

N.3 • 2019

EUROPEAN BUDDHIST

magazine

Ethics in Buddhism

Contents

- 4** **Should we try to be good?**
- 8** **Safeguarding and Ethical Guidelines in Triratna**
- 14** **ETHICS, VOWS, TITLES**
- 22** **The Ethics of the Teacher-Student Relationship in Buddhism**
- 26** **Let's create the ethical community**

Editorial

Dear readers,

With great pleasure I present to you the third installment of our European Buddhist Magazine. In this issue, we offer some thoughts of our membership on a topic which is very relevant for us at this point in time: Ethics in Buddhism.

The subject was also at the center of our discussions during the EBU's Annual General Meeting in the UK last autumn.

To look at ethical behavior in a Buddhist context obviously became very relevant in the light of many cases of sexual, emotional and physical abuse which have surfaced recently. In this number, you will find profound thoughts of distinguished members of our community on these matters. Also, the EBU strongly suggests to its members to introduce a Code of Conduct and Safeguarding measures, in order to help prevent the harm of practitioners of the Buddhist path in the future.

I wish you a joyful reading, which may inspire you as much as it did me!

With a deep bow and my best wishes in the Dharma,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron Eichhorn', with a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath.

Ron Eichhorn - Mio Sop
European Buddhist Union President

SHOULD WE TRY TO BE GOOD?

By Satya Robyn



Recently I made a decision to tithe my income. I'd known about the concept of tithing for a long time, which is a well-known spiritual practice in Christian circles and one of the five pillars of Islam. Tithing involves giving away a percentage of everything we earn (before tax!) to charity – traditionally to your spiritual community. I did my sums, decided that 10% should be possible in theory, and made a commitment to try it.

I am very interested in how we become more ethical in practice. You could say that giving a proportion of my income away is an ethical thing to do. Do we become more ethical people because we learn what good behaviour is, and then try really hard to be good? I don't think that's the whole picture... I've known for a long time that the Buddha encouraged us to live

with less, and to give what we have to those who need it. Why, if I became a Buddhist many years ago, has it taken me so long? Why now?

In my case, I didn't start tithing because I decided to try and be more generous with my money. I started tithing because I am ready to be more generous with what I have, and I'm ready because the Buddha's love has been working away on me in the background all this time. My experience of refuge has been gradually wearing away my fear around scarcity and my compulsions around spending. My ethical behaviour is a natural consequence of my taking refuge and growing in faith, rather than a conscious decision 'to be good'.

This way of looking at my decision chimes with my teacher Dharmavidya David Brazier's interpretation of the Four Noble Truths, which he outlines in his book 'The Feeling Buddha'. In it he summarises the usual interpretation of these truths as (to paraphrase) the problem of dukkha (1) can be solved by the extinction of desire, nirodha (3), which is achieved through following marga, the ethical action of the Eightfold Path (4). This is unlike the way the Buddha usually sets out his teachings,

which are "...in the form of logical propositions [that] almost invariably have the linear form A leads to B which leads to C which leads to D and so on."

Dharmavidya suggests instead that the fourth truth, marga, ethical action, is a natural consequence of the third truth, nirodha. Nirodha is a choice we can make when samudaya appears – we can build an earth bank around the fire that arises, and harness it to do good. We don't extinguish our passion, but instead use it as our fuel. We can do this by deeply understanding the first truth, which says that we can't avoid dukkha, and by realising that our attempts to avoid it in the short term won't ultimately help us. Instead, we make the choice of the noble ones. To summarise, after inevitable dukkha (1), samudaya happens (2), then we have a choice to choose nirodha (3) which leads us towards the Eightfold Path, marga (4). This process, supported by our deep refuge in the three jewels, naturally results in us becoming more ethical as time goes on.

Dharmavidya says, "The Middle Path, the Eightfold Way, is not the means to eliminate suffering. It is the noble outcome of facing the reality of affliction

and working through what then comes up for us in a courageous and authentic way. When we do so, the eight elements of the path described by the Buddha are not means to an end. They are simply a description of our authentic life. The Eightfold Path emerges from the spiritual work described in the first three truths.”

If looked at through this lens, we can see that I haven’t been a completely passive partner in the process of change. In my experience, I am more able to courageously face my dukkha when I am resourced and connected to a spiritual source. There are things I can do to affect these factors. I live in a Buddhist community and I spend time in practice, study and devotion. I make sure I receive the support I need from friends, sangha, 12 step groups, therapy and courses. I look after myself as best I can, including getting enough sleep, food, rest and fun. I seek out inspiration through my teachers and through books. I write articles on the Dharma.

All of these activities put me in good conditions and intensify the influence of the Buddha on me, or at least help get some of my ego out of the way! Despite this, it’s not helpful for me to fall into the trap of thinking that I am in control of my process of growth. This would be like a

flower feeling they could move from their undernourished soil to the other side of the garden, if only they pulled at their roots hard enough. I can turn my face to the sun, and the rest of it is not up to me.

I made the decision to tithe my income because the time was ripe for me to try it. It’s just outside my comfort zone. I have felt some panic about giving the money away, and also some rebellion at saying goodbye to money I could have bought chocolate or books with. I have worried about whether I will be able to pay my bills, or afford to go away on a writing retreat next year. This is dukkha arising, and I try to face it when it arrives with gentleness and patience.

If someone had asked me to tithe my income last year or even last month, I would only have managed to do so with a great deal of resentment. It might have been helpful for those who received my money, but at a cost – my resentment may have infected the transaction, or led me to be less generous in other parts of my life. I believe that when we push ourselves too hard to be ethical when we don’t want to be, there is a consequence, and at these times it might be more sensible to accept our current limitations and keep turning our faces to

the sun. We can’t help plants grow by tugging at them.

I have watched several people become vegan over the past four years in the temple, and they have all done so at their own pace. They have started to experiment with swapping in plant milk or trying vegan cake recipes when their time is ripe. I still occasionally succumb to prodding them to ‘hurry them up’, and it always backfires. If someone asks you for information or advice, then give it – but otherwise, get on with looking at how ethically you are living your own life – there will be plenty there to occupy you!

