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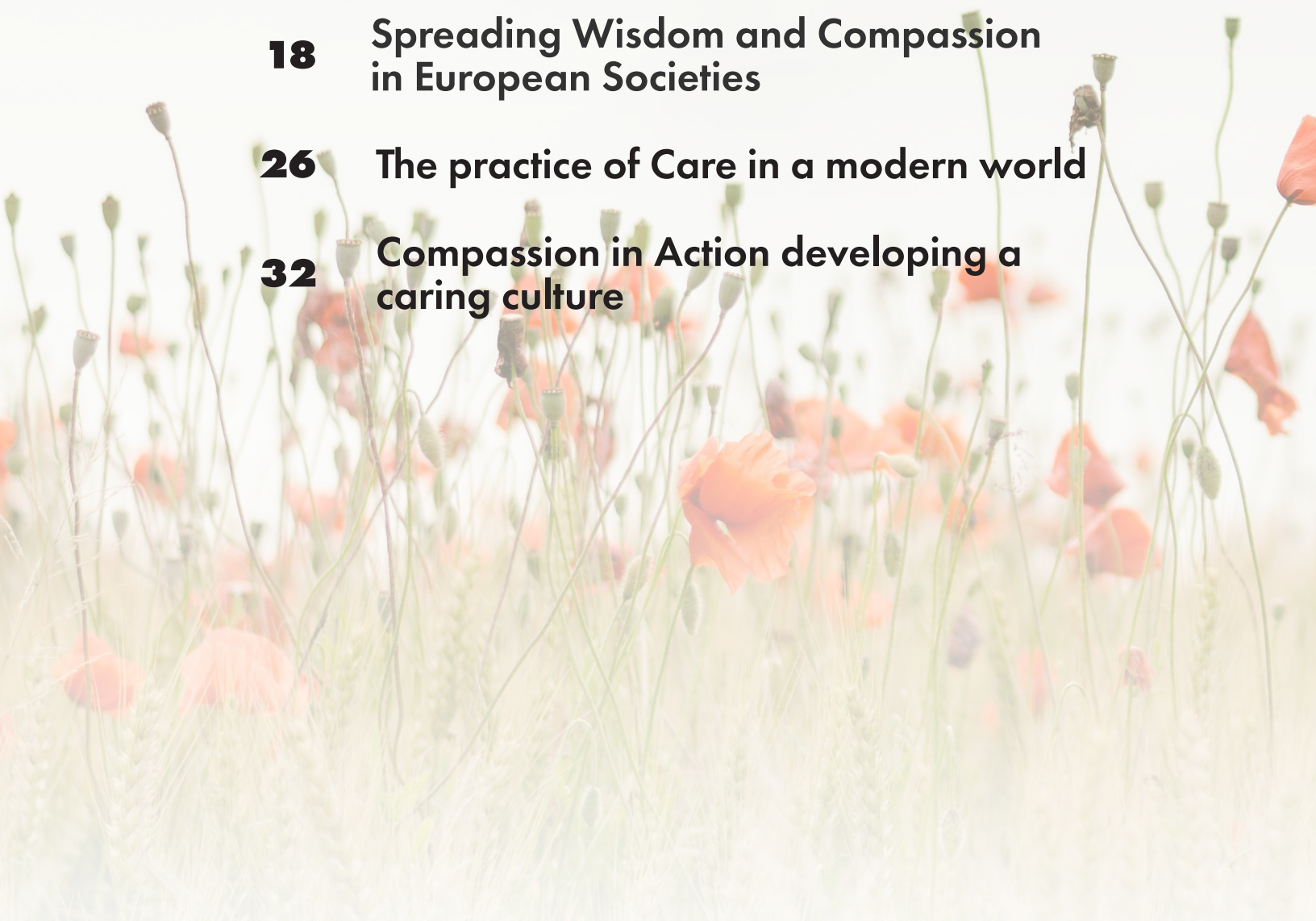
EUROPEAN BUDDHIST

magazine

**SPREADING WISDOM
AND COMPASSION**

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Editorial

Dear readers, dear friends,

It is my great pleasure to introduce to you the first issue of the European Buddhist Magazine. This new magazine of the European Buddhist Union is an important step to give people all over Europe access to the voice of Buddhism. In doing so, we can show how the EBU and its members contribute to a society guided by wisdom and compassion, for the happiness and wellbeing of all. This Magazine is also a way to intensify our intra-Buddhist dialogue.

In the near future, we will also offer the option for individuals who support our work to acquire a 'supportive EBU membership'. This will give them access to a regular EBU Newsletter with a report of our activities, as well as this European Buddhist Magazine. The Magazine also raises an opportunity for those sympathetic to our cause to offer a donation, so we are able to continue and expand our work.

The subject of this inaugural issue is 'Wisdom and Compassion in European Societies', the same theme as the EBU conference event at the Enlightenment Stupa of Benalmádena, Spain earlier this year. Wisdom and Compassion obviously are two core Buddhist principles, which are interlinked. To my view, we need to pay much more attention to these if we want to point our societies in a more positive and beneficial direction. When you read the articles, you will notice the richness of the Buddhist traditions and Buddhist thoughts represented in the EBU. You will notice how many aspects of Wisdom and Compassion are already applied in a wide variety of ways by all Buddhist schools and groups and might feel inspired by their enthusiasm.

I sincerely hope you will enjoy reading the European Buddhist Magazine,

With my best wishes in the Dharma,



Ron Eichhorn - Mio Sop JJN
European Buddhist Union President

SPREADING WISDOM AND COMPASSION IN EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

By Carola Roloff



Possibilities of Buddhist Teacher Training at European Universities

We should make ourselves aware that today about three million Buddhists are living in Europe. Thus it seems fair enough to think about solid and effective possibilities for European Buddhist teacher training, not in order to do missionary work, but to ensure certain quality standards for spreading wisdom and compassion.

The question we are confronted with is twofold;

1. how can Buddhism benefit Western Societies which mainly consist of non-Buddhists, and
2. how to train a) Buddhists who teach in Buddhist centres, and b) Buddhists who teach in schools/public institutions etc. Also, what are the problems Buddhist women are confronted with? This is my main focus today.

In large parts of Asian societies Buddhist women are still seen as inferior to men. In many traditions women are encouraged to make prayers for a male rebirth, and men pray not to be reborn as a woman

(there seems to be even a special mantra for that purpose).

Within the traditional Buddhist system, women—nuns as well as lay women—still do not have the same chances and possibilities of Buddhist teacher training as men have.

For around the last 1500 years, starting with Nālandā, the largest Buddhist University in ancient India (founded in about the 5th century), the main Buddhist teacher training took place in monastic environments and thus was largely restricted to monks only.

With growing democratic influence worldwide, societies in Asia too have changed since the beginning of the last century. In countries such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan and China but also in India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar, Buddhist education systems have been adapted to international education standards.

Buddhism can be studied at many state universities now, where women and men—whether ordained or not—can obtain a BA,

MA and PhD in Buddha Dhamma¹. Some renowned Asian professors have been trained at European universities. Here they are mainly interested to learn the different ways of historical critical research and the methods of Buddhology. Thus, in Asia a kind of “theology” has already been introduced, but with regard to the methodology it is not fulfilling international standards yet. Because of these study possibilities, many of those women, who still are denied equal access to Buddhist education in the traditional monastic system, have become well qualified teachers of Buddhism at Western universities.

But the power of ritual and institutional leadership is often—depending on country and tradition—still with monks only. Therefore it is still true that women’s institutional place in Buddhism is inferior to men’s. In the West, such sexist attitudes are no longer accepted. Therefore one of the

¹ For details in German see Roloff, Carola. 2002. “Buddhismus-Studien an Hochschulen weltweit”, *Tibet und Buddhismus* 16.3. Online: <https://www.tibet.de/fileadmin/migration/media/tibu062-2002-27-cr-hochschulen.pdf>

questions we have to deal with is: How can we adapt Buddhism for Buddhists living in European societies?

Let's go back to the main topic of the conference now. What do we mean by 'Spreading wisdom and compassion in European Societies'? How and where do we train in wisdom and compassion and by which means do we want to teach or spread wisdom and compassion?

There are many tools Buddhism puts at our disposal, especially when it comes to

- knowledge and practice in the area of mindfulness,
- mind training in loving kindness (maitrī/ mettā) and compassion (karuṇā),
- dealing with one's emotions in view of affection/attachment,

aversion, fear and aggression, and

- learning to meditate in order to gain insight into the real nature of things.

Such practical training, however, that can also benefit non-Buddhists is still very rare to be found at universities. Based on empirical and other scientific research, some techniques, mostly secularized, already find admission via the faculties of psychology, gerontology, education, and sports.

Mindfulness and other meditation practices are taught at schools and universities, in the United States more often than in Europe. But there are also complaints about poor quality control. Thus the question of a kind of certification of teachers in mindfulness and meditation came up.

In Buddhist centres too the question of where and how future generations of teachers should be educated becomes increasingly urgent. What we need are teachers who are competent to meet with the requirements of our Western/European context. Therefore, instead of sending young Europeans to Asia, in order to get trained there, we should focus on developing adequate training programs here.

