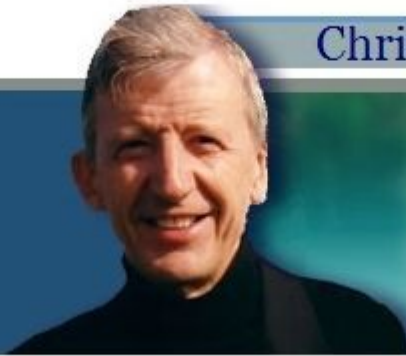


In seeing -
What utter joy!
The small mind becomes
transparent, empty,
without foundation.

Christopher



DHARMA E-NEWS Issue 23 - October 2010 - January 2011 & INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULE

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Dear Friends in the Dharma,

Welcome to the 23rd **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. If hard to read in this format, such as loss of paragraph spacing, then click [here](#) to go to home page of www.insightmeditation.org and then click on [Dharma eNews](#). Then click on issue [Dharma eNews 23](#).

If you wish to see the first 22 issues, then simply click [here](#) or go to my website at www.insightmeditation.org

If you wish to print out the Dharma e-News to read over a cafe latte, then highlight the whole 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 October 2010 to October 2011 is on my websites, as well as available at the end of this **Dharma eNews**.

In the Dharma

Three Bows

Christopher

(Editor)

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to keep us awake

Christopher Titmuss
6024 words

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Every year during the Bodh Gaya, India, retreat, I invite the yogis to write a Dharma question or two. I provide a jar with narrow strips of writing paper, and pens. There are usually around a 100 written questions over the days. I take the strips of paper to my room in the Thai Monastery, spread them out on the floor and select the easy questions to answer. I respond to them in a 75 minute Q and A session in the latter part of the 10 day retreat.

We have recorded many of these Q and A sessions over the last couple of decades. I am writing currently a Dharma book of Questions and Answers. I also receive emails about the Dharma from yogis in the East and West. These emails have come from Australia, Burma, Thailand, India, Israel and numerous Western countries. Some ask me to comment on the description of their practice, others inquire into issues arising for them about daily life while others have touched depths of realisation that have triggered fresh areas of inquiry.

I have formed 40 questions below based on written questions, emails and retreats. If you would like to email me any Dharma questions for the book, please do so. The Dharma addresses ethics, mindfulness, depths of meditation, mystical experiences, lifestyle, social, political and global issues, relationships, love, nature of things, awakening, Nirvana, emptiness and liberation.

Here is a random selection of questions responding to important questions on consciousness, meditation, Nirvana and realisation.

1. What is consciousness?

Consciousness has different meanings in different traditions. A word has no inherent meaning. We determine its meaning through its usage and agreement. I use the concept "consciousness" (Pali word is *vinanna*) much as the Buddha used it. Consciousness confirms the world of name and form, mind and matter. The world of name and form, mind and matter confirms consciousness. I do not place consciousness in a special category or give it ultimate significance. It is an aggregate in the scheme of things. We could say that consciousness has the function to make known. We could describe consciousness as the cognitive factor.

2. The Buddha has said "*vinnanam anidassanam anantam sabbato pabham.*" It literally translates as "consciousness without an attribute, infinite, all-shining (or shining everywhere)". Doesn't that equate consciousness with ultimate truth?

You can find this reference to such a consciousness twice in 5000 discourses. It is important to understand the context for such a rare statement. It seems to me the Buddha on these two occasions has taken a pragmatic step to acknowledge such a consciousness is like emptiness, since both lack any obvious attribute. You can engage in measurement of the mental/material world. You cannot convert consciousness into an object for measurement as an object requires a subject, namely consciousness. Consciousness reveals itself in infinite ways in connection with the object. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to equate consciousness with emptiness or liberation. Meditate on this. Though consciousness bears no colour, shape nor form but still dependently arises with mind and matter. Meditate on this. Apart from these two references to such a consciousness, the Buddha pointed to consciousness as linked or bound to all aspects of existence. There are also experiences in the formless realms of infinite consciousness that bring an aliveness, a sentience, to everything. You might believe that such a formless consciousness is the ultimate and transcendent truth. There are spiritual

traditions that claim such Consciousness is the Absolute. Do not take up this view. Consciousness leans on mind/matter like sheathe of wheat on another sheathe, commented the Buddha. Take note of the Buddha's rejection of claims around Consciousness (M49) such as: "I am Consciousness. I am everywhere. I am all." He added: "I do not claim to be in everything. I do not claim to be everything. I do not affirm any mode of being."

3. Buddhists believe that when we die consciousness leaves the body and enters into another body. Is this a useful belief or is it reality?

Belief and reality are often indistinguishable. What is the reality one day becomes different the next due to changes in perception, research and views. The separation of consciousness from the body for its rebirth is a belief too far. The belief in a single self, with a unique beginning at birth and an absolute extinction at death, is a belief too far. Look at the way nature keeps moving through cycles. The belief in one unique life is one extreme view. The belief in reincarnation is another extreme view. The first belief often belongs to scientific materialism with its kindergarten views on the nature of consciousness and cycles of change. The second view belongs to religion (reincarnation, going to Kingdom of Heaven or Hell after death) with its kindergarten views of separating consciousness from matter. Explore the middle way. Explore how events, great and small, keep rolling on. Know liberation from the tyranny of extreme views and beliefs. Be wary of science and religion if you wish to realise liberating truth.

4. We could say the nature binds us together. We live in the body. We require food, water, clothing, shelter and medicine. We all go through birth, ageing, pain and death. Does consciousness bind us all together?

Let us reflect frequently on what we all have in common. If we meditated on this deeply, it would affect our ethics, values and views of various people, animals and environment. As one Tibetan lama (teacher) commented: "Why do armies go to war and kill each other and numerous citizens? We are all going to die anyway." Ultimately, we are not bound together nor are we apart from each other. We certainly need love to be happy. Ultimately, we are not conscious human beings, not unconscious either, nor sometime conscious and sometimes not conscious. We can explore deeper than that. We are not products of evolutionary forces nor expressions of infinite consciousness. We are not a mystery. Go deep into the silence. Never settle for that belief that "life is a mystery." This view is an insult to your natural intelligence.

5. Why is it important to meditate?

We live in a madly conceived world. Theoretical and applied science mostly has grossly exaggerated the place of matter far beyond its significance. Yes, there are a few rare exceptions. Some major religions have fixed upon the belief in a Creator who rewards and punishes us for our actions and religions have indulged in bizarre beliefs. Yes, there are exceptions. Politicians and economists have adopted capitalism as the only financial operating system with Darwinian thinking of aggressive competition for survival. The private sector has persuaded us that material gain and wealth matters more than anything else. Many applications of science and business seem far removed from the real world with its limited resources. Meditation, reflection and a deep inquiry into life has the potential to contribute to a clear and wise relationship of consciousness to matter without exaggerating the place of one over the other. We meditate to wake up from the mundane, often referred to as living in the real world. Deep meditation establishes emotional well being, contentment, natural happiness with the power to act mindfully, and with equanimity. We pay respect to ourselves when we meditate and we pay respect to life as well.

6. Is consciousness the same as inter-connectedness?

We have to sense our inner response to these terms. Does the experience of "consciousness" feel to be a truly expansive sense of everything? Does the experience of interconnectedness feel like an expansive sense of everything? This sense, this experience is valuable. It is one

of the ways of opening our mind up beyond the narrow limits of the self. There are precious experiences of consciousness, of inter-connectedness. It is important however not to place these experiences in any kind of ultimate category. Consciousness is no nearer to nirvana than matter/form upon which it depends. Inter-connectedness carries with it an assumption, namely there are some "thing(s) connected to some thing(s) else. The understanding of dependent arising lies at the heart of the Buddha's teachings. It is not the same as inter-connectedness.

7. What is the relationship of meditation to Nirvana?

Meditation provides the opportunity for a sublime sense of silence and stillness where the constructions of mind lose their hold on the inner life. There are various depths to this sublime sense of things, free from demands upon oneself and the world. The significance of not wanting for anything, no demanding anything, nor spellbound with expectations, reveals an important feature of human experience. In this place of deep rest, a realm not of the conventional makes itself accessible. Nirvana is closer than our thoughts, closer than what we imagine and available amidst conscious and unconscious life. We confirm nirvana through realisations and their application.

8. Do I meditate with the conscious aim of reaching Nirvana or should I expect Nirvana to emerge because I meditate?

Calmness (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*) meditation addresses primary needs of the inner life. Practice and application of the teachings reduces the stress and tension that obscures calmness. Practice contributes to insight into our processes that give shape to our life. The riches and diversity of experiences of the inner life will always provide us with the opportunity for developing and deepening calmness as clear comprehension of our experiences. Far too many meditators stay glued to such a priority. If you experience a sustainable calm and clarity in your practice, then take a deep interest in nirvana and liberation. Don't imagine that somehow nirvana will mystically emerge just because you are developing calm and insight. Be willing to make realisation of nirvana as your major priority.

9. What does it mean to pass beyond samsara?

Samsara literally means "wandering on from one thing to another." Samsara is living trapped in the same old issues which keep coming up, keep being reborn in consciousness, whether we attend to these issues or not. Ask yourself: "Am I drifting around? Wavering. Indecisive. Unsure." Samsara also includes fixations? What do I obsess about? Do I feel bound, tied up, trapped, stressed? Do I go through ups and downs? This is samsara. It means that consciousness has to endure fluctuating conditions frequently impacting on body/mind. Investment in this realm of samsara gives it a reality that is not inherent to it. Samsara is a package. Open the package. See the emptiness of living in samsara. Nirvana is then obvious as colour to a person with sound eyesight.

10. Is awakening synonymous with Nirvana?

Yes and No. Yes. Awakening reveals nirvana, the cooled out realisation of no-thing-ness, of neither this nor that. No. This means awakening is seeing through stories, fabrications and proliferation of thought. This is truly liberating. Awakening cannot be without Nirvana. Nirvana cannot be without awakening. If you consider awakening and nirvana as two concepts far removed from your sensitivities, then don't hesitate to drop both concepts. Find your own expressions that intimate something revealing and precious where this (awakening) and that (nirvana) reveal the same deathless event. It is worthwhile persevering in your interest in Nirvana, even if, at times, it cost you some level of peace of mind. Why climb a mountain if you settle for calling a halt halfway up?

11. Is nirvana just another phenomena? My teacher did not accept my description of my experience of nirvana. He told me to treat the experience as just another

phenomenon? Am I deluded or is he out of touch with such experiences?

Some teachers resist hearing yogis experience of nirvana. Such teachers perhaps lack the experience, confidence or understanding of nirvana. Or, perhaps, your description does not reveal the liberating insights that must emerge out of such an experience to confirm it as nirvana. You may have to allow the experience and the insights to season over time. It sounds as though you and your teacher are doing something right since your time with him enables you to report such kinds of profound experiences. Don't move away from this situation.

12. Is the awakening of the Buddha the same or different from another's awakening?

Responses to such questions are rarely black and white. The Buddha said there are four kinds of people in this world. One kind never practices. This kind of person treats all experiences as the reality. 2nd kind of person practices to be free from the grip of grasping. Third kind has realised freedom from the grasping while the fourth kind has realised and teaches. We could say that when we share wisdom with others, based on experience and insight, the Buddha mind functions. In other words, we could say the four kinds of people exist within and without. Awakening can show itself as emergence with deep insight and understanding from the spell of a situation, a drama, a crisis. The event has lost its hold over us. The loosening of the grip is liberating.

13. How can I determine one experience as nIrvana, as used by the Buddha, and another deep spiritual experience as something else?

It is not possible to tell the difference through feeling or sensation, or absence of feeling or sensation in the time of the "experience." You cannot know this if you have realised nirvana or simply had a profound meditation/spiritual/mystical experience. Do not rely on the quality of experience of the event. Be mindful of the description you give to the experience, to the shift of consciousness, dramatic or not, short lived or not. It is the knowing, insights, realisations and liberations that matter. If it is a genuinely transformative event, you will forever be in the stream of the Dharma. You will know such event (s) as turning point(s) in your life, despite still probably have stuff to deal with in the future.

14. Is an open ended view the best approach to my practice?

No. Definitely not. On the face of it, an open ended view reveals a healthy attitude. There is not a fixation , a narrow attitude in the inquiry into the human condition. It may be a useful approach for a particular time if grasping after a goal. No more. No less. To describe it as the best approach to your practice overshadows other equally important attitudes. You may decide you are determined to reach the end of practice. You don't want it open ended and going on and on. To see and know the liberating feature of truth ends practice. There is nothing open ended about that. We have the capacity to know a fully liberated way of life that dissolves notions of open or closed ends.

15. Is Nirvana a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow?

No. The pot is empty. It is a huge "pot" that makes everything possible. The rainbow comes out of the pot and confirms it. The gold is ungraspable, unweighable and untouchable. Essentially, the rainbow, the gold and the pot confirm the same "element" the remains indestructible. That's awesome. That's the wonder. That's what realising the Dharma is all about. Nirvana is unformed, unmade. You can't form it into anything.

