and can't see itself. So whatever appears in the mind, just say, "This isn't my business. It's impermanent, unsatisfactory and not self."

Thinking you'd like to go on living for a long time will make you suffer. But thinking you'd like to die right away or very quickly isn't right either. It's suffering, isn't it? Conditions don't belong to us, they follow their own natural laws. You can't do anything about the way the body is. You can beautify it a little, make it attractive and clean for a while, like the young girls who paint their lips and let their nails grow long, but when old age arrives, everybody's in the same boat. That's the way the body is, you can't make it any other way. What you can improve and beautify is the mind.

Anyone can build a house of wood and bricks, but the Buddha taught that that sort of home is not our real home, it's only nominally ours. It's home in the world and it follows the ways of the world. Our real home is inner peace. An external, material home may well be pretty but it is not very peaceful. There's this worry and then that, this anxiety and then that. So we say it's not our real home, it's external to us. Sooner or later we'll have to give it up. It's not a place we can live in permanently because it doesn't truly belong to us, it belongs to the world. Our body is the same. We take it to be a self, to be "me" or "mine," but in fact it's not really so at all, it's another worldly home. Your body has followed its natural course from birth, until now it's old and sick, and you can't forbid it from doing that. That's the way it is. Wanting it to be any different would be as foolish as wanting a duck to be like a chicken. When you see that that's impossible - that a duck must be a duck and a chicken must be a chicken, and that the bodies have to get old and die - you will find courage and energy. However much you want the body to go on lasting, it won't do that.

The Buddha said

Impermanent, alas, are all conditions,

Subject to rise and fall.

Subject to rise and fall.

Their stilling is bliss.

All conditions are impermanent and unstable. Having come into being they disappear, having arisen they pass away, and yet everyone wants them to be permanent. This

information that helps them correct their poor perceptions.

The situation of our country, of our world, is [too important] to be entrusted only to politicians. As a mother, as a father, as a school teacher, as a doctor, you have to practice in order to remain calm, in order to look deeply, in order to understand, and you have to convey your insight, your compassion to your elected people. You have to practice. We cannot leave the matter only to our politicians.

In Buddhist psychology, we speak of consciousness in terms of seeds. In the lower level, lower layer of our consciousness, there is a part that is called store consciousness. Store consciousness is the place where all the seeds of mental formations are preserved.

There is a seed of fear; there is a seed of anger; there is a seed of despair; there is a seed of peace; there is a seed of joy; there is a seed of loving kindness--all the good seeds and all the negative seeds that have been transmitted to us by our ancestors, our parents. It depends on the environment where we live, [but] such seeds can be watered several times a day.

Our children watch television three hours a day or even more. And during the time they watch television, their seed of fear, of anger, of craving may be watered, and they continue to grow. We have to create, we have to produce television programs that are able to water the seed of compassion, joy, peace, loving kindness.

That is why mindful consumption is very important. When you read a magazine, you consume. When you listen to music, you consume. When we begin a conversation, we consume, because a conversation can also be highly toxic.

If a man or a woman is full of fear, of despair, of hatred, and if we listen to him or to her for an hour, the poisons will penetrate into store consciousness, and make the seed of fear and anger grow very quickly. That is why the practice of mindful consumption, including consumption of conversation, is very crucial for self-protection, for the protection of our family and society.

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... We should be able to stop violence and to take up the path of reconciliation and peace. This is possible. I have the conviction that America has enough wisdom and courage and compassion in order to pick up that path of reconciliation and healing.

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When we listen to the other person, to the other group of persons, you get insight about their suffering, their difficulty, their fear, and their anger. And at the same time, you realize that we do have wrong perceptions also. We have done, we

is foolishness. Look at the breath. Once it's gone in, it goes out, that's its nature, that's how it has to be. The inhalations and exhalations have to alternate, there must be change. Conditions exist through change, you can't prevent it. Just think, could you exhale without inhaling? Would it feel good? Or could you just inhale? We want things to be permanent but they can't be, it's impossible. Once the breath has come in, it must go out. When it's gone out it comes back in again, and that's natural, isn't it? Having been born we get old and then die, and that's totally natural and normal. It's because conditions have done their job, because the in-breaths and out-breaths have alternated in this way, that the human race is still here today.