When we look to Islam, which has been in Germany for some years now, a widespread debate has been launched about whether Muslim imams should be trained at state-funded universities. And how about Christianity? Can you become a Christian priest at university? Yes and no. This question needs some clarification. What is meant by this?



In Germany, you can become a theologian including the study of so-called practical theology where you learn about liturgy, sermons and pastoral care. After you have finished your MA studies, you can join a Christian parish and gain experience of putting such learning into practice. So you do not become a priest at university, but you become a priest due to your additional training in the parish.

That's why I think it is worth considering whether European Buddhist teachers could receive their basic education at European universities too, funded by the respective states. And if so, whether it wouldn't be time to consider together what such training might look like.

In Europe, in those countries where the state provides Christians—and now also Muslims—the possibility to study theology in order to become a teacher of religion at school, Buddhists should have the same possibility. Based on the legal principle of equality, such studies could have a special focus on practical Buddhist “theology” or engaged Buddhism including pastoral care, various forms of counselling in the field of health care, social work, prison work and psychotherapy. There is already some know-how we can build on. The European Buddhist Union has started collecting resources on prison chaplaincy. The American Sravasti Abbey Nuns Community started their Prison Outreach in 2009. They work with prisoners put on death row.

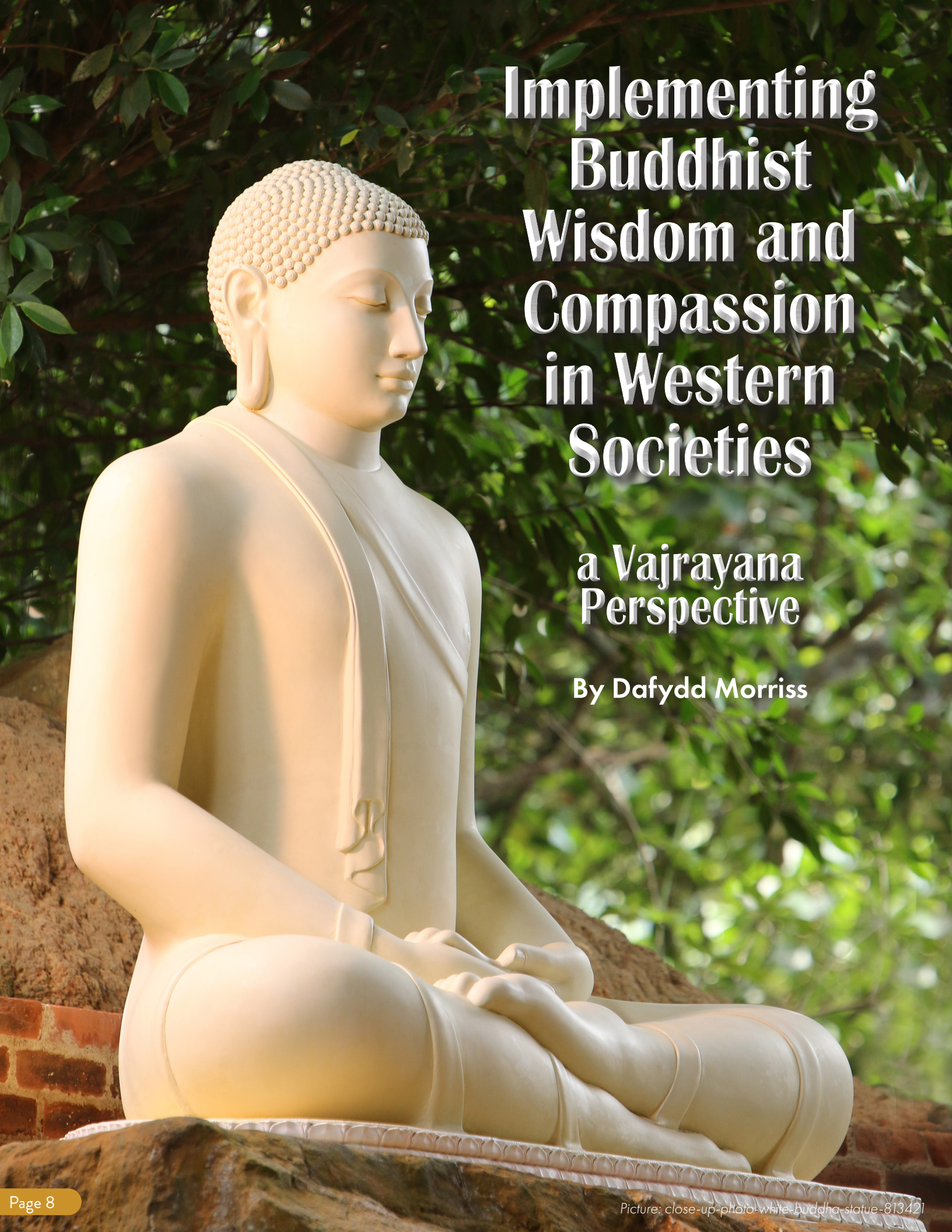
It would be beneficial if Buddhists would qualify in professions where Buddhist ethics can have the best impact. I am thinking about professions where they assist the sick and dying, care for orphans, or work among prisoners. Thus Buddhists could not only help the people who suffer from illness, poverty or social oppression, but also become engaged in the protection of the environment and animals, and last but not least, they could actively commit themselves to peace, justice, and social transformation inspired by loving-kindness and compassion combined with wisdom.

Thus we need to ask: What are the requirements to ensure the success and benefit of such an ambitious

undertaking of ‘Spreading wisdom and compassion in European Societies’? What are the underlying attitudes and goals? Whom are we going to teach and how?

There is one more aspect I would like to mention at the end of my contribution: Before we spread wisdom and compassion we should analyze how far the understanding of these terms overlaps in the various schools of Buddhism. What do we have in common, and where do we differ? We should try to find common ground and speak with one voice and use the same terms, based on Sanskrit and Pāli, otherwise confusion is inevitable. 🧘





Implementing Buddhist Wisdom and Compassion in Western Societies

a Vajrayana
Perspective

By Dafydd Morriss

In discussing Vajrayana Buddhism, I'm referring mainly to the traditions of Himalayan origin: Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal, and India. These include all of Buddha's teachings, encompassing Sutra and Tantra, but it is the Tantric methods which make their character unique. These practices involve identification with one's Buddha nature: the immanent qualities of wisdom, compassion and power present as our deepest essence. In the Tantras, these qualities are represented by wisdom aspects, or "deities", relied on as methods to train one's inner awareness. Also, included are the practices known as Mahamudra (the Great Seal) and Dzogchen (the Great Perfection) which introduce one directly to the experience of the mind's innermost nature.

Thanks to the cooperation between accomplished lineage masters and their Western disciples, Vajrayana is taking root in the West. There have been challenges, misunderstandings and even crises, but the foundations exist for a stable future. Texts and teachings have been translated into Western languages, centres of learning and meditation established, and

communities of practitioners provide bridges to qualified masters of these traditions. While there is still a way to go before Western masters of Vajrayana are commonplace, there are some outstanding examples.

Buddhist compassion and wisdom are implemented in both the inner and the outer spheres.

1) The inner sphere

The Buddha's teaching is summarised as: "Do no non-virtue whatsoever, practice virtue thoroughly, and completely tame your own mind". So implementing compassion and wisdom must start with one's own immediate situation.

In the Sutra system, wisdom refers to realizing emptiness, and method to the practice of the Six Paramitas, whose basis is compassion. Wisdom and method are distinct and complimentary factors. In Vajrayana, method or "skilful means" as the counterpart of wisdom, relates to the practices of Tantra, Mahamudra or Dzogchen. They are transmitted via lineages whereby those receiving initiation share in the realisation of a particular skilful means of

the master. When meditating on peaceful or protective wisdom aspects, one is aware simultaneously of the form and its empty nature: wisdom and method are practiced inseparably.

According to Vajrayana, beings are trapped in Samsara because of impure perception: clinging to experience as solid, ordinary, and limited. The antidote is to develop pure perception, taking the environment as a pure land and beings as Buddhas. This optimistic view is to see the perfect qualities of beings and one's environment and develop these within oneself. Rather than focusing on the defects of Samsara, one recognises the inherent purity of phenomena. Understanding that mind and its manifestations are inseparable like the sun and its rays, disturbing emotions are self-liberated and transformed into corresponding aspects of wisdom.

Implementing compassion and wisdom thus relates to directly to one's view. Transforming experience into primordial purity, colloquially described as "behaving like a Buddha until one becomes a Buddha" brings

powerful results and inspires others to recognise their own potential.

2) The outer sphere

What distinguishes Buddhist compassion from humanistic good wishes? Firstly, it is impartial, recognising all beings possess Buddha nature. Secondly, it brings lasting results not temporary remedies. Giving somebody money may help them for a day, giving an education may help them for a lifetime, but giving the confidence that mind's nature is indestructible clear light helps them in this life, and in all future lives. Enlightened compassion is both far-reaching and intelligent, benefiting the greatest number of people the furthest into the future.