16. The Buddha speaks of the "end of the world." Does the end of the world also mean the end of consciousness?

Yes. Consciousness 'confirms 'the world.' The 'world' confirms 'consciousness.' Only consciousness (with perceptions, feelings, thoughts) can confirm the world. We know one via the other. There is no evidence for a primal consciousness. There is no evidence to show matter or sub atomic particles are the primal nature. The deepest Dharma makes reference to the 'end of the world.' The most noble of teachers announce the 'end of the world.' For the unrealised, this can sound like negation, extinction, a disappearance into nothingness. Trapped in matter and theories about the brain, scientists for the most part have tried to explain consciousness as an outcome of evolutionary forces or as an inexplicable biological function. Such views are narrow, limited and show the absence of meditation on the nature of consciousness and matter. We are looking in the wrong direction if we look to science for an understanding of consciousness. Scientists tell us that matter only constitutes 4% of what is in the universe. The consciousness of biologists and physicists have grasped onto sub atomic particles as fundamental. Matter is not fundamental. Matter arises dependent on conditions as much as consciousness arises dependent on conditions. Neither consciousness nor matter reveal the ground of reality. There is not a consciousness independent of matter, perceptions, feelings and thoughts.

17. If I take no interest in nirvana, am I selling myself short?

Yes. You can get a reasonable part way up the mountain. If the mountain metaphor feels like all effort and hard work, then drop it. Here is another analogy. If you are in an intimate relationship and you both enjoy making love, would you be selling yourselves short by stopping part way to go and watch *Sex and the City*? The beginning and middle of the "path" challenge every cell, every fibre of our being. An authentic way of life leaves no stone unturned – lifestyle, communication, meditation, relationships and spiritual experiences. It is not an endless endeavour. The end of the path is accessible. Truth fulfilment is direct knowing of the end of the path. The "seeing and knowing" is breathtaking. Note to readers: I have not seen on TV *Sex and the City*. I thought it was a documentary series but, apparently, it's a soap opera. Make love. Enjoy the deep rest of intimacy in its fulfilment.

18. If I take an interest in nirvana, even though it is out of my experience, am I caught up in a concept?

You must answer this question. You may find yourself facing these apparent high minded concepts. High minded concepts can truly appear to be out of this world. Practice brings such concepts down to earth, down to consciousness and into our humanity. You will know if you get caught up in the concept through how you relate to it. Confusion, self-doubt, desire and resistance indicate a mind grasping onto a concept. Non-confusion show a mind not caught up.

19. Hindrances, defilements and fetters inhibit me from realising nirvana. Do I have to purify myself first by exhausting all my defilements?

No. Treat the language of purification, exhausting of defilements, a common Buddhist view, with much mindfulness. If you grasp onto notions of purity, you will start moralising. Those attached to concepts like defilements will keep judging themselves. The language of hindrances, defilements and fetters easily feed into a negative, fault finding view about ourselves and others. Use these concepts in a very mindful way. Grasping of them will make them more trouble than they are worth. Full immersion in the stream of the Dharma requires realisations. Ultimately, you cannot fragment samsara from nirvana anymore than waves from the ocean.

20. How can I realise nirvana if there are defilements left?

Meditate on dependent arising. Reflect on the bare truth that nothing has any self-existence, including defilements. Do not hold to the view that I have to get rid of one thing first in order to experience something else after. Such a view denies the infinite nature and potential that embraces everything. Take no notice of the thoughts that reject one thing, namely

defilements, and pursue something else, namely a transcendent. You can tear yourself apart over this struggle. Realisation includes a liberated way of being that includes looking deeply and uncovering whatever needs real attention. In such a liberation, we cannot hide anything from ourselves or from others. Clear acknowledgment and exploration of defilements can confirm liberation. Those in the stream of the Dharma remain free to explore whatever arises – the good, the bad and the ugly.

21. I had developed a momentum for metta practice. It has now been lost? Should I keep practising even though it seems unreal?

Such perceptions of what is unreal usually indicate the feeling factor has faded away from the practice. There is no point in trying to use will power to force oneself to engage in *metta* (love, friendship, loving kindness) since such an attitude shows lack of kindness for oneself. The tradition has tended to isolate each of the four divine abidings, namely love, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity from each other. You need the freedom to explore all four abidings so the heart is deep and expansive. You can touch upon and explore the divine in countless ways.

22. I have doubts about the meditation technique that I have used for a long time? Is this doubt a form of delusion? Or is time to make a change in practice? Or should I ignore my doubts?

There are two ways here to view your doubts. The doubts may reveal a healthy attitude. You may have reached the limits currently of a particular meditation technique. The doubt tells you to turn to another area of practice rather than go on blindly repeating the same old technique, either because your meditation teacher has insisted you follow his or her prescription or because you cling to the benefits from the past from the technique and believe the benefits should continue. A technique can become a real support, like scaffolding for a building, a dependency or an imprisonment through the unwillingness to let it go in the short or long term. You develop an understanding of the benefits and limits of meditation techniques over months and years not from attending a few short retreats of a weeklong or so. There is a great limitation to technique. It becomes a crutch. It is used to provide a sense of security, a false sense of security. Clinging to one technique or jumping around from one technique to another show a lack of understanding of a middle way approach to practice. In the body of the Dharma, treat meditation technique as having the same significance as a finger to the whole body. Useful at times but we can live with or without.

23. How many of your students can you name as having achieved nirvana?

Nirvana reveals the emptiness of numbers, the emptiness of the construct "student" and the emptiness of "achievement." I can say there is freedom of the spirit in the Sangha emanating from those who live with a liberated wisdom whether in a rather nomadic way of life and those with homes and families or both. There are people in the Sangha with deep realisations and reveal their realisations through their way of life. It is through contact with the wise and loving that we know such people. I hear the occasional voices in the Sangha for desire for success in the material/secular world when people in the Dharma compare their situation with the so-called "better off." Some experience doubts about a rather austere way of life. We have to remember true wealth is love, happiness and deep friendship without ignoring the practical realities of the material world. If matter is 4% of the universe, let us be generous and give up to 10% of our attention to the material world. No more.

24. There are spiritual teachers who claim there is only the Now. They claim the Now is the only truth, and all practice is the ego's desire to get something for itself in the future. What is your view?

The equation of liberation and the so-called Now is an error of perception and view. It would limit liberation to the now. It is a fashionable view. Live now pay later functions as the predominant mantra of our time. This view allows for the rejection of concerns for the future

and ignores the wealth of insights available from reflection and inquiry into the past. There are very unhealthy consequences to holding to such a view of the Now. We cannot tie liberation to the Now. This would restrict freedom of being to explore. The timeless offers a freedom to explore past, present and future. Past, present and future dependently arise. Love and insight about the three fields of time confirm the timeless. Steer clear of *Nowism* and *Nowists*. Or use a long spoon when you take supper with the believers, Buddhists, Non dualists or others. Years ago, I used the language of here and now as a feature of practice but certain spiritual teachers have reified, made substantial and an exclusive reality to the here and now. In recent years, I use the here and now language very infrequently.

25. Is the path the overcoming of our imperfections and the end of the path the realisation of perfection?

No. This is a troublesome interpretation due to a very problematic duality in such a view. To take up the view that situations (events, life) are always imperfect shows a distortion in the perception. To take up the view that everything is perfect shows another distortion in the perception. Explore what it means to see "things" as they have become – free from attributing imperfection or perfection onto them. Those who go on about how imperfect everything may well develop a negative view. Those who claim everything is perfect have painted a rosy view. They will probably experience a rude awakening, a painful shock to the system through living in denial.

26. There have been some wonderful contemporary Dharma luminaries in the Theravada tradition, such as Ajahn Buddhadasa, Ajahn Chah and Upandita Sayadaw. Why can't get the West produce such luminaries?

The Dharma teachers you referred to are truly worthy of respect, appreciation and acknowledgement for their tireless dedication to the Triple Gem of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Such teachers provide us with insight and inspiration. We belong to the first one or two generation of servants of the Dharma in the West. Many Western lay teachers connected with the Theravada tradition have discarded much of the religion of Buddhism, intentionally or unintentionally, apart from application of Buddha images, as archetypes of awakening through meditation, and support for the ordained Sangha. The three teachers you mentioned are senior Buddhist monks. There are Dharma luminaries in the West whose teachings are as substantial as these ordained masters in the East. Keep your ears open.

27. After countless retreats at Gaia House and elsewhere, I am probably no closer to real fruition and attainment. I suspect only a few teachers and highly committed students have any real attainment. Is it the case of a few at the expense of the many?

Gaia House (Devon, England) and other centres offer primarily meditation and supportive practices. This is an invaluable service to the Sangha. Meditation is one limb in the body of the Dharma. To be highly committed to the Dharma is an attainment. Dharma exploration is an adventure. All credit to you for attending countless retreats at Gaia House and elsewhere. Attend countless more. Go to different teachers, different approaches. Don't play safe. It's the death of adventure. One beautiful yogi wrote to me on Facebook: "We are all dancing in the light." Now that perception blows away the idea of the few and the many.

28. Is attainment only available for those who have the necessary paramis before they even start practice?

No. Attainment is available for everybody, no matter what their history. Pali scholars translate *paramis* as *perfection*, including the *parami* of patience, ethics, generosity, renunciation, truthfulness and loving kindness. *Para* means *higher*. It conveys the capacity to express the very best within. Human beings regularly reveal to others and themselves a *parami*. One expression of attainment is the expression of a *parami*. The liberated ones have

access to the *paramis* in a wide variety of challenging situations.

29. I am not able to spend months or years practising in a Buddhist monastery in the East or even in a Western centre. Would it be wise to settle for a little calm and peace of mind to keep at bay the everyday stress?

No. It would not be wise. It would be irresponsible. To settle for calm, peace of mind and reduction of stress, no matter how welcome at times, shows a disservice to yourself, to your birth and to your state as a human being with infinite potential. Only settle for the best. The best is realisation of *paramattha* (the ultimate) and expressions of the *paramis*. You are only a finite creature when you take on board the notion that you are body and mind. This is a misplaced view. See the emptiness of this view and everything is clear beyond your wildest dreams.

30. I cannot give myself, or anybody else, a clear explanation as to why I meditate. Yet, I still meditate regularly. Is it simply a habit that keeps me going?

Count your blessings. Why do you need to explain to yourself why you meditate? Why should we feel obliged to explain to others why we meditate? Meditation is not rational. Does sitting, walking slowly, standing and reclining in silence have to make sense? If we move parts of our body for a few centimetres in sitting meditation, we feel we have done too much. It doesn't make sense to spend time in the postures especially when pain, hassle and discomfort arises. We could be out shopping all day, or being a slave to the desk all day, until we drop onto the sofa to become a zombie in front of the TV night after night. Does that make sense? Fixed habits are the trademark of the living dead. Inquire within the difference in experience between a habit and regular revitalisation through meditation.

31. Is wisdom to let everything be and let it all go, including the most incredible fruits of practice?

Wisdom is the refusal to place wisdom in categories. It is terribly easy to define wisdom as this and that. Wisdom is a liberating force that includes seeing the causes and conditions that bring events about and the application of the wisdom to the circumstances. Let us not place wisdom, or anything else for that matter, in a box. It restricts the unrestricted. There is a transcendent element to wisdom since it is not bound to events. Letting things be or letting go may express a wisdom for certain situations but shows a lack of wisdom in other situations. Sometimes we need to act, not let things be. Sometimes we need to engage rather than let it all go. There is no measurement to wisdom. It is the confirmation of the immeasurable.

32. My "self" sometimes runs wild. I feel ashamed grasping for understanding that goes on in myself. How do I deal with this?

Regular meditation serves to slow the mind down so that our mind does not behave like a monkey leaping from one branch to another. The self can go from one thing to another trying to understand. Understanding has come to you so that understanding stands under you – a foundation, a basis for action. For example, you read something. It resonates. Stop the reading. Give that what you read an opportunity to sink deeply. Apply the principle to numerous situations. Grasping after understanding is the impatient mind, the monkey mind. Apologies here to monkeys. Ask yourself: "What do I need to understand about understanding, itself?" Be patient. Listen deeply within.

33. I know that whatever arises is impersonal and not personal, not self. Can't this perception become a way of avoiding taking responsibility for what I am experiencing?

It's the other way around. The self cannot take responsibility because the only interest of the self is in the self. The self overshadows everything. "I" "I" "I" "me" "me" "me" "mine" "mine"

"mine." I, me, mine glues to the features of the world killing off the opportunity for responsibility – meaning the ability to respond. "I" am experiencing indicates a lack of response ability for the causes and conditions that enable an experience to arise. "I" has as much significance in the scheme of things as a line drawn with a stick on the water of a lake. Teachings of non-self free up the inner life for the realisation of dependent arising conditions and the capacity to act freely with love and wisdom.

34. I am practising in this monastery in Burma for several months. Neither my teacher, nor his senior monk, seem to be able to answer my questions. I am told to just go back to my practice, let go of the questions or be patient? I feel more and more frustrated. What should I do?

