



STEP BY STEP

Today we tend to make things complicated and easy get lost in right and wrong. There was a special Cambodian Beggar how did not talked much and used to put the Buddha Dharma into action. Less of his words are caught in letters and the less books he made for his people contain the remembrance that body and also names will disappear.

He remembers us to look to the only resource we can find peace and truth, the palace where Dharma is visible: It is our own heart.

May those words, make us attached to our pure hearts, and regarding the wish of Maha Ghosananda, not to persons and names.

Preface

by Jack Kornfield

Since I met him more than twenty years ago, Maha Ghosananda has represented to me the essence of sweet generosity and unstoppable courage of heart.

Just to be in his presence, to experience his smile and the infectious loving kindness that flows from him is healing to the spirit.

I have seen Maha Ghosananda in many circumstances: practicing as a forest monk, as a father figure for Cambodian children, as a translator and scholar of fifteen languages, as a meditation master for Western students, as a peacemaker at the United Nations, and as one of the living treasures of Cambodia leading the Khmer refugee communities around the world. In these situations, his heart has remained unfalteringly compassionate and joyful, and he emanates the teachings of simplicity and love. He would and has offered the robe off his back and the food in his bowl to anyone who needs them.

Dome years ago, in the dusty, barren heat of Cambodian refugee camps that hold hundreds of thousands of shell-shocked survivors, I saw the greatness of Maha Ghosananda's heart and the Buddha's shine as one. In the camps of the Khmer Rouge, where people were warned not to cooperate at the cost of their lives, Maha Ghosananda opened a Buddhist temple. He wanted to bring the Dharma back to these people who had suffered as deeply as any on Earth. In spite of the threats, when the lage bamboo temple was completed, nearly 20,000 refugees gathered to recite again the lost chants of 2,000 years - left behind when their own villages were burned and temples destroyed. Maha Ghosananda chanted to them the traditional chants as thousands wept.

Then it was time to speak, to proclaim the holy Dharma, to bring the teachings of the Buddha to bear witness to the unspeakable sorrows

of their lives. Maha Ghosananda spoke with utmost simplicity to those who had suffered, reciting over and over in ancient the language of the Buddha and in Cambodian this verse from the Dhammapada:

Hatred never ceases by hatred
but by love alone is healed.
This is the ancient and eternal law.

It is this spirit that flows through Maha Ghosananda. If he could come out of this book, he would smile at you or laugh with sparkling joy. Because he cannot, you will find him in these words, the quiet simplicity and truth that underlie his loving presence.

Enjoy these blessing.

To Rule the Universe

In the beginning, the gods and goddesses held an election to determine who would be best suited to rule the universe. The first candidate was Agnidevaputra, the God of Fire. “I am the strongest,” he said, “so I should rule. Witness my power.” Then, as he began to chant in a loud voice, a huge fire rose up from the center of the universe and began to burn everywhere. The other gods and goddesses trembled with fear, and they all raised their hands to elect Agnidevaputra. All, that is, except Valahakedeputra, the God of Water.

Valahakedeputra said, “I can control fire.” And immediately he created a huge deluge to extinguish the fire. As the floodwater rose higher and higher, all the deities raised their hands to vote for him, except Saradadevi, the Goddess of Art and Wisdom.

Saradadevi said, “Dear friends, fire and water can frighten and kill people, but I give birth to beauty. When I begin to dance, you will relax and completely forget about fire and water.” Saradadevi then danced and sang, and all the gods and goddesses became entranced. Instead of drinking water through their mouths, they began pouring wine into their ears, eyes, and noses. Awed by Saradadevi’s power, all of the deities raised their hands, except Gandharva, the God of Celestial Music.

Gandharva said, “Woman can overcome man, but man can also overcome woman.” Then he began to play his heavenly guitar and sing, and all the deities swooned as the music flowed through the hall. As if in a stupor, they all raised their hands, except Santidevaputra, the God of Peace, Mindfulness, and Clear Comprehension.

Santidevaputra said, “I am the God of Peace. I always practice mindfulness and clear comprehension. Whether you vote for me or not, I rule myself. To rule the universe, you must first rule yourself. To rule yourself, you must be able to rule your own mind. To rule

your own mind, you must practice mindfulness and clear comprehension.”