Unfortunately, it is possible to fall into a trap of believing that

one already possesses such enlightened compassion and wisdom when it is in fact conceit. This is caused by the pernicious belief that Dharma is identical to one's own undigested assumptions and prejudices. It is represented by the syllogism: "My opinions are wise and compassionate. Dharma is wise and compassionate. Therefore, Dharma and my opinions must be identical". Intentions proceeding from such beliefs, especially if broadcast to signal virtue to others, merely pave the road to hell for ourselves and our societies.

It is said that only on the first Bhumi can one truly benefit others, because the belief in the illusion of a self has dissolved. The closer one draws to Buddhahood, the less one is hindered by the false dualism of subject and object and

one acts spontaneously for the benefit of others.

For somebody still only aspiring to such qualities of non-conceptual compassion and wisdom, what possibility is there of implementing them in society? Fortunately, such aspirants may encounter the opportunity to support the activity of those who do possess them. The establishment and maintenance of centres of Buddhist learning and practice rooted in authentic Eastern traditions carrying the blessing of lineage masters, is a great gift for people in Western societies, who can encounter the methods to discover ultimate freedom.

What seems to be working?

There are many successful institutions of Vajrayana Buddhism in the West that manage to uphold





an authentic tradition and present a meaningful system of practice and study according to the needs of various kinds of people. One example is the network of 680 Karma Kagyu Diamond Way Centres established by Lama Ole Nydahl and his late wife Hannah in the name of the 16th Karmapa and his successor the 17th Karmapa Trinley Thaye Dorje.

These draw inspiration from the 11th Century Tibetan master, Marpa. He was a lay practitioner with a family and business, who heroically brought his Dharma lineage into a new environment, from India to Tibet. He was a controversial and stubborn character, but effective in integrating Vajrayana practice into daily life and guiding his students. Marpa's own teacher Naropa predicted:

"In the view of some impure ordinary men, you will appear to gratify yourself in this life with sense

pleasures. Your desires will seem unchanging, like a carving in rock, so solid and so great. On the other hand, since you yourself have seen Dharmata, samsara will be self-liberated, like a snake uncoiling. All the future students of the lineage will be like the children of lions and garudas, and each generation will be better than the last."

Lama Ole and Hannah Nydahl have been successful in not only establishing but also maintaining this large network of Buddhist centres. There are numerous reasons for this, concerning both the content and the packaging.

The practice curriculum comprises the fundamental elements of the Karma Kagyu tradition. Students mainly practice Ngöndro, the "Four Foundational Practices". Additionally, the Guru Yoga meditation of the 16th Karmapa is regularly practiced in groups.

The Tibetan word jinlab (adhisthana in Sanskrit) refers to spiritual blessings. Literally, jin refers to power, magnificence or splendour, and lab to waves. Jinlab is thus the waves of power and magnificence emanating from a holy agent such as a person, object or event, and affect others who encounter them.

The Buddhas and spiritual masters bless others through physical forms, verbal expressions and mental connections. The Buddha blessed people through his miraculous display of multiple emanations and supernatural feats. He also blessed his disciples by connecting with their minds through the power of meditation, such as the case of blessing Sariputra to ask the question in the Heart Sutra. However, the most important mode of jinlab by the Buddha is through his words and teachings,

influencing his audience through the waves of his powerful speech.

Jinlab becomes effective when it leaves an impact. As the meaning suggests, the recipient must be touched by the waves of power and qualities of the source of blessing. The specialty of the Karma Kagyu tradition is the jinlab or blessing of the Karmapas. The 16th Karmapa Guru Yoga conveys the blessing of the Karmapa's enlightened form, speech and mind, connected with the body's three main energy centres.

Strict Vajrayana methods are very technical. If the technique isn't respected, they will not function and won't bring results. As explained by Jigme Rinpoche, the 16th Karmapa Guru Yoga itself is between Mahayana and Vajrayana. It is a simple, yet profound and effective tool. The 16th Karmapa encouraged it as particularly appropriate for Westerners. The method is to ask for Karmapa's blessing for support on one's path, and to remain united with his essence: the inseparability of compassion and wisdom. As it is simplified and suitable for general people, it is easy to work with and follow. Hence, it has proven to be a popular practice with Westerners who are interested to learn and connect with the Vajrayana methods, without jumping head first into commitments and technical practices.

Lama Ole says "it is the job of a scholar to make simple things sound complicated and the job of a yogi to make complicated things sound simple". He is not

advocating a watering down of the teachings, but rather focusing on what is easily grasped by Westerners with busy lives and responsibilities who aren't necessarily able to go intensively into study or retreat. The Diamond Way Centres have opened the door to Vajrayana Buddhism to countless people.

These centres are not abstract institutions, but vibrant and fun places, with people from many walks of life. Operating on a voluntary basis, they contain no "professional Buddhists". Those involved in the centres' daily functioning have day jobs and participate from a position of inner surplus. Friendship is the oil that keeps the motor running, so there is a strong social element. The centres attract people of all ages, including a lot of young people who in the absence of such a community might be wasting time in hedonism or nihilism. Shared practice and participating in the activity of the centres for the benefit of others is an opportunity to accumulate merit and wisdom.

As well as counteracting jealousy, rejoicing in the positive actions and merit of others brings the same psychological impact as if one had performed the act oneself. Communication – within and between – Buddhist organisations of initiatives, projects and accomplishments for the benefit of all is the key to a mutually reinforcing upward spiral of merit and insight.

Thoughts on the future prospects for Buddhism in Europe

The basis for Dharma practice is the "Precious Human Existence", defined by various freedoms and advantages, some personal and others reliant on outer conditions. In the latter category, one must inhabit a "central land", a place where there are accessible holy beings and where Dharma can be encountered.

Returning to the principle that the scope of Buddhist compassion includes the greatest number of people the furthest into the future, it is important to maintain a wide and historic worldview. Observing world events, as well as the values held by different cultures, one may consider what freedoms and human development they promise for our children and future societies.

Europe is a "central land" where currently favourable circumstances to practice Dharma exist. This is largely due to the bedrock values on which Western civilisation has developed. Yesterday much gratitude arose hearing the speeches of the representatives of the Spanish Government, emphasising that freedom of religion is enshrined in law. But not only this, democracy, equal rights for men and women, equal justice for all under the law, and most importantly freedom of speech should never be taken for granted. If we are to talk about implementing Buddhist wisdom and compassion in Western societies,

then fundamentally this means protecting these circumstances, ensuring Europe remains a central land in future.

I rejoice in the merit we all accumulate in spreading Buddhist principles in the West. I conclude with the wish for the manifestation of enlightened compassion and wisdom in our societies through the Four Buddha Activities: for negativity and obstacles to be pacified; for merit, wisdom, strength, and prosperity to increase; for experience and realization to be magnetised; and for influences harmful to the Buddha's teachings to be liberated into emptiness. 🧘



Wisdom and Compassion automatically appear by having the right view

by Supreme Matriarch Ji Kwang Dae Poep Sa Nim



If all the people in this world realized that the mind is one, and comprehended that they are actually utilizing one and the same mind, then world peace would come automatically. But the concepts of 'my mind', and 'your mind', as well as discrimination stem from individual karma. Consequently, the mind is used according to individual karma and that explain why everyone's preferences, looks and thoughts are different.

But our original place of mind, which is the place of Buddha, has never any difference but is always equal, and is filled with great love and compassion.

All 10,000 things appear, grow and exist. That is why each individual, no matter how heavy karma they have, if they keep and use the mind the correct way, then that heavy karma will disappear. Gradually through the practice, the original mind can be found.

At the same time, it will be realized that all sentient beings are not different. They are one and are themselves. If this is realized, then the situations and sufferings of others will be thought of as their

own situations and sufferings. So the desire is to help those who are suffering and do the best wholeheartedly. When others are comfortable and happy, one also becomes comfortable and happy.

But presently, until the original mind is attained, the karma "I" is thought to be the own "I". Such kind of great confusion exists. That is why the self is separated from others. Because of that the wish is to be better than others and people want to show how good they are. At the same time, others are disliked and there is craving to take things from others, or harm and hurt others. These kinds of ignorant actions are done.

That is why Buddha instructs us to always keep the precepts and always listen to the teachings of Buddha, which is so precious. It is essential to listen and practice and realize the original mind and all ignorance disappears and wisdom shines. So, either alive or dead, we can have a life without suffering, and happiness can be enjoyed by all sentient beings. World peace is therefore not impossible. It is possible, if we have the right view.

The difference between seeing the world when blindfolded, and viewing the world when the blindfold is taken off, cannot be described or expressed in words. Wearing that blindfold, one is trapped by confusion, illusions, delusions and fantasies that arise from the resulting obscurity. However, suddenly removing the blindfold, makes it possible to comprehend the confusion created by the wrong vision of the world

and understanding of wrong and erroneous concepts. One then realizes the great depth of negative karma that was created in that state of ignorance and darkness, within which one has remained for so long.

Realization, which is enlightenment, removes that blindfold so that the present can be seen clearly, as it is. With this new clarity, the correct thoughts, speech and actions appear. Hence, the right human functions and duties are performed, and nobody is irritated, bothered or harmed. Rather, one becomes a person who is needed and valued by others and who automatically helps and cares for them unconditionally without calculating anything.

