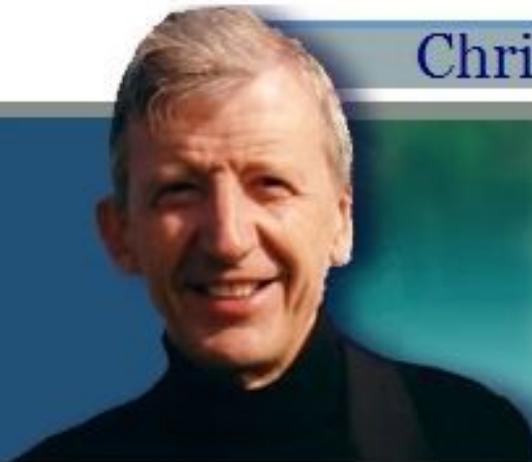


DHARMA E-NEWS

Christopher Titmuss

In seeing -
What utter joy!
The small mind becomes
transparent, empty,
without foundation.

Christopher



DHARMA E-NEWS ISSUE 22 - July - October 2010 & INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULE

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Dear Friends in the Dharma,

Welcome to the 22nd **Dharma e-News**, and to our new subscribers. **Dharma e-News** goes out to more than 3500 people in some 30 countries, including many centres, dharma teachers, dharma networks, and groups.

We send out the **Dharma eNews** every about every three or four months.

Dharma e-News endeavours to bring a fresh Dharma perspective to contemporary issues and encourage us to keep questioning. The newsletter will be kept to a maximum of 10 items per issue.

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If you wish to print out the Dharma e-News to read over a cafe latte, then highlight the whole

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thing (control-A), copy it (control-C), then paste after opening a Word Document (control-V), then Save (control-S) then delete spaces between sections. Make narrow margins to use less paper. It will make about 25 pages in total. Or simply highlight particular sections of interest and print out.

One page of A4 paper is about 500 words.

[My International Teaching Schedule](#) from Summer 2010 to August 2011 is on my websites, as well as available at the end of this **Dharma eNews**.

In the Dharma

Three Bows
Christopher
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1.

A commentary on a vital statement

“Incline the mind towards the Deathless”

said the Buddha

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Christopher Titmuss

A Dharma friend wrote to me recently the following:

"Do I meditate with the aim or expectation of passing beyond samsara and into Nirvana?"

On the one hand this seems quite a wise approach, a non-grasping open-ended view that does not seek to elicit some sort of spiritual pot of gold at the end of the Buddhist rainbow. Additionally, it appears rather unlikely that I would ever attain Nirvana, so surely in effect not worth worrying about. On the other hand, I wonder sometimes if without the conscious aim of Nirvana am I selling myself short or missing the point of spiritual practice entirely?"

On inquiry it seems like I have two slightly contradictory (or perhaps complimentary?) views of Nirvana.

I have not attained Nirvana, nor do I for the great part really seek or expect to attain Nirvana. Notwithstanding, given that the Buddha clearly laid out the path from samsara to Nirvana (of which mental culture or meditation is one key part) and furthermore, dedicated his life to teaching this path - am I not missing something here?"

Or have I missed the point entirely Christopher?"

Truth be told, I am still not even any nearer to explaining why I actually meditate, other than to say I love it and that I find it both practical and wholesome when it's applied in my life.

Any thoughts most welcome."

There is an important injunction of the Buddha, often overlooked in Dharma teachings and insight meditation (vipassana) tradition. In a meeting with Malunkyaputta (Middle Length Discourses MN64), the Buddha stated:

"Whatever exists therein of material form, feeling, perception, thoughts and consciousness, he sees these states as impermanent, unsatisfactory and non-self. He turns his mind away from those states, and directs it towards the Deathless."

It is worthwhile for every dedicated yogi to take this powerful and unambiguous statement to heart. We can easily fall into the habitual trap of "practice, practice and practice" and never turn our attention to liberation, nirvana, the Deathless. It is hardly surprising that some truly committed yogis, who make enormous personal sacrifice for their practice, can feel the limitations of practice, practice, practice and find themselves turning away from practice but not towards the Deathless but towards other traditions that ignore practice. In

the Buddha's discourse, *The Way to the Imperturbable* (MLD 265), the Buddha explained exactly what he meant when he used the term *the Deathless*. "This is the Deathless, namely the liberation of the mind through non-clinging."

I fully support the wish of yogis to such to turn away from practice but it is not necessary to towards another methodology, whether satsang, guru devotion, advaita or grasp onto insights into disillusionment. There is no need to look outside the Triple Gem, nor confuse the limits of the Theravada tradition with the words of the Buddha. It makes me smile when I hear such voices as "I attended satsang with a wonderful Advaita teacher (non-dual teacher). I experienced enlightenment in his presence. But how do you meditate?"

In March, 2010, we held our four day Dharma Facilitators Programme in at the Pauenhof Centre, near Dusseldorf, Germany. Klaus-Peter gave a precise summary of the Buddha's teachings to Malunkyaputta. In the two hour workshop, Thorsten and Gesine led groups on aspects of the discourse. I found the session insightful. The workshop reminded me of the importance of this statement of the Buddha. When I arrived home, I went on a search through the suttas of the terms the Buddha used for the ultimate. I had thought there were about 30. I found 100. I have listed near the end of this article.

The Buddha met with Malunkyaputta in Jeta's Grove, where the Buddha engaged in the annual rains retreat (a three month period) for more than 20 years. In the previous discourse (MLD 63), Malunkyaputta said he found himself caught up during his meditation in speculative views about the world, the self and whether one who has gone beyond exists or not after death. He said that he if did not get clear answers he would give up the Dharma life. Malunkyputta's voice continues to *rebecome* 2500 years later. There is still much misunderstanding about the Buddha's refusal to decline to be involved in the metaphysics of the world, life, matter, origins of existence and whether one who has gone beyond exists or not after death. Did the Buddha know and did not say or did the Buddha not know? We forget these speculations have **nothing to do** with the Dharma of liberation.

It seems to me that it is as much a metaphysic to cling to the unknown and to assume that there is only a single, self-existent life and death and denial of rebirth. Incidentally, there is no concept "rebirth" or "reincarnation in the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha only used the word "rebecoming."

I have no experience of a self existence. I can see through my experience there is dependent arising, rebecoming and liberation. This we can **see and know**. There are Dharma teachers who make a virtue about living in the unknown, who claim a freedom in not knowing about the way things or the way things have become. Such a view again misses the point since it confirms an ignorance, not a virtue or a release. Realisation dismisses settling for such a view so that we **see and know** the eye of the Dharma, of the emptiness of self existence and understand dependent arising.

The Buddha used the analogy of the surgeon whose take the arrow out of a wounded man rather than speculate about the origin of the wood used in the bow and arrow. "I have left

these speculative views undeclared. It does not belong to the fundamentals of the spiritual life as it does not lead to awakening and nirvana," the Buddha told Malunkyaputta. He spoke to Malunkyaputta of freedom from of the five lower fetters . In ending these fetters, the yogi is no longer *obsessing or enslaved* to a view of his identity, to doubts, rules and observances, desire for pleasure or negativity. Seeing the Deathless ends these fetters. It is useful to note that the Pali word for fetter is *samyojana*. The middle syllables come from the root "yug" like the word yoga. You can interpret this rather freely as a reminder to yogis, to practitioners, that nothing whatsoever is worth becoming yoked to

The fetter of rules and observances becomes important one for meditators, as well as religious believers. The Pali is *sīlabbata paramasa*. *Sila* means rules, laws and perceived virtue in the way of doing things. *Vata* includes forms of practice, rites and methods. *Parāmāsa* means holding onto and being under the influence of. For the meditator holding onto a particular practice, seeing virtue in it above everything else is a fetter, a hindrance to liberation.

The Buddha also explained that a "young, tender infant lying prone does not even have the notion of 'identity' yet the underlying tendency to identity view lies with him. An untaught ordinary person, no regard for the noble ones, unskilled and undisciplined in the Dharma, abides with a mind obsessed and enslaved by identity view." It has become habitual, uneradicated in him and obsessed and enslaved. The same principle applies to all the fetters.

The Buddha then spoke of ways to dissolve the fetters through the depths of meditation or through seeing the suffering of any or all of the fetters. He employed strong metaphors. "Regard the fetters as *suffering, a disease, a tumour, as barbed wire*, and also non self in terms the fetters are a *calamity, as disintegrating, as empty*.. *He turns his mind away from these states and directs it towards the Deathless element. Thus, this is peaceful. This is sublime. This is the renunciation of all grasping, all fuelling. This is Nirvana. With the destruction of the five lower fetters, he abides in the realm of the Gods from where he attains final Nirvana without ever returning from that world.* In this pure realm, we abide with happiness, content and love.

Dedicated practitioners need to give dedicated attention to the depth of this discourse from the Buddha to yogis. Incidentally, scholars usually translate the word "*savaka*" in the texts as "disciple." The word **savaka** actually means "**the hearer (of the Dharma), the listener.**" It would thus appear from the texts, there are *savakas* who come to a liberating wisdom through listening to the noble ones and others through practice (noble path, meditation etc). *Ariyasavaka* is one who listens to a noble one. *Savakasangha* is the community of listeners. The Buddha emphasised the profound importance of listening to the Dharma to see and know the truth for ourselves as he challenged the religious culture of gurus and disciples.

At the end of the discourse Ananda, the Buddha's personal attendant, asked the Buddha why there was a difference between the two types of liberation, gradual and immediate. Gautama said it was due to the "difference in faculties." Some yogis intentionally developed their receptive faculties, including listening, through practice that eventually culminated in liberation of mind. While others had mature faculties that enabled a

liberating wisdom to establish immediately while listening to teachings on the Deathless.

What does it mean to "direct the mind to the Deathless?"

There are times when we neither obsess nor feel enslaved to any of the fetters, nor to various mind states, whether happy or unhappy, shallow or deep. With confidence, we focus on the Deathless. We make this turning of attention to the Deathless our first interest, no matter how abstract, vague or intellectual, it may first seem. It would not be a waste of time to spend a year and a day, or much longer, whether in retreats, sangha dialogues, meditation and other times, abiding with a mind directed as much as possible to the deathless with unwavering interest. We have much to address to awaken to clear seeing and knowing the Deathless element.

Ten Reflections for the Deathless

- 1. Do I have any experiences, especially in recent times, hours, days, months or year or two, not being bound up with self and other? We might refer to these experiences as "transcendent" to the ordinary, everyday conventional mind when consciousness has become involved in content. Do I have an authentic sense of the timeless, and emergence of awe and wonder?*
- 2. If not, why not?*
- 3. What steps can I take to get out of certain habits, adherence to ways of doing things, self preoccupation and other fetters. Be very clear and very specific about this.*
- 4. If I have had such "transcendent" experiences, reflect on their significance. Squeeze the honey out of them.*
- 5. Why are they important? What is revealed? What is uncovered? What is the realisation about?*
- 6. At the end of the article, I have listed more 108 terms the Buddha used for the Deathless. Are any of these terms in accordance with your experiences, insights or realizations?*
- 7. Reflect on the liberating element in these perceptions. How does the liberating element reveal itself in your daily life. Do you experience a daily sense of liberation (Deathless) or is it occasional or very occasional or not at all?*
- 8. Keep turning your attention to liberation that is not bound up with self, nor sense objects, yet not outside of them in some metaphysical realm.*
- 9. Meditate, reflect and read very slowly and consciously statement on ultimate truth. You need only a few verses for awakening to truth, to reality that knows no boundary.*

10. Make your interest in liberating truth your primary interest and draw regularly on profound moments, experiences and insights. Remember any practice is a preparation. Direct interest to the Deathless right into the foreseeable future.

Two years ago, I formed an idea to write a book on the ultimate teachings of the Buddha. I felt concern that far too many Dharma teachings in all the Buddhist traditions make too little reference to the Buddha teachings on liberation. There are senior Buddhist teachers who have taken up the view that the Buddha barely made reference to nirvana, the Deathless and other similar terms. It left me wondering whether such teachers actually read the Pali suttas of the Buddha.

I began going through the 5000 discourses of the Buddha to highlight passages with reference to the ultimate. I also asked Lila in Jerusalem, Jenny Wilks and Asaf Federman in England to send to me location of such passages. We put together a formidable collection of statements on the deathless. Lila also completed a university thesis on the Buddha teachings on non-duality. I then started to write a commentary on these passages that would form the basis of the book. I felt the Theravada commentaries, mostly written in the sixth century AD, failed to capture the breadth and depth of these profound passages, and the way they serve as a resource for inspiration and insight for dedicated Dharma practitioners. I had written several thousand words of my book when I started work on another book about the development of a Western Dharma tradition, its strengths and weaknesses. I finished working on that book early last November, 2009 and sent it off to Shambhala Books, a Buddhist publisher, in the USA. Emily Bower, editor of Shambhala Books expressed a keen interest to see the manuscript. The manuscript runs to around 350 pages. At the time of writing, I haven't heard back from her.

In February, Shaila Catherine, Dharma teacher, based in California, kindly sent me a copy of *"The Island, An Anthology of the Buddha's teachings on Nibbana"*. Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro wrote the book. (*Abhayagiri 2009 Publication for free distribution only. Go to www.abhayagiri.org*). Pasanno and Amaro shared the same appreciation as myself about the significance of the ultimate teachings of the Buddha. Passano reported at the beginning of their book that his involvement with this book began with "jotting down a variety of sutta quotes which I had found inspiring." Amaro said he "had hardly heard a word spoken about this (ultimate reality, Unconditioned, Unborn, Nirvana). He and Passano put together a "small compendium of the essence of the teachings of the Buddha. He added that these teachings are for those who "rejoice in the liberation of the heart." Clearly, Passanno and Amaro and myself took an interest in a similar line of inquiry. The two monks have put together this remarkable anthology with commentary on the Deathless.

I read *"The Island"* – one of the concepts the Buddha used to describe the ultimate. I realised I would be covering much the same ground, though there are many ways to shed light on the Deathless. Amaro and Passano had not engaged in a pre-emptive strike, as if such monks could even think along those lines (!), but had spent years selecting and preparing these sections from the suttas with further commentary. The two Ajahns have

divided their 350 page into four major sections.

1. *Introduction.*
2. *Seeds, names and symbols (meaning of nirvana, associated words (English and Pali) and some important quotes from the suttas and use of cool element for nirvana.*
3. *The Terrain including dependent arising, conditions, consciousness, not made of that, attending to the Deathless.*
4. *The final section explores the gradual path and sudden penetration, path and goal and the nature of the stream enterer. Every chapter has the backbone of a full complement of quotes , plus an excellent concordance at the end.*

The commentary from Passano and Amaro included quotes from authorities in the Theravada tradition, such as Ajahn and Ajahn Sumedho. *The Island* remains especially relevant for those deeply interested in full realization of the end of the path, rather than the path. I read the book with much appreciation for their noble work. I regard *The Island* as belonging to among the best commentaries available on a vitally important aspect of the Buddha's teachings. There is nothing comparable in the history of the Theravada tradition.

To find out how to secure a copy of the book "*The Island. An Anthology of the Buddha's Teachings on Nibbana.*" Go to www.abhayagiri.org. The book is for free distribution only. Bless them!

I had the impression that the important chapter on *stream enterer on the way* to realizing the Deathless. I doubt this commonly held Theravada view. Stream entry reveals noble realizations with the dissolution of various personality issues. The Buddha made it clear the significance of the liberating element of stream entry with the end of the fetters of adherence to identity, doubts and clinging to rules and observance. In stream entry, the eye of the Dharma has opened, has not linked fully enough the experience and insights of the Deathless with stream entry. Some yogis might think that stream entry constitutes a vitally profound experience

Doubt in the ultimate teachings of the Buddha ends when the practitioner has seen and known for herself or himself the Deathless element. It is as obvious as light is to person with good eyesight - to use an analogy of the Buddha. The Buddha does not make a condition to realise the unconditioned the gradual and systematic dissolution of all the fetters. The remaining five fetters out of 10 consist of clinging to forms, formless, restlessness, conceit and ignorance (of conditions).

The book's index runs to a very useful 17 pages. The index could have been two or three times longer using a smaller typeface. I had read passages and then wish to go back to the topic only to find the key words were not in the index. For example, *elements, world,*

space and many other words used in the text have been omitted from the index. If this book runs to reprints, and I hope it will, then the authors might wish to extend the index.

The verses in the remaining two chapters of the Sutta Nipata (the earliest collection of suttas) have many references to liberation. "*The Island*" gives about 16 of them. I recall these two chapters very well because during my nine months in the cave in Thailand during my years as a monk, I took with me *Suttas Nipata* as my book for daily reflection. I am still giving the same encouragement to yogis to direct their focus to Nirvana 36 years later. In the concordance at the back of the book, no means intended to be exhaustive, there are numerous beautiful quotes from the Buddha on the consummation of the teachings.

This book can serve as an important reference for years for dedicated yogis. It forever puts to rest a common view in Zen, Advaita (Non-Dual) tradition, Dzogchen, followers of Madhyamika tradition of Nagarjuna and even in the Theravada tradition itself, that the Buddha concentrated exclusively on the path and practice with reliance on the Abhidhamma for psycho-physical analysis.

Below are a handful of quotes on ultimate truth, I had selected out from the Connected Discourses of the Buddha. Many appear in *The Island* which contains literally hundreds of quotes, mostly addressing ultimate truth. The Buddha clearly encouraged the entire assembly of practitioners to **incline towards nibbana - just as the River Ganges inclines towards the sea**. (M. 73.14).

S 22.1 (p 855):

"And how, householder, is one afflicted in body but not afflicted in mind? Here, householder, the instructed noble disciple, who is a seer of the noble ones and is skilled and disciplined in their Dhamma... does not regard form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form. He does not live obsessed by the notions: 'I am form, form is mine'. As he lives unobsessed by these notions, that form of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of form, there do not arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair."

[Repeated for feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness.]

S 22.8 (p 867):

"And how, bhikkhus, is there non-agitation through nonclinging? Here, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple does not regard form thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self.' That form of his changes and alters, With the change and alteration of form, there do not arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair."

[Repeated for feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness.]

S 22.36 (p879):

"If one does not have an underlying tendency toward form, then one is not measured in accordance with it; if one is not measured in accordance with it, then one is not reckoned in terms of it. If one does not have an underlying tendency toward feeling... towards perception... towards volitional formations... toward consciousness, then one is not measured in accordance with it; if one is not measured in accordance with it, then one is not reckoned in terms of it.

S 22.45 (p884):

"Bhikkhus, form is impermanent... feeling is impermanent... perception is impermanent... volitional formations are impermanent... consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is nonself. What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' When one sees this thus as it really is with correct wisdom, the mind becomes dispassionate and is liberated from the taints by non-clinging.

"If, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu's mind has become dispassionate towards the form element... towards the feeling element... towards the perception element... towards the volitional formations element... towards the consciousness element, it is liberated from the taints by non-clinging.