All of the gods and goddesses recognized Santidevaputra’s strength and elected him unanimously. They understood that peace is the strongest force in the world.

One Teaching

There was once a young monk who studied assiduously every day, but he could not learn all of the scriptures and precepts. So he became distressed. He couldn't eat or sleep, and he grew weak and thin.

Finally, he approached the Buddha. „Lord, please take back my robe. There are many teachings, and I cannot master them all. I am not fit to be a monk.“

The Buddha answered, „

Do not worry. To be free, you must master only one thing.”

“Please teach me,” begged the monk. “If you give me just one practice, I will do it wholeheartedly, and I am sure that I can Succeed.”

So the Buddha told him, “Master the mind. When you have mastered the mind, you will know everything.”

When we master the mind, we are free from all suffering. There is no need for any other teaching.

The Present Is Mother of the Future

We may notice that the vase of flowers on the table is very beautiful, but the flowers never tell us of their beauty. We never hear them boast of their sweet scent.

When a person has realized nirvana, it is the same. He or she does not have to say anything. We can sense his beauty, her sweetness, just by being there.

There is no need to worry about the past or the future. The secret of happiness is to be entirely present with what is in front of you, to live fully in the present moment. You can't go back and reshape the past.

It's gone! You can't dictate the future. So there is no need to worry!

The next time I fly on an airplane, who knows what will happen? Maybe I will arrive safely, or maybe I won't. When we make plans, we can make them only in the present moment. This is the only moment we can control. We can love this moment and use it well.

Past suffering can never harm us, if we truly care for the present.

Take care of the present, and the future will be well. The Dharma is always in the present, and the present is the mother of the future.

Take care of the mother, and the mother will take care of her child.

Letting Go of Suffering

The Buddha said, „I teach only two things - suffering and the end of suffering.“

What is the cause of suffering? Suffering arises from clinging. If the mind says „I am,“ then there is suffering. If the mind says „I am not,“ then there is also suffering. As long as the mind clings, it suffers. When the mind is silent, it becomes peaceful and free.

Clinging has 108 names. It may be called greed, anger, envy, or covetousness.

Clinging is like a snake that sheds its skin. Beneath one tough skin there is always another.

How can we be freed from suffering? We simply let it go. “Painfully we sustain it, happily we let it go.” Suffering follows one with an untamed mind as surely as a cart follows an ox. Peacefulness follows one who has mastered the mind as surely as his own shadow.

Clinging always brings suffering. This is a natural law, like the law of fire. It does not matter whether you believe that fire is hot. When you hold fire, it will burn you.

The Dharma teaches us to know, shape, and free the mind. When the mind is mastered, all of the Dharma is mastered. What is the key for mastering the mind? It is mindfulness.

Does it take long to be released from Suffering? No, enlightenment is always here and now. But to realize this may take many lifetimes!

Balancing Wisdom and Compassion

Wisdom must always be balanced by compassion, and compassion must be balanced by wisdom. We cannot have peace without this balance. I would like to share three stories to illustrate this.

One day, a violent dragon king met a Bodhisattva on the path. The Bodhisattva said, „My son, do not kill. If you keep the five precepts and care for all life, you will be happy.“ Hearing just these few words, the dragon became totally nonviolent.

The children who tended animals at the foot of the Himalayan mountains had been very afraid of the dragon. But when the dragon became gently, they lost their fear and soon began to jump on him, pull his tail, and stuff stones and dirt into his mouth. After a while, the dragon could not eat, and became very sick.

The next time the dragon king met the Bodhisattva, he shouted, “You told me that if I kept the precepts and was compassionate, I would be happy. But now I suffer, and I am not happy at all.”

The Bodhisattva replied, “My son, if you have compassion, morality, and virtue, you must also have wisdom and intelligence. This is the way to protect yourself. The next time the children make you suffer, show them your fire. After that, they will trouble you no more.”

Who was harmed when the dragon lacked wisdom? Both the dragon and the children suffered.