That is why Buddhism, which is the teaching of Buddha, helps to eliminate each individual's blindfold in order to reveal what lies behind, namely the most precious treasure within oneself. It is, in other words, like discovering one's own diamond. All sentient beings have Buddha nature. And so, by practicing according to the teaching of Buddha, the ignorant blindfold can be cast away completely some day and thus one is able to view new horizons.

Therefore, having already discarded the blindfold, one has the capacity to see more clearly and wisely as a person. Consequently, it is possible to not only perceive the ignorant actions of others, who are still blindfolded, but also to imagine how they must feel. The person who has shed the blindfold has the mind of love

and care for everyone because discomfort of life behind the blindfold is more easily realized. That is why the person, who has taken it off, has developed endurance because such true forbearance can only come from great love and compassion.

Even though there are over seven billion people in this world, each person has a different appearance, nature, personality and power. These characteristics are actually the "I" that comes from karma and, therefore, each person thinks, speaks and acts according to that "I", thus making it difficult to emerge from individual karma.

That is why it is difficult to attain clarity. It is like trying to see the sky through the dark clouds. So, serious refuge is taken in Buddha (the Absolute, the Truth), Dharma and Sangha, and practice is sincere and wholehearted in order to emerge from that karma. Clear perception of situations will be gained subsequently. It will also be possible to ascertain if past actions, which were carried out before meeting the Three Jewels, were correct or incorrect, and ignorant or wise.

This ability to see oneself, and spontaneously repent for previous negative actions while also

recognizing good deeds that were done, brings self-confidence. Though understanding others was difficult in the past, a new comprehension of people begins to dawn. At the same time, there is empathy to truly listen to their problems, and true understanding of the suffering of others, and sharing that pain together, occurs.

Compassionate friendship develops with everyone, reaching out to others like a brother or sister, and mother or father.

That is why when there is a change in dealing with others, their actions by way of response will be different, too. This transforms



one into reaching out to people and truly caring for others, and will spontaneously attract their compliments and respect.

By doing so, whatever is the present cause for any situation, will also get altered. Previously, or in the past, when the cause was unclear, it usually veered towards negativity. But from now on, the cause goes in the direction of engaging in kind deeds and goodness, with the wish and sincere attempt to be far away from negativity. Of course, this kind of cause always brings good effects, which means it brings favorable results and rewards.

That is why the teaching of the Dharma is the most precious Jewel. 🧘

This article consists of texts which originally appeared as the „Daily Fragrance of the Lotus Flower“, teachings which Supreme Matriarch Ji Kwang Dae Poep Sa Nim makes available to her students every single day since 1992, without interruption.

Supreme Matriarch Ji Kwang Dae Poep Sa Nim is a great Dharma master and the founder of the Yun Hwa Denomination of World Social Buddhism.



Picture of Supreme Matriarch Ji Kwang Dae Poep Sa Nim





Spreading Wisdom and Compassion in European Societies

David Rycroft

Mind with Heart is a secular education charity, founded by professionals working in mainstream education. One of our aims is to give teenagers the opportunity to reflect on wellbeing and its causes, and what it means to be flourishing human being.

Our view that happiness is found in our mind, in subjective experience, and not in outer circumstances of the 'material world'. In western educational terms, this view means seeing mental wellbeing and emotional health the key to human flourishing.

One way in which this spreading takes place is when we model, or embody, wisdom and compassion - communicating through the way we are, in any and all situations.

Here's an example. As you shake hands with someone, see how you can embody wisdom and compassion in this simple act. In terms of wisdom, all the senses are open and you are attending to the present moment without getting distracted and without fixating on

anything. In terms of compassion, in the way we say 'good morning', can we communicate some love and compassion? As we look at someone, can we connect? I am looking at you, and you, just like me, are looking back.]

This principle of human flourishing or 'happiness' requires one important clarification. There are two types of happiness. One is based more on the physical senses, you could call it 'pleasure'; it's about getting good stuff from 'outside', from the world. This search for sensory wellbeing the Ancient Greeks called Hedonism.



The School of Athens by Raphael, 1509, showing Plato (left) and Aristotle (right)

The second type of happiness comes from cultivating 'inner values', or qualities of mind. This is not so much about what happens to us, but rather what attitudes we bring to situations. In other words, we look to our inner qualities for wellbeing. This search for human flourishing the Ancient Greeks called Eudaimonia. About the etymology of this word, 'eu' means good, or well and 'daimon' - like 'demon', 'spirit', 'esprit' in French, or mind - means an immaterial guiding consciousness. So Eudaimonia means 'well spirit'. It's this type of happiness that we are referring to when we talk about Human Flourishing.



Mind with Heart offers trainings to staff, accompanying schools in their culture-shift towards whole-school wellbeing and emotional health.

The lack of Eudaimonia or 'well mind' is increasingly manifest in our schools, and the education system at large. Mind With Heart works principally with secondary schools - teenagers, 11 - 18 years, and their educators. The sufferings we witness on the rise are mental sufferings - anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and loneliness. These are pervasive and often crippling.

But where do they come from?
And why are they on the rise?

From a Buddhist psychological perspective, these mental sufferings are exacerbated by the assumed and unexamined values of the current education paradigm - namely, materialism. We study to get a good job, to find out more about the physical world in order to be able to make life easier, more fun and satisfying. Materialism channels our desires towards hedonistic pursuits. We assume that juicy hamburgers, smooth iPhones or the excitement of the latest hyped film are the source of continuous happiness. Sure, the pleasure derived from the senses is, from a Buddhist point of view, not a problem in itself.

However, without wisdom it is so easy to fixate on [and become attached to] the quest for hedonic 'hits'. This is a sure way on to the consumerist treadmill that, the faster it goes, becomes ever more difficult to get off.

Consumerism is not only devastating for the sustainability of the planet and its resources but also it undermines our inner capacities for fulfilment, engraining, as it does, habits of lack and grasping.

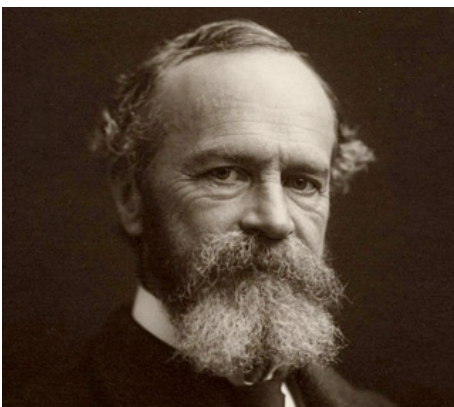
How did we get ourselves into this situation? Some of the views that we take for unquestionable truth have their own histories and were established by the energy of certain individuals. Our assumptions that materialism is the view of modernity, for example, evolved from a very effective campaign by one man, Thomas Huxley, who, towards the end of the nineteenth century, conflated materialistic belief (that human behaviour is determined solely by physical causes) with scientific knowledge. He successfully advocated that science must only be practised within the framework of materialism.

Materialism was victorious over those who believed that the mind - and how it subjectively perceives - plays a vital role in our understanding of the world and that contemplative enquiry can be compatible with scientific method. William James - often called the 'father of American psychology' - championed the central role of the mind; he stated that geniuses had the ability to sustain attention longer than the rest of us. Bringing back wandering attention is, he said, the very root of character and that improving attention would be the best education. However, he was not aware of any methods that could bring this improvement about.

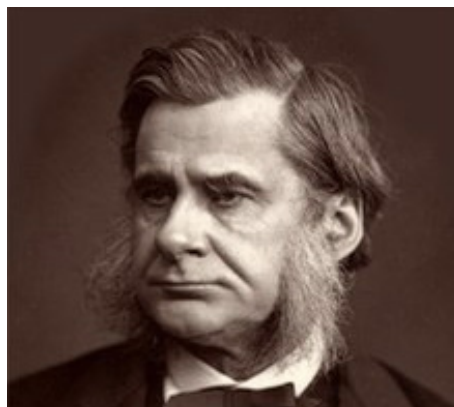
If materialism was a done deal, and the resultant suffering inevitable, then we would be obliged to accept it. But this is not the case. What might have happened if William James' view had dominated during the 20th century?

The causes of happiness, from a Buddhist perspective, can be categorised into the three higher trainings. These are ethics [behaviour], samadhi [meditative stability] and wisdom.

Buddhist ethics share with other systems of ethics the principle of the Golden Rule, often formulated as 'Do unto others as you would like them to do to you'. This principle, Karen Armstrong (founder of the Charter for Compassion) says, is central to all major religious traditions and ethical systems.



William James



Thomas Huxley

Before we look into samadhi, let's see how wisdom could be at the heart of our education system.

Wisdom is the precise discernment of phenomena (both physical and mental) - knowing how they appear and knowing their nature. Modern 'Western' education may have lost sight of this goal, but wisdom was central in ancient Indian education. One of the largest education establishments in ancient Indian, flourishing from around 500 CE, was Nalanda. At Nalanda, all studied subjects fed into and flowed out of wisdom.

Four main areas of study formed the curriculum: Logic & maths, medicine & natural science, language & music, and creativity (including art and engineering). These four areas are not too different from the range of subjects that teenagers study today, but this wholistic approach, where study of diverse phenomena is orientated towards inner wisdom, is mainly absent in contemporary curricula.