"By being liberated, it is steady; by being steady, it is content; by being content, he is not agitated. Being unagitated, he personally attains Nibbana. He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.' "

S 22.58 (P 901) [from the Buddha's second discourse in Sarnath]:

"Bhikkhus, form is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.' But because form is nonself, form leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.'

[Repeated for feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness.]

S 22.92:

Then the venerable Rahula ... said to the Blessed One:

"Venerable sir, how should one know, how should one see so that, in regard to this body with consciousness and in regard to all external signs, the mind is rid of I-making, mine-making, and conceit, has transcended discrimination, and is peaceful and well liberated"

"Any kind of form whatsoever, Rahula, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near – having seen all form as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' one is liberated by nonclinging.

[Repeated for feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness.]

"When one knows and sees thus, Rahula, then in regard to this body with consciousness and in regard to all external signs, the mind is rid of I-making, mine-making, and conceit, has transcended discrimination, and is peaceful and well liberated."

S 22.95 (p 952):

*"Form is like a lump of foam,
Feeling like a water bubble;
Perception is like a mirage,
Volitions like a plantain trunk,
And consciousness like an illusion,
So explained the Kinsman of the Sun.*

*"However one may ponder it
And carefully investigate it,
It appears but hollow and void
When one views it carefully."*

S 28.1 (p 1015):

Sariputta: "Here, friend, secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered and dwelt in the first jhana, which is accompanied by thought and examination, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. yet, friend, it did not occur to me, 'I am attaining the first jhana,' or 'I have attained the first jhana,' or 'I have emerged from the first jhana.' "

"It must be because I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted in the Venerable Sariputta for a long time that such thoughts did not occur to him."

We gather information on a variety of themes that the mind has a capacity to store and remember. Insight has a different quality making a truly beneficial difference to our lives. Liberation knowledge transforms our life. We meditate, reflect, inquire into dharma knowledge for liberation.

The sources for insight includes

a) *meditation,*

- b) mindfulness,
- c) inquiry,
- d) listening,
- e) speaking,
- f) reading,
- g) nature
- h) spontaneously
- i) receptivity

The difference between general knowledge and insight is rather like the difference between visiting the Himalayas and looking at postcards of these mountains. Insights make a difference to our lives, they open up consciousness, they wake us up from the sleep of existence. Invaluable insights come from experience, Liberating knowledge dissolved the fetters involved with our constructed world view. We allow ourselves to be available to fresh insights into the phenomenal existence, change and knowing emptiness of self existence. Realising the liberation element takes the suffering out of *I* and *my*. It is not enough to know what we suffer over. We lose ourselves in our picture of existence. We imagine that all that matters revolves around what goes on in our life or in the life of others, and how that affects us. At times, we can sense stillness, a palpable silence and an element unaffected through fluctuations and ripples in our life. We can uncover a sense of the timeless, a freedom from feeling bound to time and the stress bound up with time. We do not have to gain access to sub-atomic particles as the kind of building blocks of existence. Kalapas, the Pali word for sub-atomic particles, appears nowhere in the words of the Buddha. As the Buddha said, the liberating dharma is difficult to see but that should not discourage us from its exploration.

Udana 1.10

When, Bahiya, in the seen is merely what is seen...in the cognised is merely what is cognised, then, Bahiya, you will not be 'with that'; when you are not 'with that', then you will not be 'in that'; when you are not 'in that', then, Bahiya, you will be neither here nor beyond nor in between the two. Just this is the end of suffering."

Now through this brief Dharma teaching of the Lord the mind of Bahiya of the Bark-cloth was immediately freed from the taints without grasping..

Owing to our projections, we easily imagine that our failures, troubles and problems are the consequences of situations, inside or outside of ourselves, both or neither (God, karma, destiny, fate). The Buddha told Bahiya to see clearly the cognised as simply the cognised. Seeing clearly takes the problem out of situation, nor is there any necessity to look for liberation here, there or in between.

The mind has a tendency to project, to cast layers of itself upon the object, so then the object carries with it features of the subject. In this movement of the subject casting itself onto the object, we find it hard to distinguish what is going on in our mind and what the object itself reveals. We can never underestimate the determinant of the mind in the world

and about the world.

There is a meeting of subject and object. There are points to be clear about.

- *The subject is not independent of the object.*
- *The object is not independent of the subject.*
- *The subject gives significance to the object*
- *The object gives significance to the subject.*
- *The object can be external to 'ourselves.'*

6. The object (of attention) can be 'ourselves' such as giving attention to states of mind, emotions and thoughts.

Realising that one is neither here, nor there, nor in between, reveals the end of the unrest, confusion and distortions.

Udana 1.10

THE ELEMENTS

Where neither water nor yet earth
Nor fire nor air gains a foothold,
There gleam no start, no sun sheds light,
There shines no moon, yet there no darkness reigns.

When a sage, a Brahmin, has come to know this
For himself through his own experience
Then he is freed from form and formless,
Freed from pleasure and from pain.

Have you ever reflected on the reasons on why we love to spend time on a lovely day on a long, deserted beach, removed from all features of civilisation? Could it have something to do with the extraordinary display of the elements – earth, air, heat and water. There is the earth, namely the beach under our feet. There is the clean air filling up our lungs. There is the heat of the sun warming our cellular existence and the ocean of water lapping upon the sand. The four elements are extraordinarily distinctive at such a time while abiding amidst great space.

Of course, there is the possibility of a superficial appreciation of the lovely view and pleasant environment. We can approve and disapprove of the state of the beach or the air element – too windy, too little breeze – or heat element – too hot or too cold – or water element – too rough or too still. The perceived state of the elements gains another foothold in our consciousness so that our peace of mind seems to become dependent on the elements. We are never satisfied. We want our experiences, indoors or outdoors, to be as comfortable and pleasant for as long as possible. We resist living in the world and

resistance to remembering that the world does not function to fit our demands.

Or, perhaps, we respond from a deep place within as we behold the wondrous elements and our participation in this remarkable process unfolding before our eyes. It is these deep responses that have the power to evoke an intimacy with the elements; a sense of something 'spiritual' comes to mind. It seems such a waste to use the beach for the primitive activity of sunbathing instead of exploring this meeting of consciousness with the bare elements.

When we have stripped away our roles and identity, as well as other preoccupations, there is accessibility to a profound sense of wonder about the meeting of heaven and earth. The deserted beach serves as one of those precious spots in nature permitting an absorption that speaks to us of oneness, of abiding in a unitive dimension. This is not the Deathless but a true confirmation of the unitive mind.

We respond in an affirmative way to the direct and immediate experience of the four major elements making contact with our consciousness. There is an expansive sense of things while knowing the dependent arising of the elements as one after the other of the elements stands out so clearly for us. We can describe such an experience as either exposure to the wonderful forms of nature or a formless experience.

If, however, the elements take a foothold within us, it means we would be clinging to the experience, wanting to repeat it, exaggerating it or undermining it in some way or other. When such an experience doesn't take hold in consciousness, there is a depth of expansiveness that is as immeasurable as the very elements themselves. The Deathless is clear when nothing takes hold including the most sublime experience of solitude among the elements.

As human beings, we employ the elements to construct a seemingly limitless number of products. Living in the grip of the materiality, we lose ourselves in a magnetic attraction to consumer goods. The commercial world certainly seems to have gained a foothold in our lives. Yet the vast array of goods also emerges out of the same raw elements, nothing else.

Consciousness inter-acts with elements yet we have the potential to realise an awakening, not bound to the elements, not tied to the condition of the elements. Meditate on this. Reflect on this. Inquire into this.

There is a common misperception that the Buddha concentrated exclusively on the path to awakening but avoided making much reference to awakening itself. "Words cannot speak of that beyond words" is a common refrain from teachers and yogis. There is another condition as well. The Buddha warned about the danger of boasting about realisations about the ultimate, whether unintentional or a deliberate attempt to deceive. It is all too easy for the ego ("I" and "my") to grasp onto such experiences and realisations, perhaps to impress others or to have a belief in personal accomplishment. Monks and nuns hesitate to speak about their realisations in case it sews the seed for sectarianism and division in

the Sangha that could result in banishment from the ordained way of life. Dharma teachers and practitioners do not have to observe such a Vinaya (discipline) but have certainly inherited the same kind of cautious approach.

Those engaged in the fourfold sangha (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) need to engage in the exploration of the Deathless, the ultimate, rather than constant attention of the journey from birth to death, impermanence and the path of practice. It is not easy. For example, some Buddhist commentators, past and present, have said the meditator makes the "Deathless element an object of meditation." That is not possible. All objects are subject to change, subject to birth and death.

The "experience" and "realisations" of the Deathless belong to a different order, different sense of things altogether. The world of objects belongs to the world of birth, change and death. Everything that arises makes a journey, short or long, towards ending. That is surely worth contemplating upon but we give priority to awakening to the Deathless. We have to bear in mind here that we cannot make the Deathless an object of meditation or mindfulness since all objects, without exception, remain tied to the three characteristics of existence, impermanence, unsatisfactory and non-self.

The Buddha has deeply appreciated the problem of language, as limited constructs that we might employ to convey the limitless. I have dug out of the Pali suttas more numerous terms and concepts to communicate the Deathless. We do not have to *feel* that we can connect intuitively with all of them.

In Chapter 9.43.14, in the second volume of the Connected Discourses, The Buddha gave a list of synonyms for liberation, for the ultimate. Elsewhere in his discourses, he used various words to describe the ultimate. It is important to appreciate that every word shares the same essential meaning. It may well be that one word, or more than word, brings a depth of inner response. The Buddha's use of a wide range of concepts for ultimate realisation shows skilful means. Religious teachings on the ultimate are often become to a single word such as God, Non-Duality or Liberation.

The Buddha recognised that we simply cannot connect either emotionally or intellectually with some words but other words may elicit an inner response, perhaps due to deep experiences in the past or a sense of being close to an ultimate discovery. Read slowly and carefully through the list and see what word or words you respond to, Take the word or words to heart. Words have neither the power to hide truth, nor reveal truth. As has been state earlier, we give priority to the Deathless element. This list is not an exhaustive collection of the Buddha's terms. He certainly generated a tremendous generosity of language in his determination to support the awakening of the sravakas and practitioners.

108 SYNONYMS OF THE BUDDHA FOR THE DEATHLESS AND KNOWING THE DEATHLESS

108 is a number for infinity in the Buddhist tradition.

In alphabetical order

1. ABSENCE OF CYCLIC EXISTENCE (SAMSAARA, NAMELY WANDERING ON FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER)
2. ALL LUMINOUS CONSCIOUSNESS (used only twice. M. 49.25 and D11.85)
3. ALL THINGS MERGE IN THE DEATHLESS
4. ASUYLUM
5. AWAKENING
6. BIRTHLESS
7. BOUNDLESS
8. BRAHMAN (God but not in the sense of a personal Creator)
9. CESSATION (of poisons of the mind)
10. CESSATION OF SUFFERING
11. DELIVERANCE
12. DESTRUCTION OF ATTACHMENT
13. DESTRUCTION OF DESIRE (meaning gross or subtle problematic needs, obsessions, wanting.
14. DIRECT KNOWLEDGE
15. DISENCHANTMENT (with the mundane)
16. DISPASSION
17. EMPTINESS OF SELF EXISTENCE(SUNYATTA)
18. EMPTY OF WANTING, NEGATIVITY AND DELUSION
19. END OF CLAIMS ABOUT SELF (I AM THAT OR ANYTHING ELSE).
20. END OF ATTACHMENT (Pali word *upadana* also refers to grasping, clinging or fuelling)
21. END OF BECOMING.
22. END OF BEING (this or that or an antology)
23. END OF EXISTENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE
24. END OF SUFFERING
25. END OF THE WORLD OF NAME AND FORM
26. ENDING OF BEING JOINED TO (YOGA) –Pali sam-**joga**-na means *fetter*
27. ENLIGHTENMENT
28. ETERNAL(endless)
29. FAR SHORE
30. FREEDOM
31. FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE
32. FULLY AWAKENED
33. HIGHEST HAPPINESS
34. IMMACULATE VISION
35. IMMEASURABLE
36. IMPERTURABLE
37. INFINITE
38. INVINCIBLE
39. LIBERATION (also by trust, wisdom)
40. LIBERATION from reckoning in terms of consciousness
41. LIBERATION THROUGH DIVINE ABIDINGS
42. LIMITLESS
43. NEITHER HERE, NOR THERE, NO IN BETWEEN

44. NIRVANA (NIR-VANA) extinction of fire of greed, hate and delusion
45. NO LANDING OF CONSCIOUSNESS
46. NOBLE PEACE
47. NON CONCEIVING
48. NON-ARISING
49. NON-DEPENDENCY
50. NON-SELF or NO SELF (meaning no inherent existence of anyone or anything)
51. NOT BEING MADE UP OF ANY THING OR FROM ANYTHING (atammayata)
52. ONE WHO KNOWS AND SEES
53. OTHER SHORE
54. PEACE
55. SIGNALSS
56. SAFETY
57. SUPREME SECURITY
58. TAINTLESS
59. THE AGELESS
60. THE AUSPICIOUS
61. THE BEYOND
62. THE BLESSED
63. THE COMPLETION
64. THE DEATHLESS
65. THE DHARMA
66. THE ENDLESS
67. THE EVERLASTING
68. THE HARBOUR
69. THE INVISIBLE
70. THE ISLAND
71. THE MARVELLOUS
72. THE PEACEFUL
73. THE PROFOUND
74. THE PURITY
75. THE REFUGE
76. THE RELEASE
77. THE SECURE
78. THE SHELTER
79. THE SORROWLESS
80. THE STABLE
81. THE SUBLIME
82. THE SUBTLE
83. THE SUPREME
84. THE TRUTH
85. THE UNAFFLICTED
86. THE UNAILLING
87. THE UNBORN
88. THE UNCONDITIONED
89. THE UNMADE UP OF ANYTHING
90. THE UNDIVERSIFIED

91. THE UNDISINTEGRATING
92. THE UNDISTURBED
93. THE UNFORMED
94. THE UNMADE
95. THE UNPROLIFERATED (OF THOUGHTS, PROJECTIONS)
96. THE UNSHAKEABLE
97. THE UNSTUCK
98. THE UNTRACEABLE
99. THE VERY DIFFICULT TO SEE
100. THE WONDERFUL, STRANGE
101. TIMELESS
102. TRANSCENDENT KNOWING
103. TRUE KNOWLEDGE
104. UNFATHOMABLE
105. UNFORMED
106. VISION
107. WHAT HAD TO BE DONE HAS BEEN DONE
108. WHERE ELEMENTS HAVE NO FOOTHOLD

We are blessed with the teachings of the Buddha, the true wealth of the Triple Gem, and an infinite number of expressions of what truly matters, suitable for every one, along with numerous open doorways to full and immediate realisation.

Incline the mind fully to liberation. There is nothing more important to incline the mind towards. The Deathless is closer to you than the tide of conceiving.

May all beings live know and see the Deathless

2.

FRENCH YATRA

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Afternoon of July 22 to August 1. 2010

Come to the 10th annual French Yatra (walking pilgrimage). It will start on late afternoon of Thursday, July 22 to **Sunday, 12 noon on August 1, 2010** .

It will be held in the lovely region of Limoux in southern part of France. Limoux is situated south of Carcassonne and Toulouse – easily accessible by air, train and coach.

Teachers: Christopher Titmuss, Christelle. Zohar and Ellaya.

In 2009, we had a total of 95 adults and children. **For 2010, we are not setting a limit**

on the numbers. All are welcome.

We would like to encourage all those who have been on a past yatra to join with us in our celebration of the 10th Yatra.

A Yatra is a pilgrimage. Men, women and children have gone on walking pilgrimages for thousands of years. Our Yatra is run entirely on donations (*dana*) to cover all the running costs, and donations for teachers etc.

If you require further information about the Dharma Yatra, and you cannot locate it in this website, then send an e-mail to the address below. Please keep your e-mail with any questions rather precise. Thank you.

To register, please send €50 or £35 or more to support initial costs or pay upon arrival. If you have difficulty to register, then register upon arrival.

For further information contact Muriel in France murielbansard@laposte.net

www.dharmayatra.org

info@dharmayatra.org

Do join the Yatra. It is a wonderful event.

2.

TWO CRITICAL ARTICLES ON DHARMA TEACHERS AND *DANA*

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“No Strings Attached”

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

“Pitiful, guilt-ridden puritanism”

Ken Wilber

I recently received from Dharma friends in different parts of the world the following two articles posted on the Internet. Thanissaro Bhikkhu is the director of the *Access to Insight* website that makes Dharma teachings and suttas available online. Ken Wilber has written numerous books on the evolution of consciousness. Both Thanissaro and Wilber have expressed critical views in their respective articles about Dharma teachers and our relationship to *dana* (**practice and acts of generosity**). I believe readers might be interested to read their views. I have edited their original articles due to length. I have

given the link at the end of each article so readers can read the full article. I have given a response at the end of the articles.

No Strings Attached

The Buddha's Culture of Generosity

Thanissaro Bhikkhu

“How can I ever repay you for your teaching?”

Good meditation teachers often hear this question from their students, and the best answer I know for it is one that my teacher, Ajaan Fuang, gave every time:

“By being intent on practicing.”

Each time he gave this answer, I was struck by how noble and gracious it was. And it wasn't just a formality. He never tried to find opportunities to pressure his students for donations. Even when our monastery was poor, he never acted poor, never tried to take advantage of their gratitude and trust. This was a refreshing change from some of my previous experiences with run-of-the-mill village and city monks who were quick to drop hints about their need for donations from even stray or casual visitors.

Eventually I learned that Ajaan Fuang's behavior is common throughout the Forest Tradition. It's based on a passage in the Pali Canon where the Buddha on his deathbed states that the highest homage to him is not material homage, but the homage of practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. In other words, the best way to repay a teacher is to take the Dhamma to heart and to practice it in a way that fulfills his or her compassionate purpose in teaching it. I was proud to be part of a tradition where the inner wealth of this noble idea was actually lived — where, as Ajaan Fuang often put it, we weren't reduced to hirelings, and the act of teaching the Dhamma was purely a gift.

So I was saddened when, on my return to America, I had my first encounters with the *dana* talk: the talk on giving and generosity that often comes at the end of a retreat. The context of the talk — and often the content — makes clear that it's not a disinterested exercise. It's aimed at generating gifts for the teacher or the organization sponsoring the retreat, and it places the burden of responsibility on the retreatants to ensure that future retreats can occur. The language of the talk is often smooth and encouraging, but when contrasted with Ajaan Fuang's answer, I found the sheer fact of the talk ill-mannered and demeaning. If the organizers and teachers really trusted the retreatants' good-heartedness, they wouldn't be giving the talk at all. To make matters worse, the typical *dana* talk — along with its companion, the meditation-center fundraising letter — often cites the example of how monks and nuns are supported in Asia as justification for how *dana* is treated here in the West. But they're taking as their example the worst of the monks, and not the best.