As soon as we are born we are dead. Our birth and our death are just one thing. It's like a tree: when there's a root there must be branches, when there are branches there must be a root. You can't have one without the other. It's a little funny to see how at death people are so grief-stricken and distracted and at birth how happy and delighted. It's delusion, nobody has ever looked at this clearly. I think if you really want to cry it would be better to do so when someone's born. Birth is death, death is birth; the branch is the root, the root is the branch. If you must cry, cry at the root, cry at the birth. Look closely: if there was no birth there would be no death. Can you understand this?

Don't worry about things too much, just think "this is the way things are." This is your work, your duty. Right now nobody can help you, there's nothing that your family and possessions can do for you. All that can help you now is clear awareness.

So don't waver. Let go. Throw it all away.

Even if you don't let go, everything is starting to leave you anyway. Can you see that, how all the different parts of your body are trying to slip away? Take your hair; when you were young it was thick and black. Now it's falling out. It's leaving. Your eyes used to be good and strong but now they're weak, your sight is unclear. When your organs have had enough they leave, this isn't their home. When you were a child your teeth were healthy and firm, now they're wobbly, or you've got false ones. Your eyes, ears, nose, tongue - everything is trying to leave because this isn't their home. You can't make a permanent home in conditions, you can only stay for a short time and then you have to go. It's like a tenant watching over his tiny little house with failing eyes. His teeth aren't so good, his eyes aren't so good, his body's not so healthy, everything is leaving.

So you needn't worry about anything because this isn't your real home, it's only a temporary shelter. Having come into this world you should contemplate its nature. Everything there is is preparing to disappear. Look at your body. Is there

have said things that have created misunderstanding. We have not understood us completely. We have not understood them completely. We vow to practice in order to have a better understanding of ourselves and of them so that our action will be in the direction of peace.

America will learn a lot with the practice of deep listening and compassionate listening. The insights she will get will be able to serve as the ground for repairing the damage she has done to herself in America and she has done in other parts of the world. She will be able to help remove the wrong perceptions of the people outside of America, about America, and about themselves.

It is my conviction that [she must work to] remove wrong perceptions - for that is the base, the foundation of hatred and violence and terrorism. That work cannot be done by the bombs. It should be done by the practice of deep listening, compassionate listening, and loving speech.

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My dear friends, peace is not something we can only hope for. Peace is something we can contemplate in our daily life by our practice of mindful breathing, mindful walking, embracing our fear, our anger, producing the energy of understanding and compassion. And with that element of peace in us, we should be able to support our government, our Congress.

And let us remember that peace is in our hands. We can do something for peace every day. Let us practice as individuals. Let us practice as communities, as Sanghas, and let us give peace a chance.



### Grace - Osha

Quietly, now  
The grace that we've been seeking  
Has always been there  
Patiently waiting  
  
For us to turn around,  
Reach out our hand and say,  
"Thank you for staying here  
While I was sleeping."  
  
And how could it otherwise be?  
Our true nature  
Waits for us to turn back in gratitude, see  
And feel our way, finally,  
Home.

Ajahn Chah: continued

anything there that's still in its original form? Is your skin as it used to be? Is your hair? They aren't the same, are they? Where has everything gone? This is nature, the way things are. When their time is up, conditions go their way. In this world there is nothing to rely on - it's an endless round of disturbance and trouble, pleasure and pain. There's no peace.

When we have no real home we're like aimless travelers out on the road, going here and there, stopping for a while and then setting off again. Until we return to our real homes we feel uneasy, just like a villager who's left his village. Only when he gets home can he really relax and be at peace.

Nowhere in the world is there any real peace to be found. The poor have no peace and neither do the rich; adults have no peace and neither do the highly educated. There's no peace anywhere, that's the nature of the world. Those who have few possessions suffer, and so do those who have many. Children, adults, old and young... everyone suffers. The suffering of being old, the suffering of being young, the suffering of being wealthy and the suffering of being poor... it's all nothing but suffering.