The balance of wisdom and compassion is called the middle path. Here is another story. Once an old farmer found a dying cobra in his ricefield. Seeing the cobra's suffering, the farmer was filled with compassion. He picked up the snake and carried him home. Then he fed the cobra warm milk, wrapped him in a soft blanket, and lovingly placed the snake beside him in his bed as he went to sleep. In the morning, the farmer was dead.

Why was he killed? Because he used compassion and not wisdom. If you pick up a cobra, it will bite you. When you find a way to save

the dying cobra without lifting it, you have balanced wisdom with compassion. Then you are happy, and the cobra is happy, too.

Here is the third story: There was a farmer who went into the forest with his friend to gather wood. When the farmer struck a tree with his axe, he disturbed a beehive, and a swarm of angry bees flew out and began stinging him.

The farmer's friend was filled with compassion. He grabbed his axe and killed the bees with swift, mighty blows. Unfortunately, he also killed the farmer.

Compassion without wisdom can cause great suffering. We might even say, "It is better to have a wise enemy than a foolish friend."

Wisdom and compassion must walk together. Having one without the other is like walking with one foot. You may hop a few times, but eventually you will walk very well - slowly and elegantly, step by step.

The Middle Path

The road to peace is called the middle path. It is beyond all duality and all opposites. Sometimes it is called equanimity. Equanimity harmonizes all extremes. Equanimity is like the finely-tuned string of an instrument, not too tight and not too loose. It vibrates perfectly and makes beautiful music.

Equanimity means the absence of struggle. One time a great elephant jumped into a mud hole to cool off. Of course he got stuck, and the more he struggled, the deeper he sank! Struggling is useless. It only makes things worse. Do not struggle with suffering. Find your own path. This is called taking refuge in the Dharma. The Dharma is the middle path.

Before the Buddha began his spiritual journey, he indulged in many kinds of sensual pleasures, but he found no lasting happiness. After that, he fasted for many weeks, until he became pale and thin, but he found only pain. Practicing in this way, the Buddha learned that both self-indulgence and self-mortification are extremes, and extremes can never bring happiness.

Peace comes only when we stop struggling with opposites. The middle path has no beginning and no end, so we do not need to travel far on the middle path to find peace. The middle path is not only the road to peace, it is also the road of peace. It is safe, and very pleasant to travel.

Good Luck, Bad Luck

Opposites are endless. Good and bad, day and night, right and wrong, mine and yours, praising and blaming - all are opposites, all are endless.

Opposites produce each other. Day becomes night, and death becomes rebirth. The egg becomes the hen, and the hen makes the egg. In just this way, good luck and bad luck are an endless cycle.

There was once a farmer who lost his mare. When the mare disappeared, the people of the village said, "Bad luck!" But when the mare came home the very next day followed by a good strong horse, the people of the village said, "Good luck!" Yesterday they thought "bad luck," today they think "good luck". Yesterday they said "loss," but today they say "gain." Which is true? Gain and loss are opposites.

When the farmer's son rode the beautiful horse, he fell and broke his leg. Then all the people said, "Bad luck!" War came, and all of the strong men were drafted. Many men fought and died on the battlefield. Because the farmer's son had broken his leg, he could not go to war. Was this loss or gain? Good luck or bad luck? Who knows?

We Must Eat Time

What is life? Life is eating and drinking through all of our senses. And life is keeping from being eaten. What eats us? Time! What is time? Time is living in the past or living in the future, feeding on the emotions. Beings who can say that they have mentally healthy for even one minute are rare in the world. Most of us suffer from clinging to pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, and from hunger and thirst. Most living beings have to eat and drink every second through their eyes, ears, nose, tongue, skin, and nerves. We eat twenty-four hours a day without stopping! We crave food for the body, food for feeling, food for volitional action, and food for rebirth. We are what we eat. We are the world, and we eat the world. The Buddha cried when he saw this endless cycle of suffering: the fly eats the flower; the frog eats the fly; the snake eats the frog; the bird eats the snake; the tiger eats the bird; the hunter kills the tiger; the tiger's body become swollen; flies come and eat the tiger's corpse; the flies lay eggs in the corpse; the eggs become more flies; the flies eat the flowers; and the frogs eat the flies...