Send your teacher and his senior monk *metta* (loving kindness) for failing to be omniscient. Teachers and yogis live in a world defined by mind, body, brain and senses. There are questions we can ask and find a transformative reply. We can ask questions where the answer is irrelevant. We ask questions and not receive a response. There are questions we cannot ask because our heart-mind/body-form/consciousness (*nama/rupa/vinnana*) has natural limits in the duality of question and answer. What is the significance of the answerable and the unanswerable? Go deep within with this question.

35. I have been practising metta on a long disciplined retreat with a view to attaining jhanas. I feel happy and concentrated but am not sure if my experience confirms a jhana or an early stage of practice to reach a jhana. What is your advice?

The signs of happiness and concentration are excellent in terms of deep, meditative concentration (*jhana*) with happiness as a feature. Trust in your experience rather than simply accepting your teacher's affirmation or rejection of the level of your experience. If you are not sure, just know you are not sure. The Buddha has not treated *jhanas* in a lightweight manner as if consciousness can run and up down the depths of meditation with just a little practice. He has not insisted on such strength of concentration and strict conditions that make the *jhanas* virtually inaccessible. Develop concentration and happiness and you will sense the significance of your depth over time. Our mind's view and the mind of the teacher may not assess accurately your experience. Understanding the nature and value of the *jhana* will come clear. It is the sense of the depth within that matters and a fading of interest in unwelcome patterns.

36. Mindfulness courses and meditation retreat, which make the technique the priority, seem to have excluded the mystical experience from the practice. Does the Buddha reject mystical experiences? What is the place of mystical experiences in Dharma practice?

It is deeply regrettable that the West has secularised Dharma exploration. Mindfulness courses and formal meditation courses have ignored or marginalised the exploration of mystical experiences. Owing to the poverty in the West of such a range of experiences, secular culture fails to understand the significance of the mystical. 'Be mindful in every moment', 'stick to the technique' numbs consciousness in the course of time. Secular culture wants people to be emotionally well adjusted and politely fitting in with society. We become obedient to the prescription of study, work and leisure for our daily lives. The Buddha affirms the importance of the mystical through depths of meditation experience, shifts of consciousness, formless realms, heavens and hells and the poetry of nature. If you do not have mystical experiences, alone or with others, indoors or outdoors, then find out why. Has mindfulness, meditation technique, routine and habits made you into a well functioning Buddhist robot? Swim in rough seas. Even better, walk on water.

37. I always have the feeling after the interview with my teacher that I have not gone deep enough in my practice? How deep do I have to go before I get his

recognition that I have gone deep?

I know your teacher. I call him 'Mister Granite.' If he cracked a smile, the Himalayan glaciers would melt. Authentic Dharma teachers do not concern themselves with the world of praise and blame. He does not speak to make you feel good about yourself. His Dharma is not for thumbsucking kids. He is not sitting there to give you recognition that you have gone deep. He does not sit there to give you approval. If he gave you the recognition you want, it would be a sign of disrespect for you.

38. I am getting more insights from metta practice than from vipassana. I am told that metta is samatha (calmness) practice not vipassana. I feel confused.

Your email is the confirmation that nothing is separate from anything else. The practices and explorations applied to the inner life dependently arise. This means that calmness meditations can lead to insight. Heart meditations, such as *metta*, can lead to insight. *Vipassana* meditations can lead to insight. Insights can arise without any obvious practice. Insights can arise with obvious practice. Form and the formless can reveal insights. Your confusion may be due to a tendency to place different practices into different boxes. The meeting of *metta* and *vipassana* has the potential to open to the limitless. The meeting of *metta* and insights is precious.

39. I see frequently the emptiness of everything. There is nothing negative about this experience. I feel a relief in fact. Are there deeper levels of emptiness?

It is important to see and know the emptiness of 'things' since "things" are made up of causes and conditions. There is no kind of self-existing entity anywhere. It is important to know that, to experience that. It frees us up. When we know emptiness, then grasping stops. You realise there is no "thing" in truth, in reality, to grasp onto. Sadly, Buddhist commentaries on the Buddha and Nagarjuna, the two greatest exponents on emptiness, refer to different levels of emptiness. Sadly, yogis report to their teacher different levels of emptiness. Different levels of emptiness show a contradiction in terms. A 'level' has no self existence – it "exists" due to the notion of other 'levels.' There are no levels, no hierarchy, no "thing" to compare with some "thing" else. A level is a human invention, interpretation and judgement reminding us of the limits of conventions, interpretations and judgements. The language of "levels" has a usefulness at times in the conventional world. See the emptiness of the belief in deeper levels of emptiness.

40. What is the difference between longing for nirvana and really wanting to find nirvana?

Wanting nirvana hinders realisation. The mind has grabbed the concept through projections desires and pursuit of self interest. In such wanting, the self gets caught up in measurement. "I am so far from nirvana." "I am near nirvana." "I am full of doubts as to where I am." Longing expresses a quiet inner movement informing our lives. This longing confirms nirvana. The path and the goal confirm the same truth. Stay awake.

2.

**Hindrances to Clarity and Insight
- Gates to Liberation -**

**By Michal Cohen
4234 words**

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The liberated mind is luminously clear; like a sharp diamond, cutting through projections and expectations, interpretations and judgements, it allows vision into the way things are. It is imbued with wisdom and compassion, intensity, ease and joy. We all have moments of such clarity, non-duality, non-conflict and no struggle; life is just as it is. One doesn't have to be fully enlightened to experience enlightened moments. At many other times, however, we seem to lack clarity; we are dragging our feet heavily through a bog of confusion, frustration and conflict.

The **Five Hindrances to Insight and Clarity**, nivarana appear on the ground of a mind affected by dualistic thinking. In this context we are talking about two areas of duality. The first one is the **duality of preferences** - what we want and what we don't want. In a beautiful metaphor [1] the mind is referred to as a pond full of water, with the potential to reflect perfectly what's in front of it. Each of the hindrances, however, affects the water in a different way and prevents it from doing so. **Desire** (kamacchanda) is like water mixed with manifold colours, **aversion** (vyapada) is like boiling water. Desire and aversion often prepare the ground for the arising of the other pair of opposites - the duality **of energy**. Restlessness and sleepiness are two extremes on this spectrum. **Sloth and torpor** (thina-middha) are like water covered with moss, **restlessness** (uddhacca-kukkucca) like agitated water. When these four conditions are not seen with clarity and transformed, they, in turn, give rise to the fifth hindrance: **Sceptical doubt**. Doubt is like turbid and muddy water. In the same way that water affected by any of these conditions will not reflect back clearly what's in front of it, so the mind affected by any of the five hindrances will lack clarity, insight and joy.

The very perception of a hindrance is a matter of opinion. With the same validity one can choose to give these mind states a positive, conducive value. We can see desire, aversion, restlessness, sleepiness and doubt simply as stepping stone on the path of meditation. As such, they indicate a location, and not a problem. Further, we can relate to these mind states as gates on the path leading to liberation. A gate can be locked on a heavy lock; the key may be hidden away, maybe forever lost. This kind of a gate can hinder our progress on the path. On the other hand, some gates are only seemingly locked but practically open. All we need to do when facing them is to lift the handle, step in and keep walking past. The five hindrances can be given another interpretation - five open gates on the path of calm and insight. They present the walker with the opportunity to go beyond the limitation of first impression. What seemed to be an obstacle is transformed into the path -material to work with, an opportunity to expand and deepen one's sense of freedom and joy. The five hindrances are nothing but non existing open gates on the path of liberation. As mind-made illusions they may force you to slow down, listen more deeply and explore life more intimately. Once you've done this, there is nothing left to stop you, no hindrances, and no problem.[2]

The Duality of Preferences: Desire and Aversion

The term desire refers to a wide spectrum of objects and ideas that we are fascinated by or feel attraction towards. The fact that we have preferences and feel attraction is in itself a natural and important part of life. Look at nature in springtime. See how the abundance of colours and odours attracts insects to flowers. This attraction sets in motion the dance of fertility: pollination, seeding and reproducing life.

The dance of nature isn't problematic. The shift from attraction and gratitude to attachment and possessiveness, however, can be quick, tricky and potentially destructive. We know we have crossed the lines when we feel anxiety mixed with pleasure. Gratitude and appreciation intensify our experience and heighten our perception. Desire and attachment, on the other hand, take us into the realm of fantasies, fear and idealism; none of which support clarity and peace of mind.

Rahula,[3] that the Buddha's son, 18 years old at the time was once walking behind his Dad when the order of monks went on an alms round. Aware of the beauty and attractiveness of his father's body he thought; 'Being his son, I, too must be lovely looking and attractive'.

This gave rise to thoughts about the beauty of the feminine body and from there the way to sexual fantasies was short and fast. The Buddha read his son's mind and addressed him:

"Rahula, any form whatsoever... is to be seen as it actually is with right discernment as: 'This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'"

The Buddha encouraged his son to see things for what they are. The body is a physical form, and as such it is conditioned and therefore cannot promise everlasting happiness. Clinging to such an object will inevitably end up in disappointment and pain. For your own sake, the Buddha says; don't look at it for refuge and safety.

In the same sutta the Buddha continues: *"Rahula, develop meditation that is like the earth... (so that) agreeable and disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind. Just as when people throw what is clean or unclean on the earth — faeces, urine, saliva, pus, or blood — the earth is not horrified, humiliated, or disgusted by it; in the same way, when you are developing the meditation that is like the earth, agreeable and disagreeable sensory impressions that have arisen will not stay in charge of your mind."*

There is so much love and compassion in these teachings given by a father to his adolescent son. Desire has already arisen in the young mind; and if it remain as the dominant force suffering will follow. This kind of suffering is avoidable if we can change our relationship with the mind and the thoughts. If we apply a bit of common sense (through reflection) and stability (like the Buddha touching the earth) to our desiring minds and bodies, we can live life whole-heartedly, joyfully and passionately, yet in harmony and deep peace.

Aversion arises from an encounter with an unpleasant, unwished for object; pain or what is potentially painful. At the root of aversion is the fear of pain. The following dynamic is described in the sutta:

"When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two pains, physical & mental. Just as if they were to shoot a man with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot him with another one." [4]

So futile is our habitual reaction to pain. We over react with resistance and self-pity, which in turn gives rise to mental proliferation and emotional pain. The fear of pain stops us from fully experiencing it, in trying to avoid pain we fail to realize how we shoot the second arrow, straight into our heart. Aversion is in itself a second arrow – it increases pain and is avoidable.

The aversive, negative mind is as powerful as an ox pulling the cart down the hill. In this sense aversion is unwholesome, impure; if we are not aware of the initial discomfort, it is easy to get carried away with a chain of negative thoughts, each seemingly justified and right, and yet all together distractive and down pulling.

If we wish to face such strong energy we need sustained determination and skill. Realizing this dynamic is the first and essential step. Some times this is sufficient; we stop and see, and this much stopping is enough for the mind to change direction. Wisdom can cut through tendencies and make the difference. At other times, though, seeing is not enough, especially if negative thinking has already established itself in the mind as a pattern or a habit. This can happen if we are not skilled and fast enough in recognizing the tendency toward negativity and its built up in early stages. In this case we are dealing with a fully-grown ox pulling a cart already half way through a slippery slope - merely watching it being destructive is not enough.

The Buddha was once asked how to overcome negative mind-states. Though the question was rather general, the Buddha's reply relates to the specifics, indicating that different negative mind states have to be dealt with according to their intensity, character and

potential danger. Amongst the options mentioned in this text are: paying attention, tolerating, putting an end or developing the opposite attitude. Some mind states have to be avoided, it is said, and beautifully illustrated with a list of metaphors: 'There is the case where a monk, reflecting appropriately, avoids a wild elephant, a wild horse, a wild bull, a wild dog, a snake, a stump, a bramble patch, a chasm, a cliff, a cesspool, an open sewer. Reflecting appropriately, he avoids sitting in the sorts of unsuitable seats, wandering to the sorts of unsuitable habitats, and associating with the sorts of bad friends that would make his knowledgeable friends in the holy life suspect him of evil conduct. The fermentations, vexation, or fever that would arise if he were not to avoid these things do not arise for him when he avoids them. These are called the fermentations to be abandoned by avoiding.' [5]

If the power of the negative mind is still strong, avoiding it can be difficult. In this case, we can use another strategy mentioned in the sutta –cultivating the opposite attitude. With mindfulness and intention we can differentiate mental energy from the emotions with which it is entangled. By so doing we are left with bare potent energy, which than can used for cultivating a more wholesome, helpful state of mind.

Facing pain and discomfort offers the opportunity to explore freedom and liberation. We don't really have to stop there. If we can bear the pain, stay with it, accept and explore it, we find it does not block our way to happiness. Like any mind made gate - it is wide open. No experience can bind us; only our concepts and beliefs do. We don't have to go through life scared and detached: we can embrace life to the fullest, pleasant or painful. When we know each moment as it truly is, duality cease to exist. No mind-made fabrications can stop us.

The Duality of Energy: Sleepiness and Restlessness

As the story goes, Mogalana, a middle-aged man met the Buddha after years of determined, long spiritual search. It's easy to imagine Mogalana's great relief and excitement when he found this great teacher and knew that the goal is, for the first time – at reach. The wanderer Mogalana received meditation instruction from the Buddha and full of determination retreated to a remote cave to practice. He sat crossed legged in the cave, establishing mindfulness in front of him and... all of a sudden he hears his teacher's voice: 'Are you nodding off, Mogalana, are you nodding off?' Mogalana had to admit: 'Yes, great teacher. I'm nodding off; I'm sleepy and can't keep the practice going.