I understand the reasoning behind the talk. Lay teachers here aspire to the ideal of teaching for free, but they still need to eat. And, unlike the monastics of Asia, they don't have a long-standing tradition of *dana* to fall back on. So the *dana* talk was devised as a means for establishing a culture of *dana* in a Western context. But as so often is the case when new customs are devised for Western Buddhism, the question is whether the *dana* talk skillfully translates Buddhist principles into the Western context or seriously distorts them. The best way to answer this question is to take a close look at those principles in their original context.

It's well known that *dana* lies at the beginning of Buddhist practice. *Dana*, quite literally, has kept the Dhamma alive. If it weren't for the Indian tradition of giving to mendicants, the Buddha would never have had the opportunity to explore and find the path to Awakening. The monastic sangha wouldn't have had the time and opportunity to follow his way. *Dana* is the first teaching in the graduated discourse: the list of topics the Buddha used to lead listeners step-by-step to an appreciation of the four noble truths, and often from there to their own first taste of Awakening. When stating the basic principles of karma, he would begin with the statement, "There is what is given."

This is why the Buddha adopted *dana* as the context for practicing and teaching the Dhamma. But — to maintain the twin principles of freedom and fruitfulness in giving — he created a culture of *dana* that embodied particularly Buddhist ideals. To begin with, he defined *dana* not simply as material gifts. The practice of the precepts, he said, was also a type of *dana* — the gift of universal safety, protecting all beings from the harm of one's unskillful actions — as was the act of teaching the Dhamma. This meant that lavish giving was not just the prerogative of the rich. Secondly, he formulated a code of conduct to produce an attitude toward giving that would benefit both the donors and the recipients, keeping the practice of giving both fruitful and free.

We tend not to associate codes of conduct with the word "freedom," but that's because we forget that freedom, too, needs protection, especially from the attitude that wants to be free in its choices but feels insecure when others are free in theirs. The Buddha's codes of conduct are voluntary — he never coerced anyone into practicing his teachings — but once they are adopted, they require the cooperation of both sides to keep them effective and strong.

These codes are best understood in terms of the six factors that the Buddha said exemplified the ideal gift:

"The donor, before giving, is glad; while giving, his/her mind is inspired; and after giving, is gratified. These are the three factors of the donor...

"The recipients are free of passion or are practicing for the subduing of passion; free of aversion or practicing for the subduing of aversion; and free of delusion or practicing for the subduing of delusion. These are the three factors of the recipients." — [AN 6.37](#)

Although this passage seems to suggest that each side is responsible only for the factors on its side, the Buddha's larger etiquette for generosity shows that the responsibility for all six factors — and in particular, the three factors of the donor — is shared. And this shared responsibility flourishes best in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

For the donors, this means that if they want to feel glad, inspired, and gratified at their gift, they should not see the gift as payment for personal services rendered by individual monks or nuns. That would turn the gift into wages, and deprive it of its emotional power. Instead, they'd be wise to look for trustworthy recipients: people who are training — or have trained — their minds to be cleaned and undefiled. They should also give their gift in a respectful way so that the act of giving will reinforce the gladness that inspired it, and will inspire the recipient to value their gift.

The responsibilities of the recipients, however, are even more stringent. To ensure that the donor feels glad before giving, monks and nuns are forbidden from pressuring the donor in any way. Except when ill or in situations where the donor has invited them to ask, they cannot ask for anything beyond the barest emergency necessities. They are not even allowed to give hints about what they'd like to receive. When asked where a prospective gift should be given, they are told to follow the Buddha's example and say, "Give wherever your gift would be used, or would be well-cared for, or would last long, or wherever your mind feels inspired." This conveys a sense of trust in the donor's discernment — which in itself is a gift that gladdens the donor's mind.

To ensure that a donor feels inspired while giving a gift, the monks and nuns are enjoined to receive gifts attentively and with an attitude of respect. To ensure that the donor feels gratified afterward, they should live frugally, care for the gift, and make sure it is used in an appropriate way. In other words, they should show that the donor's trust in them is well placed. And of course they must work on subduing their greed, anger, and delusion. In fact, this is a primary motivation for trying to attain arahantship: so that the gifts given to one will bear the donors great fruit.

By sharing these responsibilities in an atmosphere of trust, both sides protect the freedom of the donor. They also foster the conditions that will enable not only the practice of generosity but also the entire practice of Dhamma to flourish and grow.

The principles of freedom and fruitfulness also govern the code the Buddha formulated specifically for protecting the gift of Dhamma. Here again, the responsibilities are shared. To ensure that the teacher is glad, inspired, and gratified in teaching, the listeners are advised to listen with respect, to try to understand the teaching, and — once they're convinced that it's genuinely wise — to sincerely put it into practice so as to gain the desired results. Like a monk or nun receiving a material gift, the recipient of the gift of Dhamma has the simple responsibility of treating the gift well.

The teacher, meanwhile, must make sure not to regard the act of teaching as a repayment of a debt. After all, monks and nuns repay their debt to their lay donors by trying to rid their minds of greed, aversion, and delusion. They are in no way obligated to teach, which

means that the act of teaching is a gift free and clear. In addition, the Buddha insisted that the Dhamma be taught without expectation of material reward. When he was once offered a "teacher's fee" for his teaching, he refused to accept it and told the donor to throw it away. He also established the precedent that when a monastic teaches the rewards of generosity, the teaching is given after a gift has been given, not before, so that the stain of hinting won't sully what's said.

He never gave an extended explanation of why the act of teaching should always be a gift, but he did state in general terms that when his code of conduct became corrupt over time, that would corrupt the Dhamma as well. And in the case of the etiquette of generosity, this principle has been borne out frequently throughout Buddhist history.

Which goes to show that once the culture of *dana* gets distorted, it can distort the practice of Dhamma as a whole for many centuries. So if we're serious about bringing the culture of *dana* to the West, we should be very careful to ensure that our efforts honor the principles that make *dana* a genuinely Buddhist practice. This means no longer using the tactics of modern fundraising to encourage generosity among retreatants or Buddhists in general. It also means rethinking the *dana* talk, for on many counts it fails the test. In pressuring retreatants to give to teachers, it doesn't lead to gladness before giving, and instead sounds like a plea for a tip at the end of a meal. The frequent efforts to pull on the retreatants' heartstrings as a path to their purse strings betray a lack of trust in their thoughtfulness and leave a bad taste. And the entire way *dana* is handled for teachers doesn't escape the fact that it's payment for services rendered. Whether teachers think about this consciously or not, it pressures them subtly to tell their listeners what they think their listeners want to hear. The Dhamma can't help but suffer as a result.

The ideal solution would be to provide a framework whereby serious Dhamma practitioners could be supported whether or not they taught. That way, the act of teaching would be a genuine gift. In the meantime, though, a step in the direction of a genuine culture of *dana* would be to declare a moratorium on all *dana* talks at the end of retreats, and on references to the Buddhist tradition of *dana* in fundraising appeals, so as to give the word time to recover its dignity.

On retreats, *dana* could be discussed in a general way, in the context of the many Dhamma talks given on how best to integrate Dhamma practice in daily life. At the end of the retreat, a basket could be left out for donations, with a note that the teacher hasn't been paid to teach the retreat. That's all. No appeals for mercy. No flashcards. Sensitive retreatants will be able to put two and two together, and will feel glad, inspired, and gratified that they were trusted to do the math for themselves.

To read full article

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/nostringsattached.html>

"Pitiful, Guilt-ridden Puritanism"

Ken Wilbur

The Dharma is free. No one should charge money for teaching or transmitting Dharma. Dharma that touches money is no Dharma. The Dharma offered freely and without charge to all who seek it: there is purity, nobility, and honourable disposition. And so goes the strange antagonism between Dharma and dollars. In dealing with this issue of money and Dharma - or money very different items that need to be teased apart and addressed separately. The first is the appropriate money value of education to goods and services in general: and the second is, should monetary exchange ever be linked to Dharma teachings?

Money, food, sex. The great no-no's in the purely Ascending, agrarian, male oriented wisdom traditions. It is no accident that the Buddha's second noble truth - the cause of suffering is desire- specifically meant sexual desire; and that meant, of course, women. "Eve" (by whatever her name) was everywhere the great temptress, even the great source, of evil.

Money was no less problematic. Christ driving the money changers from the Temple was probably itself a good idea: but more than that, it was emblematic of whole Ascending order of the first great Dharma Systems is dirty, manifestation is evil, and the Ascending Male simply should not traffic in money food, sex. It all, uh, robs him of his vital juices and power: the power to get off the wheel, out of the game, and rest in the extinction in the unmanifest, uncreate, unborn.

The agrarian societies universally supported the Ascending Male,, and the wandering monks, yogis, sanyasins, mendicants, or all supported solely by the alms and donations of the faithful. The Dharma was pure; the Dharma was clean; the Dharma would not touch samsara, would not touch or at least, would not enjoy many, food, sex or women.

And above all, the Dharma would not charge money for its dissemination. This would be, in effect, trafficking with the Devil, with Mara, with manifestation.

And thus without exception these early Dharma traditions, East and West, were (and still are) stamped with a disdain of money, food, sex, and of power; and the ethics of those agrarian and Ascending systems or all designed, one way or another, to avoid and altogether renounce these evils. (All of which, we may charitably suppose, was pretty much unavoidable under the circumstances of the agrarian social organisation).

And all of which would change dramatically with two rather extraordinary developments. The first was the rise of the Nondual Systems in both East and West and the second was industrialisation in the West but with far reaching global implications.

The Nondual revolution introduced in the West by the brilliant Plotinus and in the east by the remarkable Nagarjuna had one basic tenet: the manifest world of samsara is not an impediment to spirit but is rather the perfect expression of Spirit: Samsara and Nirvana or

not to. Emptiness is form, form is emptiness.

To unite East and West at this point in history that means, more than anything else, to unite the extraordinary breakthrough represented by the Non-Dual orientation which values equally Ascending and Descending Wisdom and Compassion, Emptiness and Form, Eros and Agape, Male and Female, Heaven and Earth means to unite this orientation with a techno economic base (benign industrial and especially post-industrial) which is the only base that can allow the manifestation of this non-dual orientation.

Put simply, it means uniting the Nondual orientation with the post-industrial base. That is, the Nondual orientation with a non-gender biased base. This would be, in the very best sense, a non-dual Tantric outlook not only in vision and theory but in fact and in deed, in actual manifestation.

And all of this means a thorough going friendliness with money, food, sex, and women, none of which are significantly present in the merely Ascending Paths. At the same time, we don't want to go to the other extreme; too many women's spirituality movement end up being a merely Descending Path, emphasising nothing but the body and the biosphere and Agape and compassion -- without a clue as to real Eros and transcendent and Emptiness -- and that they end up endlessly emerging and parading a personalistic and egoic series of unending feelings, preferably on a full moon night, as if that were liberation).

The trick, of course, then centres, not on a forced abstinence and condescending judgement about money, food, and sects, but on the appropriate and functional use of these relations as an appropriate and functional expression of Emptiness, as in the appropriate manifestation of the very divine.

In this difficult equation we can err in either of two extremes. The one, of course, is the Ascending error: all aspects of samsara are evil to be disinfected with disgust (don't touch!: money, food, sex, earth, body, women. But the other extreme (the merely descending is equally alluring): a type of over- indulgence in personal desires and impulses under the guise that 'everything is spirit '-- a type of hippy Dharma, beat Zen, ersatz self-indulgence that confuses egoic whoppee with egoic transcendence.

How individuals and teachers decide to handle that delicate equation integrate both Ascending and Descending in the non-dual heart I will lead to individuals that is indeed a whole other topic. My point here is rather that we still see an extra ordinary ambivalence, and guilt, and disgust, with the idea that Dharma and money should ever cross paths at all.

And this is profoundly muddle headed. Granted, if some people cannot afford to attend a Dharma class, then we want to make every effort to make provisions for these individuals. But that is a completely separate issue, and at heart is not in any way different from any other goods and services: I think most people feel that we ought to make basic medical services available to people regardless of their capacity to pay. Just so we should make Dharma and available to people regardless of capacity to pay.

But that is not what bothers so many people and so many teachers of Dharma). Rather they tend to feel that even if people can afford to pay, they shouldn't have too. The Dharma is about all that, that Dharma shouldn't sully itself with dirty barks. In other words, that Dharma ought to present itself as thoroughly disgusted with the gross realm. So that Dharma's purity is beyond all that.

But that is pure agrarian, ascending, anti-this-world nonsense. In its claim to purity, it hides a disgust with manifestation. In its claims to freedom, it conceals and enslavement to and other world that touches not the basic realities of existence in this world. In its claim to moral clarity, it hides a moral judgement that Samsara is rotten to the core.

Filthy lucre. Touch not the gross realm. With eyes reverted ever upward, let us transcend only: let us not enter common with care and compassion, the relation of exchanges that define this world: relation to food and of sex, and of money.

And let us point for our ideals full, to the agrarian sages that refused monetary exchange and, indeed, condemned it. We are using the ethical standards are appropriate to the agrarian structure proposed modern world where they don't even vaguely apply. The entire agrarian structure supported yogis and mendicants with arms and donations -- they didn't have to worry about money, a place to live, how to pay taxes -- and it's very easy to condemn something you are freely given anyway.

All this does, in the post-modern world, is create and enforce a vicious hypocrisy. Since individuals and teachers must raise money in order to survive but since money is evil, then with guilt- torn conscience let us raise money but call it something else ("free" donations). Let us keep pointing out that Ramana didn't except money (he was supported by devotees of course); the Dalai Lama doesn't accept money (he just has an entire small countries supporting him) and God forbid some teachers should be found driving a BMW: the Devil, no doubt made him do it.

And worse: the message that goes out from the Dharma is not how to be responsible for appropriate money and how to avoid that responsibility. The pure Dharma doesn't touch backs: therefore pure practitioners shouldn't care about money. Which means, a good practitioner should be thoroughly, totally, and wildly out of touch with reality.

Nobody likes to see spirituality and abused by exorbitant monetary greed and grasping the Jimmy Swaggart or Oral Roberts or (Rajneesh etc) sucking for bucsk among the unsuspecting. But the opposite of greedy money is not known money that appropriate money. The Ascending list has to be amended and supplemented: buy food, right sex, right backs.

My own view, in fact, is even personally stronger I believe that this hippy Dharma (filthy lucre) actually cheapens the Dharma it sends out the message that the Dharma hasn't a clue as to how to make it in the real world. It sends out the ages-old ascending nonsense that Dharma equals puritanical, dead from the neck down. It sends out the message that

Dharma cannot touch money without sullyng itself. And that is the cheapest of the cheap.

As I said, I believe that every pragmatic effort should be made to nonetheless make Dharma available to anybody, regardless of ability to pay (I'll return to this in a moment. But that is entirely different from the stance that says Dharma should never be repaid its efforts.

In other words, these two issues are entirely separate -- making Dharma available to those who can't afford it and the notion that Dharma should not be paid at all. The form is commendable, noble, and honourable; the latter is pathetic, retarded, regressive, and obscene. And a Dharma disgusted with the gross domain: that is not free Dharma, that is cheap Dharma, crippled by its incapacity to embrace the gross domain with care and concern and intelligence.

There are varied types of activities that can be arranged which have a monetary differential. For example, some teachers can give free lectures, open to any and all, and then interested students can sign up for special individual sessions, or group retreats, with a monetary charge (this again, can be arranged on a sliding scale or not,) depending on circumstances, and scholarships can always be available to sincere but disadvantaged practitioners, not because the Dharma should not touch money, but because it makes happy concessions to the less fortunate).

But allegedly "free" Dharma (as a matter of "purity") which is to day, Dharma on the cheap, sends out the unmistakable message that Dharma is worthless, and that you, too, can become worthless if you practice hard enough. It sends out the message that Dharma assumes not mature responsibility for gross relationship exchange, and that you, too, can become irresponsible if you apply yourself diligently. It sends out the unmistakable message that "liberation" and "gross incompetence" are identical.

There are gifted Dharma teachers who have over 20 years of experience and wisdom – and who by teaching will save their students enormous expense and time and money and suffering and yet they gnash their teeth, put on their hair shirt, and grimace as they ask for 5 dollars to cover expenses.

This is not transcendence, this is pitiful, guilt ridden Puritanism. Emptiness will not relieve you or me or anybody else of the need for appropriate relational exchange in the manifest world. Becoming less attached to money does not simple-mindedly mean having less money: less attached does not mean don't touch. It means gracefully touch and don't squeezed to death. It means touch with open hands, It doesn't mean cut off your hands.

I myself have been poor and most of my adult life I was a dishwasher and busboy and gas station attendant the most of a decade until my book started making money (quite late in the game) and then Treya (Ken Wilber's wife who died from cancer in 1989) left me a fuel oil and gas wells in Texas, so now I don't have to worry too much about money. But my views on this matter were no different then than now: dollars and Dharma are not only not incompatible, monetary exchange is an altogether appropriate functional manifestation of

the Divine in every day life, just like appropriate food and appropriate sexuality.

And as the disdainful view – filthy lucre -- I guarantee you that, the structural reasons, that view is ineradicably linked to an anti-body, anti-ecologically, antisex, anti-woman stance: in every way, a package deal they historically arose together, and they will only fall together: they are linked by hidden structures of relational exchange).

And we will drag the Dharma kicking and screaming into the modern and post-modern world only when every single one of those anti-stances money, food, sex, body,, woman is attacked simultaneously: they stand or fall together.

It is time to have done with this Dharma on the cheap; time to stop announcing the Dharma is worthless; time to stop implying that a good practitioner hasn't a dime or a clue: time to cease this spiritual child abuse. Time, rather, to enter the manifest realm of appropriate and functional relational exchange -- of money, food, sex, body, earth and find, Plotinus said, that this Earth and all it's good becomes a blessing being, and sanctifies each and every event by attaching it with grace, not disinfecting it with disgust.

To read full article

<http://www.kenwilber.com/blog/show/574>

Response on *Dana* for teachers

Christopher Titmuss

1467 words

I appreciated reading the two articles. It gave me the reminder to write about the practical application of the Dharma-*dana* in the West. Both articles often sound like a diatribe. Ken Wilber seems to engage in a rant at times (and why not?) against Dharma teachers who receive *dana* for their support.

Firstly, I wish to make a Dharma correction to two claims from Ken Wilber in his article. Though well known for his knowledge on spiritual matters, Ken Wilber appears to have little real knowledge of the Buddha or Nagarjuna's basic teachings.

He writes: "Buddha's second noble truth - the cause of suffering is desire- specifically meant sexual desire; and that meant, of course, women." The second truth of the noble ones is *tanha* (desire). You find desire in lust, violence, fear and obsessions. The second truth does not "specifically mean sexual desire" as he claims. Has Ken been reading too many books by Freud?