So, should we try to be good? Of course, yes. Sometimes it is helpful to ‘fake it to make it’, doing what is ethical even though our hearts aren’t in it. Sometimes we learn about ourselves by giving a little more than feels comfortable, or holding our tongue when we really want to gossip. And – there are limits to the choices we make. We all carry heavy karma, going back many generations. If it was easier to become perfectly ethical, we’d all be Buddhas by now! I might be tithing at the moment, but I’m still using too much plastic, speaking unskillfully, feeling jealous, using various compulsions etc. etc. etc.

I think it is helpful to be realistic about what is possible, and realistic about how much control we have over ourselves. We are all bombu – foolish beings of wayward passions. We can keep turning our faces towards the light, by taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha whenever we can. We can do our best. We can forgive ourselves for not living up to our expectations, and try to forgive others for disappointing us. We can also trust that the Buddha is working on us all the time and that, deep inside, our potential to be more ethical is slowly ripening... Wait for the blossom, any day now! 🧘



References: 1 – p47 of *The Feeling Buddha*,
2 – p 125 of *The Feeling Buddha*





Safeguarding and Ethical Guidelines in Triratna

By Munisha

Following talks I gave to the German Buddhist Union in April 2018 and the European Buddhist Union in September, both organisations asked me to write something for their members.

While I fully acknowledge that there has been controversy and harm in Triratna's past, I am not going to address that in this article, because you can read about it in great detail here: <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/node/14140>

This article explains the measures we have put in Triratna place to lessen the risk of harm in future. I'll begin by explaining who we are.

What is the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community?

We were founded as the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order in Britain in 1967 by the Venerable

Urgyen Sangharakshita (1925-2018), later becoming known as the Triratna Buddhist Order and Triratna Buddhist Community.

Triratna today is an international Buddhist movement, crossing many cultures and legal systems. Our members are not lay or monastic and we are not defined as "teachers" or "students"; we are spiritual friends at different stages of commitment to and experience of Buddhism and Triratna. Today over 2,200 of us are ordained as members of the Triratna Buddhist Order - women and men, all over the world.

Half the Order still lives in Britain, with the other half spread across the rest of the world. Several more thousand people worldwide practise Buddhism with us, many of whom are training to enter the Order. A great many of us live in India, mostly in Dalit communities formerly known as "Untouchable".

However, we began in London in the 1960s as a very small, informal group of young British hippies with 'experimental' ideas about a number of things including sexual relationships. Over the decades since we have periodically had to revisit some sad consequences of the

behaviour of our founder and some others from the 1960s to the early 1980s.

What is 'Safeguarding'?

Safeguarding is a British English term for the duty of legally established bodies in Britain to protect from harm children (under 18s) but also adults – especially adults who may be particularly "vulnerable" or "at risk" under certain conditions; for example those with addictions or mental instability, who would be particularly vulnerable to influence or lack mental capacity to make sound judgments for themselves.

The risk to children

It's interesting that although our sanghas are rightly concerned with past misconduct by Buddhist teachers with adult students, child protection is a far greater concern in other religious organisations, and in society in general. We Buddhists must not think that Buddhists will never commit serious child sexual abuse. I am certain it is by far the greater danger facing us now and indeed It has already happened: this article reports the case of a German Zen priest jailed in 2017 for sexual offences with seven boys aged 4-13.

<https://buddhismus-aktuell.de/diskussionen/der-fall-genpo-d/zen-priester-8-jahre-haft-fuer-kindesmissbrauch.html>

How does Safeguarding look in Triratna?

Since 2015, Triratna has been developing two kinds of written policy:

- 1) Safeguarding policies for children and adults and
- 2) Ethical guidelines.

Safeguarding policies meet external requirements: they set out the law on matters such as criminal abuse and discrimination, and demonstrate an organisation's commitment to abide by the law and good practice. They include definitions of abuse, how to recognise it and what to do when a complaint is made or abuse is suspected. Buddhist Safeguarding policies make it clear that these external requirements are expressions of Buddhist ethical teachings and values.

Triratna's Ethical Guidelines are internal statements of our own values as Triratna Buddhists, based on the Five Precepts. For example, they state that Order members should be extremely careful if they start sexual relations with adult newcomers.

These two sets of documents overlap, of course, and both are public. They are updated every year as our experience and understanding develop and you can see the 2018 versions here:

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-safeguarding-policies-and-ethical-guidelines-2018>

Half our ordained sangha ('the Order') lives in countries where the requirement for Safeguarding is different or does not exist at all. But since half of us live in the UK, it makes sense to use British requirements as the model for all our centres worldwide.

All Triratna centres in Britain are separately registered charities, all therefore regulated by the Charity Commission (England and Wales) or Scottish Charity Regulator, which hold the trustees of each charity legally responsible for Safeguarding in the course of its activities.

Model documents

Our Safeguarding policies and Ethical guidelines are 'model' documents. A model policy is a suggested form of words. It is recommended that each centre has such a policy but the exact form of words is up to them and it may be that local requirements in a particular country are different from the

British requirements. In Sweden, where I live, Safeguarding does not exist but we have adopted the British documents with slight amendments taking account of Swedish law. In Germany our centres have adopted rather different documents, which you can see here: <http://www.buddhistisches-zentrum-essen.de/ueber-uns/ethische-leitlinien.html>

Sexual relations in the Triratna sangha

Triratna is not a celibate sangha, and we do not wish to regulate people's sex lives, but we make clear that preceptors must not have sexual relationships with people they have ordained, or ordain people with whom they have had sexual relations in the past.

Triratna's Safeguarding has been developing since 2013

Introducing Safeguarding is a matter of slow culture change. I began to talk about the need for Safeguarding policies and training in 2013 but it took until 2015 for us to publish our first model policies, and I became overall Safeguarding officer in 2016. (This is a full-time job for which I am paid a very modest living allowance by the leaders of all Triratna's centres in Europe.)

In 2017 I started a Safeguarding team, working with another member of our Order who is very senior in the criminal justice system in Britain. And we are part of an Ethics Kula with more senior members of the Order – who can take action at a higher level, for example where a person's conduct has implications for their continued membership of the Order.

Triratna Safeguarding today

You can always see the latest Safeguarding news on Triratna's main website here: <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/search/node/safeguarding>

But in short, every one of our 30 or so UK Triratna centres now has written Safeguarding policies and Ethical guidelines and at least one Safeguarding officer.