Soon after Mogalana regained his alertness and vitality of mind, he grew to become Maha Mogalana, Mogalana the Great – one of the two chief disciples of the Buddha; fully awake, and a great teacher. A sleepy mind, though inefficient is not a hopeless case, we learn.

Sloth and torpor, sleepiness or low energy are all very common The myth of Maha Mogalana reassures us that sleepiness does not necessarily indicate lack of motivation. The Buddha teaches Mogalana [6] ways and means to overcome sleepiness. These are easy to read and understand and I'm sure the reader will appreciate the light heartedness and practical manner in which they are presented.

Sleepiness may be a result of two different sets of conditions. The first is lack of sleep or rest; it is, therefore a physical condition with potential mental repercussions. Most of us walk through life half asleep because we simply don't sleep enough. When the body and mind are kept busy and hyped-up we may not even notice this accumulated tiredness. It's only when we relax that the exhaustion come to the surface. There is a lot of moss in the pond of our body and mind. Facing tiredness in during meditation practice may serve us as a stop sign, an inverted wake-up call.

It's important to differentiate between physical tiredness and the mind states that may accompany it. The experience of tiredness can be quite pleasant; a sense of lightness and ease both in the body and mind. We may feel a bit spaced out when the intensity, density and demands of our (ab)normal endless stream of thoughts eventually slows down. We may be aware of the shift in the mind as we actually drift into sleep: thoughts become more

random, less coherent and often fascinating, original and amusing. It's a nice break from it all.

People often misperceive this state to be a deep relaxation or meditation. Actually it's nothing very profound, only a not yet deep sleep. In relaxation and meditation the body does relax significantly; muscles ease their tension, the metabolism slows down and the breath becomes slow and shallow. Yet – the mind is utterly sharp, alert and focused. The thinking process is seen vividly and clearly. From meditation you don't sneak into sleep. After all, it's a rather well known tool for bringing about wakefulness - awakening.

The pleasantness of tiredness is also to be aware of because it can give rise to clinging. Pleasure and relaxation are indeed very much liked effects of meditation. In a beautiful metaphor the Buddha describes a person searching for heartwood for his use. [7]. This person does not know what heartwood actually is. He collects leaves, barks and branches, mistakenly assuming these are what he needs. Using the wrong materials he fails to create whatever he needs. So it is with the spiritual life; it brings many benefits- in the same way a tree give lovely leaves, branches and so forth. But it would be a mistake and a great shame to take them as signs for achieving the final goal and drop the search all together. The Buddha urges the listeners with this simile not to be satisfied with any less than the best; 'so this holly life does not have gain, honour and renown ,concentration or knowledge and vision for its benefit. But this is this unshakable deliverance of mind that is the goal of this holly life, its heartwood, and its end'

Sleepiness is not totally and entirely pleasant; the Buddha often reminds his listeners that whatever is conditioned is subject to change and therefore is Dukkha- actually or potentially unsatisfactory and unpleasant. When we feel tired we simply want to lie down and sleep. Sleepiness is accompanied by a strong desire. When desire arises all we are really looking for is its end. Acknowledging sleepiness as a desire to sleep gives a chance to see the dynamic of desire, craving and clinging. In seeing these patterns and tendencies lies the potential for liberation from unconscious grip.

At times the hindrance of sloth and torpor is well present in our meditation despite the fact that we are not lacking sleep and are actually not physically tired. Yet we drift off; we nod, yawn and fall asleep. We can call this a secondary sleepiness, an acquired sloth-like behaviour. This kind of sleepiness is there to hinder or cover over something else. The bodily sensation may still be the same and yet when we investigate, discriminating body from mind, causes and conditions we see that sleepiness follows an unpleasant sensation, emotion or thought; it is an escape mechanism. It may be useful to chase back what came prior to sleepiness, rather than identifying what follows it. Chasing back our thoughts, feelings and emotions we realize that a split second before we dozed off, a memory triggered an unpleasant emotion such as shame, hurt or frustration. Alternatively, we may discover that it was some bodily discomfort or even mild boredom. Aversion can take many different forms – subtle or gross – but, unless we see it with clarity, we will automatically try to escape it. If we only could, we'd find hundreds of ways to get away from the unpleasant. We would nit an amazingly elaborated crochet of fantasies, hopes or plans. Or, unable to do any of these, we quietly close behind us the doors of consciousness – we don't have to feel any of this anymore; we're gone, asleep.

Luckily, change is always part of life. Somehow it happens that we wake up and see how unsatisfying this pattern is. We know that we are not tired; if at all, we are tired of disconnecting from life. Dreams are not so bad; we're so used to them anyway. Just that there's life in and out there, and we hate missing our only chance to be alive. The desire to live, to be, is stronger than the fear of life, stronger than the desire not to be.

When we see the pattern of sleepiness as an escape mechanism we become aware of everything we miss sleepwalking through life. We also realize that selective wakefulness is not an option; it is all or nothing. Being awake, available and engaged means we are going to experience both sukha and dukha – the desired and agreeable as well as the unpleasant and

unwished for. Life is a package deal, or rather a gift well rapped, which we accept with both hands, openly and whole-heartedly. Being awake and available to life is the greatest privilege. But more than that, it is a commitment and a victory of the courageous heart over fear and withdrawal.

Restlessness is the opposite of sloth and torpor. Like any pair of opposites – they are rather alike despite the external differences. We recognize restlessness when we simply can't keep still even though there isn't any major physical discomfort. Restlessness is primarily a mental phenomenon, with a physical expression.

Restlessness is mainly a mind made state and as such it's very similar to the secondary sleepiness described above. The only difference being that instead of urge to lie flat; here we are drawn to move in all directions, often at once. We deal with restlessness, therefore, mainly through observing, embracing and training the mind. When you are aware of restlessness try to chase back your experience to just a split second before. As with sleepiness, you may find some discomfort, anxiety, pain or any other unpleasant sensation.

When the Buddha instructed Mogalana as to the hindrance of sloth and torpor, his first advice was not to pay any attention to a thought of drowsiness. We can apply this advice here: when you become aware of restlessness – firmly ignore it and don't pay any attention to it. Keep sitting still remembering your meditation object.

As said before, restlessness feels like too much energy to contain. On the lacking side of the same spectrum is sloth and torpor- not enough energy to keep one going. The art of meditation is finding the middle way. Restlessness is a bit too much of a good thing. When we develop sufficient concentration and skill in meditation, we gradually learn how to balance our level of energy. When there is not enough energy – reflect on something bright; to pacifying too much energy focus your attention on watching the out-breath; you may find this calming and helpful in settling the mind.

Sceptical Doubt

The Buddha was walking together with Ananda, his personal attendant, when they came to a village and headed towards its well in order drink some water. Some hostile villagers saw the two recluses from a distance, and wishing to cause them harm filled the well up to its top with leaves and branches. On arrival, the Buddha addressed Ananda thus; 'fetch me some water from this well, Ananda, to ease my thirst'. To which ananda replied: 'I can't do that great master. The water is dirty and unfit for drinking. Have some rest and then we can walk on to the next village where we can get some pure water. On hearing this, the Buddha repeated his request and Ananda his reply, for the second and third time. Heavy heartedly he fetched some dirty water and handed it to his master to drink. To his great surprise and disbelief, as soon as the Buddha held the bowl the water instantly became clear and pure.[8]

Desire, aversion, sleepiness and restlessness are like water somehow polluted. Dirty water are not the best one can drink. However, understanding the hindrances transforms them into the path – this is how we open the gates to liberation, this is the way of purification. Often we don't believe this is possible. Upon seeing dirty water, we immediately loose hope and look for other sources. We often don't take the time to investigate; we don't dare fetching dirty water and holding it in our bowls, touching it with our lips. We are so much like Ananda. Can we try the Buddha's way? Can we say 'I know the water is dirty, yet this is not going to kill me. Water with branches and leaves are still better than keep walking thirsty in a mid hot summer day, maybe it's worth trying.' Overcoming doubt is not only about enduring the unpleasant; it's about knowing that we never know it all, that whatever the mind is telling me can only be part of the picture, and yet there is a bigger perspective. Overcoming doubt is often about, despite ourselves, believing in miracles.

A thought of doubt often starts with the words 'it's impossible'. This mental expression of

doubt is contradictive within. We are full of doubt and yet what we say to ourselves is that there is not doubt, no way, no use in trying. Can we see how what we say (even privately, mentally to ourselves) conditions our perception? Can we see how words form minds? When doubt is expressed as conviction it shuts us down below an opinion. When we recognize this process we may give a chance to a more open statement, one that is honest to the fact that we don't know, and yet leaves some space for exploration, investigation, surprises and even miracles.

Not knowing, however, is not that easy. The practice and experiences during meditation often challenge the solidity and stability of this mental structure. Meditation is a disintegrative process; views, feelings and even the physical world in and around us lose their rigid borders and characters. Whether we are aware of it or not, the process of meditation involves some level of disintegration of the fabrication we call 'self'. When our awareness and concentration are enhanced, things are no more what we thought they were. When there is an underlying resistance to the unknown, it can appear destabilizing and scary; the neutral unknown is perceived as unpleasant and unwished for. In order to avoid the unpleasantness we twist the doubt into a solid view, which feels familiar and safe.

This though comforting is unhelpful. Pretending we know we stop asking, looking, touching. With time not only that we lose contact with what actually is, but also we miss our opportunity to grow and expand. Doubt is one more gate on our way to liberation. It's up to us whether we keep it close, sit by and pretend that there is nothing beyond it, or whether we dare to keep walking, out and beyond the limitations of the known – into the wide open space of liberation and peace.

Michal Cohen has followed the Dharma for the past 18 years. She has practised and studied in various centres and monasteries in India, Japan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, as well as Israel. To deepen her practice she has spent periods in self-retreat lasting from three months to one year. Michal, a mother of a young child, has also explored the Buddha's teachings as revealed in the early texts and their application to daily life. She lives in Israel.

[1] The metaphor of water in this context is based on: Angutara Nikaya, V, 193. See translation to English in: Thera Nyanaponika and Bikkhu Bodhi. (1999). Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

[2] I would like to express my gratitude and thankfulness to Brian Tucker, a dear friend and teacher, for sharing with me his insight on the five hindrances / the five open gates and inspiring this work.

[3] Majjhima Nikaya 62, Maha-Rahulovada Sutta; The Greater sutta on advice to Rahula and its commentary. All quotations from this sutta are from Thanissaro Bhikkhu's translation, as on www.accesstoinsight.org

[4] SN 36.6 Sallatha Sutta; 'The Arrow'. See translation to English in: Bikkhu Bodhi. (2000). The Connected Discourses of the Buddha. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

[5] Majjhima Nikaya 2. See English translation in: Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi. 1995. The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

[6] Angutara Nikaya 7:58, See English translation in: Thera Nyanaponika and Bikkhu Bodhi. (1999). Numerical Discourses of the Buddha. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

[7] MN 29; The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood, see English translation in: Bhikkhu Nanamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995) The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha. Buddhist Publication Society. Kandy, Sri Lanka

[8] Udana 7.9, see English translation in: Ireland John. D. (1997) The Udana and the Itivuttaka. Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka.

3.

Best Books (in my view) of Teachings of the Elders on the Dharma of the Buddha

Christopher Titmuss
2617 words

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I have a small library of 2000 books at home addressing a range of themes – the Buddha's teachings, Jesus, Islam, the Gods, Advaita, Yoga, global issues, environment, philosophy, psychology, politics, poetry and novels. Fiction can communicate truth as much as non-

fiction.

There are shelves of books devoted to teachings of the elders. In that respect, I consider myself a Theravadin. Theravada literally means Teachings of the Elders. One or two orthodox Buddhists have referred to myself as a Terror-vadin.

Although I love the Theravada meditation practices, and the kindness and wisdom of monks and nuns, I do not consider myself a follower of the rather conservative Theravada tradition, with its numerous rules, religious orthodoxy, and defined interpretation of the Buddha Dharma. The Theravada tradition has around 100 million followers, mostly concentrated in south-East Asia. Within the tradition, there are some fine progressive/radical voices. I have included some in my list of much loved books below.

Here is a list of 15 very worthwhile books written by some of the elders that serve as a commentary on the Buddha's teachings, as found in the Pali Suttas. I make use regularly several of these books as part of my research into the words of the Buddha. I have also given below a short explanation why I appreciate each book. I thoroughly recommend these books to those of you who love Dharma practice and Pali Suttas (discourses of the Buddha).

I cannot express enough appreciative joy (*mudita*) to the pandits (learned scholars in Sanskrit and Pali), past and present, who have devoted years to analysing and explaining the teachings. Without these gods, we would struggle to know the depths and range of realisations available and our infinite potential for an enlightened life.