Ken Wilber claims Nagarjuna introduced the Non-dual revolution to the East. Nagarjuna did

not teach Non Duality. I am not sure if Nagarjuna even uses the word Non-Duality (Advaita) anywhere in his teachings. Nagarjuna gave teachings on the emptiness of self-existence. Emptiness of self-existence and non-duality are not the same at all. The East regards Sankara as the teacher who introduced Non-Duality to the region. (see Dharma eNews January 2005 on the differences between Dharma and Advaita. <http://www.insightmeditation.org/index.php/welcome/eng/dharmanews>)

In response to the two articles: I am now in my 40th year of living on *dana* - the first six years from 1970 – 1976 as a Buddhist monk in Thailand and India and since 1976 as a lay teacher. *Dana* works in two simple ways on a retreat. There are some retreats, Dharma Gatherings and other Dharma events where organisers offer the total event on *dana*. On the final afternoon, the teacher/manager gives a talk on *dana*. The yogis are told of the bowl or basket for the teacher (s) and possibly one for the staff. The value of such an approach means that the poor student, the pensioner, the person in debt, the single mother, hard up Dharma wallahs can participate without having to request a scholarship, if one is available.

There are other retreats where there is a daily rate to cover such costs. The payment is made prior or upon arrival. The teacher or manager gives a *dana* talk for perhaps for 10-15 minutes on the final afternoon or closing morning of the retreat for teachers and centre, possibly volunteer staff, too. This approach helps to keep the daily rate lower. A lower daily rate keeps the retreat more affordable because there is no salary, nor stipend, going to the teacher. The centre pays the teachers' travel expenses – flight, train and bus. We provide receipts to the centre for these bills in accordance with book keeping requirements of the centre.

Ken Wilber claims Dharma teachers "grimace" over \$5 claims for expenses and this is "pitiful, guilt-ridden puritanism." He perceives such teachers as treating money as "filthy lucre." He claims "all aspects of samsara are evil to be disinfected with disgust (don't touch!: money, food, sex, earth, body, women.)"

In 40 years, I cannot recall a single practitioner asking me to switch to payment for services approach. The Sangha gives *dana* to the teachers with the understanding that we use the *dana* for the four practical necessities – food, clothing, accommodation and medicine. We pay respect to the sangha through wise and appropriate application of their *dana* to support our daily life expenses. Practitioners offer *dana* on this understanding. I also receive *dana* on Paypal from my audio website and money in the post,.

We, the Dharma teachers, appreciate the long tradition of *dana*. Teachers and others in the Sangha experience the value of *dana* practice in many forms. I do not see any interest from teachers or sangha to change to payment for Dharma services at the various centres where I teach in either Australia, India, Israel or European Union. Teachers have discussed the points that Thanissaro mentions regularly enough over the years. I believe I might have been the first Dharma teacher in the West to speak a few minutes about the *dana* at the end of retreats rather than leave the retreat manager to say some words.

In his article, Thanissaro found the sheer fact of the talk (on *dana* at the of the retreat) “ill-mannered and demeaning.” He added: “If the organizers and teachers really trusted the retreatants' good-heartedness, they wouldn't be giving the talk at all.”

I believe the Sangha appreciates the fact we are specific rather than fearful of mentioning the *dana* boxes and their purpose. Thanissaro is a monk who lay Buddhists take care of. He has no experience as a lay teacher with home, rent, mortgage, possibly children and grandchildren to support. Dharma teachers give a rather short explanation with bowls or boxes put out for people to offer *dana*. We do not know who gives or how much. We feel very grateful for the generosity of the yogis.

Outside of retreats, most teachers as well as practitioners give an immense time to reflection, practice, research, committee meetings and organisational matters. The act of generosity (*dana*) expresses through offering time, energy, skills, knowledge and presence at meetings. In one major respect, the *dana* of money for centres and teachers is the easiest *dana* to give since it takes less than a minute to put one's hand into one's pocket, take out some money, or sign a cheque, and put it in a *dana* box.

In the past 40 years, I must have listened to more than a 100 Dharma teachers and managers, speak on *dana*. Who are the male and female teachers that Wilber refers to who have such aversion to money, as well as food, sex, earth, body and women? All the Dharma teachers I know have a rather comfortable relationship around money.

Some Dharma teachers also receive a fixed payment for their services from the centre or organisation for their retreat, workshop or public talk rather than a *dana*. I do not know of any teacher who has a problem with this. Some of us have concern about high charges for courses that completely exclude people on little or no income. This is a legitimate concern.

Some teachers have an inheritance, benefits of stocks and shares, work as mind/body therapists, work in business and so on. Some teachers receive support from their partner or parents. There are various ways we all give support to each other. That's part of our practice. A tiny number of teachers receive significant income from book advances and sales. I wrote a book a year between 1989 and 2003. I did not use an agent. Whatever the publisher offered me as an advance I accepted. I regarded it as a *dana*. I received between £1000 and £5000 in advance. A publisher would often come back to me to write a second or third book because I happily received the publisher offered. It might have been different if I had argued for a bigger advance.

I can't think of a single teacher who, consciously or unconsciously, thinks of money as a “filthy lucre.” Who are the Dharma teachers that Wilber has in mind? He should name them. Occasionally, and it is occasional, I will hear a Dharma teacher whinge a bit about their financial circumstances but who doesn't? Ken Wilber ranks as one of the most successful spiritual authors in the West, with book sales running into hundreds of thousands, as well as inheriting Texas oil wells from his late wife. I was left wondering whether Thanissaro or Ken live in the real world of those who give great care to monthly outgoing, to support themselves and sometimes or two parents, children and

grandchildren. Many teachers and practitioners in the sangha, like millions of others, live on a tight financial budget. It is a credit to all who love the Dharma to live in a modest way as practice, especially in a world that's fast running out of resources.

It seems to me the monk and the millionaire, who authored the above articles, simply may not understand the Sangha's approach to Dharma and *dana* in the West. Thanissaro wrote: "At the end of the retreat, a basket could be left out for donations, with a note that the teacher hasn't been paid to teach the retreat. That's all."

To put it in simple terms: What's the problem with a short talk on *dana* at the end of the retreat that makes clear the beneficiaries – teachers, staff and centre?

We, the teachers, men and women, and the sangha, will continue to offer retreats in a variety of ways. We love the Dharma-*dana* culture. In our modest way, we try to stay true to aspects of it. It is a beautiful way to serve others. We also support those who wish to engage in Western forms of fixed transactions for their Dharma services. You could call it a non-dual approach.

May all beings live with wisdom

4.

33 Feature Films (movies) for Inspiration and Insight

Christopher Titmuss

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6966 words

First. A confession. It takes a lot of persuasion to move me to go to sit in the cinema and watch a Hollywood "movie."

During the 20 years between 1990 and 2010, I entered the doors of a cinema around five times for such films. I have very rarely watched a film on long haul flights. I have tried but nod off, prefer reading, writing, or engaging in standing meditation at the back of the aircraft.

I have accompanied my daughter, Nshorna; my Swedish partner at the time and my mother to the cinema.

In 1997, Nshorna and I went to nearby Torquay, Devon, England, to see the Film "Seven Years in Tibet" starring Brad Pitt, an actor my daughter, then aged 16, liked at the time. I spotted a few friends in the cinema. After the credits had finished, I asked my daughter

what she thought of the film. She responded: "It was about as exciting as watching paint dry on the wall." I disagreed. I replied: "It wasn't that exciting."

On another occasion, Nina and I went to the cinema in Stockholm to see *Dancer in the Dark* directed by Lars Von Trier, the Danish film director using a hand held camera and starring Björk. I promised Nina I would not leave my seat in the cinema before the film finished. After the film, not a Hollywood movie, of course, had been running for an hour, Nina turned to me and said: "Your eyes are closed." I replied. "I'm keeping to our agreement so I'm meditating." Ten or fifteen minutes later, she said: "Let's go. It's not much of a film." We were not the only ones to leave early.

I can't remember the name of the film I attended with my mother while in Australia on a very hot summer's day. I remember it starred Richard Gere about a female pilot in the early days of aviation. Frankly, I found the time of the flight from London to Australia passed more quickly. My mother, 90, enjoyed the film.

For my birthday, my daughter gave me a copy of the DVD "*Avatar*," made by James Cameron, the Canadian film director. In Sanskrit, *Avatar* means the descent of an enlightened being from heaven to earth. Cameron's *Avatar* is a science fiction film about life on Pandora in 2154 where a mining company threatens life's survival. Despite the massive media blitz about the film's special effects, I found the movie most suited for a night out for teenagers. Mind you, my grandson, aged 9, has seen it twice. Great title though.

We, British, share a common language with the USA. It is one of the unfortunate karmic consequences of Britain's history of colonialism. The karmic cost shows in the saturation of our television programmes nightly with endless banal Hollywood films.

A Transformation

My relationship to feature film has undergone a major transformation, an inner renaissance in the past three years and a half years.

The initial trigger took place in October, 2006. My 21-year-old television set that my mother gave me in the 1980s fell off the stand where it had remained perilously perched for more than two decades. The TV collapsed into a thousand pieces. Five months later in late February, 2007, I bought a 32" flat screen television with amplifier and loudspeakers. The television sits a few feet in front of my two-seater sofa, handed onto me by Nshorna. I started to watch feature films on a very regular basis.

I bought some cheap films online. Once a week, I go across to my local market on a Saturday morning where Paul, a vendor has boxes of used DVD feature films that he sells cheaply. A few of my favourite films I bought in the market. I have joined a club to rent four films a month. Two of the films came free with The Independent newspaper. Subtitled films are far preferable to dubbed films. If possible, secure a 2 DVD edition or sometimes 3 DVD edition that often carry an interview with the director, leading actors and unused

scenes.

I have written below a list of 33 feature films that I have personally found insightful and inspirational. I have written the title of the film, country and year of origin, name of director and main actor (s) a short synopsis and a line about why I appreciate the film.

If you have a television and DVD player, you perhaps can sit on a sofa cross-legged, turn out the lights, press the play button, and give wise attention to the onscreen exploration of the depth of understanding of human existence. Please note that around 90% of all films have actors smoking – paid for by the tobacco industry. A cigarette is lit up a few minutes after the start of Avatar in 2154!

There are a whole range of superb films available from around the world that are works of art. There are films that endeavour to address the range of human experiences, emotions and challenges, whether portrayed through everyday life, historical actions, political plots, love or comedy. As a general rule, I regard films for inspiration and insight tend to be about, so to speak, real lives, real people, real families in real situations” I have selected 33 films.

- Australia (1)
- France (3)
- Germany (4)
- India (3)
- Iran (1)
- Israel (1)
- Italy (5)
- Pakistan (1)
- Palestine (1)
- Poland (2)
- Spain (3)
- Sweden (1)
- Turkey (1)
- UK (5)
- USA (2)

Cinema has the power to contribute to waking us up.

In alphabetical order

1. A Very Long Engagement (France)
2. Bright Star (UK)
3. Buddha Collapsed out of Shame (Iran)
4. Cinema Paradiso (Italy)
5. Downfall (Germany)
6. Ghajini (India),
7. Hamlet (UK,)

8. Il Postino (Italy)
9. In Memory of Myself (Italy)
10. Jodhaa Akbar (India)
11. Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God) (Pakistan)
12. Lemon Tree (Israel)
13. Malena (Italy)
14. My Life as a Dog (Sweden)
15. Pan's Labyrinth (Spain)
16. Paradise Now (Palestine)
17. Paris (France)
18. Samson and Delilah (Australia)
19. Take my Eyes (Spain)
20. The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (France)
21. The Full Monty (UK)
22. The Lives of Others (Germany)
23. The Pianist (Poland)
24. The Son's Room (Italy)
25. The Wave (Germany)
26. The White Ribbon (Germany)
27. The Wind that Shakes the Barley (UK)
28. Three Burials Of Melquiades Estrada - USA
29. Three Colour (Red). Poland.
30. Time and Winds (Turkey)
31. Viridiana (Spain)
32. Water (India)
33. 2001. A Space Odyssey (USA)

1. A VERY LONG ENGAGEMENT (FRANCE, 2004)

Director: Jean-Pierre Jeunet

Starring: Audrey Tautou, Gaspard Ulliel

Rated: Suitable 15 years and older

Marion Cotillard won the César Award for Best Supporting Actress .

Mathilde (Audrey Tautou) receives a message that the young man, Manech (Gaspard Ulliel) she loves may not have died after all in the European battlefields of World War 1 but may have survived. The message makes Mathilde determined to find out what actually happened to him. Bit by bit, she begins to piece together unfolding events. The film communicates one woman's determination to track down the truth. We witness the terrible folly of warfare. Shot in colours that reflect heavenly French countryside and rural life, we experience its juxtaposition with war and the terrible anguish for families of missing persons. The film conveys a haunting beauty and the power of love to pursue truth.

2. Bright Star (UK 2009)

Director: Jane Campion

Starring: Ben Whishaw, Abbie Cornish

Rated: Parental Guidance

Won a British Independent Film Award and other nominations world wide

Directed by Jane Campion (New Zealand), BRIGHT STAR tells the love story of John Keats (1795 – 1821), the English romantic poet. I have loved Keats for decades and hesitated to watch this film in case the film made a hatchet job of these last years of his insecure life telling of his precious and heartbreaking relationship with Fanny Brawne in Hampstead (at that time) outside of London. I appreciated immensely Jane Campion's THE PIANO but found the sensationalist and gratuitous violence of her next film "In the Cut," set in New York devoid of any merit. There is a poetic beauty in BRIGHT STAR and when coupled with some of Keats's poems it brings tears to the eyes. Keats had a rather tragic life – cut off at the age of 26, suffered with tuberculosis and lived in hardship and poverty. Keats (Ben Whishaw) and Fanny Brawne (Abbie Cornish, Australia) convey a genuine sense of a deeply loving but challenged relationship while Paul Schneider (USA), who plays Charles Armitage Brown (Keats's best friend) seems frankly unbelievable, overacting by a mile. Sensuous and spiritual, the film is genuinely a poignant and respectful interpretation of Keats, who made his last journey to Rome for the sunshine in the hope of recovery. I have visited his room where he died besides the Spanish Steps in the heart of the city. At his request, his grave in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome says John Keat 1795–1821 'Here Lies One Whose Name Was Writ in Water.'" Below is his moving sonnet, Bright Star, as always written from the heart to his beloved Fanny Brawne. Keats explains to Fanny he does not wish his love to be in isolated splendour like an eternal star, like a solitary monk (Eremit) gazing over moving waters, mountains and moor rather, he longs to be "awake for ever" and share his love in bed with her and hear her tender breath. The poem tells of his struggle with transcendent love and human love. Tell me about it! Thank you Keats. I love you. A beautiful film.

*Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art--
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors--
No--yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,*

*Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever--or else swoon to death.*

3. BUDDHA COLLAPSED OUT OF SHAME (IRAN 2007)

Director: Hana Makhmalbaf

Starring. Nikbakht Noruz

Rated: Parental Guidance

Won awards in Montreal, Canada in 2007, and two awards from San Sebastian International Film Festival, Spain.

A young Afghani girl, Baktay, aged around 7, (Nikbakht Noruz) focuses her young mind on one thing – to go to school. She lives in the shadow of the great Buddha images carved into the mountains that the Taliban blew up. She has to overcome major hurdles to get to school including bullying and threats of violence. We look at Afghanistan through the eyes of children. In this poignant film, we witness the innocence of the girl and the aggression of older boys. (Incidentally, Iran produces some of the world's most thought provoking films). We are left wondering whether the bullies and the bullied provide an allegory for the Taliban and women in Afghanistan or the USA and its allies as the bullies on the Afghani people or, most probably, both. This is authentic cinema with political statements without the politics. I have loving memories of Afghanistan in 1967. The film will bring you closer to the tragedies of the Afghani people.

4. Cinema Paradiso (Italy 1989)

Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Starring: Marco Leonardi, Agnes Nano **Rated:** 15 years and over.

(4 Disc edition Box Set)

Cannes Film Festival Winner. Oscar for Best Foreign Film. It won the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 1989. The film is often credited for reviving Italy's film industry.

A Sicilian village conveys the changing times through the cinema situated in the heart of the village. The projectionist shows a boy the art of film projection and it triggers a deep love of the power of the cinema. There are a series of delightful scenes such as the parish priest who censors every film from scenes of romantic passion. The film reveals the nostalgia often associated with change, and the beauty and vulnerability of community. Viewers get a deep sense of this changing world when the boy returns to the village as an adult. The director has captured the emotions and stories of those who visit the cinema. We are left with a sense of the wonder and humour of community life and yet of loss and

sadness, frequently conveyed through the haunting emotional score of the composer, Ennio Morricone. This is a film to touch the heart of all movie lovers.

5. Downfall (Germany 2005)

Director: Oliver Hirschbiegel

Starring: Bruno Ganz, Corinna Harfouch

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over

2 Disc Edition

Several of Germany's top actors worked together to make this film, surely the definitive film on the violent and claustrophobic atmosphere in the Bunker, where Adolf Hitler and others spent their last days in April 1945. There is historical accuracy to the film since it is based on the experience of one of Hitler's young secretaries, Traudl Junge, who wrote a book after the war of her experience in the Bunker. We witness a Hitler (Bruno Ganz), raving and ranting but perfectly capable of quiet, civil speech, and mesmerising. There is an intensity throughout the film conveying the obscene madness unfolding in the bunker itself as Hitler and Eva Braun marry and then organise their suicide and Goebbels and Magda, his wife, arrange their suicide and the killing of their six children and dog. Commentators on Nazism believe that Magda Goebbels had an interest in Buddhism and believed in rebirth. The Nazis used the swastika and belief in the Aryan (a word used by the Buddha meaning the "noble ones") as part of their fascist ideology. It is a living hell realm inside the bunker as well as terrible events taking place outside the bunker as the Russian move ever close to Hitler. Trudl Junge speaks in 2001 at the end of the film. German title of the film is "Der Untergang" - implying "Submergence" and "Decline."

6. Ghajini (India, 2008)

Director: A.R. Murugadoss

Starring: Aamir Khan

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over

Aamir Khan, a businessman in communications, is suffering from acute short-term memory loss set off after he is brutally beaten up during the violent murder of his girlfriend Asin. He cannot recall any events and information more than 15 minutes old. He clearly recalls what happened till the moment he witnesses Asin's murder. To overcome his memory loss, he carries around a sheaf of Polaroids and when he is really sure of a piece of information, he has it tattooed on his body, which stands in for the damaged part of his mind. His indelibly marked torso forms his memory with his mind set on revenge for his girl friend's murder.

The "victim" essentially lives his life in short, present-tense segments. What happens to us when we lose our identity? Notice the train scene when the girl's identity is stolen and the consequences. The film keeps going backward in short segments. The suspense of the movie lies not in discovering what happens, but in finding out why it happened. The film leads us along a path of dependent arising. Ghajini examines the question of who we are from the standpoint of the present, the past, identity and the field of time, and turns out to show us the naïve limitations of the current ideology of "living in the now" view so used in the Buddhist/Advaita world. We are reminded how one major event (in this case a brutal attack) can impact on every level of our psyche – making us unrecognisable. For better or worse. Ghajini explored the light and dark side of events. In 2000, a UK/USA film MEMENTO, UK director, Christopher Nolan, came out drawing on exactly the same story line. The Indian version carries the light and dark duality unambiguously. Ghajini communicates the narrative of the inner life when cut off from external matters. Dharma friend, Dani Raveh on the faculty of Tel Aviv University, has written an essay on Ghajini with references to Memento, from the culture standpoint and India philosophy. I have posted it on www.insightmeditation.org.