Problems, concerns and rumours must be reported first (and only)

to the Safeguarding officer, who is responsible for deciding what to do next. This is because everybody doing something can be as harmful as nobody doing anything, and gossip and discussion can cause great harm. Confidentiality and good record-keeping are very important: information may be shared only with those who need to know in order to address the matter effectively without causing further harm, and if necessary the charity must be able to explain its actions to the Charity Commission or police.

If the matter may be criminal, the Safeguarding officer must report to the police, no matter how senior the person against whom the complaint is being made.

It takes time to change a culture

Some people ask why we need Safeguarding policies

and Ethical guidelines when we have the precepts. My answer: how useful are the precepts if your Buddhist centre or temple is on fire? In such an emergency you will not want a discussion about the best way to leave the building!

It's the same thing with Safeguarding. The precepts are wonderful but they are not practical guides to behaviour in an emergency. Anyway, it's clear people have been hurt in Triratna so it's obvious our precepts were not enough.

Other policies

In addition to the policies mentioned already, we are gradually developing a number of other policies including:

- Safeguarding teenagers policy
- Complaints policy
- Grievance policy
- Whistleblower policy



- Disability policy
- Bullying and harassment policy
- Trans and non-binary policy

Managing ex-prisoners joining the sangha after having been in jail for sexual/violent crimes

We have also created a paralegal process for addressing serious allegations against members of Triratna (no matter how senior) where for any reason the police cannot pursue the matter.

<https://alaya.thebuddhistcentre.com>

What if such policies are not normal in your country?

You may be interested in what I have described here, but may be thinking it would be impossible to introduce such things in your tradition because they are too foreign to your culture.

I would suggest that you use these ideas – and even our documents if you wish - as a starting point for awareness-raising and discussion amongst your leadership. You may be surprised at what emerges. Experience has shown us that such discussion be very valuable, providing people with an opportunity to raise matters they have not thought to raise before, things they have forgotten because they were uncomfortable. You can then decide with your board/council/trustees what kinds of documents are appropriate for your organisation, in your country.

Is your group too small to need such policies?

If your Buddhist group is small you may also be thinking that these things are necessary for a large international organisation like Triratna, but not for yours. Please learn from our experience: the things which went wrong in Triratna happened when we were still very small, and we are still dealing with the consequences over 30 years later.

‘Restorative process’

One last thing needs to be mentioned, which is not formally part of Safeguarding but which is another important way of enabling people in Triratna to speak out, be heard and resolve difficulties.

A key complaint arising from Triratna’s past is that from the 1960s to the 1980s our founder Sangharakshita had sexual relationships with (as far as we know) 25 of his early followers, aged 17 to 30, a few of whom later said they felt very unhappy about this. In 2018 Triratna engaged an external expert in ‘Restorative process’ to contact as many of those former partners as possible. As a result she was able to facilitate Restorative dialogues between Sangharakshita and one or two of them in the year before he died.

Restorative process is not the same as mediation.

Read about Restorative process and why we chose it: <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/adhishthana-kula/why-restorative-approach>

Read about the trainer: www.restorativenow.com

To enable systemic learning, we paid the trainer to train our leaders and many other Order members in Restorative process, and we set up an internal Restorative team of Order members who are available to work with people in Triratna as the need arises.

Recommendations for effective Safeguarding

- I’ll finish with four points
- Safeguarding should be led by your senior leaders and teachers
- have written policies
- have named Safeguarding officers
- Get training from external experts in Safeguarding

Email: safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org







ETHICS, VOWS, TITLES

by Shenpen Rinpoche

Given a certain amount of situations regarding abuse these last years within Buddhism, I think it is important to remind ourselves about the importance of ethics. In many fundamental Texts, across all traditions, there is a clear emphasis on ethical values, and the importance of vows, to establish guidelines, to strengthen the mind and collect merits. Buddha Shakyamuni was a monk and started the establishment of the ordained Sangha. The purpose of ordination is to live and practice with less possibilities to engage in improper activities.

We are indeed in a very strange time of our civilization. At the same time, we can notice a widening of the field of spirituality, but also a degeneration of its depth. It has been predicted that Buddhism will last 5000 years from the time of its founder; and we are around its half.

Though clearly ethic & vows are of utmost importance throughout

all traditions of Buddhism, this article is mostly about Tibetan Buddhism.

From the time Dharma entered the Land of Snow Mountains, it has undergone various periods of development and degeneration. But we can say that Buddhism has been wonderfully kept inside Tibet, with a strong tradition of memorization and oral transmission. The texts available today, basis of studies and practices, are descending in a straight line from Shakyamuni Buddha's Teachings, either under His historical form, or His subsequent Manifestations. Ethics and moral behavior have also been challenged throughout the history, with many misunderstandings about what should be done and what should be avoided.

This has been one of the reasons that in the 14th century, a famous Lama known as Je-Tsong-Kha-pa, or Lobsang Drakpa, after having learned from Masters of the three existing schools, started a new one - Gelug.pa - with the goal of reviving the importance of Ethics and Knowledge. Ethic as the basis of all virtues; Knowledge to avoid wrong views, and to purely preserve the Buddha's Teachings.

One source of confusion in the West nowadays is based on titles. Most people do not know what they cover and what they

don't and tend to take as their Root Guru people who do not have the required qualifications for that. So, let's take a look at the main titles in Tibetan Vajrayana Buddhism:

Geshe:

The Gelug.pa system starts based on a system of studies. A monk usually enters monastery around the age 7 to 10; he will learn for about 20 years, going through the 5 great topics: Par. Chin (Paramitas or Perfections), U.Ma (Madyamika or Middle Way), Dul.Wa (Vinaya or Code of Ethic), and Dzö (Abhidharma or Metaphysics). Then, he will pass an exam and become a Geshe (Doctor in Buddhist philosophy). He can go on for one or more years to the Gyu. Me or Gyu.Tö Tantric College to learn about Tantras.

This diploma of a Geshe is a "scholastic degree" i.e. it doesn't imply any spiritual realization. Here, we should emphasize that there are four levels of Geshe. This fact is often unknown in the West and leads to certain mistakes. The first and second are very basic scholarship levels; they are mainly able to memorize, but do not go in depth in the understanding or in the debate. Almost all of these will get the Geshe title when reaching the end of the study program.