In Alphabetical Order:

1. An Analytical Study of Four Nikayas

Dipak Kumar Brua

Mushiram Manoharal Publishers, New Delhi, India

1971. 626 pages

650 rupees

The author sheds light on the social, religious and cultural aspects of the daily lives of people as revealed in the Four Nikayas (Longer, Middle, Gradual and Discourses) of the Buddha. The author also explains the discourses to the laity, on the higher training as well as examines the secular issues, including the impact of caste (class divisions) on society. The final 200 pages gives a very brief summary of the major discourses in the four Nikayas. Those of you who can read Pali will benefit immensely from this analytical study. Sections of this book give a real sense of the way of life of citizens, householders and yogis, at the time of Gautama. After all, these people lived not happen so long ago in terms of the time our species has walked this earth.

2. A History of Pali Literature

Bimala Churn Law

Indica Books

Varanasi

1933 (reprinted 2000) 692 pages

695 rupees

The first 300 pages are an exhaustive analysis of the Pali suttas. The second section addresses the Theravada commentaries. Through the index, you can find reference to countless suttas. Sri Bimala Law sheds light on the background to numerous discourses that helped shaped the thinking of those who questioned the Buddha. Sri Law makes clear the profound importance of poetry in the Dharma as a vehicle to transform consciousness. The author gives his views on the chronological order of the suttas. Some of us have no interest in this area of scholarship. I appreciate much the light the author sheds on certain passages for our application today. Some 2500 years ago, the two main religious sects were the brahmans (the priests preserving the tradition of the Vedas (like priests, rabbis and immans today who wish to preserve the past at all costs) and the samanas, that is the yogis, meditators, spiritual seekers, monastics, who contemplate the present moment to gain

mystical experiences. You can see from the discussions the Buddha's determination to engage in a different discourse from the brahmanas and saminsas.

3. Buddhadhamma.

Natural Laws and Values for Life
Phra Payudh Payutto
State University of New York Press
Albany, New York
1995 302 pages.

Arguably, this book offers the best explanation of the 12 links of dependent arising. These links show the processes that takes place giving rise to suffering. The Buddha equates the understanding of the Dharma with the understanding of the bareness of dependent arising for an authentic awakening. Note to readers that Phra Payutto, the respected Thai monk, translates dependent arising as dependent origination. Origination can carry for some readers a tone of first cause that the Buddha refuted. It is worthwhile to memorise the sequence of links as a resource for insights into the inner life. It is important to understand the nature of dependent arising without any reference to the 12 links. The bare nature of dependent arising stays authentic whether there are awakened ones or not. I cannot see any evidence to refute dependent arising and the emptiness of self existence

4. Buddhist Dictionary:

Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines
Bhikkhu Nyantiloka
Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka
1952. 402 pages.

A classic. Indispensable to helpful knowledge and understanding of the Buddha's teachings. Available in hard copy or to download as a PDF onto your computer. Although nearly 60 years old, the Buddhist Dictionary still stands as an important translation of key Buddhist words. It is worthwhile reading the book from start to finish to get a sense of the depth and breadth of the Buddha Dharma. We live in a time of "amputations" (as one Dharma friend wrote recently) of aspects of the Buddha's teachings (such as mindfulness, meditation, impermanence, kindness) from the whole body that challenge every aspect of our existence and our relationship to this world. This dictionary makes clear the breadth of the vast body of the Dharma.

5. Concept and Reality

in early Buddhist thought
Bhikkhu Nananda
Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy, Sri Lanka
1971. 158 pages

A Western monk brought with him from Sri Lanka to Thailand a handful of copies of Concept and Reality shortly after it came out in 1971. Sri Lankan monk, Bhikkhu Nananda explains in detail the significance of "papanca" as used in the Pali. Not easy to translate, papanca generally means the proliferation of thought and the various projections involving the self and time. Papanca supports the stories that we get caught up in. I recall that this book had more impact on the practice of Western monks than any other commentary on the practice. We regularly referred it. A masterpiece of analysis. The book shows the different ways that papanca manifests in desire, conceit and views. This book addresses the profound problem in human existence due to excessive thinking.

6. Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree

The Buddha's Teachings on Voidness
Buddhadasa Bhikkhu
Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA
1994. 152 pages
\$12.50

Emptiness and non-self lie at the heart of the Buddha's radical voice. These are two themes that practitioners often struggle around. In clear and straightforward language, Ajahn

Buddhadasa (one of my two Thai teachers) addresses emptiness and non-self. He examines the ego of "I" "me" and "mine" and various ways to understand "sunnata" (emptiness). It is an excellent translation by Dhammavicayo and editing by Santikaro Bhikkhu. I listened to these themes directly from the Ajahn in the early 1970's. I can hear his voice as I read this book. A sign of a great teacher is the capacity to give the most profound teachings in an understandable language. This book is probably the most readable book on the subject available. Ven. Buddhadasa preferred the concept "voidness" to "emptiness."

7. In the Buddha's Words

An Anthology of Discourses from the Pali Canon

Edited and Introduced by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA

2005. 485 pages

\$18.95

Bhikkhu Bodhi, the Patron Saint of Pali, stands at the open doorway into the world of the Buddha by making the Pali accessible to the English speaking world. For many practitioners, the suttas are a hard nut to crack. This book is a definitive introduction to the suttas addressing the human condition, the Dharma, kamma, views and the path to liberation. Bhikkhu Bodhi gives a comprehensive commentary on numerous key concepts that the Buddha employed. This is a substantial book bearing as it says on the back jacket "eloquent testimony to the breadth and intelligence of the Buddha's teachings."

8. Mindfulness in Plain English

Venerable Henepola Gunaratana

Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA,

1991. 236 pages

\$14.95

A publisher in 2001 commissioned me to write a book on mindfulness (Mindfulness in Everyday Life). The director said: "Christopher, try and write a book as clearly written as Mindfulness in Plain English by Venerable Gunaratana." I replied: "I wish I could. I can only speak and write in English." To its credit, the Theravada tradition has exported mindfulness to the West – to deal with pain, depression and anxiety. There are mindfulness practices now developing in hospitals, prisons, schools, clinics and in offices in the public and private sector. We need books on mindfulness of shopping, use of resources, making love, communication, banking ethics and much more. Of the growing number of books on mindfulness, I regard this book by Venerable Gunaratana, the Sri Lankan monk, as easily the best introduction to the practice. This is the book to read – a simple and effective manual written in a such way that you naturally want to practice. Pass the word on.

9. Satipatthana

The Direct Path to Realization

Analayo

Windhorse Publications, Birmingham, England

2003. 319 pages

£16.95

Satipatthana means Application of Mindfulness. This book explains in detail the full meaning of this root discourse of the Buddha. Analayo, a German monk, has written the definitive guide to this discourse that focuses entirely on mindfulness/meditation for full liberation. I regard his book as the finest commentary on the discourse in the past 2000 years. The Buddha gives deep and subtle teachings with every word, phrase and analogy in this discourse. The entire tradition of vipassana bases its emphasis on the interpretation of this discourse. You can see for yourself what the Buddha said on mindfulness and you can benefit from Analayo's explanation of the word, terms and themes addressed. Indispensable for the truly serious meditator. If you read this book, you will not limit yourself to a particular method, technique or form. Read also Analayo's excellent analysis, based on the Buddha's suttas in PDF format From Grasping to Emptiness <http://www.box.net/shared/zjgoefxtik> and another PDF format online From Craving to Liberation.

<http://www.box.net/shared/tn383kz8mx> .

10. The Buddha's Teachings on Prosperity

At home. At work. In the world

Bhikkhu Basnagoda

Wisdom Publications, Boston, USA

2008. 200 pages

£9.99

I welcomed this book as a truly important contribution to the householders' life. Drawing extensively on the Buddha-Dharma, Bhikkhu Basnagoda examines our relationship to money, prosperity, relationships, parenting and social life. For example, the Buddha has examined the accumulation of wealth from an ethical standpoint, the fetish around money but also the wise application of money – rather than the naïve condemnation of wealth. The book is full of practical, down to earth guidance eminently suitable for young and old alike. To make it clear, the monk offers useful steps to address issues. Excellent bedtime reading to support wise reflection on your day. Why can't such books belong to an inquiry in schools, colleges and universities? We live blind without ethics and wisdom. There is very little free or fair about oppressive and controlling society.

11. The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism

Rune Johansson

Scandinavian Institute of Asia Studies

Curzon Press

London and Malmo, Sweden

1978. 236 pages.

(not easily available)

Do not be misled by the title. This book concentrates itself entirely on the dynamic psychology of the Buddha's teachings, not Theravada Buddhism. Other books of Buddhist psychology tend to offer from the limits of a very Western perspective. Dr. Johansson has selected numerous passages from the Pali addressing consciousness, feelings, perceptions, motivation and personality. The West often takes the view that there is the reality of the world and our subjective experience of it. The Buddha regards this perception as a view rather than a statement of true reality. This is an excellent book for all those who have a deep interest in the processes of the inner life. Western psychology is the new kid on the block in terms of the application of a therapy to the dukkha in the personality. The Buddha goes far deeper into the human situation and examines the multiple conditions, inner and outer, that shape our lives.

12. The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way

Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika

Translation and Commentary by Jay L. Garfield

Oxford University Press

1995 372 pages

US \$15.95

I regard Nagarjuna's Mulamadhyamakakarika as the foremost commentary on the Buddha's teachings of all the countless texts and books written in the past 2000 years. It is the master text for meditators dedicated to insight (vipassana). I find it impossible to refute the argument (revelations, analysis, inquiry) of Nagarjuna in the several hundred verses of the 27 chapters. I believe I have every translation from the Sanskrit or Tibetan into English on my book shelves. Professor Garfield brings an unsurpassed precision and clarity to the Mulakarika, plus a brief commentary to each verse to enable readers to get a sense of the meaning. Like the Buddha, Nagarjuna raises profound questions and then answers the questions. If you are approaching the Mulakarika for the first time, I would suggest you read aloud the verses so they have the opportunity for a deeper impact. Only the most naïve person dismisses the rigor of Nagarjuna's inquiry as intellectual. This view misses what Nagarjuna is pointing out. Be willing to spend decades meditating on the verses.

13. The Historical Buddha

Times, Life and Teachings of the Founder of Buddhism

H.W. Schumann

Translated from the German by M.O'C Walshe

Motilal Banarsidas Publishers

Delhi, India

295 rupees

1982. 274 pages

I love reading about the life of the Buddha. I have on my bookshelves about 10 biographies of the Buddha. In January, 2011, it will be my 37th year of teaching in Bodh Gaya where Buddha realised essential truth and 13th year in Sarnath, near Varanasi, where he gave his first teachings. It is a privilege to walk annually on the same soil. For many of us, the Buddha functions as THE historical archetype that embodies ethics, depths of the inner life, the sense of the spiritual and full awakening. I never tire of reading about the Buddha, his life and the social, political and religious conditions of his time. I regard Dr. Schumann's biography of the Buddha as easily the best in this regard. You may consider reading *Life of the Buddha* by Venerable Saddatissa of Sri Lanka, a small and very readable book based on the texts. Dr. Schumann, a graduate from Bonn University, Germany, spent around 20 years in India including travelling the major locations where the Buddha spent his life. His knowledge and intimacy with India shines through the book. Dr. Schumann explores Gautama's early life, the quest for truth, the foundation of the Sangha and the way of life of that period. Fascinating.

14. The Island

An Anthology of the Buddha's Teachings on Nibbana (Nirvana)

Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro

Abhayagiri Publication

For free distribution

2008. 390 pages

Ajahn Pasanno and Ajahn Amaro shared the same appreciation as myself on the significance of the ultimate teachings of the Buddha. The two monks put together this compendium of the essence of the teachings of the Buddha with excellent commentary. These teachings are for those who "rejoice in the liberation of the heart." "The Island" is one of the concepts the Buddha used to describe the ultimate. The two teachers have put together an excellent book for those who wish to take their inquiry into the Dharma into ultimate realisations. *In the last Dharma eNews, I addressed the exploration of the Deathless.*

<http://www.bodhgayaretreats.org/shared-images/DharmaEnews22.pdf>

15. What the Buddha Taught

Walpola Rahula

Corporate Body of Buddha Educational Foundation,

Taipei, Taiwan.

For free distribution

1959 152 pages

There are far too many people, including numerous Buddhists, who know very little about the Buddha's teachings. Buddhism often gets in the way of the Buddha's teachings. There is certainly a rapidly growing interest in the Dharma, as the West argues itself silly about religion and science. If you have an associate who wants to know about the Buddha and his teachings, then *What the Buddha Taught* is the ideal volume to give as a gift. Venerable Rahula from Sri Lanka writes a lucid exposition of the Four Noble Truth, non self, mental culture and the application of Dharma in the world. It is a true classic that has gone through numerous reprints.