7. Hamlet (England 1996)

Director: Kenneth Branagh

Starring: Kenneth Branagh, Julie Christie

Rated: Parental Guidance

2 Disc edition.

Hamlet received four Oscar nominations and numerous awards and nominations

This is a fully unabridged version of William Shakespeare's Hamlet. The film runs nearly four hours.

Kenneth Branagh, regarded as the finest contemporary filmmaker of Shakespeare's plays, has made a cinema epic of HAMLET. Set in [Denmark](#), the play tells the story of [Prince Hamlet](#) (Kenneth Branagh) who inflicts revenge on his uncle [Claudius](#) for murdering Hamlet's father and the power and terror that follows on. The play explores real and imagined madness in family and social dynamics, as well as the terror of emotional and physical abuse in human relationships. "To be or not to be, that is the question" ranks as one of the most famous one-liners in world literature. There is a context to this line that deserves attention. Shakespeare is the master of exploration and expression of our inner life. Branagh ensures his actors express every line with lucidity. This is gripping cinema, a major epic, rich in insights into the dynamics and consequences of corruption in the mind.

8. Il Postino (Italy 1995)

Director: Michael Radford

Starring: Massimo Troisi, Philippe Noiret

Won the BAFTA Award for Best Film Not in the English Language. The film's score, composed by Luis Enríquez Bacalov, won the Academy Award for Original Music Score

The day the filming came to completion, Massimo Troisi died from heart failure after a history of heart disease giving a certain poignancy to the film, itself. In some outdoor scenes, the director used an extra as Troisi did not have the strength to walk. Based on true events, Troisi plays a shy postman who strikes up an unlikely friendship with exiled Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda (Philippe Noiret). Neruda becomes the postman's mentor in matters of love and politics. It is the story of one's man's humility, need for guidance and the destiny that emerges from their relationship. This film combines subtle acting, love, passion, friendship and poetry. We need the sensitivity and humanity that pervades *Il Postino* to remind us of the significance of the romance of life.

9. *In Memory Of Me* (Italy 2006)

Director: Saverio Costanzo

Starring: Cristo Jikhov

Rated: Universal, suitable for all

Won or nominated for awards at various film festivals.

Disillusioned with society, Andrea, a handsome and intelligent young man, joins a large monastery in Venice with a view to becoming a priest. He is expected to engage in a range of spiritual exercises, prayer and reflection while giving much time to being in silence. In this austere environment, he realises how difficult the situation is. He has simply brought his inner life into another environment. Andrea has to deal with the voices of authority in the monastery, the attitudes of fellow novices and his own doubts about God and himself. Dialogue in the film is sparse. No words are wasted. Anyone who has attended a long retreat, taken ordination, struggled with doubt and authority, will appreciate this film as a meditation on the inner life and co-existence in a spiritual environment.

10. *Jodhaa Akbar* (India 2008)

Director: Ashutosh Gowariker

Starring: Aishwarya Rai and Hrithik Roshan

Rated: Suitable for All.

Won numerous awards and nominations in Asia in every category. Voted one of the top ten films worldwide for 2008.

This grand Indian epic tells the story of the 17th century marriage, a political alliance, between a great Mughal emperor, Akbar, and the very independent minded Hindu princess, Jodhaa .Gradually, the marriage of convenience develops into romantic love. Hrithik Roshan and Aishwarya Rai, two of India's royalty of cinema, play the lead roles with incredible sensitivity and depth. This three and half hour romantic epic, including wonderful bhajans , is definitely one of the most exquisite epics of its genre in cinema history. Aishwarya Rai is surely the most beautiful woman ever to grace the screen. Her beauty and genuine capacity to express deep feelings has become legendary in India. The sensitive eyes of Akbar (Hrithik Roshan) convey the power of his love for Jodhaa and compassion for his people amidst complex family and political issues. The sub-text of relationship between Islam and Hinduism shows how love bridges all divides. Wonderful cinema. Remember to watch two the deleted scenes on the 3rd CD. Brilliant insights.

11. Khuda Kay Liye (In the Name of God) (Pakistan, 2007)

Director: Shoaib Mansoor

Starring: [Fawad Khan](#), Naseeruddin Sha

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over.

Voted best film at Film Festivals in Japan, Egypt and Italy.

Khuda Kay Liye is the second highest grossing film of Pakistan of all time. Sarmad (Fawad), a singer, becomes influenced by an Islamic activist in Pakistan. He begins to practice the extremist interpretation of Islam, grows a beard and turns his back on music. The sect interprets certain verses of the Quran and Hadith as a call for a ban on music. In England, Mary's father takes his daughter to Pakistan and makes her forcibly marry Sarmad, who is her cousin. Sarmad's brother, also a singer, goes to music school in Chicago. After 9/11, FBI officers capture and torture him when someone overhears a drunkard accusing Mansoor of being a terrorist. The film addresses some of the internal divisions in Islamic culture and the West's treatment of Muslims. It is a film that contributes to a more sympathetic understanding of Islamic societies. Incidentally, a practitioner from Holland cycled through Europe, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan to Bodh Gaya, India and further in 2009/2010. He told me he received nothing but warmth, kindness and hospitality from the Muslim world, he did not even have to pay for food or accommodation en route.

12. Lemon Tree (Israel 2008)

Director: Eran Riklis

Starring: Doron Tavory, Hiam Abbass

Rated: Parental Guidance

The Israeli Defense Minister moves into his new house opposite her lemon grove on the border between Israel and the West Bank. Salma, a Palestinian widow, has to stand up for her rights. The Israeli security forces declare that Salma's trees pose a threat to the Minister's safety and issue orders to uproot them. Salma goes all the way to the Israeli Supreme Court to try and save her trees. Her struggle raises the interest of Mira Navon, the Defense minister's wife. The film captures the way the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land impacts on the lives of people. While earning applause overseas, *Lemon Tree* was not well received in Israel. A small note to readers. An Israeli lawyer who takes the Israeli government to court for violation of Palestinian rights, told me in Jerusalem that an Israeli government spokesman said to her: "We like to allow a few Palestinians to bring their case to the Israeli high court as it makes us appear to the rest of the world that we uphold human rights. You are doing a good job supporting the international image of the Israeli government." I told the lawyer to keep holding Israel accountable in the courts for their abuse of human rights.

13. Malena (Italy 2000)

Director: Giuseppe Tornatore

Starring: Monica Bellucci, Giuseppe Sulfaro

Rated: Suitable for 15 years

Malena nominated for best Golden Globe award and British Film awards

Set in Sicily in the 1940's, the film addresses attraction and aversion. A 12 year old boy, Renato, finds himself utterly infatuated with Malena (Monica Bellucci), a goddess oozing intense sensuality just walking down the street. Alongside the power of such projection, Malèna has to face the same intensity but of negative projections from jealous women in the town. Unknown to the town, she remains true to her husband but the situation gets worse for her when her husband is killed during the war. The town turns against her as men lust after her and women hate her while Renato observes what happens to her due to the wrath of the town. There is a vein of sadness, with dashes of humour in teenager infatuation, running regularly through the film that the film score underlies. Women and men, young and old, often do not know how to relate great beauty and sensuality so those with such beauty become isolated archetypes of desire and rejection. The film communicates the loneliness of it all. The Anglo-American censors cut 15 minutes from the original version. The censor confirms the point of the film – fear of the erotic and subsequent rejection.

14. My Life as a Dog (Sweden, 1985)

Director: Lasse Hallstrom

Starring: Anton Glanzelius

Rated: Parental Guidance

Won 11 international awards plus nominations. Distributed freely with an issue of The Independent newspaper, UK, in 2008.

Set in 1957, Ingemar, 12, lives with his mother who is terminally ill. His mother can't handle his mischievous behaviour so she sends him away to stay with his uncle and aunt in Smaland, Sweden. Separated from his mother, his dog, and everything he has ever known, he thinks of himself similar to the first dog in space who had no say in where he went. His reflections give him a radical change in perspective. He then realises his new life gives him fresh opportunities to meet new people. The film reminds viewers of the importance of attitude and intention to events. This is a beautiful coming-of-age film in more ways than one.

15. Pan's Labyrinth (Spain, 2006)

Director: Guillermo del Toro

Starring: Ivana Baquero, Ariadna Gil

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over

Winner of numerous awards. Frequently voted one of the world's Top Ten films of 2006.

Ofelia moves from a large Spanish city to a rural area in the North of the country. In the "real world" she has to deal with her abusive step father, a brutal army captain who supports General Franco and Fascism. Ofelia enters the underworld (you could read that as unconscious) with its eerie forests, pathways and demons. It means she has to find ways to deal with both worlds. In Jungian terms, this adult film engages in the inner world of unconscious, dreams and forces that can mirror in the waking state. This is a dark but true reflection of both worlds, night and day, that we inhabit. Worthwhile viewing for those deeply interested, whether clients, meditators and therapists, in the dream world, unconscious and analysis. The film is rich in imagery showing that unconscious world and the conscious world remain as inseparable events.

16. Paradise Now (Palestine 2005)

Director: Hany Abu-Assa

Starring: Kais Nashef, Lubna Azabel

Paradise Now was the first Palestinian film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film. Won more than a dozen international awards for best film and best screenplay. Screened at Amnesty International for members to view.

PARADISE NOW focuses on the final days of two Palestinian suicide terrorists from Nablus in the occupied territories who prepare to go to Tel Aviv to blow up Israelis, as well as themselves. The two men take up the cause of martyrdom and the process that shows why suicide bombers want to carry out such missions, even though there are voices trying to persuade them to change their mind. From the opening minutes, the film is tense, tightly constructed, often bleak and broken by occasional dark humour. I found myself in the grip of the film since I have walked along some of the streets, as well as the kasbah in Nablus used for making much of the film. There is no attempt by the director to be sympathetic to suicide bombers nor paint them as lunatics. Extremist Israelis subjected the director and others with various threats during the making of the film. The desperate plight of the Palestinians continues even though the very vast majority of Palestinians have long since turned their back on violence. There are far too many martyrs in Palestine. See report of my April 2010 visit to Palestine.

17. Paris (France 2008)

Director: Cédric Klapisch

Starring: Juliette Binoche, Romain Duris

I love French cinema, contemporary French philosophers and rural French villages. The best of French cinema enables the audience to engage in thoughtful reflection on life's circumstances - unlike American movie makers who feel compelled to inflate the characters and plot with hype in the name of entertainment. French cinema has the capacity to stay true to life - neither prone to exaggerate nor understate events. I regard the best of French cinema as a form of art. It feels like we witness real lives and real people. "Paris" is an example of what I mean. Pierre, a handsome French citizen in his late 20's, has been diagnosed with a fatal illness. He views Paris from his balcony. He realises that people take life for granted. The film explores the complexity of a handful of lives - without coming to conclusions. The hopes and fears of people going about their daily activities. We find ourselves experiencing an empathy with the circumstances of one and all. Quite superb and a worthy introduction to French cinema. The director clearly loves his beloved Paris.

18. Samson and Delilah (Australia, 2009)

Director: Warwick Thornton

Starring: Rowan MacNamara, Marissa Gibson

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over.

Regarded as one of the top ten films ever made in Australia, Numerous awards

Two teenagers, petrol sniffing Samson and Delilah, run away from violent abuse in an isolated community in the Central Australian desert. (Rowan and Marissa were chosen for the parts without prior training as actors). The young couple set off on a journey with only a rather silent presence to keep them together amidst the hardship and injustice of what they have to face. This touching and sensitive film gives us insight into the lives of the Aborigines and what they have had to endure which also serves as a metaphor for our own life. I hitched around Australia in my early 20's and slept at night in the dry bed of the River Todd with Aborigines at Alice Springs. I'm fairly sure that the scenes of the two teenagers and the alcoholic homeless man were filmed on the same dry river bed. The homeless man, a reformed alcoholic, who had lived such a life, is the brother of the film's director. Some scenes make us realise our public indifference for those clearly struggling to find their way. Any journey into the unknown, from home to homeless, opens up the vista of existence and tests our metal. The director wants us to see whether we have embarked on any kind of journey. I found myself applauding at the end of the film. It's a timeless story.

19. Take My Eyes (Spanish 2007)

Director: Iciar Bollain

Starring: Laia Marull, Luis Tosar

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over.

it won seven Goya Awards in 2004, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Lead Actor and Best Lead Actress.

This film addresses domestic violence. One night Pilar (Marull) and her young son flees her violent husband Antonio (Tosar). She wavers in the face of her son's desire to see his father and the fact that she still loves her husband. She agrees to return after he starts group therapy, but his violence returns. Again, she is shattered by his violent behavior. 'Take my eyes' is a moving account of the struggle of a married couple to come to terms with the violent nature in domestic life. Although he wishes to end his violence, his compulsions keep taking over. It is a film of raw emotions displayed as the story unfolds from one situation to the next. The film contributes to an understanding of the abused and as the film proceeds of the abuser. One in four homes in the UK endure at some point scenes of domestic violence – from judges, doctors, lawyers, teachers, builders, army officers, the unemployed, alcoholics and drug addicts, rich and poor alike. A film worthy of interest from all those concerned about suffering in domestic situations.

20. The Diving Bell and the Butterfly (France, 2007)

Directed by Julian Schnabel

Starring: Mathieu Amalric

Won awards at the Canns Film Festival, the Golden Globes and the BAFTA Awards, as well as four Academy Award nominations

Based on the memoir of the same name by Jean-Dominique Bauby, the film explores Bauby's life after suffering a massive stroke in December 1995, at the age of 42. The stroke left him with a condition known as locked-in syndrome. The condition paralyzed him from the neck down. He is left with only his left eye, and uses it to blink to communicate messages. Ronald Harwood wrote the script and stars as Bauby. Bauby cannot speak, but he develops a system of communication with his speech and language therapist by blinking his left eye as she reads a list of letters to laboriously spell out his messages, letter by letter. The film returns to Bauby's past. A former edition of *Elle*, the fashion magazine, and then back to his present. It's a story of the power of determination to communicate in the most restricted of human conditions. We need to count our blessings.

21. The Full Monty (England,1997)

Director: Peter Cattaneo

Starring: Robert Carlyle, Dave Hill

Rated: Suitable for 15 years

2 Disc Special Edition.

Won the BAFTA Award for Best Film in 1997. It was nominated for four Academy Awards

The story revolves around the efforts of five unemployed men in Sheffield, northern England, who decided to become male strippers to make some money. It contains the full flush of whacky English humour whether the first rehearsal in a disused factory or queuing in the dole queue when a rock song emerges from the radio that the five men move in tune to. *The Full Monty* tells of the triumph of spirit over adversity and conveys a heart warming, working class honesty than defeats the gloom of their situation. I re-watched the film recently. It has lost none of its magic. It's a masterpiece of independent cinema with an uplifting ending. When we are willing to take risks, go naked into events, we find it liberating.

22. The Lives of Others (Germany 2007)

Director: Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck

Starring: Martina Gedeck, Sebastian Koch

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over

Received numerous awards worldwide. Cost €2,000,000 to make and box receipts came to more than €77,000,000

In East Berlin in 1984, the secret police, known as the Stasi, are spying on German citizens. Captain Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Muhe) has been ordered to spy on playwright Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch), so he sets up a surveillance room and listens closely as Dreyman, his actress girlfriend, Christa-Marie Sieland (Martina Gedeck), and the playwright's friends visiting the apartment. Then the Wiesler brings far more attention to artists and their values as well as reflecting on power issues of his bosses in the government. THE LIVES OF OTHERS is a tense, compelling thriller inspired by actual events and real characters. The film reminds us deeply of the importance of human liberty and culture, the power of the state to invade our lives and the power of mindful observation makes way for unexpected insights. The closing minute or two in the film mirror a heart touching truth.

23. The Pianist (Poland 2002)

Director: Roman Polanski

Starring: Adrien Brody, Thomas Kretschmann

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over Synopsis

Various Academy Awards, BAFTA awards and numerous other awards worldwide.

Wladyslaw Szpilman, a Jewish gifted classical pianist living Poland during the Nazi occupation manages to escape deportation to a concentration camp and goes into hiding. For the next years Wladyslaw eludes capture and lives in the ruins of the Warsaw ghetto. The Pianist is the true story of the struggle to survive the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto. The musician wrote an account of his experience right after the war. The film tells how he survived against the odds , hiding in various parts of the city , before his life was saved by a German army officer , Captain Wilm Hosenfeld. The movie portrays life and death in the ghetto . The scene of the young woman being shot in the head for asking the Nazi guard where the Nazis are taking them is a scene that Roman Polanski witnessed as a young Jewish boy in Poland during the Nazi occupation. The film explores the determination of one man's quest for survival. There is a transcendent message of the spirit, of music, of both Szpilman and Hosenfeld. Millions of others were not so blessed. A ghetto emerges when a powerful nation builds a high wall to form an open prison,

generates a humanitarian disaster, inflicts death and destruction on the ghetto , blows up the infrastructure and blocks all freedom of movement.

24. The Son's Room (Italy 2002)

Director: Nanni Moretti

Starring: Nanni Moretti, Laura Morante

The Son's Room was the winner of the Palme d'Or at the 2001 Cannes Film Festival

and voted one of the 500 greatest films of all time.

Giovanni, a successful psychoanalyst, lives the bourgeois life in the suburbs of an Italian city with his beautiful wife and two lovely teenage children, a boy and a girl. He is used to dealing with the traumas of his clients. One day a major drama enters his world. He finds that his middle class life and all that he and his wife had formed together begins to fall apart under the terrible stress of family events. The film examines the process of loss, despair and raging grief. The analyst finds he has to face the insecurities and anguish that never surfaced until tragedy struck him and his family. We witness the impact of emotional truths and the fragility of who and what we take for granted. The film portrays an authentic slice of life – well conceived and intelligently written. As the Buddha said; “the quality of the metal is tested in the fire.”

25. The Wave (Germany 2008)

Director: Dennis Gansel

Rated: Suitable for 15 years

Around 2.3 million people in Germany went to see the film in its 10 weeks in the cinema.

The film is based on a true story in California in 1967. In an attempt to engage his students in politics, a high school teacher in an unnamed town in Germany takes the controversial decision to impose full authority over the direction of the classroom. The students agree to the initiative. This week long social experiment step by step becomes more and more sinister as the ideology begins to take root in the minds of the students. The feeling of community, action as power and collective discipline starts the process of intimidation of others and violence as the movement grows in power. Any cult, sect, followers, spiritual teachers, group leaders, as well as voices of power in the political/ corporate world, ought to see this film. Students in college and university need to ask themselves such questions as “What are we being groomed for? Does our so called liberal democracies hide something much darker?”

26. The White Ribbon (2009 Germany)

Director: Michael Haneke

Starring: Christian Friedel, Leonie Benesh

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over.

Winner of the 2009 Cannes Film Festival and numerous other awards and nominations worldwide.