And so the Buddha said, „I teach only two things - suffering and the end of suffering.“ Suffering, eating, and feeling are exactly the same. Feelings eats everything. Feeling has six mouths - the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. The first mouth eats forms through the eye. The second mouth eats sound. The third mouth eats smells. The fourth mouth eats tastes. The fifth mouth eats physical contact. And the last mouth eats ideas. That is feeling.

Time is also an eater. In traditional Cambodian stories, there is often a giant with many mouths who eats everything. This giant is time. If you eat time, you gain nirvana. You can eat time by living in the moment. When you live just in this moment, time cannot eat you.

Everything is causational. There is no you, only causes and conditions. Therefore, you cannot hear or see. When sound and ear comes together, there is hearing. When form and eye meet, there is seeing.

When eye, form and consciousness meet, there is eye contact. Eye contact conditions feeling. Feeling conditions perception. Perceptions thinking, and thinking is I, my, me - the painful misconception that I see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think.

Feeling uses the eye to eat shapes. If a shape is beautiful, a pleasant feeling enters the eye. If a shape is not beautiful, it brings a unpleasant feeling. If we are not attentive to a shape, a neutral feeling comes. The ear is the same: sweet sounds bring pleasant feelings, harsh sounds bring unpleasant feelings, and inattention brings neutral feelings.

Again, you may think, "I am seeing, I am hearing, I am feeling." But it is not you, it is only contact, the meeting of the eye, form, and eye-consciousness. It is only the Dharma.

A man once asked the Buddha, "Who feels?" The Buddha answered, "This is not a real question." No one feels. Feeling feels. There is no I, my, or me. There is only the Dharma.

All kinds of feelings are suffering, filled with vanity, filled with "I am." If we can penetrate the nature of sensations, we can realize the pure happiness of nirvana.

Feelings and sensations causes us to suffer, because we fail to realize that they are impermanent. The Buddha asked, "How can feeling be permanent if it depends upon the body, which is impermanent?"

When we do not control our feelings, we are controlled by them. If we live in the moment, we can see things just as they are. Doing so, we can put an end to all desire, break out bondage, and realize peace.

To understand pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings, we have to put the four foundations of mindfulness into practice. Mindfulness can transform pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings into wisdom. The world is created by the mind. If we can control feelings, then we can control the mind. If we can control the mind, then we can rule the world.

In meditation, we relax our body, but we sit up straight, and by following our breathing of another object of concentration, we stop most of our thinking. Therefore, we stop being pushed around by our feelings. Thinking creates feeling, and feeling creates thinking. To be

free from clinging to thinking and feeling is nirvana - the highest, supreme happiness.

To live without suffering means to live always in the present. The highest happiness is here and now. There is no time at all unless we cling to it. Brothers and Sisters, please eat time!

The Bodhi Tree

The Bodhi tree is the tree of life. When the Buddha sat under the Bodhi tree for many weeks in quiet contemplation, he gained enlightenment. You can find a Bodhi tree anywhere, in Cambodia, in India, even in your own backyard.

The Bodhi tree is called “the great tree of life” because all that is needed for lasting peace can be found in its roots, trunk, branches, and fruits. The Bodhi tree is a beautiful symbol for Buddhism.

We can begin to learn about the Bodhi tree at its roots, which are known as the roots of all actions. Three roots are wholesome, and so they naturally bear sweet fruits - generosity, wisdom and loving kindness. The other three are unwholesome, and so they naturally bear bitter fruits - greed, hatred, and delusion.

The roots of the Bodhi tree extend into the trunk, which is made up of five aggregates - form, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness. These are the components of all our experience. The five aggregates are all slaves to feeling. They are like cooks preparing food for feeling to eat through the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. We can meditate on the five aggregates, making them the objects of our mindfulness. To live mindfully is to live without clinging to any of them. The trunk of the Bodhi tree grows into twelve branches which are links in the great chain of dependent origination. The Buddha saw that this chain was the cause of our painful cycle of birth and death. The branches of the Bodhi tree teach us that everything in life arises through causes and conditions. Ignorance conditions volitional actions, which condition consciousness, which conditions the mind and body, which condition the six sense doors - eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind - which condition contact between a sense door and a sense object, which conditions feeling. All feeling - pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral - is suffering, because feeling is impermanent. When we are not mindful, feeling goes on to condition craving or aversion, which conditions clinging, which conditions the karmic formations of

becoming, which condition rebirth, which conditions the entire cycle of birth and death once again.