HH Dalai Lama is critical of the modern education system, saying

that it focuses too much on material values, and not enough on cultivating 'inner values'.

Having said this, great efforts have been made to champion education of the 'whole person'. One example is the International Baccalaureate (IB). If we look at the IB learner profile, we see that Inquiry, Knowledge, Open-Mindedness, Balance and Care are all valued, at least in theory. Yet there is often a gap between the values a school promotes on its website and what the school [with myriad pressures and competing priorities] manages to deliver.

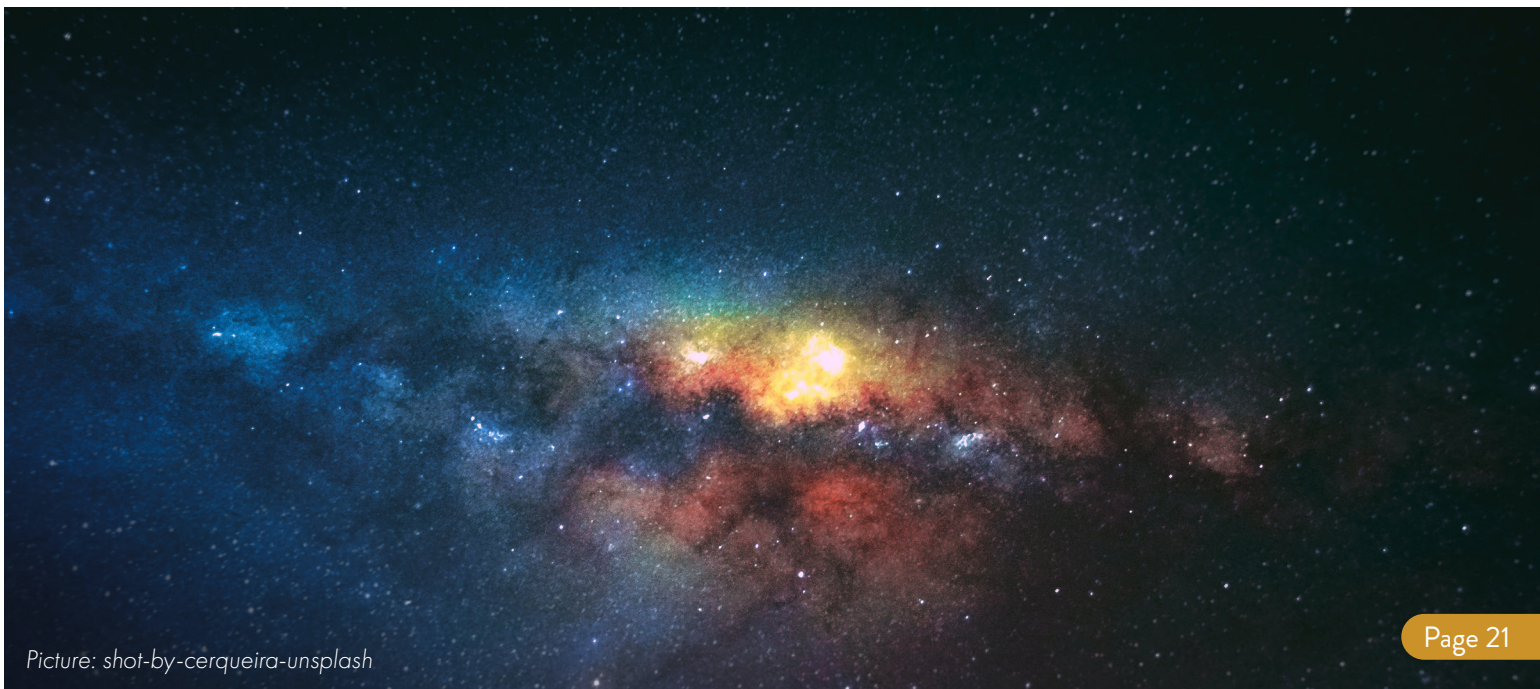
It seems that schools often need commitment at senior management level and a sustained education in tools for cultivating inner values for school culture to change.

Where Knowledge and Inquiry are valued, there is also recognition that non-distraction and the ability to focus is necessary.

Here we come to samadhi. And this is where the modern

mindfulness movement is making a very positive contribution to secular society. We, the public, have recognised that restlessness and anxiety are caused by our inability to sit quietly, as the 17th century French philosopher Blaise Pascal says, in a room by ourselves. Mindfulness, the cultivation of mental stability and a mind less fixated on the movement of thoughts and emotions, is the cultivation of samadhi, even if, in most of our cases, these are baby-steps.

To communicate to teens the value of cultivating mental stability, we often use the example of Galileo, an example given by Alan Wallace. [Wallace is a great meditation scholar-practitioner in the Buddhist tradition with a keen interest in science. Those who know his work will recognise many of the themes expressed here.] Galileo was one of the first to use a telescope (starting with lenses that magnified just three times) to observe the outer phenomena of the night's sky. By making accurate



and replicable observations he showed that the planet Venus had phases and thus rotated round the Sun, not the Earth. With this empirical evidence he overturned centuries of dogma and assumed knowledge. Since then, Hubble, around 100 years ago, using the latest technology, found several galaxies - not just the few thousand stars that Galileo observed.

And now, with the Hubble space telescope, scientists tell us that there are 100 billion galaxies in the universe, each with 100 billion stars. The number of stars hasn't changed much, but our ability to observe them has developed enormously. Using a stable, clear instrument we see much more clearly what is already there.

In the same way, if we stabilise and clarify the mind, we can come to know ourselves more deeply and thereby align our understanding with the nature of 'reality'.

In Mind With Heart, we also use the metaphor of the snake that helps teens see why understanding ourselves could be useful. Imagine you are on holiday somewhere hot and are heading back to the place you are staying. It's dark and the path is unfamiliar. Suddenly, you see something in the corner: Help! it's a huge snake. You panic and think you are about to be bitten and die of poisoning. At that moment your friend whips out his new phone and shines its flashlight on the snake. It's not a snake at all; it's a coil of rope. Your panic subsides and you sigh with relief.

Your panic was real and really made you suffer; but it was founded on a fallacy, a misunderstanding. When the misunderstanding is removed, the suffering dissolves. In a similar way, might not many of the mental sufferings we experience be soothed when we come to see more clearly how our mind works?

I would therefore suggest that the lack of genuine happiness experienced in our schools is caused by materialism and the accompanying fixation on 'external' phenomena as an assumed source of happiness. Happiness is experienced in the mind, and is caused by cultivating inner qualities and inner values (e.g. non-distraction, clarity, kindness and compassion). This needs to be the starting point for a healthy education system. There is nothing new here. The question now is 'How do we put this into practice, and make an education of the heart and mind a priority?'

Many individuals have aligned their work with spreading wisdom and compassion in secular European society. Here is a sampling of projects in the field of education.

- For the Mind & Life institute, Katherine Weare is forming the Community on Contemplative Education (CCE). Its aim is to explore and disseminate key insights and best practices in the field of contemplative education.
- The FPMT have the Foundation for Developing Compassion and Wisdom (FDCW), like Mind with Heart developing secular

programmes and resources based on universal human values.

- The Novak Djokovic Foundation has funded the implementation of Goldie Hawn's MindUp programme in several schools in Serbia.
- Perhaps the most widely used mindfulness programme in schools is 'b', developed by the Mindfulness in Schools Project. The MYRIAD project is using .b as a Mindfulness Training intervention; it is researching how schools prepare young people to improve resilience and manage their emotional health in the UK.
- Empathy & Compassion in Society organises Youth Gatherings at conferences where leading scientists, thinkers and change-makers address the role of compassion in society. The resulting videos, for example of Paul Gilbert on his compassion research, are viewable via Mind with Heart's YouTube channel.

These are just a few examples of charitable initiatives.



A theatre-full of teenagers listening to Scilla Elworthy and other change-makers at Mind with Heart's recent Youth Gathering in Oslo

On a governmental level, the Mindfulness Initiative is helping legislators 'make capacities of heart and mind

serious considerations of public policy'. The Mindful Nation UK report identifies four areas that mindfulness can be brought into society - the health, education, and criminal justice systems and the workplace. The modern mindfulness movement is perhaps the most successful vehicle for bringing the wise and compassionate tools of Buddhism into a secular society. Not only is the language secular and addressing contemporary needs and context but also its claims for improving attention skills and reducing stress are corroborated by scientific research, a strong currency in contemporary secular society.

Mind with Heart was founded by a bunch of idealists - people who believe that our education system should reflect the full spectrum of experience: humanity's deepest wishes for flourishing, the complex relationships between us all, and the infinite interconnections between humanity and the planet we all call home.

But idealism is not enough, and so we aim to accompany schools in wise and practical steps to impact whole-school culture, taking care of senior management and teachers first, discovering the value of mindfulness and awareness for oneself. And only then, when teachers can model these qualities, do we recommend that schools pass understanding and practice on to students. When teachers are modelling and embodying mindfulness, awareness, empathy

and compassion, students reap the benefits.