MAY ALL BEINGS LIVE AN AWAKENED LIFE

Christopher's Teachings

Month by Month, October 2010 to February 2011

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- BRIGHTON, ENGLAND SATURDAY OCT 3. 10 AM TO 5 PM.
- GERMANY. WALDHAUS, NEAR BONN . RESIDENTIAL. DFP OCT 12 -16,
- GERMANY. WALDHAUS, SILENT RETREAT. OCT 16-21
- LONDON , ISLINGTON, ENGLAND. SUNDAY OCTOBER 24. 2 PM TO 4 PM.
- AUSTRALIA. NEAR COFFS HARBOUR DHARMA-YOGA RETREAT. NOV. 12-17.
- AUSTRALIA NEAR COFFS HARBOUR. NSW. DHARMA GATHERING. NOVE 19-26
- AUSTRALIA NEAR COFFS HARBOUR. NSW. DFP. NOV. 26-30
- AUSTRALIA. BRISBANE. MORNINGSIDE. 7 PM – 9M.
- INDIA. BODH GAYA, SILENT RETREAT. JANUARY 27 TO FEB 6. 2011
- INDIA. SARNATH, NEAR VARANASI. FEB 9 TO FEB 19

For full details of above programmes [see below](#)

5.

Mother India: the Many Guises of Poverty

Annie Eagleton
3965 words

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The reality of India's poor was brought to the big screen, in 2008, in the multi-award winning film, "Slumdog Millionaire". Shocking though it was, it is all true, and worse. I have travelled India. It is the holiest of lands and the filthiest. Most spiritual and most cruel. A land where leprosy and polio are rife, and no social system exists to treat or support its victims. Where caste prejudices are still powerful and whole swathes of society are impoverished, in the midst of an unprecedented economic boom. Multitudes of Indians toil daily to survive, yet remain poor, for labour is worth nothing. Most people work for little more than a dollar a day. Farming families made destitute by landowners and loan sharks, flock to the cities in search of work. They camp out on the streets and in railway stations, with their pathetic bundles of belongings, training their famished children to fan out in all directions, to beg food and money.

'Mother India', land of maharajas and maharanis, tigers and elephants; land of ancient wisdom, whose sages seeded the great traditions of Buddhism, yoga, meditation and Ayurveda. India's mystique has drawn me back time and again, since I first came there in the fall of 2005. Arriving overland from Pakistan, at the city of Amritsar ('Pool of Nectar'), my first impression was one of opulence - the Golden Temple, most sacred site for Sikhs and many Hindus. It was 'Diwali', the five-day Indian 'Festival of Lights,' and a couple of million souls teemed about in one seething mass of brilliant colours and devotional singing.

Pilgrims were accommodated by the thousands throughout the complex, where foreigners were also made welcome in specially reserved quarters. Free food was served around the clock, (according to the Temple brochure to half a million people daily). It was good wholesome dal with chappatis and rice pudding, cooked in great cauldrons and served by a

veritable army of volunteers. Organisation on an impressively grand scale. Everything was clean and orderly. Here, no one went hungry. Not a beggar in sight. A Sikh elder told me there are no beggars among Sikhs, because the community ensures everyone is fed. Not so elsewhere.

The other face of India was a mere overnight train journey away in Rajasthan. In the Old City of Jaipur next day, I found myself on a main thoroughfare engulfed by another sea of people, surging in both directions, amongst bicycles, motorbikes, cycle rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, horse-drawn 'tongas', cars, buses, hand-drawn carts and even elephants. In the midst of this, the sudden appearance of beggars, sitting on the ground, often horribly deformed, was a jolt each time. Every mutilation on full display, clothing routinely rolled back to expose these. Some invalids wheeled themselves along on 'skateboards'. The image that haunts me most is of an older leper woman, being pushed towards me in a cart, wailing, with outstretched arms. No fingers and half her face eaten away.

Long before I went to India, I was warned not to give to beggars. I tried to remain hardened to them in the beginning, guiltily endeavouring to ignore them. And sometimes resentfully. Thinking, "Do I have a dollar sign emblazoned on my forehead?" Thinking, "Because you are begging, do I have to be giving? Thinking "I already gave!" Everywhere I encountered them, and had to decide if, when, to whom and how much I could give, from my dwindling funds. It was all pitiful and shocking. Some may have been scammers, but many were clearly helpless and hopeless cases and I felt compelled to give.

In another part of Rajasthan, at the annual Camel Fair near Pushkar (where 50,000 camels are traded) I watched this tiny quiet town, fill up with thousands of people over the seven days of the fair. As the crowds grew, so did the number of beggars on the streets, each with a particular disability or deformity, which they highlighted in ostentatious ways: a colourful legless sadhu¹ would sail down the street on his go-cart, singing and greeting everyone; a girl rolled around on the ground twitching and moaning; a dwarf with a huge head, in outlandish dress, made strange noises; numerous gypsy women with a babe in arms worked the crowds. It seemed that each was putting on a unique 'performance' to outdo the competition. Afterwards describing this scenario to an Indiaphile friend, she alluded to it as a 'freak show'. "Nothing is hidden in India" she said, "It is all there. In your face." No institutions to care for the disabled, or 'hide' them from public view.

And as the crowds dispersed at the end of the week, as if by magic, all the beggars vanished. This was where I began to learn that beggars betake themselves from festival to festival. My feelings of shock and sympathy at their plight were now infused with a little cynicism.

But in Pushkar I came across two physically challenged men, who, rather than milking tourists and pilgrims, showed great resourcefulness: one had stumps for legs, but had some cleverly crafted callipers that enabled him to walk. Although he also had no arms, he had taught himself to paint, quite beautifully, with his mouth. Another, a Rastafarian, though hunchbacked and dramatically stunted in growth, dressed as a fashion statement, and had a clothing business, with shops in a couple of towns. Rare testament in India that disability does not have its only recourse in begging.

I was humbled one day, after stalling my motorbike for the umpteenth time, and in a sweat from trying to kick-start it, when a teenager with polio², scuttled across the lane on all fours to my assistance. Grinning up at me from the ground, he started my stubborn bike with his hand. He was the first victim of polio I had encountered. I was to come across many more on my travels through India, though all of them were begging.

Some of my most vivid memories of beggars were on trains, notably on the Coromandel Express, a thirty hour journey from Chennai in the southeast to Kolkata, two thousand miles to the north. From my upper berth in sleeper class, I could survey the near ceaseless cavalcade of food 'wallahs³', and beggars, each with a 'walk-on' part, embarking at one

station or another, moving through the elongated train and disembarking down the line.

Two blind men passed through, but one was unforgettable, because he sang with a voice as sweet as a songbird, and then blessed each who put a coin in his hand. I subsequently came across a number of singing blind beggars in India, and after seeing "Slumdog", I gained a new and chilling perspective on it ("Blind singers earn double"*). Having assumed that blind people were exploiting a talent to make a living, rather than just waiting for handouts, I now realize that it is probably as often, the other way round – vulnerable children with a good voice are blinded by racketeers, to make begging more profitable.

There was a man with half an arm, and then another man with steel-clawed extensions instead of both arms. Victims of birth defects or industrial accidents? A man with polio dragged his useless stick-thin legs, down the now filthy aisle, grovelling on his knees. It always disconcerted me to see human beings thus animalized, by the indignity of crawling. I don't remember ever seeing a wheelchair in India. But I have seen enough invalids in wheelbarrows.

Later a grubby child of five or six crawled through, using his T-shirt to sweep aside the detritus of peanut shells and plastic cups, before appealing for a few rupees. Ragged children pawed at me through the window as the train stood still at a station. Barefoot sadhus, in orange robes, collected alms. Another, by now familiar figure, a gypsy woman with a crying baby, also appealed to us with anguished face, gesturing to the baby's mouth. ("Babies earn double. Keep her crying, you'll earn triple."*) In Delhi, my son spotted one such woman, down an alley, smacking the baby until it wailed. It is well known that these women 'borrow' or even rent babies to beg with. They are the most persistent, often aggressively pursuing a 'target' for a good way, tugging at their clothes.

On this journey, I had my first of several encounters with a trio of 'hijra'⁴

(transvestites or eunuchs), who moved through the train clapping for money.

These heavily made-up 'women' strike fear into some Indians, as they are known to curse or flash at people who fail to donate. I was intrigued that they did not harangue me, as beggars usually make a beeline for westerners. Instead they smiled sweetly and greeted me with "Namaste".⁵ I since then encountered many such trios, but no hijra ever bothered me. There is a reason for this, someone told me, but added cryptically, that it was not PC to say.

Travelling west by train from Kolkata to Varanasi, the procession of beggars looked like this: a teenager laboriously dragging one hugely swollen leg, thick like a tree trunk (elephantiasis); a lass of maybe twelve or thirteen, bizarrely 'Dickensian' in a nightdress, shuffling along moaning with hand outstretched; a youth who appeared physically healthy, repeating a prayer in a croaky voice; a young blind man with a stick, moving through slowly, singing some awful mantra; two young sweeper boys, who had fashioned small brooms from fresh green plants; a man on the floor with wild hair and wild eyes, chanting "La lo, la lo"; a woman who dropped a card written in Hindi on my lap, then returned and poked me; another woman with a small wooden box of burning incense, who prodded me, demanding "Baksheesh"⁶ for her bogus blessing.

En route to Darjeeling by overnight train, I encountered three beggars, who all made an impression on me. The first had no hands, just pointed stumps outstretched, with a collection bag hanging over them. The second was an old man with the kindest face, hobbling with a truncated foot. The third took me by surprise, looking up at me from the floor, his two pitifully thin vestiges of legs pointing up provocatively. I asked him what happened to them. "Train accident" he said, and shuffled away on his canvas 'seat'.

They move through the train like fleeting characters in a play, each with but a cameo part, often using their particular hook to dramatic effect. I came to realize that India's rail system

has been, in a way, hi-jacked by beggars. Whereas on the streets, they are usually stationary among pedestrians, here passengers are like sitting ducks for beggars on the move.

There are others whose patch is the train station itself, where legions of potential donors pass day and night. At Jamalpur station in Bihar, India's poorest state, there was a young woman spread-eagled on a blanket, frothing at the mouth, flies swarming around her. Something small under a cloth next to her occasionally kicked. No one, but me, paid them any attention.

At Patna station, while waiting for a train to Gaya, for Bodhgaya, I mysteriously attracted a circle of gawkers, to watch my shoes being shined. Presently, the beat of a small drum diverted the people's attention. A grubby little Dalit⁷ girl of no more than six, with incongruous bright purple nail polish, summoned her audience, and began doing contortionist tricks. Her grand finale was to stand on her hands and lower her head down onto an erect sewing needle, which she then picked up with the eyelids of one eye. Afterwards, her younger brother assisted in collecting money, but they received a pittance of small coins from that impoverished crowd, for what was really a very clever and dangerous stunt. There was a look of disdain in their young faces, startling in ones so young, and so vulnerable.

In my travels around India I saw that beggars usually congregate near holy sites and temples. The hill station of McCleod Ganj, home of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, draws hordes of Buddhist pilgrims and western tourists, who are a magnet for beggars. Here they are quite well-organised (by a Mafia possibly) and are bussed up the hill from Dharamsala very early each morning to park themselves at their patch for the day. Most of them have leprosy, missing body parts or hideous disfigurements. Though leprosy⁸ can now be cured, among beggars there may not be this awareness, though cynics might say, it is easier to make a living as a leper, than go out to work.

The number and variety of mutilations and missing limbs in India is striking. One hears of parents actually maiming their children, to exploit them as beggars for the family. They will set them out on the street early morning, and pick them (and the money) up in the evening. I have often wondered why there are so many, or how this happened to a particular person. But in these fleeting encounters any real communication was rare, because we had no common language. The main word I heard as an entreaty was "Ma" (mother).

The holiest place for Buddhists is Bodhgaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, at the site of the Mahabodhi Temple. The little town burgeons with pagodas and meditation centres from every Buddhist country, offering teachings to foreigners, and thronging with spiritual seekers from all over the world. And a concomitant number of beggars. The long approach to the Mahabodhi Temple is lined with them sitting on the ground on both sides, and I found it quite daunting to have to 'walk the gauntlet' through them. Several young polio victims scamper around on all fours like dogs. Children circulate amongst the milling crowds, ready to pounce, whenever they spot a foreigner pulling out a purse to buy snacks or trinkets. Hungry eyes are everywhere.

Beggars are not allowed inside the temple complex, but sometimes they adhere to the fence along its boundary, and a hundred arms jingling begging bowls are thrust through the railings at the droves of circumnambulating pilgrims. The sacred ambience of the Mahabodhi is the eye of the storm that rages around its walls. The needy also station themselves all over town. Besides those overtly begging, are many locals touting for support for their school or project, genuine and opportunist, preying on westerners for donations or voluntary work.

Everywhere in the noisy, dusty town I was harangued, to the point of being leery of responding to anyone who spoke to me. Truth to tell, the only Indians who addressed me, wanted something from me. A one-way cash relationship. A common request was "Ten rupees" (which I rather cynically came to think of as the 'Bodhgaya mantra'.) Feeling 'under siege' there, and resentful of being perceived as nothing but a bottomless pit, I had to steel myself daily to enter the maelstrom of human need and greed. The holiest of places has

become a circus, where spirituality and materialism face off.