In a village in Protestant northern Germany in 1913 on the eve of World War I, the children of a church and school and their families experience a series of bizarre incidents, accidents, harming and deaths. The incidents appear as some kind of punishment. It is not clear who is responsible for such events in the community largely dependent on an aristocratic estate. As the story unfolds, we begin to see clearly the way people treat each other with the women living in shadows of men with unresolved control issues. The director made the film in black and white, without music. We enter a journey around children's lives while we feel unsettled due to the ongoing anxiety and fear permeating the various families. Does the power of inflicting pain mean those who inflict pain in revenge find themselves caught up in the same abuse of power? This is truly original cinema. There is something chilling, if not sadistic, about a repressed and puritanical community where punishment begets punishment. A very powerful and thought provoking film. The film leaves questions for every family and every society. I found myself reflecting on the film days after viewing it.

27. The Wind That Shakes The Barley (England 2006)

Director: Ken Loach

Starring: Cillian Murphy, Liam Cunningham

Rated: Suitable for 15 year olds and over

Won the Cannes Film Festival award and several other awards and nominations at European film festivals.

This gripping drama by Ken Loach is set in Cork, Ireland, in 1920 during the early days of the IRA (Irish Republican Army) struggle for independence. The British occupation of Ireland triggered young Irishmen and women to take up arms. Cillian Murphy plays Damien, a medical student on his way to London when he witnesses atrocities committed by British troops. Instead of becoming a doctor, he turns into a leading figure in an IRA division led by his brother, Teddy. The film conveys the emotional transition of young men who decide to engage in acts of terror having witnessed acts of terror from British soldiers. Their wrath of the IRA recruits also turns on each other. The film also serves as an allegory for contemporary British policy with the Arab world. As blind supporters of US foreign

policy, the British army continues to repeat history through the occupation of Iraq and now Afghanistan . Afghanis report that British army, as well as the US army and other NAYO forces dishes out brutal treatment of citizens of these countries that only encourage young Afghanis to join the Taliban. When will we ever learn? Afghanis want their country free from foreign occupation. The film is a masterpiece of political inference. The meaning in English of the Arabic word "Taliban" is "Students." If we used the English word "Students," instead of the word "Taliban," it would impact on our view of the ideological and military war on the people of Afghanistan in the same way it must for Afghani people. Remember people in Afghanistan say "Our students are fighting the foreign armies." It evokes sympathy even if one has no time for some of the Students' ideological tenets. The West will not defeat the hearts of Afghanistan.

28. Three Burials Of Melquiades Estrada (USA 2005)

Director: Tommy Lee Jones

Starring: Tommy Lee Jones, Barry Pepper

Rated: Suitable for 15 years

Nominated at Cannes Film Festival and elsewhere

Hollywood movies woefully lack subtlety and depth. Hollywood Films are churned out weekly for popcorn munchers acting mostly as a distraction from daily life. Why not? British television is saturated with American movies full of blockbusters, special effects, utterly implausible dramas, trite comedy and endless disaster movies with happy endings. There is nothing subtle about Tommy Lee Jones nor his film. This film is an example of where a hard edged film really works. The action takes place on the border between Texas and Mexico, a hot spot for illegal crossings. But one man is hell-bent on crossing the border in the opposite direction. A Mexican is shot by accident, and his friend (Tommy Lee Jones) has promised him he would bury him in Mexico. He kidnaps the man responsible when the local police do nothing, and takes him on a journey to find the Mexican's home to bury him. This is the story of suffering, a journey and finally redemption. Redemption requires going against the current – hence hazardous journey from US to Mexico not the other way around. THREE BURIALS serves as powerful allegory of the spiritual path – albeit in the brutal desert climate and in small town of emotional dryness and general absence of empathy. Yet, one man keeps his word to his friend and shows the killer the way to redemption.

29. Three Colours Red (Poland 1994)

Director: Krzysztof Kieslowski

Starring: Irène Jacob, Jean-Louis Trintignant

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over.

Various awards and nominations worldwide.

All of the films of Kieslowski, the Polish director (1941 to 1996) are worth watching. Red is the last and the pinnacle of a trilogy, Three Colours. Irene Jacob portrays a sad young woman, searching for a sense of meaning within the confusion of her everyday life. The film conveys how small circumstances set all manner of directions in our life. The film begins with a telephone call between London and Geneva, where a university student and part-time model, Valentine Dusot (Irene Jacob), is talking to her emotionally distant boyfriend. We are taken deeper and deeper into a complexity of events with symbolic items scattered around such as the broken beer glass and crumpled cigarette carton. Take notice of connection of Dusot with the judge and the way they share similar feelings. See the use of the colour red through the film. The film reveals the sadness and pathos of life, the struggle with glimmers of transcendence.

30. Times and Winds (Turkey. 2007)

Director: Reha Erdem

Starring: Ozkan Ozen

Music by Arvo Part.

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over

Won awards at international film festivals.

Times and Winds is a cinematic work of art, visual poetry, a sculpture for every scene. Set in a village in Eastern Turkey, the film offers a view of life with the day revolving the mosque's call five times a day to prayer. A coming of age movie, the story revolves around the pressure of three young teenager trapped in the harsh circumstances of family life – whether caring for a new born, falling in love with his teacher or plotting revenge on a cruel father who is the local imam. The film enters brief silent sequences showing the children immobile in the bushes – as if dead, frozen in time like citizens of Pompeii, or a metaphor for being absorbed in their world as they face the sky. We are left to wonder. The awesome beauty of the landscape fuses with the rigors and hardships of village life. The film is a spiritual and visual essay on the passage of time and the basic hardships of community life. Like the film's teenagers sitting on the top of the hills, we are left contemplating the eloquent beauty of life amidst the ongoing pain in families through generations. Time and Winds tell us with eloquent presentation about family narratives.

31. Viridiana (Spain, 1961)

Director: Luis Bunuel

Starring: Silvia Pinal, Francisco Rabal

Rated: Suitable for 15 years and over .

Winner of the Cannes Film Festival award.

Rich in symbolism in scene after scene, involving humans and sometimes animals, *Viridiana* tells the story of a woman about to ordain as a nun who returns to see her uncle who lusts after her and then kills himself on his estate. With her puritan rules, the nun stays on at the farmhouse and invites beggars to join her as she wants to do good. Due to her naivety, everything goes amok because she is out of touch with reality. The beggars take over, have their own Last Supper and "Christ" attempts to sexually assault her. The beggars refuse to submit to her authority and take over. Numerous symbolic innuendos dominate the film –whether a poor dog tied to the cart , the nun milking the cow or the nun waking up then engaging in a card game. The Roman Catholic Church and General Franco, the Spanish dictator, went ballistic about the film. He confiscated every copy rather than ban it and be accused of suppression. A revolutionary masterpiece to wake up do-gooders, blind followers of loving kindness, in and out of religion, the complexity of situations, and shows that the transcendent reveals itself in the symbolic. A masterpiece. Comparable to a Beethoven Symphony or a Shakespearean play.

32. Water (India, 2006)

Director: Deepa Mehta

Starring: Lisa Ray, John Abraham

Rated: Suitable for 12 years

Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film and various other awards and nominations.

Set during the British occupation of India in 1938, *Water* addresses the long painful circumstances of widows in Hindu society. This controversial film had to be shot in Sri Lanka due to threats from extremist Hindu groups. For centuries widows found themselves marginalised in traditional Hindu society. Chuyi is one such girl, widowed at seven years old. She is left in the care of a group of widows forced to live outside of normal society for the rest of their lives . She finds a kind friend, a beautiful young lady named Kalyani (Lisa Ray). Kalyani soon meets a young man named Narayan (John Abraham), a modern thinker and follower of Gandhi. They fall in love, and Narayan (to his mother's horror) asks her to marry him. The film exposes the insensitivity of religious dogma and its painful impact upon people's lives. Widows then had the choice to marry their late husband's brother or stay celibate for the rest of the life. There are heart touching moments in the film. We are exposed to incidents that make possible infinite interpretations. The film questions orthodoxy, beliefs and values through the eyes of widows and independent minded

women.

33. 2001: A Space Odyssey (USA 1968)

(2 Disc Special Edition)]

Director: Stanley Kubrick

Starring: Keir Dullea, Gary Lockwood

Two Discs.

Suitable for 12 years and older

Won Oscars and several international awards.

From ape to human to space exploration, 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY ranks as one of the most discussed films in cinema history based on a book by Arthur C. Clarke, the science fiction writer. The film took four years to make. The two spaceman , Bowman (Keir Dullea) and Poole (Gary Lockwood), engage with HAL, the most sophisticated on board computer on a space flight where a large black monolith, the transcendent element, exists confirming human evolution. Bowman discovers on the flight that there is some kind of malfunction with HAL that shows HAL's desire to be in control. The two spacemen find themselves in a psychological struggle with HAL. We are left with the question whether computers and technology runs the lives of the human species, not only geeks and nerds absorbed in technology and making a journey to the transcendent. Again, the timeless story of the dangerous journey for self in the search for the eternal. The questions the film raised apply even more today than in 1968 when the film became available to the public. The film may seem a little dated but the questions it raises have not gone away.

Mega appreciation to all those involved in the film industry who contribute to shedding more light on our remarkable lives.

MAY ALL BEINGS DISCOVER LIBERATING INSIGHTS THROUGH THE ARTS

5.

Benefits and Limits of Mindfulness

By Christopher Titmuss

edited and adapted from a recorded talk given in Sarnath, India. 2009

3835 words

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The Buddha's teachings point to a radical shift in the priorities of human beings. He took everyday themes and explored them in depth. One of them is mindfulness. In this talk, I will address the benefits and limits of mindfulness, and speak about that which is not mindfulness.

Tradition and contemporary religion has made *faith* a key concept, an unmistakable characteristic of religion. The concept of faith implies a belief in that what I cannot know or directly confirm for myself. For example, a Christian may have faith in the virgin birth, the resurrection of Christ and belief in the after- life. If I am Jewish, I may have faith that the Torah as the word of God and in the various rules that the Torah has laid down as important to observe and maintain. My Buddhist or Hindu faith tells me to have faith in rebirth. If I perform good deeds, if I engage in meritorious action, I will be reborn with a better opportunity for awakening. This is faith. There is the act of faith in revelation, the prophet, the master, the incarnation, the avatar, the book or the tradition.

The Buddha weaned us away from all that. He does not use the word "faith" in such a context. He took a different approach with an encouragement to make a primary shift in emphasis, by focusing on the value of being conscious of what arises. He endorsed mindfulness, investigation and meditation. He told us as much as possible to stay true to our experience and to be extremely vigilant, keep to our experience and, through insights, see and understand for ourselves what arises. We observe the views that arise connected with our experience. We apply mindfulness with clear comprehension (*sati-sampajanna*) to the experience, story or process of whatever reveals itself.

Currently, psychology and psychotherapy show tremendous interest in the potency and the power of mindfulness to deal with stress, depression and physical pain. The various programmes of MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction), MBCT (Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy), and similar courses offer a variety of invaluable and important exercises, under the guidance of a psychologist or therapist, and have proved effective in enabling many patients and clients to handle psychological problems, including insomnia, chronic pain, migraine, life threatening illnesses, depression and anxiety. Mindfulness practices provide resources and tools to help people, so to speak, get back on their feet. Hospitals, health centres and private practices employ mindfulness training. Although truly supportive, it is important to bear in mind mindfulness functions as only one feature of a diversity of Buddhist practices, particularly in the Theravada Buddhist tradition.

During my years in the Thai monastery our daily mindfulness/insight meditation practice began at 4 am when a monk rang the very large gong. Originally, the gong was a bomb destined for North Vietnam which had accidentally fallen out of B52 bomber jet after taking off from the American air base in Thudong, northern Thailand during the time of the American war on Vietnam. Perhaps the military forgot to close the hatch door. Local villagers found the unexploded bomb in a field. After removing the explosives, the villagers offered the bomb as a *dana* (gift) to my teacher. Ajahn Dhammadharo, and a truck brought it to our monastery, Wat Chai Na in Nakornsridhammaraj, southern Thailand.

There is a certain ironic justice when a bomb becomes a bell to wake up nuns and the monks in a monastery. A genuine transformation in the material world.

For the first couple of years, I was the only Westerner in the monastery. I developed much love and appreciation for the practice of mindfulness. I witnessed the refinement of the mindful monks and the nuns. Their way of mindful being reflected and revealed a beautiful presence that showed in the way they walked, ate food and cared for every moment of the day. I found it an inspiration for practice and the application of mindfulness from the wake up to the end of the day around ten o'clock in the evening. A mindful way of life through the variety of human experiences brings grace and dignity to our lives.

The monastery was situated on the outskirts of Nakornsridhammaraj – it literally means "the city of the kings of Dharma." Christian missionaries from the West would occasionally come to try to "save" me from such Buddhist practices. My teacher had no concept of God. Speaking very good Thai, the missionaries would say to the teacher that they had heard about an English monk in the monastery, and requested the Ajahn's permission to talk to me. One missionary told me: "We have a direct telephone line to God. There is only one way to have contact with God and that was through Jesus, who was the name of the only telephone operator." I told them: "I am a Buddhist monk. We live a life of great simplicity. We don't use telephones." Another missionary said to me: "What are you doing living in a Buddhist monastery, dressed up in robes, with a shaved head? I replied: "Jesus sent me." The missionaries went silent.

Mindfulness is an important limb in the large body of the Dharma. However, we can too easily neglect or forget all the other limbs of the Dharma such as ethics, lifestyle, use of resources, letting go, service, acts of compassion, depths of meditation, total transformation and liberation. Having said that, the practice of mindfulness can become a stepping-stone to explore further if mindfulness teachers make that explicitly clear. Anything that is a stepping-stone to a greater vision has to count.

Mindfulness meets the object of perception to see the object clearly, undistorted by projections. This is a feature of the practice. We often use the phrase "to see things as they are" but this is an imprecise translation of what the Buddha said: he taught us to "to see and know what has become." We can bring mindfulness to formal meditation, to sitting, walking, standing, reclining, to communication with another, to all the senses, and every aspect of inner life knowing clearly the dynamic aspect of things. It doesn't allow us to grab hold of a moment and keep it because no moment is static. We can claim we are "seeing things as they are" but what we see belongs to a vibrant unfolding process of nature that is going on to become something else. It is an enormous challenge to be in tune with the unfolding process.

If I think for one moment I can see someone as they are, and that view is fixed, then I'm really deluding myself, and deluding others. No human being can stand still for a moment. There are too many contingent factors, forces and events involved in change. It is a huge challenge for mindfulness to abide conscious of what unfolds in this process of becoming. The exploratory nature of Dharma practice also reveals our potential, as we never remain

a fixed entity. What is happening influences me. I have the capacity to be with what's unfolding, with what's becoming. That is the undertaking.

I might be seeing myself or someone else or the situation rather clearly – yesterday. But it may not offer an iota of support for today. The image and the story we carried before may become unrelated to what's happening now and to where we are today. Where we are today maybe quite unrelated to where we are tomorrow. You practice Dharma in India. You see inner change and then you go back to the West only to have to face your old miserable self unless deep realizations have arisen about what matters. We practise to understand dependent arising.

You might wish to share the value of your experiences with others, friends or family. Those people's lives are so busy they don't have time to ask you. You've come to insight and understanding while in India. You don't want to return home as a missionary, but nobody shows any interest, anyway!

I spent ten years and ten days away from England from April 1967 to early May 1977. I told my parents I would come home to meet them rather than they meet me at the airport. I didn't want a tidal wave of tears flooding the arrival lounge. While walking home on the Sunday morning, with the same backpack, a man digging up weeds in his garden spotted me. "Been on holiday?" I replied: "You could say that." My dear father, who never lived more than six miles from the house he was born in, apart from fighting Germans in World War 2, never asked a single question about my ten years, ten days away from home. Not once. It was too painful for him.

We need to be mindful of the opportunities to share experiences with others and to listen mindfully to the other person's responses. Why should they be interested in what we've been doing and where we've been?

APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS TO THE BODY

Mindfulness works in the field of the defined and limited with interest in four primary objects – body, feelings, states of mind and sense objects. For example, our culture has a fetish with obsessional perceptions around the appearance of the body. We are often not in touch with the body as an organic process of elements and diverse sensations. We cling to youth and resist getting older.

We also cling to stereotyped pictures of beauty. Beautiful women and men can find their beauty difficult, not knowing if another has a deep interest in their inner life, or if merely sexual attraction determines their interest. A beautiful person can experience insecurity and vulnerability when desire from another dominates conversation. Health and lifestyle also impact on physical life. We practice mindfulness and clear comprehension otherwise, as years go by, the level of anxiety and fear around loss of youth, beauty and energy increases.

We practice to stay in tune with the aging process, as well as to develop ways to stay calm

and clear with sickness and pain. If we don't bring mindfulness and insight to bodily issues, they become problems in the mind. The Buddha said the suffering then doubles – pain in the body and suffering in the mind. Ill health in the body can trigger anxiety in the mind. In the morning, we look in the bathroom mirror. It is positively the worst time of the day to have to face one's face. We like to be told we look younger than our age. If someone says: "You look well. I didn't realize you are 65, I thought you were only 63," it makes our day.

The body is aging every second of every day. I started with fair hair as a child, then it became dark hair and now I have a completely new hair look! From fair, to salt and pepper, to just salt, and then for some men to neither salt nor pepper hair. When there is a light above my head, I can see in the mirror how thin the hair is getting on top of my head. Hair is now growing out of my ears and out of my nose. Is my hair falling off my head and taking root in my ears? It wasn't doing that 40 years ago!

I remember the first gray hair in my genitals in my early 40's. This single grey hair served as the advance messenger of what was to come. With mindfulness, we become aware of moment-to-moment change while remembering to treat change with some lightness and humor. Nothing is static. We might need the good resources of medication for extreme pain in the body and the resources of mindfulness meditation to keep the mind clear. Then there is no doubling of the suffering. Our scientists tell us: "Oh, we'll have a cure for cancer. We will have a cure for dementia. We will have a cure for heart disease." All these are promises. Even if scientists found a total cure for these three diseases, it only means the body will die from something else. There is no ageless, deathless body. People who believe this delude themselves and others. There is no resting on the laurels of "I have seen things as they are". We cannot rest on the past. The very claim puts us out of touch with what is unfolding.

APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS TO FEELINGS

The Buddha's teachings on feelings are extensive. I don't know any teacher in the history of humanity who examines feelings as much as the Buddha. He explored comprehensively the range of human feelings. He spoke about the great importance of feelings in humans' life.

The Buddha referred to the dukkha (unsatisfactoriness, suffering) of feelings: painful, difficult feelings of body, heart, mind and the sukha (satisfactoriness, happiness) of feelings: happy, welcome feelings, spiritual and worldly. He spoke about the pursuit of pleasure, superficial sensations, most superficial, the transience, danger and what lies deeper, as well as pointing to transcendent happiness, not bound to any cause or condition. The Buddha encouraged the exploration of our feelings. We see what the feelings are, both the outer feeling and the inner deeper feeling, with a strong encouragement to look at the deeper inner feeling.