As part of Mind with Heart's trainings, educators explore creative and playful ways of sharing tools for cultivating emotional intelligence

About the effects of practising mindfulness during their lunch break, two teachers report...

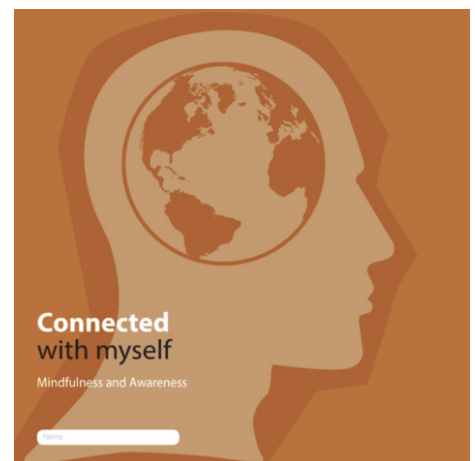
"the kids came back into the room and there was a change in the air: 'What have you done? Where have you been?' They instantly knew something was different. And in turn, the way they interacted with us was more positive so we got more out of them.... This might sound a bit strange, but it creates more a fun, upbeat atmosphere, not so regimented 'this is what we are doing... blah blah blah...' boring. One of kids said the other day they didn't even realise they were learning.... And for us, it's not about teaching; it's just about engaging and being present."

Along with three partners, Mind With Heart has just completed a major research project on teacher wellbeing in Australia. The departments of education in Queensland and New South Wales recruited 20 schools. Teachers Health funded the project. Mind with Heart delivered

the intervention and the Australian Catholic University conducted the evaluation.



Teachers received an 8-week course focusing on their own wellbeing. The researchers were asking two questions: Does mindfulness practice boost teacher wellbeing? and Does teacher wellbeing improve student wellbeing and student learning? The research will be published in June 2018.



A good example of the Mind with Heart whole-school-approach can be found in the work of Moissac college, near Toulouse, one of the most disadvantaged secondary schools in the region. Twenty teachers, with the support of the head, decided to make a shift in school culture and trained in our programmes over three years. Participating teachers reorganised the timetable to in order to be able to teach all students in their first year at the school.

Research carried out by the University of Montpellier on these pupils found the impact to be on cognitive, relational and emotional levels. They reported that students were more at ease when they did not know the answer, were less rigid in their thinking and more connected to other people and to nature.

Making the case for schools to prioritize teacher wellbeing is crucial. When schools see investment in staff wellbeing as a sustainable approach to student wellbeing, then school culture starts to change. Sure, mindfulness helps

students relax, stay focused and, as a result, boosts their attainment. But mindfulness exercises only really make sense longterm if it permeates the school, prioritising human flourishing above all else, and moving the paradigm away from an infatuation with materialism towards the cultivation of inner values and prioritisation of wisdom.

Living with mindfulness, awareness and compassion are not tools to accomplish something else; they are an understanding of the truth of things, and an expression of this understanding.

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THE PRACTICE OF CARE IN A MODERN WORLD

By Stefano Bettera

Care at the centre

I'm going to reflect on the topic of care from Gotama, the Buddha, who puts at the centre of his ethical thinking system a cornerstone on which to base the development of reasoning on the role of the individual as a social being. This is the concept of appamada, which we can translate as "care". He argued that care is like the elephant's footprint, which contains the footprints of all other animals. Care is the most important of all virtues because it encloses all of them. On his deathbed, Gotama gave this last teaching to Ananda; "Life falls apart, tread the path with care". Sometimes the word appamada is translated as diligence. But this does no justice to its deep meaning, at least in the context of modern thought, or ethical significance of Buddhist teaching.

Appamada comprises two parts: "a" (which means "not") and pammada (meaning "drunk"). The literal meaning would be non-

drunk. We return to the central role of awareness in social and individual action. Behaving like a drunkard is not just a lack of diligence, it is ill-considered acting, under the effect of elements that obscure the ability to choose and behave lucidly. It is a condition where we are unaware of the consequences of actions and their effect on ourselves and others.

In our modern social context, it is easy to see which and how many influences lead us to certain behaviours and choices. This concept of a life based on care is also implicit in social criticism: in Gotama's time the complexity of life, especially in the urban context, was already sufficiently evident to impose a serious analysis of its consequences.

Gotama's response to the confusion of living together lies in the choice of living and working under the aegis of awareness, rather than dragged

by automatism. It is not a condemnation of the instincts, needs and desires that are part of our human condition. Rather, it is the formulation of a new paradigm of relationship with these drives, not set on reactivity, but on conscious response. The strength of this model lies in its ability to unite several levels: the spiritual/personal level that moves from the most intimate part of the soul with the ethical level that springs from a conscious relationship with the outside world. It brings this individual level into contact with the social, focusing on commitment, on the choice of a method of practice both transformative of the individual and of the context in which the individual operates. In short, Gotama tells us that we already have the problem and the solution, precisely because we are deeply human and because we are social beings. But we must find out and pursue it. As humans, we are inclined to act according to reactive schemes, but we have the talent, tools and freedom to go further and build the conditions

so that it is not these schemes that drive individual and social choices. There is no distinction in his thinking between these two levels. Coincidence is implicit, and freedom of choice is the plan of synthesis.

A non-dogmatic vision

Gotama never faces a choice dogmatically or on the basis of absolute, abstract principles. Its perspective starts from the situation and takes into account the context, the conditions and the experience of the real person, not the idea of the person. This awareness is always of the present, of the contingent, of the situation. That is why the reference to attention of the experience of the body in the moment: every moment is unique and the body teaches us.

Similarly, every situation is unique and no answer is always and in any case good. Another useful "criterion" when facing a difficult choice is that of the common good: when a person performs actions clearly harmful to many or his "sacrifice" allows others to live in a more serene way, it becomes "simple" to understand the choice to be made.

Obviously, the more our decision brings suffering others, the harder it is to understand where to stand. Even a borderline situation such as violence against a woman or child, Gotama reminds us if we really cannot act for the good of

that person, we at least are better avoiding evil. A case like this could result in trying to maintain an attitude of equanimity without aggravating a situation that is already a source of suffering.

A fertile heart

This perspective means giving ourselves freedom from preconceptions, fixed ideas, convictions that do not allow us to "feel" the other, to make him part of our own experience or let us witness what is there here and now. The fixed, discounted, pre-constituted schemes leave no room for knowledge, for encounter, but dry us and transform us into sandy soil when rain does not arrive.

A dead land, where nothing grows. An aridity that prevents us from facing and living in our bodies the great questions of human existence: the mystery of living and dying, as the Chinese masters said. In general, whatever favours this freedom, this sharing, this connection and does not hinder the process of living is wise and to be pursued. Wise not right, compassionate not true.

Whatever favors the dryness of the spirit, the chains, the denial of freedom is good to avoid, extracting it from our behaviors as an arrow from the wound so as not to infect the body. The focus is on what to do and how to do it, how to heal the wound and rebuild unity, not about why or where.

Moving in this context requires a method. In this process lies the opportunity for freedom.

This is a freedom of both wisdom and experience. The body is the "master" who teaches us our limits and puts us in contact with the condition of others. This is our own and leaves us no other way but to share this transience, this imperfection that unites us. Here is compassion as a force and foundation from which to start for every choice that is authentically human: it is precisely in this way, looking with compassion, awareness and humanity at the situation that we can act.

Living with care

Not to be dragged by instincts, by reactivity means to live a life where care and instinctive generosity are central. This makes it easier to look for another way to stay in relationship with ourselves and others. Generosity allows care to express itself, to act directly. If we look honestly, we see our daily conduct is often an activity based on a closed heart. The generosity that is directed primarily towards ourselves, allows us to soften that protective fabric we surround ourselves with and become porous, available, affectionate. It allows the human warmth that puts us in immediate communication with others.



Picture: pixabay-pexels

Do the right thing

We often read about heroic acts committed by "normal" people in extreme circumstances: after an earthquake or attack, some run into flames to save a woman or a child. At the risk of their lives, they defy logic to bring others trapped or stranded to safety. Such events are on the agenda. It almost seems that when conditions become so adverse that life is at risk, we drop all personal stories and simply remember what's needed.

This is not a logical process. We do not ask ourselves if it is right, or what will happen to us. We do not care about how others see us or our gratification. We do not aspire to become heroes. We instinctively feel that being authentically human requires us to

do so. It is a profound perception and not an act of heroism. It is the rediscovery of an even banal fact: we all share the same condition, the same nature of creatures that live by communicating, by living in relationships. And it is this condition that defines us as humans, that allows us to exist, to express what we are, to let our heart pulsate.

When we allow this mind of generosity to manifest, it is precisely there that we are authentically human. We are part of the situation, part of the process of life, part of the river that flows. We do not ask what the direction of the current is. We dive and swim. Gotama often used the metaphor of a stream to define the practice and says that it's like entering the stream to go against the stream.

So, when we act in harmony with the mind of generosity we act perhaps in a way that may be considered illogical, irrational.