Nowadays, there are wishes from the Central Tibetan

Administration that only the highest degree – Geshe Lharampa - could hold the title of Geshe. Because the level of "Doctor in Philosophy" can indeed only be compared with those who have succeeded in their studies through the Lharampa class and passed the final exams. This takes nearly 25 years of study. "Lharampa" Geshe have not just learned and memorized the Texts, but have gone more in depth in their understanding, with a special skill in logic. Yet, there is still a big gap between "understanding" and "realizing". When in the West students hear the word "Geshe", they tend to mix it up with "Lama". A Geshe "knows"; a "Lama" has some spiritual realizations and/or experience. A Geshe can be Lama or not; a Lama can be Geshe or not.

Lama: (Sanskrit: Guru) is a Spiritual Guide. There is no school for "Lamas". This title is obtained after having followed a very ethical life and showing signs of Wisdom. It is given by other Lamas, or by a large group of disciples. It is also given automatically to the reincarnation of Lamas. Let's also point out the fact that in the Kagyu.pa Tradition, a person who has performed a certain amount of years in retreat (from 3 to 6) can get the title "Lama". In the same way in which

studies don't automatically bring realizations, retreat doesn't either. In that aspect, the title "Lama" is not always a warranty of realizations.

Rinpoche: "Very precious". It is given mostly to reincarnated Lamas; but also, as an honorific title, to the Abbots of big monasteries (Khenpo Rinpoche) – which they keep also when retired from this function (Khensur Rinpoche).

Tulku: "Emanation Body". This originally referred to highly realized beings – Buddhas or Bodhisattvas – taking rebirth for the sake of sentient beings. But nowadays, all reincarnated Lamas are called 'Tulku', on the basis of their past life as good practitioners.

As a conclusion about the titles, none of them is a guarantee in terms of "spiritual liability". In Tibet, there was a lot more possibility to control the titles and anybody couldn't just play the role of a Lama. Nowadays, with the gap between East and West, some lower Geshe pretend to guide spiritually without any realization and without a clue about Western life and problems; and some Western teachers claim to have this or that realization, holding the title of Lama for their own sake.

It is indeed the responsibility of each Dharma student to carefully check and counter-

check the qualities of a teacher before considering him or her a reliable Spiritual Guide.

To guide the disciple on the progressive path of the three types of practitioners, a spiritual master in the Mahayana path needs to possess 10 qualities:

- Must be disciplined by the training in Ethics.
- Appeased by the training in meditative absorption.
- Pacified by the training in Wisdom.
- Virtues are superior in virtues to the virtues of his disciples.
- Possessing energy and enthusiasm for the accomplishment of the benefit of others.
- Rich of the study of the scriptures.
- Having a realization (manifest or conceptual) of Emptiness.
- Able to teach and has skillful means.
- Revealing the doctrine with Compassion.
- Gives up discouragement while having to repeat the instruction constantly.

CODE OF ETHICS

Pratimoksha Vows, or Vows of Individual Liberation:

All the advises given by Shakyamuni Buddha about Ethics are gathered in a Text called "Vinaya" (Skt.) or Dul.Wa

(Tib.). We learn that there are different levels of engagement in the practice, a different depth on the Path to renunciation and dedication.

Genyen: This is a lay person who takes 5 vows: not to kill, not to lie, not to steal, no sexual misconduct, and no alcohol (or any intoxicant).

Rabjung and Rabjung.ma: This is the first step to engage into the monastic life. It is considered as the first and very important step to become monk/nun. There are 8 vows: not to kill, not to lie, not to steal, to preserve one's chastity, no alcohol or intoxicants, changing of clothes (to wear the monk robes), changing of name (getting a new name), changing the mind (renouncing the lay life and livelihood).

Getsul and Getsul.ma: Formally called "novice", even though the novitiate is clearly started from Rabjung. The novice has to take 36 vows that can be taken usually from the age of 13 or 14. In the same way as a fortification around castles, those extra vows are added to protect the "main vows" also called "defeat" (i.e. not to kill, not to lie, not to steal, chastity).

Gelong: and Gelong.ma (Bhiksu and Bhiksuni in Sanskrit). The fully ordained monk respects 253 vows and the fully ordained nun respects 364 vows. These

vows cannot be taken before one is 21 years old. [Note that the lineage of the Gelongma ordination has been lost in Tibet, by the nuns. Nowadays, a woman who seeks full ordination must take it from another Buddhist tradition.]

Vows are fixed guidelines to channel the mind in the direction of pure conduct, source of all virtues. Some of them are based on the action performed, some others more on the motivation.

According to the Vinaya, we should not expose the full list of Getsul and Gelong vows to people not ready for ordination. Nevertheless, for a better understanding of monkhood we can take out and explain some of the major vows.

The four defeats (common to Rabjung/ma, Getsul/ma and Gelong/ma) which, if broken, destroy the ordination (other vows can be purified during a special ceremony held each 14 days in a monastery, called "Sojong"):

* Not to kill: this is broken by killing a human being; but a branch vow also includes other sentient beings.

* Not to lie: this defeat is completed by claiming to have a spiritual Realization that one doesn't have. A branch vow includes "telling voluntarily something which is not true".

* Not to steal: robbery is observed when taking a significant object from someone without their permission.

* Chastity: means not to penetrate any of the "three doors" (i.e. vagina, mouth, anus) of any being.

After those four defeats we usually add the vow of not taking alcohol and intoxicants, as under their influence we could break any or all the four defeats.

It is useful to know about those vows, so that a disciple who would be approached by an ordained teacher (monk, Geshe, ...) in a way which contradicts the vows, should be able to refuse categorically without any shame. Shame is for those who abuse their status as a teacher to obtain pleasure from those who regard them as a Guru.

Bodhisattva Vows

While the monks'/nuns' vows are common to both the Theravada and Mahayana Path, another set of vows concerns only the practitioners who engage in the Mahayana Path. It contains 18 root vows and 36 secondary ones. Among the root vows, we can bring out that one should not: * not forgive, especially if someone has presented excuses, * praise oneself and depreciate the others, * teach Emptiness

to those who are not ready, * claim to have realizations that one doesn't have (specially about Emptiness), * take for oneself means dedicated for the Three Jewels, * depreciate the value of those following the Theravada, * abandon Bodhicitta (exclude even a single being from our Bodhicitta).

Vajrayana Vows

These vows are taken by Vajrayana practitioners while they take an Initiation of the fourth Tantric class. They should not be displayed to those who do not have taken them. Such practitioners have to take the Bodhisattva vows too. Nevertheless, we could point out that one of them is specifically to not expose Tantric content to those not having taken the required Initiation.