Here even the most charitable can be overwhelmed. I met one very indignant elderly Swiss woman, who was blustering about having just changed her flight, to leave much earlier than planned. When I asked why, she exclaimed, "Can't you guess? It's the **beggars!** When I first came here fourteen years ago, there was only a handful. Now there are hundreds of them!" This was a lady who had returned to Bodhgaya every year, doing voluntary work, but had finally had enough. It may come as a surprise, that the word "beggar" is not a noun, but a verb, one meaning being to "exhaust the resources or ability" - and in India, one could indeed exhaust one's own resources through giving.

The causes of India's poverty are complex, and responses to it, by both westerners and Indians themselves are myriad. I have heard numerous westerners say, "I don't give to beggars. I give to charitable organizations." Having paid to volunteer for one such charity in India, I know that funds are sometimes misspent, or do not always arrive with the people they purport to help. And besides, there are so many more needy, who charities never reach.

One wealthy English lady told me, "I always give to old women. They are so rejected." Indeed, increasingly as the extended family falls apart in India, and traditional values are eroded, it is often the grandmothers who are the casualties, callously turned out on to the street. Ironically in Mother India it is males who are revered, and women are generally regarded as chattel.

Some westerners say, "I never give to children. It only encourages them to stay out of school." But when one encounters a pack of them, barefoot, filthy, in badly fitting clothes, or no clothes at all, with swollen bellies and black hair yellowed from malnutrition (the 'sun-bleached' look that westerners pay good money to emulate), it is difficult to refuse them. They tap, tap, tap unremittingly on your arm, or even more poignantly, touch your feet, a gesture usually reserved for holy personages. Yet giving them food or money does not necessarily satisfy them. More than once I've been hounded down the street by child beggars, after I had given something. At other times, I gave to one or two kids and then was mobbed by a dozen, who swooped down from all sides.

Some Indians say, "Don't give them money - their parents will take it off them and buy beer. Buy them some food." However I have had beggars refuse food, or accept the food and continue to wait for money. (One English backpacker I shared a taxi with, was clearly irritated by the persistent waif begging at the window, whom I had handed a banana. The guy was trying to swat the child away, as one would a fly. "He didn't even eat the banana!! He dropped it on the ground! Get away you little shit!")

Other Indians advised me, "Don't buy them biscuits (or rice, or milk.) They'll just take them back to the shop to get the money for them." And then there are those individuals and institutions that steadfastly discourage begging, and consider it a scourge.

Hindus and Moslems are expected to give a tenth of their income to charity or spiritual institutions. However Hindus generally regard less fortunate individuals, as victims of their own negative 'karma', and thus responsible for their deprivations, paying the price in this life, through their own hardship. In other words they regard paupers or low castes as deserving of their lot. I have seen some Indians giving coins, but most seem stoically indifferent, 'do not see'. Even where beggars lie on the ground, in the middle of a busy street, deliberately placing themselves, where they cannot be ignored, somehow the majority of passersby manage it.

The Buddhist understanding of karma comes from Hinduism, but the Buddha taught that compassion for the suffering of others is always the right way. My Buddhist teachers encourage the practice of generosity, as the antidote to miserliness, which constricts the heart. Generosity opens the heart, and is satisfying, benefiting the giver, as well as the receiver. One teacher encouraged us to try to always carry small change. "You don't have to

give much, just a few rupees. But give from your heart." When I was able to follow this advice, I felt good, whenever I did not or could not, I felt bad.

For every opportunist, imposter or racketeer in India, there must be hundreds, yeah, thousands of genuine paupers. On the 'other side' of humanity there are kind people, rationalists, cynics and the whole spectrum of attitudes from compassion to indifference to hard-heartedness to downright contempt. Budget travellers eking out their hard-earned cash on a year-long world tour, or 'doing India', may feel dismissive of the indigenous folks, who have never had a holiday in their life, nor any hope of ever having one. We westerners may feel drained by the constant exhortations for money. We are seen as 'rich', and indeed, in comparison with their lot, we are. But an individual feels powerless to sate the incessant, gaping cavern of India's poor.

Mother India as the great feminine principle, Shakti, has many guises. As Bhavani, (the common name for mother) she has spawned over one billion children in this epoch, yet it seems she cannot nurture all her brood. As Lakshmi, she bestows wealth and fortune, but many of her progeny in this life have not been blessed with it. In her aspect as Durga, the Queen Mother, she rode tigers into battle, fiercely defending her children, the gods. It is she, Supreme Being, who maintains order and righteousness. Perhaps there is some divine plan after all. And then again, it is all Maya.

*"Slumdog Millionaire", 2008, directed by Danny Boyle

1 **sadhu**: a wandering Hindu ascetic. The word means 'good man' in Sanskrit.

2 **polio**: 'short for 'poliomyelitis' means "gray marrow inflammation," referring to the propensity of the poliovirus to attack certain cells in the spinal cord and brainstem. The virus enters the body most often by the so-called fecal-oral route—that is, from fecal matter taken into the mouth through contaminated food or fingers. 1 in 200 persons with polio develops what is known as flaccid paralysis. In most cases paralytic polio strikes the limb muscles, particularly the legs. For those infected by the poliovirus, there is no cure, and in the mid-20th century hundreds of thousands of children were struck by the disease every year. Since the 1960s, thanks to widespread use of polio vaccines, polio has been eliminated from most of the world, and it is now endemic only in several countries of Africa and South Asia. Approximately 1,000–2,000 children are still paralyzed by polio each year, most of them in India.' Encyclopaedia Britannica.

3 **wallah**: is a Hindi word used generically for a man employed at a particular thing: 'kitchen wallah', 'rickshaw wallah', 'chai wallah'; 'walli' is the female version.

4 **hijra**: a so-called 'third sex' of hermaphrodites, transvestites or eunuchs who form a special caste.

5 **Namaste**: from Sanskrit, meaning 'I bow (reverentially) to you' or 'The god in me greets the god in you'.

6 **baksheesh**: tip, donation or bribe. From Sanskrit bhagya (good fortune), Persian bakhshish, from bakhshidan, from baksh (to give).

7 The word '**Dalit**' comes from the Marathi language and means 'ground', 'suppressed', 'crushed' or 'broken to pieces'. It was first coined in the nineteenth century in the context of the caste oppression faced by the erstwhile 'Untouchables'. Mahatma Gandhi renamed them 'harijans' (children of God.)

8 **Leprosy** is one of the oldest and most feared diseases on earth, and until recently was both progressively disabling and incurable. In India, where 60 per cent of the world's leprosy patients live, leprosy has been seen as either hereditary or (as written in Hindu scriptures) a curse from God. Since 1983, however, the disease has been simply and quickly curable with Multi-Drug Therapy, and since 1995 the drugs have been available free of charge to every patient in the world. The biggest remaining barrier to eliminating the disease is ignorance and stigma: people do not know the drugs are available, and people are afraid to seek treatment.' Wikipedia

9 If I am not mistaken, the **tithing** of ten percent of income is contained in the Vedas of the **Hindus**, as well as in other scriptures. Yet most Hindus/Indians may not be aware of it. Hindus/Indians give generously at temples and places of worship, especially for religious functions and celebrations. They are also well known for large donations towards temple building.

Islam speaks about the sacrifice of fruit of work (money) within the limit of one's wealth. www.ttonline.org/forum

Annie Eagleton, 55, told Dharma eNews she has been somewhat "eclectic geographically, professionally and spiritually." Anglo-Polish by birth, she has spent most of her adult life abroad, through 40 countries with the last five years being in Asia. She currently lives in Vietnam where she teaches English & edit documents, as well as writing magazine articles & short stories. Long a social activist, she focuses on environmental issues and kindness towards animals.

6.

12 Items from Christopher's Dharma blog July 2010 to October 2010

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I write about weekly item for my Dharma blog. There are 176 posts and here are the titles of some of the postings of a blog in the last three months. Go to bottom of page to go back to previous blogs. Each blog items runs from half a page to a page or so.

<http://christophertitmuss.org/blog/>

1. *Black Humour with a point to make*
2. *How will you know if your partner is having an affair?*
3. *There is no stopping the power of love for the people of Gaza*
4. *Do the poor pay for the greed of the rich?*
5. *What is this deep interest in our self?*
6. *"America will never be at war with Islam." Are you sure, Mr President?*
7. *Let us welcome single mother households*
8. *Desire for money robs the heart of love*
9. *A football match reveals the realms of the gods*
10. *When the Dalai Lama visited Ajahn Buddhadasa...*
11. *The Wonder of Dreams. Eight Most Common Dreams*
12. *France bans the burka. Why stop there?*

7.

40 Songs for Insight and Inspiration

Christopher

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A beautiful Israeli friend, artist and dedicated to Buddhist meditation, invited me to pick some inspirational songs as she recently had started work as a DJ on a radio station. I looked through my CDs and made a list to send to her.

Music forms the voices of the Gods to uplift the heart of humanity. Music feeds the soul in a way inaccessible through the deluge of words, news, articles and studies. We live as ghosts without the culture of music where lyrics at a certain time have the power to shed light on events hidden from us in endless information and "how to books."

We can employ unwisely music , such as excessive use of MP3 players, to block out the world, numb the senses that pays little respect to the musical artists from who nourish our lives. We need to dive very consciously into the communications of the Gods of Music, as the Gods transmit from the heavens.

It is worthwhile checking out all the lyrics on songs you love. Some songs bestow upon the listener the elements of the poetic form and sharp perceptions on the human condition.

Here is my list of 40 songs for inspiration and insight. The two albums I play currently with most frequency are:

Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu and Bon Iver's For Emma.

In Alphabetical order.

SONG. ARTIST. NATIONALITY. ALBUM.

1. ALEXANDRA LEAVING. LEONARD COHEN. CANADA. 10 NEW SONGS
2. BEAUTIFUL DAY. U2. IRELAND. ALL THAT YOU CAN'T LEAVE BEHIND.
3. CANDLE IN THE WIND. ELTON JOHN. UK. THE VERY BEST OF
4. CLANDESTINO. MANU CHAO. SPAIN. CLANDESTINO
5. COME TOGETHER. THE BEATLES. UK. ABBEY ROAD
6. CON TE PARTIRO. ANDREA BOCELLI. ITALY. ROMANZA
7. FLUME. BON IVER USA.FOR EMMA.
8. GATES OF EDEN. BOB DYLAN. USA. LIVE AT BUDOKON.
9. GET UP, STAND UP. BOB MARLEY. JAMAICA. LEGEND.
- 10.GURU BANDANA. ASHA BHOSLE. INDIA. LEGACY
- 11.HALLELUJAH. LEONARD COHEN. CANADA. VARIOUS POSITIONS.
- 12.HEART OF GOLD NEIL YOUNG CANADA. HARVEST
- 13.HYMN TO THE SILENCE. VAN MORRISON. NORTHERN IRELAND. HYMNS TO THE SILENCE
- 14.IF IT BE YOUR WILL. ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS. (UK) I'M YOUR MAN TRIBUTE ALBUM (to Leonard Cohen)
- 15.IMAGINE. JOHN LENNON. UK.LEGEND
- 16.JAYA JHAGATAMBE. KRISHNA DAS. USA. LIVE ON EARTH
- 17.KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU. ABBA. SWEDEN. GOLD
- 18.LA TSHEPHILE MANG JUDITH SEPHEUMA. SOUTH AFRICA.WOMEN OF AFRICA
- 19.LOSING MY RELIGION. REM (USA). BEST OF REM
- 20.MISSISSIPPI. BOB DYLAN.USA. TELL TALE SIGNS.UNRELEASED.
- 21.MR TAMBOURINE MAN. BOB DYLAN (USA). BRINGING IT ALL BACK HOME.
- 22.MY SWEET LORD. GEORGE HARRISON. UK. THE BEST OF GEORGE HARRISON
- 23.NESSUM DORMA. PAVAROTTI. ITALIAN. THE ESSENTIAL PAVAROTTI
- 24.NEVER DREAMED YOU LEAVE IN SUMMER. JOAN BAEZ. DIAMONDS AND RUST
- 25.OFFERING CHANT. LAMA GYURME. TIBET. PLANET CHANT
- 26.OH HAPPY DAY. LADYSMITH BLACK MOMBAZA. HEAVENLY.
- 27.RAOUI (THE STORYTELLER). SOUAD MASSI (ALGERIA). RAOUI
- 28.SAIL AWAY. ENYA (IRELAND). BEST OF ENYA
- 29.SAVE TONIGHT. EAGLE-EYE CHERRY SWEDISH-USA. DESIRELESS.
- 30.SEARCH FOR THE HERO. M PEOPLE. UK.THE BEST OF M PEOPLE
- 31.STAY. JACKSON BROWNE. USA. VERY BEST OF.
- 32.TEARS IN HEAVEN. ERIC CLAPTON. UK.
- 33.THE FOOL ON THE HILL THE BEATLES (UK). MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR
- 34.THE MYSTIC'S DREAM. LOREENA MCKENNITT. CANADA
- 35.WALKING ON BROKEN GLASS. ANNIE LENNOX SCOTLAND. DIVA
- 36.WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS. QUEEN. UK. GREATEST HITS
- 37.WHERE DO THE CHILDREN PLAY? CAT STEVENS. TEA FOR THE TILLERMAN.
- 38.WHERE IS THE LOVE? BLACK EYED PEAS. USA.
- 39.WIYATHUL. GEOFFREY GURRUMUL YUNIPINGU. AUSTRALIA GURRUMUL
- 40.YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL. JAMES BLUNT. ENGLAND. BACK TO BEDLAM.