When you've contemplated things in this way you'll see *aniccam*, impermanence, and *dukkham*, unsatisfactoriness. Why are things impermanent and unsatisfactory? Because they are *anatta*, not self.

Both your body that is lying sick and in pain, and the mind that is aware of its sickness and pain, are called *dhamma*. That which is formless, the thoughts, feelings and perceptions, is called *namadhamma*. That which is racked with aches and pains is called *rapadhamma*. The material is *dhamma* and the immaterial is *dhamma*. So we live with *dhamma*, in *dhamma*, and we are *dhamma*. In truth there is no self to be found, there are only *dhammas* continually arising and passing away as is their nature. Every single moment we're undergoing birth and death. This is the way things are.

When we think of the Lord Buddha, how truly he spoke, we feel how worthy he is of reverence and respect. Whenever we see the truth of something we see His teachings, even if we've never actually practiced the Dhamma. But even if we have a knowledge of the teachings, have studied and practiced them, as long as we still haven't seen the truth we are still homeless.

So understand this point. All people, all creatures, are preparing to leave. When beings have lived an appro-

priate time they must go on their way. Rich, poor, young and old must all experience this change.

When you realize that's the way the world is you'll feel that it's a wearisome place. When you see that there's nothing real or substantial you can rely on you'll feel wearied and disenchanted. Being disenchanted doesn't mean you are averse, the mind is clear. It sees that there's nothing to be done to remedy this state of affairs, it's just the way the world is. Knowing in this way you can let go of attachment, letting go with a mind that is neither happy nor sad, but at peace with conditions through seeing their changing nature with wisdom. *Anicca vata sankhara* - all conditions are impermanent.

To put it simply, impermanence is the Buddha. If we truly see an impermanent condition we'll see that it's permanent. It's permanent in the sense that its subjection to change is unchanging. This is the permanence that living beings possess. There is continual transformation, from childhood through to old age, and that very impermanence, that propensity to change, is permanent and fixed. If you look at it like this your heart will be at ease. It's not just you who has to go through this, it's everyone.

When you consider things in this way you'll see them as wearisome, and disenchantment will arise. Your delight in the world of sense pleasures will disappear. You'll see that if you have many possessions you have to leave a lot behind. If you have a few you leave few behind. Wealth is just wealth, long life is just long life... they're nothing special.

What is important is that we should do as the Lord Buddha taught and build our own home, building it by the method that I've been explaining to you. Build your own home. Let go. Let go until the mind reaches the peace that is free from advancing, free from retreating and free from stopping still. Pleasure is not your home, pain is not your home. Pleasure and pain both decline and pass away.

The great teacher saw that all conditions are impermanent and so He taught us to let go of our attachment to them. When we reach the end of our life we'll have no choice anyway, we won't be able to take anything with us. So wouldn't it be better to put things down before then? They're just a heavy burden to carry around, why not throw off that load now? Why bother to drag these things around? Let go, relax, and let your family look after you.

Those who nurse the sick grow in goodness and virtue. The patient who is giving others that opportunity shouldn't make things difficult for them. If there's pain or some problem or other, let them know and keep the mind in a wholesome state. One who is nursing parents should fill his or her mind with warmth and kindness and not get caught up in aversion. This is the one time you can repay your debt to them. From your

birth through your childhood, as you've grown up, you've been dependent on your parents. That you are here today is because your mother and father have helped you in so many ways. You owe them an incredible debt of gratitude.

So today, all of you children and relatives gathered together here, observe how your mother has become your child. Before you were her children, now she has become yours. She has become older and older until she has become a child again. Her memory goes, her eyes don't see well and her ears aren't so good. Sometimes she garbles her words. Don't let it upset you. You who are nursing the sick must know how to let go also. Don't hold onto things, just let her have her own way. When a young child is disobedient sometimes the parents let it have its own way just to keep the peace, just to make it happy. Now your mother is just like that child. Her memories and perceptions are confused. Sometimes she muddles up your names, or asks you to bring a cup when she wants a plate. It's normal, don't be upset by it.