The Bodhi tree teaches us how to break this endless chain of suffering. The secret is mindfulness. If we use mindfulness to observe and control feeling, then clinging cannot arise. If clinging does not arise, then suffering cannot arise. It is really very simple. We can learn mindfulness step by step, throughout our lifetime.

Nirvana

A wise Unitarian minister asked me, „Where is nirvana? Can people still reach nirvana these days?“ I answered, „Nirvana is here and now.“

Nirvana is everywhere. It dwells in no particular place. It is in the mind. It can only be found in the present moment.

Nirvana is the absence of suffering. It is empty and void of concept. Nothing can comprise nirvana. Nirvana is beyond cause and effect. Nirvana is the highest happiness. It is absolute peace. Peace in the world depends on conditions, but peace in nirvana is unchanging.

Nirvana is the absence of karma, the fruit of our actions. Karma can follow us through many lifetimes. When we die, karma becomes like a flame passing from one candle to another. In the state of nirvana there is no clinging, no expectation, and no desire. Each moment is fresh, new, and innocent. All karma is erased, just as we erase the tape in a tape recorder.

Suffering leads the way to nirvana. When we truly understand suffering, we become free.

Body Sick, Mind Well

The nature of the human body is to grow old and decline. Yet even as the body weakens or is harmed by an opponent, the mind can remain clear. Even in the midst of pain, the mind can be at peace.

The body is a vehicle, like a car, a plane, or a bicycle. We use the body, but we need not allow it to use us. If we can control the mind, then even when we are faced with physical suffering it can remain free and clear.

The Buddha said, “Care for your health. It is the foundation of all progress.” When we feel physical pain, we Cambodians like to say, “The body may be sick, but the mind is very well!”

Dharmayana

The Dharma is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end. Good in the beginning is the goodness of the moral precepts - not to kill, steal, commit adultery, tell lies, or take intoxicants. Good in the middle is concentration. Good in the end is wisdom and Nirvana.

The Dharma is visible here and now. It is always in the present, the omnipresent. The Dharma is timeless. It offers results at once.

In Buddhism, there are three yanas, or vehicles, and none is higher or better than any other. All three carry the same Dharma. But there is a fourth vehicle that is even more complete. I call it Dharmayana, the universe itself, and it includes every way that leads to peace and loving kindness. Because it is complete, Dharmayana can never be sectarian. It can never divide us from any of our brothers or sisters.

Come and experience it for yourself. The Dharma vehicle will bring you to nirvana right here and now. Step by Step, moment by moment, it is comprehensible and can be understood by anyone. Dharmayana is the kind of Buddhism I love.

Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension

Mindfulness protects us. As the mind grows clear and still, it can no longer be driven by ignorance or desire. Mindfulness is the driver of the chariot of the Dharma.

“Gathering in “ is the characteristic quality of mindfulness. We gather in all that we observe. “Cutting out” is the characteristic quality of clear comprehension. We discard all except the precise object of our concentration. Mindfulness gathers in the hindrances of the mind, and clear comprehension follows to cut the hindrances out. Mindfulness and clear comprehension are at the heart of Buddhist meditation. Peace is realized when we are mindful in each and every step. Through mindfulness, we can protect ourselves, and we also protect the whole world.

The Buddha’s last words were offered for our protection. “Be mindful,” he told his disciples, in exactly the same way that we often remind our loved ones to “take care.”

Making Peace

Non-action is the source of all action. There is little we can do for peace in the world without peace in our minds. And so, when we begin to make peace, we begin with silence - meditation and prayer. Peacemaking requires compassion.