Plus One Giant Leap – a remarkable album of world music.

Remember to listen to your music with total attention to open the heart to the Immeasurable.

8.

**Christopher's Teaching Schedule
October 2010 to October 2011**

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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.

Near Bonn/Cologne at Zentrum for Buddhismus

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 at Zentrum for Buddhismus

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.

Zentrum for Buddhismus *Waldhaus am Lachersee (one hour from Bonn/Cologne)*

D 56643, Nickenich, Germany

0049 2636 3344

budwest@t-online.de

www.buddhismus-im-western.de

ENGLAND

Mindfulness in the City

Christopher

Sunday October 24. 2 pm to 4 pm

Unity, 227A Upper Street,

Islington, London N1
All are welcome

AUSTRALIA

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

DHARMA YOGA RETREAT, near Coffs Harbour, NSW

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.

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.

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, NEAR COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

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), NEAR COFFS HARBOUR, NSW

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 , Sarnath, near Vaanasi

13th 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.

ENGLAND, BRIGHTON

Saturday, March 5, 2011. 10 AM TO 5 PM.

Why do I live in habits when I know better?

Christopher

We grow up with a range of tendencies. Some fade away. Others seems to have such a grip over conscious life. We have a deep interest to break away from some unsatisfactory patterns that have been with us for probably a long time. Yet our voice of clarity often seems powerless compared to the strength of the tendency. We can feel to imprisoned to our patterns. The Buddha's teachings address directly this issue. In this workshop, we will explore the issue of tendencies, habits and patterns and find practical ways for their resolution. Open to all. Be willing to share.

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 , near Dusseldorf

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.

ISRAEL

April 20 – April 24

Christopher, Sandhya, Lila and Eran

April 24 – April 30,

Christopher, Stephen Fulder and Reni assisting.

Silent Residential Retreats. Eindor, northern Israel.

Insight Meditation (Vipassana) and Dharma Teachings.

May 1 - 2

May 2 is Memorial Day in Israel to mark the Holocaust

Dharma Gathering, Tel Aviv (non-residential)

<http://tovana.org.il>

Website is in Hebrew and available in English

Hebrew info page for the course in tovana's site is:

http://tovana.org.il/newsite/magazine_details.asp?id=1188

tovana.rishum@gmail.com

mail for general questions:

tovana@tovana.org.il

GERMANY, near Bonn/Cologne

Friday May 6 - Friday May 13, 2011

A DEEP SENSE OF PRESENCE

A SILENT RETREAT

with Christopher and [Nicole Stern](#)

translated into German

This classical Vipassana retreat will include comprehensive meditation instructions in Vipassana (Insight) meditation, a daily talk and regular one to one meetings with the teachers. 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. The retreat will include regular one to one meetings with the teachers. Suitable for new and experienced meditators.

EINE TIEFE ERFAHRUNG VON PRÄSENZ

Schweigekurs

Englisch mit deutscher Uebersetzung

Dieses klassische Vipassana Retreat beinhaltet umfassende Meditationsanleitungen der Vipassana (Einsichts-) Meditation, einem taeglichen Vortrag und Einzelgespraechen mit den Lehrern. Das Retreat gibt die Moeglichkeit tief in eine unterstuetzende und fuersorgliche Atmosphaere einzutauchen. Es geht um innere Erneuerung, einem tiefen Gefuehl von Gegenwaertigkeit und dem "Entleeren" des Geistes fuer frische Sichtweisen und Einsichten. Geeignet fuer neue und erfahrene Praktizierende.

Zentrum for Buddhismus

Waldhaus am Lachersee

D 56643, Nickenich, Germany

0049 2636 3344

budwest@t-online.de

www.buddhismus-im-western.de

ENGLAND, Lewes, near Brighton

Thursday evening May 26, 2011 and end on Sunday, 4 pm of 29th May, 2011

THE POWER OF MINDFULNESS, MEDITATION AND REALIZATION

Christopher Titmuss

Youth Hostel,

Telscombe Village: YHA,

Bank Cottages, Telscombe,

Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 3HZ.

Organisers. Beka Card and Dominika Zwyrtek

To register: dfpbrighton@gmail.com

In the morning, this residential retreat will consist of instructions, groups and sharing on the themes of the retreat. After lunch, it will be a silent retreat, Dharma talk, inquiry and one to one with Christopher. All are welcome. Rooms and camping available. Lewes is located just outside Brighton. It is one hour by train from Victoria Station, London and 25 minutes on the direct train from Gatwick Airport, outside London.

ENGLAND, DEVON

Wednesday July 13 to Sunday July 17 2011

BUDDHAFIELD FESTIVAL

DHARMA TEACHINGS

Christopher Titmuss (7th year of offering teachings in Dharma Parlour on Friday and Saturday).

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 wonderful festival with numerous workshops, exploration of mind, body, spirit, plus music and dancing.

Must book in advance.

www.buddhafiield.com

FRANCE, NEAR LIMOUX

Thursday afternoon of July 28, 2011, to Sunday noon August 7, 2011.

Come to the 11th annual French Yatra.

It will be held again 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 Ella ya.

In 2010, we had a total of 115 adults and children. We would like to encourage all those who have been on a past yatra to join us on our annual 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 25 to Sunday 13.00 August 28, 2011

A SILENT RETREAT - INSIGHT MEDITATION (Vipassana)

Christopher and Tineke Osterloh

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

POLAND.

Evening Public talk in Warsaw on Tuesday August 30, 2011

Wednesday evening of August 31 to Sunday lunch of Sept. 4, 2011.

The Art of Mindfulness and Meditation

Residential retreat near Warsaw.

Evening Public talk in Krakow on Tuesday evening, September 6.

For further information, contact

Ewa Korczak. E-mail ewa.korczak@altmaster.com

GERMANY.

**Near Bonn/Cologne at Zentrum for Buddhismus
Wednesday evening October 12, 2011 to Sunday Oct 16, 2011**

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

Sunday evening October 16 2011 to Friday lunchtime October 21, 2011

**A SILENT RETREAT at Zentrum for Buddhismus
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.

Zentrum for Buddhismus Waldhaus am Lachersee (one hour from Bonn/Cologne)

D 56643, Nickenich, Germany

0049 2636 3344

budwest@t-online.de

www.buddhismus-im-western.de

9.

Vision of a new Dharma Centre and Community in Germany near the border of the Czech Republic and Poland

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The place

This summer I came across a beautiful old school house in a small town on the eastern border of Germany. About 80 kilometres east of Dresden, it is located close to Czechia (Czech Republic) and Poland and may be equally attractive to Dharma friends coming from over there. The building is in a very good condition.

On 3 floors it provides 12 class rooms (for accommodation / flats), a hall of 90 square meters size (perfect as a meditation hall) and some smaller rooms. Additionally, there is a sports hall that would fit also for very large groups.

The two buildings are situated on a plot of land of about 10.000 square meters with some old trees on it. The whole property is for sale at a remarkable low price, so that buying it would not be a big problem. Eight photographs of the place, interior and exterior, can be seen in folder for Vision for German Centre

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/christophertitmuss/>

The program

There is the idea to offer Dharma related events, such as meditation classes and retreats, sutta study, yoga, qigong, tai chi and to invite well known, as well as new teachers, for that. In addition, my brother is interested in establishing a program on philosophical, ethical and human rights topics there. It is intended, to keep the daily rates clearly below the today's average. In the longer term, a small old age home and hospice could be included. The place has the potential for all of that.

The team

In order to prepare and maintain the place, as well as to establish and run the program and to serve and support the visitors, a team of capable and likeminded people is required. A minimum of 6 men and women may live there in a Dharma community with plenty of space for personal use. This is the major point: The whole project can start only, if there are enough of us to take care full of the facility and to have time and space to enjoy togetherness and privacy.

If you are interested and like to have some more information, please contact me at: peter.bielig@googlemail.com

Peter has been a participant in the

Dharma Facilitators Programme (DFP) in Germany for several years.

He spent about three months in India earlier this year. He lives in Munich.

10.

New CDs of Christopher's Teachings

Nadamo
504 words

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In the summer of 2010, I edited many talks and compiled four new 'Themed CDs'.

First CD 'Birthday Talks' has six talks, which Christopher gave on his birthday in years past. All talks are given on Earth Day, April 22nd in 1983, 84, 86, 90, 91 and 97. Some talks are personal recollections, plus Christopher's usual sparks of humour.

Second CD 'Feelings' has five talks from 2006 to 2010. The talks explain how to deal with feelings, sensations, and emotions - mentioning also how to deal with the so called 'unpleasant feeling'.

Third CD 'Meditation Instructions' has 19 files covering the period from 1983 to 2010. Many different and helpful instructions given often at the beginning of a retreat and during the retreat itself. These instructions for all four postures are very helpful to everyone who needs guidance for his practice and support. This CD has a playing time of more than seven hours and gives support (dhamma) for all questions concerning practice.

Fourth CD has the title 'The Nature Of ...' followed by 1. Doing, 2. Personality, 3. Walking, 4. Wisdom, 5. Things, 6. Consciousness, and 7. Mystical Experience. Seven talks on various important subjects worth reflecting. These talks are given between 1986 and 2009. Listening to older talks you will hear much more reference to the 'Here and Now.' Today the 'Here and Now' doesn't have that importance for him in his teachings. Instead, he makes more reference to dependent arising of past, present and future.

In preparation: A very personal CD, I am collecting personal stories Christopher tells himself over the years in hundreds of talks. I cut the stories out of the talks and prepare them for this CD. So far, I have 47 shorter and longer stories. Upbringing, family, monks life, love affairs, times with Ajahn Buddhadasa, Ajahn Dhammadharo Jungian analyst, dreams, travels, political initiatives. Do let me know of stories that Christopher told in talks - with place, approximate date and talk title. Please write to: nadamo@web.de

In preparation: 'Guided Meditations' 30 to 45 minutes long.

Details of the new CDs. See also

<http://www.christophertitnuss.org/index.php/welcome/eng/themedcds>

Birthday Talks

Talks: Earth Day Talk; A Birthday Talk; Spiritual Exercises; The Way Of Meditation; Dharma In Daily Life Series; In Our House In Our Apartment

All these talks were given on Christopher's birthday 22nd of April! By himself!

Feelings	Talks: Sensations And Feelings; Perception, Feeling, Thought; Benefits And Limits Of Feelings; Value Of The Unpleasant Feeling; Transforming And Developing Feelings
Meditation Instructions	19 files with instructions about posture, breath, sitting-, walking-, standing-, and reclining meditation, mindfulness of the body, feelings and mind states, eating and diet, the hindrances, change, motivation, choice and attention. - Playing Time: 7h 14 min.
The Nature Of ...	Talks on the nature of 1) Doing 2) Personality 3) Walking 4) Wisdom 5) Things 6) Consciousness 7) Mystical Experience

In the Dharma
Nadamo
www.christophertitmuss.org

11.

Open Dharma Retreats

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25 January - 3 February, 2011

Silent retreat near Sri Ramana Maharishi's Ashram and Mount Arunachala, in Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu, South India.

Facilitators: Ajay and Jaya. Jess Huon will assist with the teachings.

opendharmainfo@yahoo.com

9 - 19 February, 2011

Dharma gathering in Sarnath, India.

Come any day, leave any day.

Offered completely on a donation basis.

No pre-registration.

Facilitators: Christopher, Jaya, Jess, Zohar, and others.

For more information check:

www.bodhgayaretreats.org <<http://www.bodhgayaretreats.org/>>

20- 27 February, 2011

Possible 7-day retreat with Ajay and Jaya.

Jess Huon will assist with the teachings.

There is a possibility that we will lead 2 retreats instead of one.

Location still unknown!

17-22 April, 2011

Deep rest retreat in the hills near Tarragona, Catalonia, Spain.

Facilitators: Jaya and Gemma

retirosopendharma@gmail.com

SanghaSeva Retreats

November 28 - December 8 2010 Silent meditation retreat and December 8 - 28 2010 Work retreat Anandwan leprosy community, Maharashtra, India Silent retreat facilitated by Ajay Singh, Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie Work retreat facilitated by Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

January 17 -24 2011 Silent meditation retreat Tiruvanamalai, India Facilitated by Ajay Singh, Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

March 14 - 24 2011 Eco-transformation retreat Near Dharamsala, India Facilitated by Nathan Glyde and Zohar Lavie

April 2 - 9 2011 Tree planting retreat. Scotland. Facilitated by Kirsten Kratz

For more info see www.sanghaseva.org

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**In the Dharma
Three Bows
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 for weekly viewpoint

See *flickr* for around 3000 photos in various sets 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 photos of Sangha around the world on *flickr*. Listen to teachings and opportunity to download or order on CD. Paypal available.

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 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 2009. All run on donations

6. www.dharmayatra.org Join the Dharma Yatra (pilgrimage) in France starting one hour from Bergerac in southern France between afternoon of July 22 and noon of August 01, 2010. Places for 120 adults and children. Run on donations with modest registration cost.