It is important to understand what Tantra/Vajrayana is, and what it is not, as this term is used and misused in the West. Vajrayana is a specific Path within Mahayana Buddhism which uses our most subtle energies for Spiritual achievements. That way, it also uses all our emotions (which are energies), transforming them into the Path instead of spending years to pacify them.

This Path is known as the "short-cut to Enlightenment"; its methods

are powerful and very skillful. Nevertheless, it is not suitable for all practitioners, and only highly qualified Masters are able to decide who enters those practices and who should not. Consequently, these Masters are able to guide their disciples through the methods.

When we wish to climb a difficult mountain, we wouldn't think to do it without an experienced guide; in the same way, one should not even for a second think to walk the Tantric Path without a seriously qualified Spiritual Guide.

Tantra is mainly based on very precise visualizations which the practitioner should hold firmly and identify with. Those techniques require to have mastered "Shine", Mental Quietness, and should be grounded on the motivation of Bodhicitta, the Ultimate Compassion. As well, a correct and firm understanding of Emptiness is needed. So, we can see that not all people pretending to practice Tantra are really Yogis. Also, we can hear a lot about sexual practices within the Vajrayana, but mainly in the West. Because Tantrayana is not about sexual practice at all. It is about the union of Method and Wisdom, symbolized by a male and a female deity sitting together. It would be deeply mistaken to consider that the core of the Tantric practice is

based on sexual activity. There are some methods involving the physical aspect, but it is related with highest level Yogis, having realized Emptiness and Bodhicitta, and with a consort possessing the same level of realization.

In the Vajrayana, the place of the Guru, the Spiritual Guide, is fundamental. To find a root-Guru, establish the Master-to-Disciple relationship, and follow faithfully the advice of our root-Lama is a source of great merits and swift realizations. Our Guru is seen as Enlightened, and his actions as pure. Followers do benefit from advices, guidance, adapted to their level and needs.

Aside of this, some Masters have shown actions and behavior we could qualify as against the usual norms of ethics. Yet, in the past such Lamas have been respected and venerated, as what they did was seen as skillful means, ways to bring more people into the Dharma Path. These Masters had enough Wisdom and Realization to transcend concepts without being caught by any of them. They were not acting out of attachment or their own ego; they were acting solely for the sake of others. But of course, from the outside, it's very difficult to see what someone's real motivation is, or to evaluate their level of Wisdom. Clearly,



some of the Masters of the past, such as Marpa, would today be subject to court processes and would end up in prison for how they acted towards their disciples (for example Milarepa). More contemporarily, we could mention Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

So here we have the ingredients for a profound and powerful Path to Enlightenment ... and at the same time the risk for major downfalls and abuse. The question I guess is how to find the first and avoid the latter?

The answer can be already found within the teachings. There is a great deal of explanation regarding the qualities a Teacher should have, the importance of the lineage behind, and the respect of ethical values.

In countries where Buddhism has been present for a long time, abuse cases are very limited because people are careful, and information about each Teachers, authentic or "wannabe", is circulating. Thus, one cannot really establish a system of abuse. In the West, because it is fairly new and probably also for some other reasons, we encountered quite some problems in these last years. People don't know what they are allowed to talk about, or not; what is normal between master and disciple, or not; how one can react in front of a strange or shocking situation, etc. But all is explained if you do search well or ask questions on specialized forums.

We are in a society of de-responsibilization, where individuals tend to always place themselves in the role of a victim and might hire lawyers to act on their behalf when the first problem occurs. As Buddhists we must and do understand the law of causality, which places us back at the center of what is happening to us.

I know, some people, even Buddhists, don't like this point of view, because it can easily be twisted to excuse the actions of real abusers behind a simple: "it's your karma". There is a middle way to be found between understanding our responsibility from a karmic point of view and reacting conventionally, which can include hiring a lawyer if



needed. Through the whole process of analyzing and reacting to any situation, we need to keep in mind the law of causality, based on our motivation.

With that in mind, instead of always throwing all the blame on the fake gurus, I would like to point out also the responsibility of the "fake disciples". Indeed, as a disciple, one should read well the basic texts, question, analyze, and use his/her good sense. Of course, some people are skillful in hiding, lying, manipulating, but we shouldn't also try to hide our own laziness and lack of investigation behind such assertion. Later on, to claim "I was abused" shows at least that we might have been quite naïve, and light headed. And sometimes there are also other motivations, ego reactions and revenge. Some disciples for example, when their mistakes are pointed out, with the right motivation to help them improving their mind, can leave their Teacher, slam the door and talk badly about the Guru.

Unfortunately, some teachers have been or are manipulating others to obtain their favors, sexually, financially, etc. And some newbies are falling for their strategies, even if we can point out the mistakes of these new members too. Such wrong practices need to be exposed. Yet, as for every aspect of our

life, we need to check carefully our motivation and how we will proceed, remembering once again that all our thoughts, words, and actions do have karmic consequences.