An ethics of healing

Forgetting oneself does not mean cancelling one's identity or personality. But don't start exclusively from this when filtering each other and setting up the relationship. Knowledge does not mean not putting into action pre-constituted ideas and understanding one's own ego not as non-existent but as a process, an element in transformation, porous and modifiable by the very relationship itself. It means being open to the new and to opportunity for transformation that can heal self and others. This ethic that includes others can be



called an ethic of healing. There is no healing if we cannot heal ourselves first. Thus for Gotama, a profound understanding of the transience of our human condition counts, leaving us no other way than to share this transience, the condition that unites us all and represents us. Here is compassion as a coagulating force, as the foundation of ethics.

The energy of compassion

Compassion becomes the cement that holds together and overcomes the dichotomy of thinking in dichotomous terms. Compassion is a conscious act, a choice that comes from an inner path, not a rational scheme. It is context sensitive and therefore the only possible answer. This process would not be possible, while it is logically consequential, if he had not thought, seen, imagined this marriage, this coincidence of intentions and destinies between individual and society. Both share the only truly founding characteristic: impermanence. The ethics proposed by Gotama

is an ethics of the process, rather than the rules, a practice rather than a system of thought. To use an image we can portray this form of social and individual ethics as two concentric circles where one includes another, without separation. The mission of the individual, aimed at "saving" himself, consequently becomes the realization of a spirit of participation and identification of self with the other.

Reach the other bank

Although there is profound philosophical and psychological acumen in his teaching, the main focus for the Buddha is always on the possibility of putting ideas into action, experimenting with the basic intuition about the mechanisms involving all humans. He is not interested in explaining the reason for phenomena but rather understanding the consequences of phenomena and their transformative capacity if seen as occasions for practice and awakening. In his vision there is no censor and moralist judge

who punishes. It is as if Gotama said: "Be aware of the qualities of mind and the conduct that encourage practice. If you follow them, you will encourage the process of awakening, of healing. Otherwise you will hinder it." The emphasis is always on individual responsibility and never punitive. If "life is burning" to extinguish these flames it is necessary to move towards the other bank, the bank of awareness, of compassionate action, of *appamada*, leaving the bank of acting like drunkards, which leads to suffering. It is not by chance that the first of these is precisely generosity, money, where generosity does not mean the simple act of giving, of getting rid of material possession. Rather, the focus is on the generosity of the mind, the transformative potential of the process of a practice focused on care, an ethics of awareness.

This is the end of the circle: to create a truly transformative practice these are the horizons: generosity, awareness, care and compassion. In this way we will take our raft to the other side of the river. 🧘





COMPASSION IN ACTION

developing a caring culture

by Wendy Har

I would like to share my point of view on how to cultivate compassion in action and developing a caring culture.

Buddha was born as a human in our world. After living six years of asceticism, Buddha reached the state of enlightenment and started to teach Dharma for 49 years in our world. His Dharma teaching is for us, to be used in our daily lives, to enable us to enjoy the feeling of living in heaven. Since compassion is inherent in all human beings, with the nature of Buddha hiding somewhere inside us, the question is how do we implement it in our lives? The answer is to bring it out by exercising acts of compassion. The next question we shall ask is HOW?

Master Hsing Yun has simplified it for us to practice compassion through practising Humanistic Buddhism. According to Master Hsing Yun, no one is born a Bodhisattva. Even the Bodhisattva has to practice Buddhism to become a Bodhisattva. Due to time restriction, I would like to share only two very simple ways of implementing compassion and developing a caring culture. I give these two methods a very easy and interesting name so that everybody can remember it easily. These are called the "3Gs" and "4Gs".

Practice the Three Acts of Goodness (3Gs): 1) Do Good Deeds (virtue), 2) Speak Good Words (truthfulness) and 3. Think Good Thoughts (beauty). Our minds will be filled with the power of integrity and we shall inherently be relieved from adversity and calamity. We thereby accumulate merits whilst removing unwholesome karma, that is why practicing the Three Acts of Goodness and the Four Givings are fundamental.

Practice the Four Givings (4Gs), which is to give others faith, joy, hope and convenience. These symbolize the four immeasurable states of mind. Being willing to give others faith, one will naturally speak comforting words. In willingness to give others joy, one will innately see the good in others and praise them. Essentially, speaking good words will thus purifying one's verbal karma. Owing to the willingness to give others hope one will instinctively show care, concern and encouragement. In essence, it is to think good thoughts, the purification of one's mental karma. Befitting the willingness to give others convenience, one will naturally offer a helping hand altruistically. This is to do good deeds, subsequently the purification of one's corporal karma. Thus the Three Acts of Goodness and

the Four Givings, both embody the four immeasurable states of mind cultivated by Bodhisattvas. Collectively, these are the core concepts of Humanistic Buddhism.

We shall implement the Three Act of Goodness and the Four Givings in all nurseries and schools. Educating and helping children to practice the "3Gs" and "4Gs" is to assist them to bring out their care and compassion from a young age. Applying it in their daily lives, it will cultivate good habits of compassion that will bring love, peace and harmony between humans. Simultaneously, we are leading them through the Bodhisattva path and gradually to attain Buddhahood.

Thus, the Buddha said, as long as you treat someone with respect, care, compassion, encouragement and help them build self-esteem, then they will surely improve and grow.

Finally, Master Hsing Yun's philosophy is "Humans can absolutely have nothing, but it is a MUST to have compassion."

by Wendy Har

Wendy is an advisor in BLIA (Buddha's Light International Association) Stockholm which is an international Buddhist Association, consisting of over 3 million members worldwide at present.

Compassion in our everyday lives

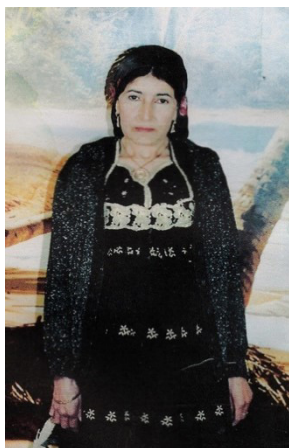
This is the story of Sabine and Sabira, who are both members of the Reiyukai community. It illustrates how applying wisdom and compassion in our daily lives transforms us and others around us. What presided over Sabine and Sabira's meeting? Their desire to transform themselves and to resolve deep karmic suffering. Together they walk the path of Buddhism: they learn to polish their hearts and open their consciousnesses, and unlock worlds of wisdom and kindness where war, negativity and violence used to reign... for the benefit of their families and the young people around them. Along the way, unknown worlds of relationships from the past that still influence their existence today appear. Only the development of wisdom and compassion will free them and provide deep meaning to their encounter.

In the form of a dialogue, they trace the broad lines of several years of common research.

Sabine : Hello everyone, my name is Sabine. I'm 43 years old. I have been a member of Reiyukai Buddhism for just over 20 years. I met the teaching of the Lotus Sutra after a serious accident, an ordeal that pushed me to seek the help of my ancestors and to commit myself, in return, not to waste my life any more.



Sabira : Hello my name is Sabira. I'm 39 years old. I live in Angoulême and I met Reiyukai 13 years ago. I was going through difficult times and I was questioning myself. I wanted to find a meaning to my life. I felt that I had to go to Algeria to visit the graves of my ancestors and ask for their help. On my return from this trip, I met Sabine and through her, the Reiyukai.



Sabine : We met in a sensitive neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city of Angoulême, in the southwest of France where we both live today.

Sabira : It is a district which, for several decades, has mainly welcomed immigrant populations, especially from the Maghreb.



Sabine : 13 years ago, in January 2005, I participated in a meeting where the teaching was shared. I heard that one can really aspire to make an encounter, that one can wish to receive a "companion, a spiritual friend", with whom one will be able to accomplish an essential path of transformation and karmic resolution. I also heard that around us, there are beings who have a particular link with the Buddha's teaching and that the strength of our determination can make them appear. It all went deep into my heart and I said to myself, "I hear this, it's possible to verify it!" I then began to recite the entire Lotus Sutra for 28 days to be inspired, with the ardent wish to live this encounter, and with great confidence.

Sabira : I didn't know Sabine yet, but my reality changed unexpectedly. At that time, I was a street educator specialised in preventing crime in so-called sensitive neighbourhoods and

I got transferred to a new neighbourhood, to work with a new teacher, Sabine, who had just been put in charge of a class hosting young people who had just arrived in France.

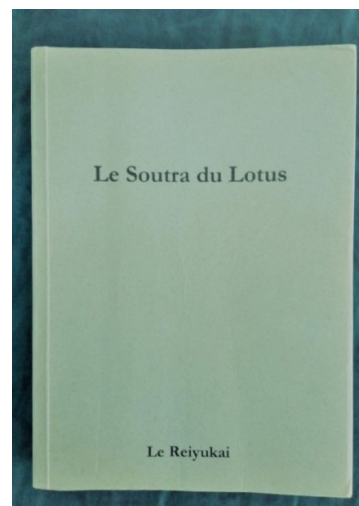
Sabine : When I met Sabira, I perceived that it was not an ordinary encounter, I made the connection with my vow, especially since I perceived she was someone who sought a meaning to existence. I felt immediately that she was very attentive, I saw her ears open...

Sabira : I was very attentive to what Sabine was telling me because I found her attitude remarkable. I observed how she considered her students, her colleagues. She was radiant, she embodied a kindness that touched me and opened my heart. I remember telling myself, "I wish I was like that too."