It requires the skill of listening. To listen, we have to give up ourselves, even our own words. We listen until we can hear our peaceful nature. As we learn to listen to ourselves, we learn to listen to others as well, and new ideas grow. There is an openness, a harmony. As we come to trust one another, we discover new possibilities for resolving conflicts. When we listen well, we will hear peace growing.

Peacemaking requires mindfulness. There is no peace with jealousy, self-righteousness, or meaningless criticism. We must decide that making peace is more important than making war.

Peacemaking requires selflessness. It is selflessness taking root. To make peace, the skill of teamwork and cooperation are essential. There is little we can do for peace as long as we feel that we are the only ones who know the way. A real peacemaker will strive only for peace, not for fame, glory, or even honor. Striving for fame, glory, or honor will only harm our efforts.

Peacemaking requires wisdom. Peace is a path that is chosen consciously. It is not an aimless wandering, but a step-by-step journey.

Peacemaking is the middle path of equanimity, non-duality, and non-attachment. Peacemaking means the perfect balance of wisdom and compassion, and the perfect meeting of humanitarian needs and political realities. It means compassion without concession, and peace without appeasement.

Loving kindness is the only way to peace.

Think Before You Speak

The thought manifests as the word.

The word manifests as the deed.

The deed develops into the habit.

The habit hardens into the character.

The character gives birth to the destiny.

So, watch your thoughts with care

And let them spring from love

Born out of respect for all beings.

Great Compassion

If I am good to someone, he or she will learn goodness and, in turn, will be good to others. If I am not good, he or she will harbor hatred and resentment and will, in turn, pass it on to others. If the world is not good, I have to make more effort to be good myself.

Taking care of others is the same as taking care of myself. When I respect and serve others, I am serving all Buddhas everywhere. This is called great compassion. Compassion is a happy mental state.

When we protect ourselves through mindfulness, we are protecting others as well. When we protect other living beings through compassionate actions, we are also protecting ourselves.

No Boundaries to loving Kindness

There is nothing more glorious than peace. When we stabilize our posture and calm our mind, we can realize peace within ourselves. Then we can radiate loving kindness to those around us - our family, our community, our nation, and our world.

We can meditate like this: “May I be happy. May I be peaceful. May I be free from anger. May I be free from suffering.”

Why must we love ourselves first? Because peace begins with the individual. It is only loving ourselves first that we are able to extend love to others. Charity begins at home. By protecting ourselves, we protect the whole world. By loving ourselves, we love the whole world. When we say, “May I be happy,” we are speaking for everyone. The whole world is one. Life is one. We are all of the same Buddha nature.

Loving kindness is a very powerful energy. It radiates to all beings, without distinction. It radiates to our loved ones, to those toward whom we feel indifferent, and to our enemies. There are no boundaries to loving kindness. The Dharma is founded in loving kindness. The Buddha saw the whole world with compassion. And so, our prayer for personal happiness naturally grows naturally into a prayer for everyone, “May the whole world be happy and free from suffering.”

Buddhist scriptures describe the merits of loving kindness meditation. They tell us that those who practice loving kindness sleep well. They have no bad dreams. They can focus their minds quickly. Their minds are clear and calm. They have no nervousness. No fire, poison, or weapons will harm them. They can solve all the problems of the world. They are loved by all sentient beings. Their complexion becomes clear. They will attain nirvana. Altogether, there are fifty-two blessings derived from meditation on loving kindness.

When we love all beings, we gain the blessing of fearlessness. Our speech and all of our physical and mental actions become clear, and we become free.

The greatest happiness is found in living without egoism. This is one of the fruits of loving kindness. Another is contentment with life as it is. Life often seems burdensome, but it becomes easy when we stop struggling. Moment after moment, step by step, we can experience life as something light and pleasant. There is no need to hurry!

With loving kindness, we are like fish in clear water, never submerged by the burdens of the world. We float down the stream of time, easily, from moment to moment. We have complete peace in our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind, because we control all of our senses. We have clear comprehension about the purpose of our life and about how to live happily. We also have clear comprehension about the object of our concentration and about I, my, and me. The Buddha said, "There is no I, my, or me," and this becomes clear when we put loving kindness into practice.