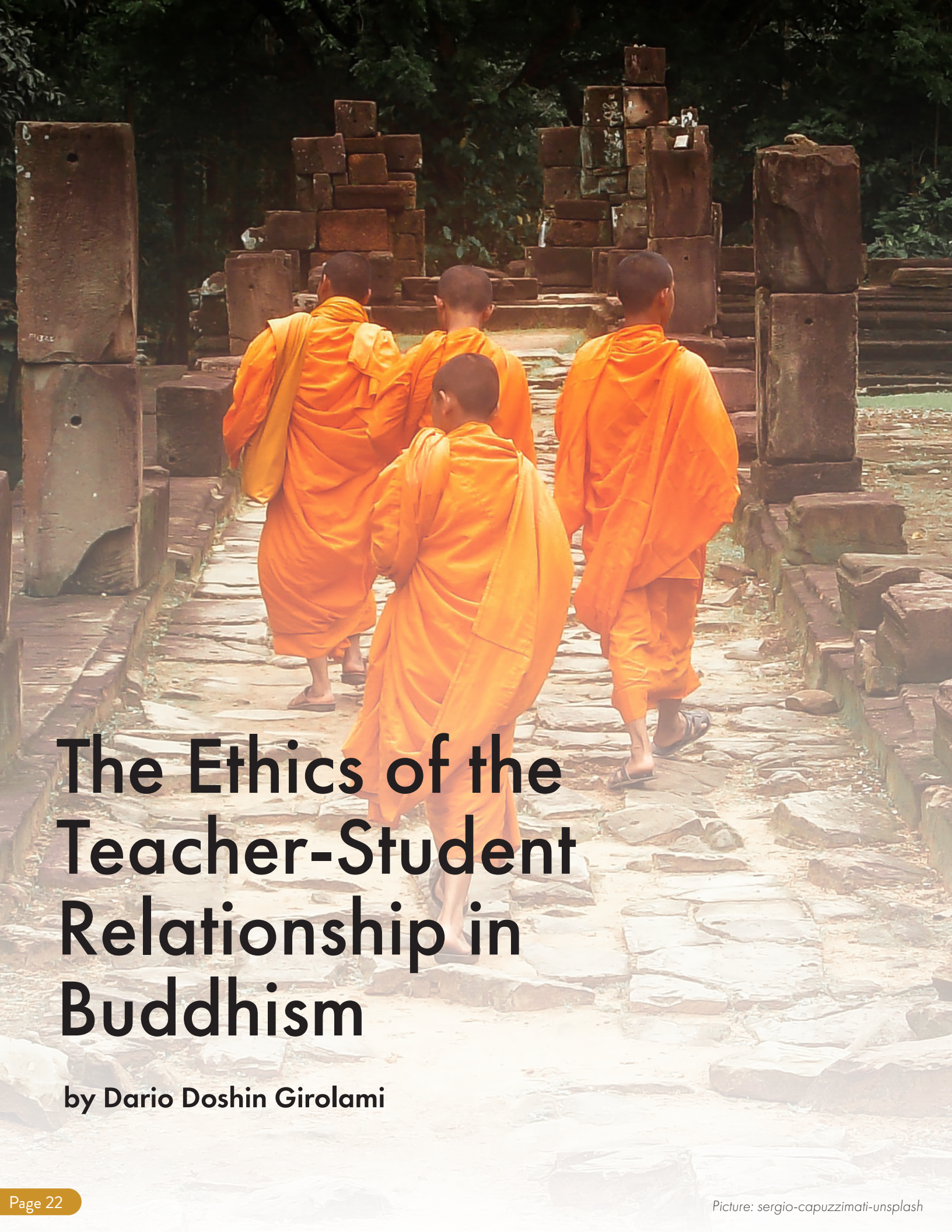
I particularly like the approach of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, when His Holiness recommends to simply move away from any insidious teacher, not falling into the mistake of slandering against him (or her). Of course, asked about the reasons, one can say what s/he has been the subject of, factually, as objectively as possible, avoiding as well as possible any negative emotions, so as not to create negative seeds for oneself. Especially as negative karma in the field of spirituality can have consequences over several incarnations.

To conclude, remaining on the topic of Ethics: if a so-called practitioner of Dharma would enter in any sexual conduct with you, especially if that person is ordained, then it would be a serious misdeed! The great Masters have a very controlled mind, remaining in special equipoise state, and do not need any pleasure of the senses. No Geshe, Lama, Tulku, Rinpoche or whoever shall use his title or position to force or mislead anyone into sexual activities based on "I-don't-know-what" Tantric practice ... If this happens, you have

the right to speak out about it, and to report this behavior to higher instances in Buddhism. But we should not fall into the big mistake of false accusations in order to draw attention or to take revenge against anyone.

At last, we can conclude by saying once more that Ethics is the basis of all accumulation of merits. 🙏





The Ethics of the Teacher-Student Relationship in Buddhism

by Dario Doshin Girolami

Quite a few western Buddhist communities have, unfortunately, become objects of scandal, often of a sexual nature. In fact, many Buddhist teachers have abused their position of power by engaging in sexual relations with their students, male and female.

Since the 1980s, the sangha of the San Francisco Zen Center has been deeply aware of just how complex the relationship is between student and teacher. For this reason, the Zen Center has developed clear ethical guidelines for the relationship, as well as specific training for Dharma teachers that includes elements of western psychology.

One of the principle problems is that Dharma teachers do not know, or are not able to manage, transference and countertransference, or projection and counterprojection.

In the field of psychoanalysis, transference is something that a patient projects on the analyst. The projection may be positive, that is, associated with esteem, affection, or love; or it may

be negative, associated with fear, competitiveness, envy, jealousy, and aggression. It is the responsibility of the analyst to draw on his or her skill and professionalism to manage these projections. As the objects of such love or hate, analysts must also know how to manage their own emotional and affective reactions, or what is called countertransference. That is, they must not make projections of their own on patients, but maintain a distance between their feelings and those of the patient. This skill is not required of patients. Instead, it is the analyst who must help patients to liberate themselves.

The same dynamic operates in the relationship between students and Dharma teachers. Students tend to idealize the teacher and to project on him or her the perfection of Buddha and, often, the figure of the loving parent of whom they have such need. In this way, students abandon their own capacity for judgment and entrust themselves to their teachers as a child does to its parent. Clearly, the

projection could instead be negative, and the teacher may be seen as the castrating parent: as for an analyst's patient, the projection is an expression of a need or of a trauma.

The skillful teacher must know that such projections are inevitable and have nothing to do with him or her personally. Thus the positive or negative image is not something that should be believed. For example, if the projection takes the form of love, the teacher has to be aware that this is not a true falling in love, but a construction of the student's, or, rather, an appeal for help. In showing such love, students are in fact showing their problem with trust. The teacher who—instead of helping wisely—enters into an affective relationship with the student, violates that trust and causes great damage.

Teachers are always in a position of power, spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical, vis-à-vis students. The spiritual Master is in fact an archetype operating in the student's mind that generates

these projections. Projections are a source of power that should be re-invested for the benefit of the student, to promote his or her spiritual, psychological, and physical well-being, and not used to advantage the teacher.

Teachers, too, must be very attentive to their counterprojections. However wonderful it is to be seen as perfect, however intoxicating it is to be invested with unlimited power, however exciting it is to be loved, it is essential that a conscientious teacher not give way to the temptation to use that power.

Teachers of the Dharma, even spiritually evolved ones, are just human beings and as such are full of human defects and emotional wounds of their own. The student's projection can therefore easily latch onto a psychological or emotional need of the teacher. For this reason, teachers have to be aware of their own mechanisms, their own needs, their own wounds, and not call on the student to satisfy those needs, but rather work on them with their own teachers and with a psychologist.