Let the patient bear in mind the kindness of those who nurse and patiently endure the painful feelings. Exert yourself mentally, don't let the mind become cattered and confused, and don't make things difficult for those looking after you. Let those who are nursing fill their minds with virtue and kindness. Don't be averse to the unattractive side of the job, cleaning up the mucous and phlegm, urine and excrement. Try your best. Everyone in the family give a hand.

She is the only mother you have. She gave you life, she has been your teacher, your doctor and your nurse - she's been everything to you. That she has brought you up, shared her wealth with you and made you her heir is the great goodness of parents. That is why the Buddha taught the virtues of being made and being unmade, knowing our debt of gratitude and trying to repay it. These two *dhammas* are complimentary. If our parents are in need, unwell or in difficulty, then we do our best to help them. This is being made-being unmade, the virtue that sustains the world. It prevents families from breaking up, and makes them stable and harmonious.

Today I have brought you the gift of Dhamma in this time of illness. I have no material things to offer you, there seem to be plenty of those in this house already. And so I give you the Dhamma, something which has lasting worth, something which you'll never be able to exhaust. Having received it you can pass it on to as many others as you like and it will never be depleted. That is the nature of Truth. I am happy to have been able to give you this gift of Dhamma and hope it will give you the strength to deal with your pain. 

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Year after year a tree bears fruit,  
and it does not care who takes it,  
whether it is a robber or a saint.  
It just knows to give.

I think goodness knows to give.  
And goodness brings about  
some transformation in its own way.

I WAS IN NEW YORK. I had just come from India. I had quite a lot of money and I had a nation behind me. But there are exchange laws and it became very difficult to convert money. Now I was left without a penny. I did not have any skills nor did I want to get a job, even if there was one. You are in a state that does not compromise. It is not that you are lazy. You have something to give to mankind.

It is a test. It is your own direct experience. Do you know we do not have any direct experience in our life? We live by emotions and sensations and thoughts of fear, tomorrow and yesterday. That is not living. What about being in the present? The resources of the present are tremendous. But for a few days, nothing happened. I did not eat.

To MAKE CONTACT WITH THE PRESENT FIRST would be the only sanity. And yet we put that in the second place and get busy with brain activity and the illusions of yesterday and tomorrow. We get distracted. And therefore we cannot know love, nor goodness, nor anything. Whatever we do know would be emotional, self-centered, related not to reality, but to our memories, and the memories of the race. You have to discipline yourself to make contact with the present. I said, "I will not compromise. The present has resources. I want to make contact with them." That was my experiment.

And it was amazing. I am still alive.

Strange things happen. When you do not compromise, you have order in your life; no insecurity touches you. So my needs were met. I began to see other forces at work, and they brought me to adoration. When you will not compromise, you are connected with the Source of life itself. It provides.

Some time later, I met Mr. J. Krishnamurti. I asked him, "Does life take care?" He said, "Yes, if you absolutely let go." What do you let go? Your fear and your thought. What is your thought? It represents insecurity, greed, selfishness - "Look at me, self-improved." The misery of it. The falseness

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*A Course In Miracles* questions everything. And the answer is the miracle, a moment of insight. It brings you to questioning, to undoing the past and the fear of the future. It introduces you to the vitality of the present. *A Course In Miracles* gives one the discipline that is most practical. It says bring to remembrance that you are divine. Bring to remembrance that 'nothing real can be threatened.'\* Bring to remembrance that 'nothing unreal exists.'

In reality there is no fear. Fear is of tomorrow; it is never in the present.

The Course awakens awareness. When you make contact with the timeless reality of yourself, there is a miracle: you are clear. In clarity there is goodness. In goodness there is certainty. And your only expression is of gratefulness that life is kind. You step out of the world of time into the world of eternity, the uni-

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versal order. It cannot be organized. I can awaken myself; you can awaken yourself. Any person can awaken - male, female, rich, poor, children, anyone.

So something is emerging out of *A Course In Miracles*: the action of the Joseph Plan for those who are in need. It starts with goodness, with giving rather than wanting.

*The Course* offers the peace of God, a state of stillness. The power of stillness is the discovery of the present and the discovery of goodness. When you have something of yourself to give, then you are extending your true nature. And "Love ye one another"\*\*\* becomes true.



