

The Snow Flower Sun

November / December 2016

AWAKENING THROUGH LOVE

Excerpted from a talk by Don Katz

In the book of the same title by John Makransky, the first practice is the practice of receiving love. When we receive love, we open and experience love as manifesting through specific people or animals, but that love is actually all-pervading. The claim that love pervades this world may not sound real to you, but that is not because it is not true. Rather, it is that we may not have learned to pay attention to the countless moments of love, kindness and care that surround us each day.

The love, support, and healing that surround us in every moment is personified in Buddhism by the form of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. The name means literally “Lord who looks down” or “Lord who sees”. In some Buddhist traditions, this compassionate energy manifests as a female Buddha named Kwan Yin (China) or Kwan-teh- um (Vietnam) or Tara in Tibetan Buddhism. Kwan-te- um means “the one who hears the cries of the world.”

We can begin to experience the love that is in us and around us by visualizing and/or calling the name of Avalokiteshvara as the symbol of compassion. Thay tells us that ‘calling the name of the bodhisattva helps your mind become concentrated, and with concentration you become calm, lucid, mindful. The simple act of invoking the name of Avalokiteshvara...can help us overcome suffering. We can also visualize her riding majestically on the waves of birth and death, totally free, completely at ease, without fear’. (Peaceful Action, Open Heart: Lessons from the Lotus Sutra, p. 144.)

What is clear from these practices is that you cannot do them in a mechanical way, by rote. You must call the name or visualize the form with complete presence and sincerity. Only in that way does the mind become still, calm, pure, concentrated so that we then have the ability to transform the suffering we encounter in life. This ability does not come from Avalokiteshvara. When we invoke her name we are not asking or begging for help. The ability to transform suffering is innate to us – it is what we call our Buddha Nature.

When we are not in touch with that part of ourselves, however, it is helpful to see the energy of compassion and love as external to ourselves so that our heart opens. We thus allow that energy to find its reflection in our self, so that we can truly love ourselves and love others. While it is easier to see that unconditional love in a great being, a Bodhisattva, yet with devotion and open-heartedness, we can allow our own resources, our own love, our own healing energies to manifest.

It is only in this allowing that we can receive and manifest Love. Healing is not something that can manifest through intention, through problem-solving, through the machinations of the mind. Love and healing manifest when we stop and open with complete relaxed confidence. It is only when we can fully receive the love that surrounds us that that Love can touch, open, and release our innate nature of compassion and wisdom.



Because suffering is impermanent, that's why we can transform it. Because happiness is impermanent, that's why we have to nourish it.

Thich Nhat Hahn

November/ December Calendar The holiday season often brings busyness and stress. This holiday season we will focus on reducing our suffering, and cultivating joy and equanimity. Join us as we look at the causes of our suffering, the second arrow, and why we love the saber tooth tiger. Just sitting with your sangha can bring peace.

November 2016

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
	11/1 Intro to Sangha – Lisa Glueck Our Path to SnowFlower – Amy Krohn & Papa Fall	11/2 Breathe! You Are Alive	11/4 Discourse on Happiness – Gloria Green
11/6 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Tod Highsmith and Joan Braune	11/8 Metta, Interbeing, and other election-night activities – Finn Enke	11/9 Breathe! You Are Alive	11/11 Why We Love the Saber Tooth Tiger – Finn Enke
11/13 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Gerri Gurman	11/15 Am I the Cause of my Suffering – Steven Spiro	11/16 Breathe! You Are Alive	11/18 Prison Dharma – Steven Spiro
11/20 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Celeste Robins	11/22 The Second Arrow and Practicing Equanimity – Mary Michal	11/23 Breathe! You Are Alive	11/25 Jane Hirshfield Poetry – Tod Highsmith
11/27 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Gerri Gurman	11/29 14 Mindfulness Trainings – Bonnie Trudell	11/30 Summary of Jack Lawlor's Dharma Talk: Practicing Wholeheartedly	

SnowFlower Sangha Cancellation Policy

In case of inclement weather, an email will be sent to the listserv by 3:00 pm the day of sangha and a notice will be posted on the door of the Friends Meetinghouse.

Join the SnowFlower email list by emailing Ann Varda at annvarda@gmail.com.

Kalyana Mitta Groups Anyone who has been attending SnowFlower for six months or longer is eligible to participate in a Kalyana Mitta (spiritual friends) group. These groups generally meet monthly and provide an opportunity to deepen one's practice within a smaller group setting. For more information, please contact Susan Pearsall, dmls313@sbcglobal.net.