As much as one may know how to meditate, it is very difficult to see with the mind what is hidden by mind: eyes cannot see the eyes. What is needed is an outside gaze that acts as a mirror and helps the teacher

recognize his or her own mechanisms. Teachers should also be aware that wounds and emotional needs may be buried in the unconscious, in the "storehouse consciousness" (in Sanskrit, *alaya vijñāna*, to employ a term from Buddhist psychology) and be activated only in the presence of particular causes and conditions, such as, for example, the projections one receives from a student.

There are therefore clear ethical guidelines that delineate the relationship between teacher and student. For example, at the San Francisco Zen Center—and, consequently, at the Centro Zen l'Arco of Rome, which is affiliated with the SFZC—we have the following ethical rule:

A disciple of the Buddha does not misuse sexuality but rather cultivates and encourages honest and caring relationships: it is considered a misuse of authority, responsibility, and sexuality for a Zen Center teacher to engage in sexual behavior with his or her student. If a teacher and/or student feel at risk of violating this guideline, they should suspend their teacher-student relationship at least until they have sought counsel with a senior Zen Center teacher. Furthermore, it is considered a misuse of sexuality for a teacher at Zen Center to form a sexual relationship with a former student within six months

of the termination of the student-teacher relationship. Before forming a sexual relationship, all Zen Center priests, head students, or other persons in a formal role that entail clear advantages of influence in relationship to others should discuss the appropriateness of the potential relationship with a teacher or practice leader.

In addition to having such rules, it is essential that the student who feels he or she has been abused—verbally, physically, sexually, psychologically—has someone to turn to without fear of not being heard, of being judged or distanced. A person is likely to feel very afraid to talk to other students of the failings of a teacher. Dharma centers must therefore have dedicated support groups within them that collate all the occasions on which the person feels he or she was abused, check the facts of the case, act as a medium of communication to the teacher and the rest of the community, and—at the same time—provide psychological and spiritual support to the presumed victim.

To offer compassion to an injured person is a central practice of Buddhism, but compassion is for everyone. I have often seen that the victims of abuse are shown great compassion in Dharma centers, but not the teacher. Although it is essential to identify the

people responsible for abuse and to correct the situation, it is also necessary to give abusive teachers the help they need to fully understand their own actions and the consequences of those actions.

When a sangha becomes aware of its collective, positive projections on the teacher, it can try to wrest back the trust it gave, and transform the person they once considered a saint into a monster. But this is tantamount to a new projection—this time, a negative one. In such a circumstance, both sangha and teacher lose an extraordinary opportunity for compassion and collective growth. 🧘



LET'S CREATE THE ETHICAL COMMUNITY

By Stefano Bettera



"Care" is a central concept in Buddhism and making it a social practice means activating the qualities of kindness, joy, equanimity and compassion. This is the basis for creating an ethical community of practice.

Care, "appamada" in Pali, the ancient language of the Canon, is a key concept in the practice. Its function does not end at the individual sphere. On the contrary, it is the basis, the container and the premise for creating a context, a community of practice, where other aspects of the relationship between people can be imagined, activated and transformed into resources. In fact, imagining the Buddhist teaching as a purely personal path can be partly effective, but not only is this the perspective with which it has been conceived and structured. Its collective dimension, enlarged, is as evident as it is necessary in order not to reduce it to a simple search for balance or well-being.

In Buddhism there are, in fact, three elements that constitute the three pillars on which it is founded and from which the whole path of practice starts. They are the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Far from being just objects of faith or veneration, they represent a system of thought and action based, in fact, on three points that connect to each other inseparably and to which all the central qualities of teaching refer: the Buddha, represents the concrete experience, embodied, of a man who has completed and realized a path. He is the "guarantee" that this method of research and practice is feasible, works and can be put into action by anyone. The Dharma is the teaching, the path, the method itself, that is, the eight steps or indications to be followed to carry out this research. Finally, the Sangha is the context that makes it possible to implement the method and to which it is addressed. Without the coexistence of all these three elements, the whole system

does not hold up and together they represent the framework within which both the individual and the community, society, act and practice the fundamental qualities. It is the description of a scientific approach where one starts from experience, examines problems, criticalities and strengths, understands that there is the possibility of dealing with them and inserting them in a broader scheme that gives meaning, and finally indicates the method of work or care. We are not far from truth if we think, for example, that Western philosophy has long been defined as a scientific search for human happiness. Practice, in this perspective, becomes a discipline to be implemented, verified and confirmed by direct experience. And it is no coincidence that the Sangha, that is, the community formed by those who practice and meditate, is the third of these three founding points, proving the importance of the collective dimension of Buddhist teaching.

"Put into practice"

"Do not believe anything - said Gotama - try and verify yourself". That it is not only a solicitation to remain concrete and not to get lost in theories, but, above all, a call to individual responsibility in the face of life. Own and of others. Care is the last of the teachings that this formidable man leaves as an inheritance to his community. The last and most significant. Because if this quality contains all the others, making it a practice, transforming it into action means activating them all. In an ideal network where each quality represents a junction and connection point with all the "sisters", it is connected to them and allows their emergence and activation. If there is no space for just one of the aspects separated from the others, it becomes evident how this profound relationship binds every aspect of existence as well as all human

beings. And it calls us all to a deep responsibility to act. In the texts of the Pali Canon, Gotama compares its teaching to a city that, once renewed, allows people to live a prosperous and happy life. So, practice is a way, first and foremost the practice of care, to bring this happiness back into a context where no one can be excluded and left behind.

Mindfulness is the new black!

This social dimension is what is missing today, for example, at Mindfulness, which has an extraordinary role in promoting awareness. But it is too often limited and instrumental only to the perspective of individual well-being. Today everyone talks about it, everyone proposes it as a magic recipe to find serenity, well-being, even happiness. Indeed, happiness seems to be within reach, thanks

to this discipline. Even easy to reach. As if it had always been in front of our eyes without us being able to see it. But is it so true? Actually, the point is another one and it comes close to what has been the path often taken by Yoga in the West, ended up being a discipline unrelated to its roots. This has an undoubted positive effect and an indisputable effectiveness: the practice of awareness, which has its basis in the Satipatana Sutta, in the most ancient teachings of Buddhism, has the great merit of having secularized and spread meditation in a way that until a few years ago was inimitable. So much so that the English health system now considers it a complementary therapy to traditional treatments. Given its roots it is natural that it is a technique that works. But its focus is on the solution of a personal problem, specific, more than collective. It is a



protocol born with this function. And this is its "limit", so much so that many teachers of this discipline today feel the need to add the adjective "relational" to complete an aspect that is objectively secondary. But it is also evident that the awareness and the ability to take care are the starting point and the foundation of any other action that aims to achieve happiness and every practice that goes in this direction becomes part of the process.