For example, we are chatting with a friend. Pleasant and unpleasant feelings are weaving through every single word that's going on. We stop for a moment. There is the quite

natural human display of the range of our outer feelings revealed in what we say. In the stopping for a moment, we get in touch with a deeper inner feeling; we become mindful of it. We listen to that. This immediately has a moderating and steadying response on the diarrhea of words rushing out of our mouth. In his great discourse on the Four Applications of Mindfulness, the Buddha said "See the feeling in the feeling", Am I, as a human being, getting lost in my outer feelings? Am I getting out of touch with the depth of inner feeling? Projections and infatuations generate the outer feeling, the externalized feelings that we grasp. What is this deep feeling, this deep sense?

In this discourse, the Buddha made an important statement. He said: "Mindfulness is established to the extent necessary for bare knowing. And one abides without dependency, not clinging to anything in the world." It is a very beautiful statement. I remember when I was a monk the first time I read this in the application of mindfulness sutta. It gave me great relief. I'm not the most mindful of creatures. It is easy for practitioners to exaggerate the place of mindfulness to such a degree we become identified and attached to being mindful all the time - in every moment. This is impossible. We need to be mindful to the "extent necessary" to abide freely in the world.

APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS TO STATES OF MIND

The third application of mindfulness refers to states of mind - inwardly and outwardly, to others as well as yourself. We are in constant contact with others. We really need to be clear with the inner and outer, superficial and deep.

In the group today, I mentioned I have a small guideline which I endeavor to remember and be mindful about when a person offers Dharma service: "Oh, Christopher, next summer I'd love to organize this for you. I would love to help coordinate this event." I'm delighted this person offers such a service. A few months later, the same person says: "I'm not sure I've got the time, I just started a new relationship." (Why has relationship got to be so totally consuming?). "I've got a new job." "I'm emigrating..."

I give myself the small mindful reminder: "This person's offer of service is made in this moment. That's all. This is the communication in this moment." Otherwise, I can become reactive: "You said this, you promised. Now you have changed your mind. Are you always unreliable?" Blah, blah, blah.

Rather than getting into all this agitation and losing one's center of gravity, we remember to be mindful of offers in this moment. The less pressure we put on people, the less we try to control their lives, the more we give the opportunity for something lovely and beautiful to emerge out of a mindful depth of communication.

The Buddha said life comes together in feelings due to contact. Our thoughts, our states of mind, our activities, what we do, what we say, the way we act, have feelings as a primary condition whether we realize it or not. Feelings are indispensable, even if the person is a theorist, an abstract thinker lost in their head. The professor, scientist, philosopher also reveals the feelings that support their views. Listen a little bit more - the feelings to

support the views are there. Somewhere.

Can we learn with each other, as our practice of mindfulness, to hear a state of mind as a state of mind? No matter what we or the other person says, no matter how it is said to us, no matter what the tone, the attitude, the statement, can we listen to it as a state of mind? It's a huge challenge for us – no matter what we listen to and what we hear, it always was, and always will be, simply a state of mind. When we see or hear a state of mind simply as that, we will not react to it.

Sometimes we think other people should be more developed than they are. We have expectations built up around the depths of mindfulness of someone else. We expect others to be mindful and know ourselves. We express the notorious one-liner: "You know me well enough. You should intuitively know that something is going wrong with me." Why should one? Why do you expect everybody to know intuitively what's going on with you?

Once you start thinking: "I know somebody." It's the end, it's the death of the relationship. We are too unpredictable. We become trapped in the view. There are too many differences emerging and unfolding. Once we think we know somebody, then our memory replaces the immediacy.

APPLICATION OF MINDFULNESS TO THE DHARMA

Mindfulness of the Dharma is the fourth application of mindfulness. This refers to bringing the Dharma to the world, to all events involving senses and sense objects. There are some dedicated practitioners who need to, either temporarily or for a long time, let go and renounce the idea of being a practitioner. If you hold to a view, then notice it in your thought, in what you write, and what you share. If you think a lot about "my practice", "my working on myself," "looking into my life," then be very mindful and aware of your relationship to the world and relationship to the Dharma. Please, at some point – let go of holding onto views!

If you've got all that Dharma practice, and you are also a client in therapy, (valuable as it can be), it's a lot of practice on one's "self." It's very hard to get out of that construct. It's very hard to liberate oneself from the view: "I've got so much to work on in myself." There are limits to mindfulness. It's a frame, a model, a methodology, a priority. Mindfulness of body, feelings, states of mind and objects of Dharma addresses all of that. The general language of "I'm working on myself" intended to liberate you can become your prison.

Your view will imprison you. Your story will imprison you. Your view of your "self" will be your prison. The very practice supposed to liberate you from practice puts you in chains. That's a deadly end, a killer. The whole purpose of the path is to get off it! And be done with it!

Some practitioners hold to the path - forgetting path is only a metaphor. There is not a scrap of evidence to show the path anywhere. If we hold onto the path, we hesitate to risk full engagement with life. The whole construct of path, of mindfulness and meditation,

have benefits and limits. Mindfulness practice can set limits to consciousness. We can abandon all limits and give up mindfulness (there probably will be no one in the meditation hall tomorrow).

Let's sit, walk, stand, recline with no interest whatsoever in any idea, deep or shallow, of working on oneself. Let's have no interest in any personal benefit whatsoever. Let's renounce the path. Mindfulness is defined by its object – breath, body, feelings, states of mind and Dharma. Since the object defines mindfulness, then the object limits the extent of mindfulness. Mindfulness is limited and the object of mindfulness is limited. How can two limited factors reveal the limitless?

What if I let go of working on myself. I've been doing it for days, weeks, months, years. I've tried every conceivable method available and I don't even live in California! What then? Is there the potential to realize the limitless – that is not bound to mindfulness and its application.?

So I say, "I see the benefits and limits of mindfulness, I see the benefits and limits of awareness, I see the benefits and limits of working on myself." Our view acts as a constructed priority. At the risk of your confusion or uncertainty, you might discover the sense of the unconstructable. The Buddha referred to the uncompounded, that which couldn't be put together. We can put mindfulness and its object together.

All methods, forms, techniques, postures offer useful benefit. I am a keen proponent of the path. I do not forget for one moment one fact: it's all constructed together. It's all formed together for the welfare of a human being. What is that we cannot construct? What is it that we cannot put together? It is liberating to realize this. Knowing this puts into correct perspective all mindfulness practices, the limits of such an approach and all that we form together.

The Buddha teachings consistently point to the unformed, unconstructed, unmade, the limitless. We realize this so it is beautifully clear, crystal clear. We realize the limited, constructed, the formed together actually, confirms the unformed. They are not two different realms. One is the mirror of the other. One confirms the other. That is such a lovely, precious, sweet freedom. One is free because liberation shows no construction. I can't put together freedom, I can't make it come together. This freedom is precious and powerful in its expression. It allows us to engage totally in the constructed. It allows us to continue to participate in the forms, in the practices, in the methods. It allows the letting go of them as well.

This freedom confirms the emancipating force of the human being.

May all beings see the formations and constructions in life,

May all beings appreciate the value and limits of mindfulness,

May all beings know clearly the limitless

Thanks for Sandya for transcribing from original audio talk

6

Compassion that Moves to Activism

A Report from Israel

Sandya Rakefet

1011 words

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"All that is needed for evil to succeed is that decent human beings do nothing" - Edmund Burk

In the Dharma circles there seems to be this dichotomy between the cushion and the doing. It seems as if the view is that meditation is a private matter, a very personal event that one does with oneself. Most of us came to be on the path not to change the world but to transform our own minds, our patterns and conditionings, to alleviate our own suffering.

But the Buddha did not teach Dukkha as an only psychological and personal event (especially since there's no such thing as "personal" in the Buddhist tradition). There is Dukkha in the world – hunger, war, oppression, injustice, exploitation – and the Dharma "Doesn't offer a comfortable view, spiritual or global, but responds to suffering where it appears and offers relief", as Christopher so rightly puts it. Many seasoned practitioners, including many Vipassana teachers, feel that sitting is enough; Outer action in the world seems to be at the expense of inner work, as if the two cannot live together.

The Dharma teaches us that there is no such thing as "my Dukkha", that all events and all beings are interconnected through dependent arising. This approach encourages us to take action, any action that brings relief to suffering and helps people to inquire deeply into the causes of suffering – inside and outside – mainly greed, hate and delusion. The fruit of our practice must be expressed not only in heightened sensitivity towards ourselves and our loved ones, but also in heightened concern, care and participation with what happens around us, in our communities and in the world.

In response to a question in the Q+A session in a Vipassana retreat in Israel last March, Shaila Catherine said:

"Buddhism is engaged on all levels. It's inconceivable to endeavor to transform ourselves

and not to transform our communities. These are always intertwined. When we recognize suffering within ourselves, it naturally brings forth the compassion. As we open to what really is, moment by moment, the compassion deepens and then we are able to respond even more to the suffering that surrounds us in the world."

Offering a retreat that combines Dharma with *right action* that "respond to the suffering that surrounds us in the world" has been a dream a small group of us in Tovana (Israel Insight Society) (link: <http://www.tovana.co.il/newsite/about-eng.asp?id=32>). In this light, we were very happy when 25 eager and earnest participants joined us for a five-day retreat, to explore what motivates us towards and what stops us from action in the world.

The first half of the days was spent in silence, deepening the mind's stability, mindfulness and concentration. The second part of the days was dedicated to working with exercises from the "Work that Reconnects" by Joanna Macy, herself a Buddhist teacher and social activist for the past 4 decades. Through group sharing, small-group work, personal reflection, Dharma teachings and various meditation practices, we strived to open our hearts to the truth of Dukkha, interconnectedness and compassion that moves to action.

One of the retreatants wrote in his blog after the retreat: "In the journey to the roots of suffering, each one of the participants in this special retreat discovered, at one point or another, that his or her suffering is intermixed with the general cry, and that there is no revival or restoration to the inner light if we let it be swallowed up in the surrounding darkness."

We all emerged out of the retreat with renewed energy and commitment to bring the fruit of our practice on the cushion – out into the suffering world. We tied a green thread around one another's wrist as a symbol of our commitment for action. We've created small groups for joined projects in different areas, according to people's interests. And we are continuing to meet to offer support for the various projects, to explore what it means to be a Dharma activist and to plan various group actions, inside and outside Israel borders.

We saw and experienced how, when we open to these truths, an inner movement of wanting to act to remedy the suffering is inevitable. The dichotomy between the cushion and action in the world dropped away. Clarity came. And with the clarity, came the energy, the commitment and the inner resources to find ways, support and creativity to continue to bring the wisdom, compassion and equanimity of the Dharma to our actions in the world, as we try to make a difference and ease the world's pain. As we aspire to embody the saying: "Buddha is as Buddha does".

Vimala Thaker, the spiritual teacher and social activist, says (in her book '*Spirituality and Social Action: A Holistic Approach*'):

"We cannot separate the individual and the society.... In this era, to become a spiritual inquirer without social consciousness is a luxury that we can ill afford... Life is not fragmented; it is not divided. It cannot be divided into spiritual and material, individual and collective... In truth, the inner life is not a private or personal thing; it's very much a

social issue.

Inner Freedom Is a Social Responsibility. Awareness of misery, without defense structures, will naturally lead to action. The heart cannot witness misery without calling the being to action, without activating the force of love... Our lives will be truly blessed only when the misery of one is genuinely felt to be the misery of all. The force of love is the force of total revolution."

The signature in my emails says: "Life is perfect as it is, now go and make a difference". How can we embody this seeming-paradox? How can we be deeply committed to the Dharma and translate this commitment into actions that "respond to suffering where it appears and offer relief "?

For me, response-able Dharma is bringing-together our actions with the wisdom and insight of the Buddha's encouragement to "save all beings knowing full well that there is no one to save".

**Sandya Rakefet is a Dharma teacher with Tovana,
a major Dharma network in Israel.**

www.tovana.co.il

Sowing Seeds for Change

A Report from Israel

Zohar Lavie and Nathan Glyde

2113 words

In today's world we are constantly exposed to news and images of suffering and violence. From war and famine to the destruction of the planet, we have a lot to take in and process as human beings wishing to live a complete and full life. At SanghaSeva we come in touch with this time and again. For ourselves, we have found this a fruitful and eyeopening process. How do we deal with the suffering we encounter, and how do the mechanisms we use affect our ability to be of use in alleviating the pain around us? What stops us from taking action as individuals and as a whole?

For the past six years, we have spent much of our time combining dharma and service work, and this has been a rich and fertile ground to explore these issues. We would like to share some of our thoughts and insights.

When hearing about a difficult situation somewhere, such as war, injustice, suffering and violence, some of our common reactions are pain, anger and perplexity. There is not a problem with these reactions in themselves, they are our natural emotional responses. We don't want suffering like this to take place around us, in the world we share. One way we deal with these emotions, is to feel overwhelmed. We feel responsible, that we need to find a solution, that we need to fix. This can easily lead to depression or numbness. Deep ecology teacher Joanna Macy points out that much of the seeming apathy and lack of positive action in our world today is a result of overwhelm. The pain is too strong, and our faith in ourselves too weak to allow us to do anything but shut down and ignore. If we find ourselves feeling apathetic or numb or helpless in the face of suffering, this is our wake up call. The first step for us to take is to reconnect to that which is suppressed, in an environment that can support and hold us. We need to take time out, create some space, cultivate compassion for everyone involved, including ourselves, and recognise and allow our need to feel hope. From there we can start making small steps, letting go of knowing or controlling the whole process. Just one step at a time, just the next right thing can bring hope and rejuvenation to our wounded hearts.

Another way we deal with these emotions is to look for a way out, because they are too uncomfortable to be with. We identify the source of these emotions as the difficult outer situation, and so we focus our energy in finding solutions to the situation, not only because it is wrong in itself, but also to get rid of our own difficulty in facing it. We move very quickly through the pain to the judgement onto the view and the solution. We rush to become someone who has answers. We look for who is responsible, and if we can find someone to blame, all the better. If we find ourselves blaming and judging, this is our wake up call. When we confuse wanting to support truth and justice, with an unwillingness to be with the difficult we are closing down. Our unwillingness to spend enough time with really feeling overwhelmed or helpless, means we don't have the time to find the ability to be with these feelings, and later to understand them.

By doing this we additionally create a separation between us and the world. We get caught up in an "Us and Them" dynamic. This dispersal of our energies leaves us unable to participate in positive action. It adds to the kind of separation and negativity which started the whole cycle in the first place.

Another way of being with difficult situations and our own reactions to them can be to stay open and investigate what is going on in ourselves. By making full contact with our own inner life we can learn about ourselves and others, and become more open and possibly useful to others as well. This doesn't mean we should ignore injustice or violence or the destruction of our planet. It doesn't mean we shouldn't do all we can to alleviate suffering and what causes it to the best of our understanding and ability. What it means is that we should act from a wider perspective, and with a constant caring looking and investigation at what is really motivating us and moving us, and how these different forces within us support or get in the way of our true compassion, our true ability to help, to be of use.

It can help to use the power of imagination, imagine ourselves living in the situation we encounter. Gandhi said that we cannot help someone until we know what it is like to be in

their shoes. Can we find parallels between the situation and our own lives? When we look at situations more closely we can see that everything 'out there', in any political or life situation, is mirrored also 'in here', in our own conditionings and habits. In fact, it is often the reflection of ourselves that we see in the 'other' that scares us and makes us shut down.

For example, if we look at two nations who are constantly at war, where the violence is escalating, it seems totally clear from the outside that violence is just leading to more violence. We can see that it is wrong, and senseless. But if we turn our looking inwards do we not see equally 'wrong' habits and patterns that we follow even though they lead us away from peace or joy?

When we explore empathy with another's situation we equally uncover more about ourselves. This new clarity can generate more passion to work on ourselves, as well as more empathy and understanding for others.

This double effect nourishes and opens our hearts. When we can be open and peaceful with ourselves we actually bring change to the world. We become the kind of being that helps transform suffering, sometimes in small ways that go unnoticed and sometimes we hit the headlines.

An American friend who works as a consultant to NGOs and charities around the world shared an experience of crossing the checkpoint between Israel and Gaza. She was in a line of NGO workers, standing in the hot sun. She was late to the course she was leading due to the security checks by Israeli soldiers taking longer than usual. Yet she could see the queues for Gazan residents were a lot longer and were moving a lot slower. She could feel herself getting frustrated and angry with the whole system around her, a system of humiliation and degradation in which the Palestinians around her had to live day after day, subjected to unfair and unjust procedures as well as aggression and abuse from the soldiers.

When she looked around at the queues and the booths and the soldiers with their guns she suddenly sensed the fear that was at the root of it all. She felt that whoever created such a situation must be overwhelmed by fear. This understanding allowed her heart to open. She looked around and felt empathy for the Palestinians and the intense hardship they suffered, and also for the young Israeli soldiers who were so strained with anxiety. Her heart was big enough for both. And she said that this allowed her to just be with that experience of waiting to go into Gaza, so that when she finally joined the Palestinian friends waiting for her, she could be there fully with them and for them. By staying open she could do what she was there to do, she could help people in Gaza.

Allowing ourselves to be with things as they are doesn't mean letting go of a deep sense of what is right or just, or ceasing to aspire for peace in the world. But when we want to make a difference we have to see as wide as we can, so we can attend to what is calling our attention in the world and within our hearts. For this to work we have to be willing to be honest with ourselves and willing to go beyond our comfort zone, and really feel what

we are running away from. Not easy.

I recently read a true story of a young woman who lost her whole family in a concentration camp during World War two. She survived because when it was her turn to enter the gas chamber, it was too full. She said that what kept her alive during the next months in the concentration camp, was the commitment to live to tell of the horrors that she and others were subjected to. But when the moment of liberation came, she looked at the faces of those that had freed her, and she felt that to tell them her whole story would be to continue the cycle of hate and negativity. In her words, she realised that within each of us there is a potential Hitler, and she didn't want to trigger a Hitler in any one. She wished to nurture the Love that is within each of us. And her life's work became this awakening of Love in everyone she met, as well as working with the Hitler inside herself. She said that if she could touch one single human life and turn it away from negativity, from hate, from revenge, from bitterness into a life of service and love and care, then her life may be worthwhile and she deserved to survive.

Peace and understanding are two words that often go together. Understanding in the deepest sense leads to Peace in the deepest sense. Deep understanding sees the unity of all life, it also sees the futility of cycles of violence that feed more violence, and it sees the way to Peace. It also sees "There is no way to Peace; Peace is the way." I heard a testimony of a unique transformation that arose during the long conflict between Israel and Palestine. "In 2001, on my last night as a Major in the Israeli army, serving in the occupied territories, I demolished a house in El Chader village. Later on during the same day, we initiated a curfew over the village of Husan and I could see Arab girls, at the same age as my daughter, in the village which in fact became a jail. I was speaking to my wife on the telephone while looking at these young Palestinian girls on the embankment which blocked in the village. She was troubled, telling me that no one can bring our daughter Tamar home from the kindergarten. The memory of my daughter and the reality of the simple daily problems had shaken me. I was brought up thinking that everyone is out to get us. Seeing the Palestinian girls on the embankment in the village which I had closed off it hit me profoundly that these girls are no different than my own daughter. It was then that I decided that I will no longer take part in this situation, no matter what price I would have to pay."