Sometimes your joy can be the source of your smile, but sometimes your smile can be the source of your joy.

Thich Nhat Hahn

December 2016

Sundays	Tuesdays	Wednesdays	Fridays
			12/2 Intro to Sangha – Lisa Glueck The Transformative Power of Compassion – David Haskin
12/4 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Pam Moran and Dave Zeman	12/6 Equanimity: Working with the Five Aggregates – Walt Keough	12/7 Breathe! You Are Alive	12/9 5 Mindfulness Trainings – Diane Lauver
12/11 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Tod Highsmith and Joan Braune	12/13 Experience at Retreat with Anh- Huong & Thu Nguyen – Marilee Wertlake	12/14 Breathe! You Are Alive	12/16 Ancestor's Prayer – Susan O’Leary
12/18 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Celeste Robins	12/20 Discourse on Happiness – Gloria Green	12/21 Breathe! You Are Alive	12/23 Cultivating Joy – Tom Loomis
12/25 The Art of Communicating – Host & Lead Gerri Gurman	12/27 Extended Sit	12/28 Ancestors Prayer	12/30 Extended Sit

Tuesday and Friday Sangha Meetings are held at The Friends Meetinghouse, 1704 Roberts Court, Madison, WI. 7 – 8:30pm.

Wednesday Daytime Sangha Meetings are from 1:30-3 pm every Wednesday at 2117 Chadbourne Avenue, Madison. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserve every Sunday. For info, contact Mary Gallagher (608) 274-2769 or Susan Pearsall (608) 238- 5929. Wednesday Sangha includes sitting and walking meditation followed by dharma sharing and discussion.

Sunday Morning Sangha Meetings are held at the homes of SnowFlower members from 10 – 11:30 am. Information regarding location and topic will be sent to the listserve every Wednesday. Join by emailing listserv@snowflower.org. Or, call: Tom Loomis (608) 334-4532, Finn Enke (608) 243-7971. Sunday Sangha includes sitting & walking meditation followed by dharma sharing and discussion.



[The “SnowFlower Sun” is pleased to offer the following update to the work of the Coming Home Project. David writes, ‘...our group (Wisconsin Prison Mindfulness Initiative, or WPMI) is growing so quickly...About 25 volunteers are helping 13 separate Mindfulness and meditation groups in eight separate prisons.’]

THE SPACE OF A BREATH

It was the type of confrontation that is all too common in prison. Albert walked into a common area in his prison housing unit, and another inmate started loudly threatening him. An angry group circled the two men.

“I could feel my fists clench automatically,’ Albert recalled later. “And, without thinking, I started toward him and was yelling stuff back at him. There was going to be a fight. And then...I remembered to take a breath.”

In prison, a primary focus of meditation and mindfulness training is the desperately practical need to alleviate suffering. With the support of SnowFlower Sangha’s Coming Home Project, Albert had been meditating and studying the teachings for three years and, using his practice, he was able to create peace in a challenging situation.

“I took a breath and felt my anger,” he recalled. “Then, I backed away. When I was far enough away, I raised my hands to him to tell him there’d be no fight, and I just walked away. Three years ago, there would have been a fight and I would have wound up in segregation [solitary confinement].” And solitary confinement can be a breeding ground for horrible suffering.

(To be continued)

METTA SUTTA (Discourse on Love)

He or she who wants to attain peace should practice being upright, humble, and capable of using loving speech. He or she will know how to live simply and happily, with senses calmed, without being covetous and carried away by the emotions of the majority. Let him or her not do anything that will be disapproved of by the wise ones.

And this is what he or she contemplates: May everyone be happy and safe, and may their hearts be filled with love. May all beings live in security and in peace—beings who are frail or strong, tall or short, big or small, visible or not visible, near or faraway, already born, or yet to be born.

May all of them dwell in perfect tranquility. Let no one do harm to anyone. Let no one put the life of anyone in danger. Let no one, out of anger or ill will, wish anyone any harm.

Just as a mother loves and protects her only child at the risk of her own life, we should cultivate boundless love to offer to all living beings in the entire cosmos. We should let our boundless love pervade the whole universe, above, below, and across. Our love will know no obstacles. Our heart will be absolutely free from hatred and enmity. Whether standing or walking, sitting or lying, as long as we are awake, we should maintain this mindfulness of love in our own heart. This is the noblest way of living.