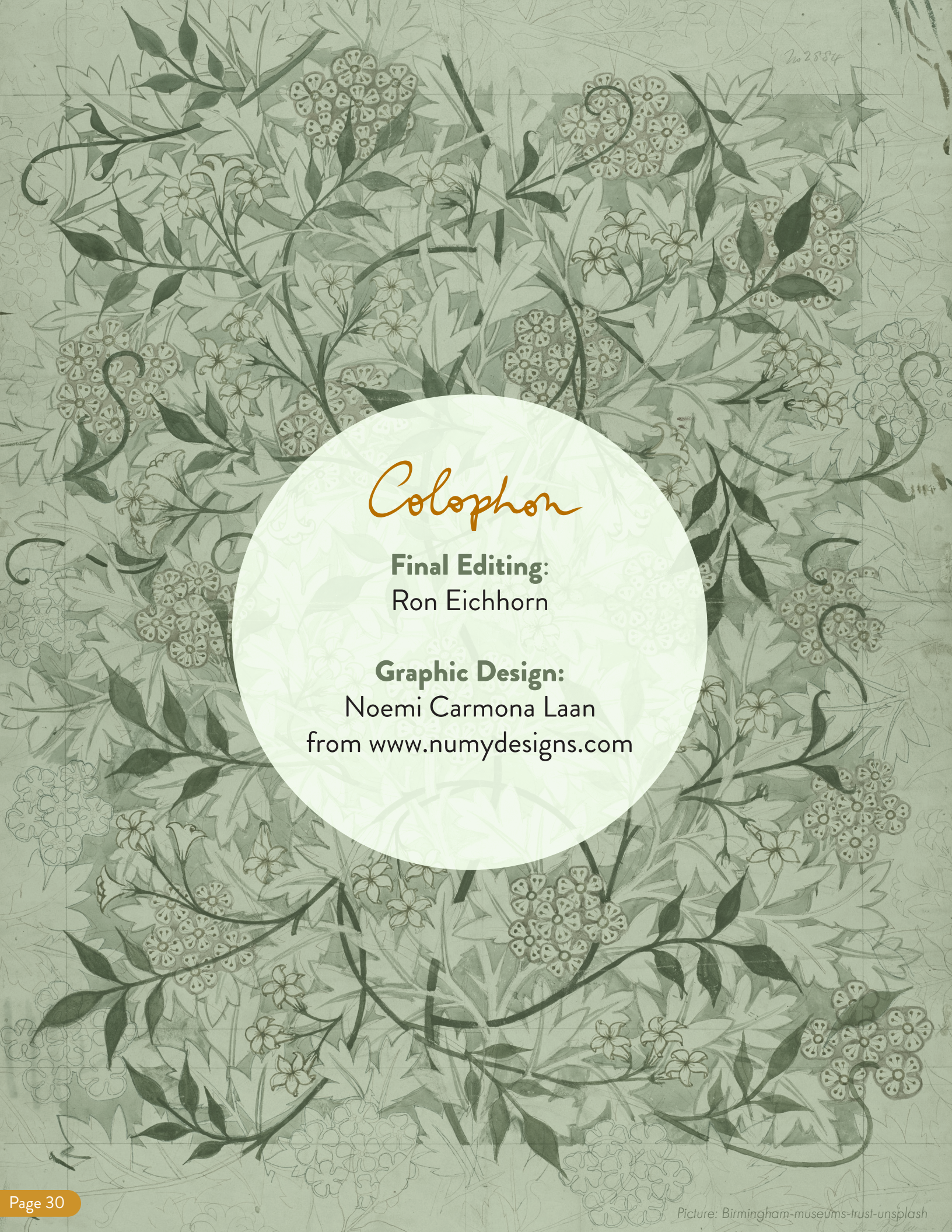
Kindness transforms

What does it mean, then, in practice, to imagine an Ethical context that emerges from a practice of care? How to act and where to start? It is not a question of creating an abstract, theoretical path, but of starting from the fundamental idea of 'care' as an action capable of activating four fundamental

qualities that are human, secular, rather than spiritual models capable of leading us back to a path of integrity, healing and freedom. Kindness, more than any other, is a revolutionary act. Because it changes the perspective. It leads us to shift our gaze from the perspective of interest in ourselves to the gratuitousness of opening ourselves up to the world. It asks nothing if not to be present and say "Yes!" to what is there. It is an embrace, the stretching out of hands and taking care of fragility by witnessing to the reality of who we are, with our limits, desires, expectations and fears. Demonstrate kindness starts with us. From understanding and accepting that, after all, we are doing well like this and that if something we want to change it doesn't have to be a struggle or a conquest. Metta, kindness means surrendering, laying down

one's arms, allowing oneself for a moment to extinguish the fire of anger. It means taking the side of an action that wants to put an end to conflicts and accept situations for those that are without forcing them, without walking together in one's own life and that of others to respond to some abstract moral imperative or to an idea of how things should go. It means, in essence, seeing oneself in the experience of others precisely because the centrality of our experience is lacking. We empty ourselves, we let go of our opinions, our divisions, our wanting to be right. We just look at ourselves, with simplicity, with delicacy, with the resources that we have at our disposal, just at that precise moment. Activating the resource of kindness in a path of practice starts right from here, from saying yes, with delicacy. 🧘





No 2884

Colophon

Final Editing:
Ron Eichhorn

Graphic Design:
Noemi Carmona Laan
from www.numydesigns.com

Contact the EBU

www.europeanbuddhistunion.org
info@europeanbuddhistunion.org

 EuropeanBuddhistUnion

The EBU was founded in 1975 in London and is a member of the European Council of Religious Leaders and Religions for Peace.

In 2008 the EBU obtained official participatory status with the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations at the Council of Europe.





THE EBU
APPRECIATES YOUR
INTEREST IN OUR
MAGAZINE