Sabine : The first time Sabira came to my house to discover the practice of Reiyukai, I felt that a cyclone was rushing into my life and that it was not going to be easy!

Sabira : The first time Sabine invited me to a meeting, I felt a powerful storm raising around me. I saw that my coming to this meeting was setting other dimensions in motion. I was terrified. The state I was in only calmed down when I began to recite the sutra: I had the deep feeling of recognizing this teaching and I cried with gratitude.

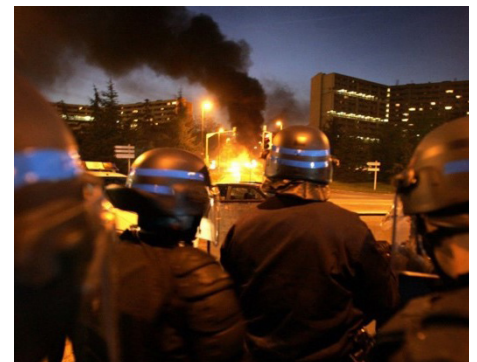
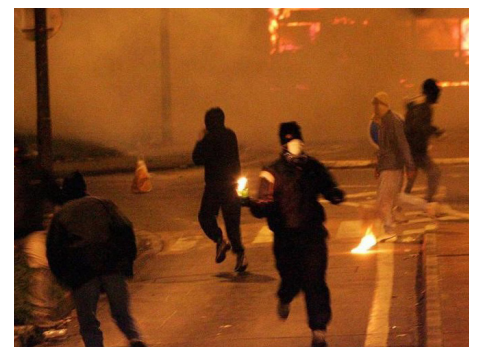
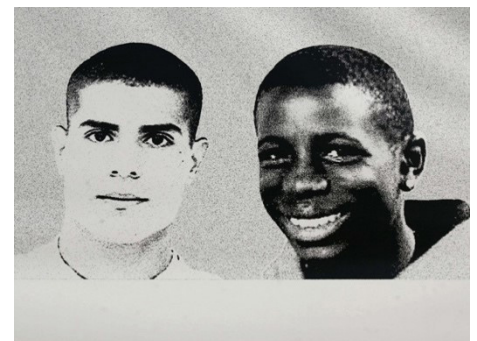


Sabine : As soon as Sabira started practicing, many young people wanted to begin this path of awakening with her. Their extraordinary experiences, including repairing bonds with parents, made us perceive the power of the spiritual world in motion.

Sabira : When I began, I heard: "This path is done with others, it is

not a personal transformation project. This practice invites us to grow the heart with all beings, with our ancestors and the people around us." Carried by this energy and enthusiasm, I shared this teaching with many people, with the desire to verify what I had heard.

Sabine : During the autumn of 2005, we were undergoing tragic events in France. In a suburban Parisian city, the death of two young people of foreign origin running away from a police checkpoint, had raised riots. In France, in all hot suburbs, the youth shouted their anger.



Sabira : At that time, I had the opportunity to meet a Japanese practitioner who had developed a great consciousness. When she arrived in France, she perceived that this reality of war had its roots in the spiritual world. She saw the state of the ancestors in the spiritual world: they had fought for France, given their lives, and were very angry to observe that France had no consideration or recognition for their descendants. It was this anger that manifested itself in the violence of young people. I found it so extraordinary to have this clear vision of the connection between the spiritual world and the reality we were living.

Sabine : When Sabira heard this and her consciousness opened to the law of the conditioned chain of causes and effects, for my part, I saw all sorts of connections that confirmed my intuition that I probably didn't meet Sabira by chance: - I learnt that the place where I was working, called The Manoeuvre Field, used to be an army training camp where my two grandfathers, born several hundred kilometres away, spent 2 years of military service before taking part in World War II.



- I found myself working with young people of foreign origin, many of whom came from former French colonies.

- Several men in my family fought against the independence of Algeria under the French flag

- Sabira is from Algerian descent, - and the area we lived in was at the heart of the battles when Catholics fought back the Arabic invaders.

Sabira : For my part, my family was deeply traumatized and marked by the Algerian war.

My mother's father was murdered. My father suffered the humiliations of the settlers for whom he worked throughout his adolescence and, during the war, he was tortured by French soldiers. So my parents arrived in France in a state of deep suffering, especially my father, full of anger and bitter resentment.



Sabine : That state of war often manifested itself in our relationship. Concretely, when my heart was filled with hatred and anger towards Sabira, I checked several times and found that she was affected by it at a distance, either that she fell ill or that she was enduring at the same time violent events.

In this situation of suffering, my elders constantly brought me back to my initial vow: "You wished to meet Sabira to solve essential things, raise your awareness, clean your heart and your mind. Only if you commit yourselves together for the happiness of others, will you cleanse these resurgences of the past. Wish to progress with her! ». I had to constantly educate my mind to reposition the meaning of our relationship at that level.

Sabira: It was as difficult for me as for Sabine. I often heard: "Look at what puts you in these states". While I was suffering from the same sorrows in this bond, I observed the same patterns that I had known with my parents. I also heard: "If you live this with Sabine, just as with your parents, it is because this reality has roots in you! Learn, watch, practice and transform yourself."

This is what gave me the strength to recite the sutra and ask the spiritual world: "What can't I see? What do I have to transform to free myself from relationships based on power?"

Sabine : I remember a special awareness on the occasion of a practice meeting: we were 9 women, from different origins and

with different skin colours. I had the vision of the ancestral history of each one of us: stories marked by the oppression of colonisations, slavery, religions, men, parents.

Sabira : I remember that day as a wonderful moment because, beyond our cultural differences, our social origins, we all had the same inability to accept reality and to question ourselves.

Sabine : Every time Sabira and I really took refuge together in front of our altars, asking to be helped to realize the Teaching, we instantly felt a great joy...

Sabira : We witnessed all kinds of experiences beyond our understanding or our personal power: we observed changes among our fellow practitioners and, at the same time, among the young people we were working with.

Sabine : They came from many "hot spots" around the globe. The group was potentially explosive and tense. Many young people had experienced horrors, and were broken. Each time Sabira and I made the effort to question ourselves and to become determined again to transform ourselves, we could see this mind-set circulating: the conflicts were defused and gave way to a very pure, very joyful, very constructive atmosphere. We have seen young people repair themselves, make amazing progress, and gain confidence in their potential.

Sabira: More broadly, we saw this atmosphere of caring and consideration spread throughout

the school and even the neighbourhood. Little by little, the head teacher and all the teachers were carried into an "educational sangha", united around the same goal: the progress of the youth.

In August 2015, Sabine and I, and other members of our tradition, had the opportunity to deepen our spiritual research in Japan, where Reiyukai Buddhism was born, and especially in Mirokusan, which is a place dedicated to youth.

Sabine : From this journey, I came back with 2 treasures: in a place dedicated to the bodhisattva Maitreya, I experienced the opening of my senses and a quality of my heart which made me perceive which extraordinary dimensions of love and compassion a human being can be connected with, and I came back with a goal, which I heard from a very ancient Japanese practitioner : "It is important now to acquire a heart as pure as water, which hurts no one and is hurt by no one..."

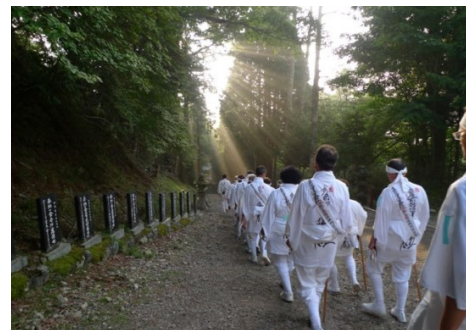


Sabira: I came back with precious things too.

First, I heard that "during this journey we could experience stepping into the spiritual realm." This sentence penetrated me: I verified that, indeed, 2 worlds existed and that, as soon as I solicited the spiritual world, I truly penetrated another

dimension where I was helped, inspired and carried.

Secondly, I felt the importance of looking for ways to give young people access to the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and I vowed to accompany them until their take off.



Sabine: When I realized how much Sabira and I were the same, instantly I could see my hard, demanding heart and lack of attention for my children. This is one of my strongest spiritual experiences: opening my heart as a mother for my eldest daughter. I really felt as if I met her for the first time. That day, everything was beautiful, bright and perfect and I thought it was wonderful.





Sabira : When I started to practice with many young people aged 15, 16, 17, some were taking drugs, others were out of school, unable to live in reality. Thanks to all their practice, they gradually became responsible young adults. I am happy to see how they build their lives wisely and engage with others with compassion. In parallel, I learnt to respect my children, and the people around me. I'm learning to love them as they are. To respect their free will without judging them, without believing that I hold The Truth.



Sabine : Since we began to prepare our talk in Benalmàdena, several young people we have accompanied in the professional context together have come to us, reconnected with us and have told us about their journey. They are now socially integrated and extremely grateful.

What an encouraging journey!
Let us wish that as many young people as possible have access to the teachings of Buddhism and create beautiful relationships of spiritual friendship. May they change their destiny and, in their turn, spread "wisdom and compassion" within their families and society. 🧘





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