This exceptional shift motivated Chen Alon, the Israeli Major who gave the testimony above, to found Combatants for Peace, a Palestinian-Israeli peace organisation with Suliman al-Chatib, a Palestinian freedom fighter. They have since been joined by hundreds of 'combatants' from both sides.

We need just a moment of inner peace to be able to see or hear a new way of understanding, and we need just enough courage to be willing to live it.

The Dhammapada wisely says "Hatred does not cease with hatred, but by non-hatred alone does hatred cease. This is an endless law (*Dhamma sanantano*)."

I wish for all of us to have the courage and honesty to learn from everything that is around and within us. To align our lives with what matters most and to keep opening our hearts.

Transformation is possible in our lives and in this world. We have a soft responsibility to do everything we can to make ourselves available to it. And we share the responsibility to support each other, to open to both the familiar and the unfamiliar, the known and the unknown. Change is possible, it happens all the time.

Zohar Lavie grew up in Israel.

Nathan Glyde is from the UK. They lead active meditation retreats through SanghaSeva.

During October Zohar and Nathan will lead the 'Being Peace' work retreat in Palestine and Israel; cultivating communication and understanding between all sides.

For more information, please visit <http://www.sanghaseva.org/>

7.

Open Dharma Weekend Meditation Retreat

with Jaya Ashmore & Gemma Polo

A weekend 17-19 September 2010

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*Telescombe Village Hall,
near Lewes,
not far from Brighton. East Sussex. UK*

Silence –Nature – Awakening

Open Dharma teachings draw on diverse wisdom traditions: Buddhism, Advaita (non-duality), other Asian spiritual traditions, the mystic heart of Christianity and our own human experience.

Jaya and Gemma live much of the year in India and offers retreats both there and around the world.

“Deep Rest in cells, mind, heart and spirit gives access to authentic meditation and transformative insight. Silence, gentleness, Dharma talks, nature help our unique wisdom to flower.”

There are numerous buses and trains to Lewes and Brighton. Brighton and Lewes are one

hour from London by train and 25 minutes from Gatwick Airport.

To register email: odbrighton@gmail.com

For more information:

www.opendharma.org

8.

Dharma and the Erotic

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Interview on Buddhist Geek Website

We have made a two part interview with Christopher Titmuss focus on the role and nature of Dharma and Sexuality, including romantic love, desire, sensuality and the erotic.

Buddhist Geeks is a digital media site that includes a free digital magazine and popular weekly audio program. The weekly audio program—also available in podcast form—includes interviews and discussions with some of the most influential teachers and luminaries in the Western Buddhist world. Past interviews are with teachers from the Theravada, Zen, and Vajrayana traditions—including Joseph Goldstein, Sharon Salzberg, Adyashanti, John Daido Looi, Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche, and Mingyur Rinpoche, among many others. Having been downloaded a couple million times, the Buddhist Geeks podcast is an important resource for practitioners around the world.

To check out our recent 2-part interview with Christopher The 1st <http://bit.ly/bJLv0u> A description from that episode: part of the interview, The Place of the Erotic:

We're joined this week by Insight meditation teacher and engaged activist Christopher Titmuss. Our main topic of exploration is the place of sexuality, eros, and love in the practice of Dharma. Contained within that topic we explore what is often meant by the word 'desire' in English, and how that differs from the what the Buddha taught as the source of suffering, tanha (often translated as thirst or craving).

Christopher explains some of the historical reasons that Buddhism has not be able to provide many helpful suggestions concerning sexuality, and also challenges what he sees as a common orthodox among Western teachers and practitioners in regards to sexuality and relationships. We conclude our conversation by exploring the importance—in a cultural climate where long-term monogamous relationships are becoming more and more rare—of treating the ending of relationships with greater care. "How," Christopher asks, "if we are ending a relationship, can we make a transition from intimacy to that of a caring friendship?"

Buddhist Geeks also includes a Digital Magazine featuring weekly articles submitted by the Buddhist Geeks community. These articles, as well as the podcast, explore the intersection of Buddhism with the ongoing in technology, science, and culture. The main question being explored on Buddhist Geeks is, "What does the future of BuddhaDharma look like, and how can we contribute to it?" And while respecting the tradition of Buddhism, Buddhist Geeks actively explores the emerging edge of how Dharma will express itself in our unique time and place.

If these topics are of interest to you, please considering getting geeky at www.BuddhistGeeks.com

9.

Dharma in Finland

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In 2006 an organisation called Nirodha was founded in Finland for the purpose of offering Insight Meditation retreats and other Dharma related projects and activities. The name Nirodha refers to the Buddha's third Noble Truth - the cessation of suffering. We now run a weekly sitting group in Helsinki and offer three silent meditation retreats a year.

Our upcoming programme for the rest of 2010 is:

July 9 - 16, 2010

Insight Meditation and the Three Perceptions: Ways of seeing that free the mind and heal the heart

Teachers: Caroline Jones and Kirsten Kratz

October 23-30, 2010

Insight Meditation and the Ten Paramis: Getting to know the beautiful mind and heart

Teachers: Caroline Jones and Jake Dartington

The retreats are in English and are held in venues a few hours drive a way from Helsinki. More information is available at <http://www.nirodha.fi/>. Everybody is warmly welcome!

Practice and Teaching in Pelion, Greece

Jock Millenson

431 words

The Kalikalos living-learning centre in Pelion, Greece is dedicated to demonstrating the

power of authentic community as a vehicle for building a new holistic world of peace, partnership and sustainability. Since 2002 we have been offering an educational programme of workshops, retreats, workcamps, conferences and living-in-community guest weeks in the summer months at our two sister campuses. Our programmes include healing (self, society & planet), creative arts, relationship science, and Self-enquiry. The Centre was inspired by several well known international ecovillages, in particular the Findhorn community in north Scotland, Auroville in south India and ZEGG in Germany.

Our website at www.kalikalos.com describes more fully the vision of our two campuses, their facilities and how our retreats interface with the community that holds the Centres. The Centres are unique in that they are run as a full community, with all retreatants and staff together to build community and put into practice mindfulness developed in the retreats.

Over the years we have offered at least one Vipassana retreat every summer. We would like to offer more than one, therefore we are at this time soliciting additional qualified Vipassana teachers who might be interested to lead 7 or 10 day retreats at our Centre. Our Vipassana retreats are unusual in that the group is silent from quiet time (2300 hr, 11 p.m.) through the silent lunch the following day. There is usually silent tai chi, Qi Qong, or Yoga in the early morning. Following a silent breakfast the daily rhythm is the usual alternation of sitting and walking with a daily dharma talk until the silent lunch. After lunch (14:00 hr, 2 p.m.) the participants engage in normal activities with each other and ourselves; talking, hiking or swimming together, and working in the gardens. During the 18:00-20:30 hr (6-8:30 p.m.) work time teachers generally offer 1-1 interviews to participants who are not cooking or gardening at that time.

At this stage in our evolution we are dependent on teachers who can recruit the bulk of the participants for their retreat from their own students, colleagues, friends and independent promotion. Although 2011 will be our eight year, and we print 7500 colour brochures, and advertise the Centre widely in the UK and to a lesser extent in the EU, we are still not well enough known to be able to recruit more than 2-3 participants from our own marketing. We particular welcome enquiries from European-based Vipassana (Insight Meditation) teachers.

Jock Millenson
2010 Kissos Campus Coordinator
Kalikalos Summer School, May--Oct
THE HOLLY FOUNDATION INC
Email: info@kalikalos.com
<http://www.kalikalos.com>

International Teaching Schedule Of Christopher Titmuss

July 2010 to March 2011

[Back to Top](#)

ENGLAND, DEVON

Wednesday July 14 jto Sunday July 18 2010

DHARMA DOME, BUDDHAFIELD FESTIVAL

DHARMA TEACHINGS, INQUIRY AND WORKSHOPS

Christopher Titmuss (Thursday, Friday, Saturday speaking)

The site address is:

The Gallops, Clayhidon, Nr Wellington, North Devon, England (roughly six miles south of Taunton and three miles from Wellington)

Around 3000 adults and children go to this festival with numerous workshops, one to one sessions for mind, body, spirit, plus music and dancing.

Must book in advance.

www.buddhafield.com

FRANCE

July 22 to August 1. 2010

Come to the 10th annual French Yatra. It will start on late afternoon of Thursday, July 22 to Sunday, 12 noon on August 1, 2010 .

It will be held in the lovely region of Limoux in southern part of France. Limoux is situated south of Carcassonne and Toulouse – easily accessible by air, train and coach.

Teachers: Christopher Titmuss, Christelle and others.

In 2009, we had a total of 95 adults and children. For 2010 we are not setting a limit on the numbers. We would like to encourage all those who have been on a past yatra to join with us in our celebration of the 10th Yatra.

A Yatra is a pilgrimage. Men, women and children have gone on walking pilgrimages for thousands of years. Our Yatra is run entirely on donations (dana) to cover all the running costs, and donations for teachers etc.

If you require further information about the Dharma Yatra, and you cannot locate it in this website, then send an e-mail to the address below. Please keep your e-mail with any questions rather precise. Thank you.

Do join. It is a wonderful event.

Please ensure you register so we have knowledge of numbers. Retreat will begin from near Le Moulin de Chaves Meditation Centre

To register, please send €50 or £35 or more to support initial costs or pay upon arrival.

For further information contact Muriel in France murielbansard@laposte.net

www.dharmayatra.org

info@dharmayatra.org

Do join the Yatra. It is a wonderful event.

GERMANY

Thursday 18.00 August 26 to Sunday 13.00 August 29, 2010

A SILENT RETREAT - INSIGHT MEDITATION (Vipassana)

Christopher and Tineke Osterloh

with Christopher

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in

Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with Christopher. The retreat offers the opportunity to go deeply into ourselves in a supportive and caring atmosphere. The retreat points to inner renewal, a deep sense of presence and the emptying of the mind for fresh perceptions and insights. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. No groups. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. There will be opportunity for one to one meetings with the teachers. The retreat will be taught in English/German.

Pauenhof e.V.

Pauendyck 1

D - 47665 Sonsbeck Hamb (40 minutes from Düsseldorf)

Germany

Tel. +49-(0)2835 / 44133

www.pauenhof.de

info@pauenhof.de

ENGLAND

Saturday, October 2, 2010. 10 AM TO 5 PM.

Listening to our Feelings

Christopher

We refer a lot to listening to our feelings. We find it necessary to take notice of what our feelings are saying about ourselves, another or a situation. Can we rely upon our feelings? What happens if our feelings keep changing? The Buddha referred to purity of heart and purity of intention. Is this a very different priority from listening to our feelings? The Buddha referred to worldly feelings and spiritual feelings, physical sensations and mental feelings, pleasant and painful and in between the two. The workshop will consist of teachings on the theme, sharing in small groups and inquiry into the benefits and limits of feelings.

Bodhi Garden

7a Ship Street Gardens (three minutes walk from the beach)

Brighton BN1 1AJ

Sussex,

England

+44 07796 331167

info@bodhigarden.org

www.bodhigarden.org

GERMANY

Tuesday evening October 12, 2010 to Saturday Oct 16, 2010

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP).

christopher@insightmeditation.org

Anyone with Dharma/inner work experience can join the DFP at any time. We meet twice a year.

There are places for 35 people to look into and share the depths of the Dharma. Please register with Waldaus.

Do pass the word onto others who might be interested to attend the residential DFP in Germany, Australia, Israel and New Zealand. For DFP in Germany, contact myself

christopher@insightmeditation.org

See also website DFP website. www.dharmafacilitators.org

Saturday evening October 16 2010 to Thursday lunchtime October 21, 2010.

A SILENT RETREAT

with Christopher

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with Christopher. The retreat offers the opportunity to go deeply into ourselves in a supportive and caring atmosphere. The retreat points to inner renewal, a deep sense of presence and the emptying of the mind for fresh perceptions and insights. Suitable for new and experienced meditators. No groups. Suitable for new and experienced meditators.

AUSTRALIA

Friday November 12 at 6.00 p.m. until lunch time Wednesday, November 17, 2010

DHARMA YOGA RETREAT

retreat will consist of dharma teachings, insight meditation, two yoga classes per day with yoga teachers, silent periods reading of Patanjali Sutra, and dialogue of practical application of Dharma and Yoga in daily life. All are welcome.

Gunundi Centre, Ballina, norther NSW, Australia

Christopher and [Radha Nicholson](#) at Gunundi, Ballina, NSW

Organisers: Judy Baderle jbaderle@bigpond.net.au

Dharma Teachers Meeting

November 18 14.30 to November 19. 14.00.

BUDDHA BY THE SEA

6th Dharma Gathering

November 19 to November 26, 2010 at noon.

Christopher, Subhana, Radha, Patrick Kearney and other Dharma teachers

Yarrahapinni Rainforest,

near Coffs Harbour,

NSW, Australia

Yarrahapinni Ecology Centre is situated on coastal rainforest.and five minutes walk from ocean

Coffs Harbour is the nearest major airport and Macksville the nearest major town.

Families welcome.

Contact: Will James wvjames@yahoo.com.au

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP)

November 26 – 30. 2010

Christopher and [Radha](#)

Yarrahapinni Rainforest,

near Coffs Harbour,

NSW, Australia

Yarrahapinni Ecology Centre is situated on coastal rainforest.

jbaderle@bigpond.net.au

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

www.dharmafacilitators.org

Friday December 3, 2010

Stress, Mindfulness and Liberation

Christopher Titmuss

Evening Talk. 7 pm to 9pm

Dharma Talk Cloudroom

147 Richmond Road

Morningside

Brisbane

Australia

Stress arises through desire for results, fear of not finishing and excessive thinking. Mindfulness and insight are the antidote. In this workshop, we will inquire into stress, mindfulness and the function of liberation.

www.insightmeditationaustralia.org

www.insightmeditation.org

INDIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

Our India programme will probably run through from November, 2010 until May 2011

Every month during this time, there are teachings and practices in very different environments all over India including Jaya, Gemma, Ajay, Sanghaseva and others.

See also www.openDharma.org email openDharmainfo@yahoo.com www.sanghaseva.org
email: sangha_seva@yahoo.co.uk

Do come to India to join all or part of this extraordinary and truly unique six month programme, much of it run entirely on your donations (*dana*). Our retreats in Bodh Gaya (started 1975) and the Dharma Gathering in Sarnath (started 1999) are run entirely on *dana* (donations) from participants.

TO REGISTER FOR BODH GAYA RETREATS

See www.bodhgayaretreats.org for more information on our programme for Bodh Gaya
bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

PLEASE REGISTER YOUR NAME FOR BODH GAYA BY E-MAIL. Bodh Gaya manager is Dominika Zwyrtsek and Ben Barnes. You are also guaranteed a place if you simply arrive in Bodh Gaya for the start of a retreat.

No need to register for Sarnath.

INDIA JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2011

January 6 18.00 to January 12 2011 12.00

3rd DHARMA GATHERING IN TIRUVANNAMALAI

Five minutes walk from Sri Ramana Maharshi Ashram

Mountain Breeze Guest House

Tiruvannamalai

Tamil Nadu.

Radha Nicholson

Radha Nicholson teaches the cultivation of wisdom and compassion through insight. Her teachings focus on inquiry and non-duality. Radha first met Christopher in India in 1975 where she participated in extended retreats. She was one of the founding members of the Australian community, Bodhi Farm, where she lived for 13 years. She is a Registered Psychologist with a private practice in Bangalow near Byron Bay. NSW. She has been co-teacher of the Bodh Gaya retreat with Christopher for five years.

For further information, please contact Radha

radhanicholson@ozemail.com.au

37th ANNUAL DHARMA RETREAT IN BODH GAYA. These retreats consist of comprehensive teachings in meditation (calm and insight, samatha and vipassana), silence, one to one interviews, daily teachings, inquiry, guided meditations. Suitable for new and experienced meditators.

January 17 - 27, 2011

BODH GAYA RETREATS

Radha Nicholson

Thai Monastery

Bodh Gaya, near Gaya, India

www.bodhgayaretreats.org,

bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

January 27 - February 6, 2011

BODH GAYA RETREATS

Christopher Titmuss, Radha Nicholson,

Thai Monastery

Bodh Gaya, near Gaya, India

www.bodhgayaretreats.org,

bodhgayamanagers@yahoo.com

February 9 - 19, 2011

12th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL DHARMA GATHERING

Christopher, Jaya, Radha, Zohar and Jess

Sarnath, near Varanasi, India

Come any day, leave any day. Dharma Gathering offered on donation.

www.bodhgayaretreats.org

No need to register for Sarnath.

See also www.insightmeditation.org

We have printed a beautiful flyer with colour pix to promote Bodh Gaya and Sarnath. Families welcome.

Germany

Thursday morning 9 am March 10 to noon Sunday March 13, 2011

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP).

Pauenhof e.V.

Pauendyck 1

D - 47665 Sonsbeck Hamb (40 minutes from Düsseldorf)

Germany

Tel. +49-(0)2835 / 44133

www.pauenhof.de

christopher@insightmeditation.org

Anyone with Dharma/inner work experience can join the DFP at any time. We meet twice a year.

There are places for 35 people to look into and share the depths of the Dharma. Please register with Pauenhof to stay. There is no need to register with myself.

The Dharma Blog is up to date: www.christophertitmuss.org/blog.

Three Bows In the Dharma Christopher

Dear One and All,

E-mails are checked very irregularly when teaching overseas. See teaching schedule on websites. Websites regularly updated. Control and click on website name below.

Christopher's dharma blog is www.christophertitmuss.org/blog. Type in name in flkr for photos of Sangha worldwide.

See www.youtube.com for five minute Dharma clips of Christopher.

1. www.insightmeditation.org International teaching schedule of Christopher Titmuss, to subscribe to freely distributed quarterly Dharma e-News, Dharma teachings, guided meditations, Dharma reflections, articles, social-political-analysis, 150 linked sites
2. www.christophertitmuss.org Audio library of world-wide talks and inquiries. Listen to audio guided meditations, poems, extracts from books and see more than 1500 photos of Sangha around the world on *flickr*. Listen to teachings and opportunity to download or order on CD.
3. www.dharmafacilitators.org Meet for four days twice a year to explore the depths of the Dharma and develop facilitation skills - DFP held in Australia, England, Germany, Israel and New Zealand. Limited to 35 people in a session.
4. www.livingdharma.info Twice a month personal e-mail contact with a Dharma mentor. To develop your meditation, practice and wisdom in daily life. Around 28 mentors from 12 countries. See photos, bio, article of mentors and how to join. Donation based with modest registration cost.
5. www.bodhgayaretreats.org How to register for the two annual 10 day Bodh Gaya retreats in Bihar, India, dates and information. 37th annual retreat in January 2011. Join

also the 13th annual 10 day Dharma Gathering in Sarnath, near Varanasi in February 2011. All run on donations

6. www.dharmayatra.org Join the Dharma Yatra (pilgrimage) in France starting one hour from Bergerac in southern France on July 22 afternoon and finishing at lunch on August 1, 2010 Places for 120 adults and children. Run on donations with modest registration cost.