Typically, we are selfish about our family, money, dwelling, name, and fame, and also about Dharma. But when we put loving kindness into practice, we become generous. We give food, shelter, and the Dharma freely to all.

Loving kindness also means friendliness. With loving kindness, all enmity is transformed. Our enemies will no longer hate us and, eventually, they will return our loving kindness to us, as friends.

Yes, my friends, that is loving kindness.

Anger

When anger controls us, we harm ourselves and people around us. Anger burns the mind and the body. The face becomes flushed, the heart weakens, and the hands tremble.

Our first duty is to protect ourselves, so we say, “May I be free from harming myself, may I be free from anger.” Then we say, “ May I be free from harming others, may I be free from anger.” When we analyze anger, we find that it has no substance of its own. It is always conditioned by something else. There is no “I” to be angry. There is only Dharma.

When we are angry, our face becomes ugly. Anger is fire, and it burns hundreds of cells in our brain and in our blood.

If we have loving kindness, our faces become brilliant, radiant, and beautiful. Loving kindness is like water. If we leave boiling water sitting for some time, it naturally becomes cool again. Sometimes we may boil with anger, but we can cool down gracefully by contemplating loving kindness, anger’s opposite. The nature of water is to cleanse. When the mind is angry, it becomes soiled. Using the water of loving kindness, we can cleanse our mind. Like water, loving kindness flows everywhere.

“Bodhi” means to wake up, to see things as they are. When we wake up to our anger, it loses all of its force. Then anger gives birth to its opposite - compassion, the compassionate heart of the Buddha.

Universal Love

Many religious leaders preach that their is the only way to salvation.
I listen with a smile, but I do not agree.
Two thousand five hundred years ago, the Buddha told his disciple
Kalama,

Do not accept anything simply because it has
been said by your teacher.
Or because it has been written in your sacred book,
Or because it has been believed by many,
Or because it has been handed down by your ancestors.
Accept and live only according to what will enable
you to see truth face to face.

At our Providence temple we have a good friend called
“Bodhisattva”, who teaches English to the monks. Bodhisattva is a
wise and patient teacher, but he also has a great challenge - he
stutters when he speaks.

One day Bodhisattva was giving the monks a lesson. “H-h-house,”
he said. And all of the monks repeated exactly, “H-h-
house!” Bodhisattva was startled. “N-n-no!” he said. And all of the
monks said “N-n-no!” in unison. Bodhisattva showed the monks the
way to enlightenment. Truth is not just what we hear. We cannot
know truth from teachers, books, or dogma only. The Buddha
advises us to test the truth on the touchstone of our experience. Truth
can be know only through our own mindful experience.

No religion is higher than truth. Our goal as human is to realize our
universal brotherhood and sisterhood. I pray that this realization will
be spread throughout our troubled world. I pray that we can learn to
support each other in our quest for peace.

Giving

Jesus said, “Whatsoever you have given to one of my brothers, you have given to me as well.”

Great beings maintain their mental balance by giving preference to the welfare of others, working to alleviate the suffering of others, feeling joy for the successes of others, and treating all beings equally.

Great beings receive their pleasure in giving gifts. To avoid harming others, they practice the five precepts. They practice non-indulgence in order to perfect their virtue. They practice meditation in order to see clearly what is good and what is not good for beings.

Great beings constantly arouse their energy by keeping the welfare of others at heart. When they attain great courage through this exertion of energy, they become patient with others’ faults. They do not deceive. They are unshakeable committed to the welfare and happiness of others. With loving kindness, they always place the welfare of others before their own. With equanimity, they expect no reward. This is how they perfect all the good states, beginning with giving.

We Are Our Temple

Many Buddhists are suffering - in Tibet, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Vietnam, and elsewhere. The most important thing we Buddhists can do is to foster the liberation of the human spirit in every nation of the human family. We must use our religious heritage as a living resource.

What can Buddhism do to heal the wounds of the world? What did the Buddha teach that we can use to heal and elevate the human condition? One of the Buddha's most courageous acts was to walk onto a battlefield to stop a conflict. He did not sit in his temple waiting for the opponents to approach him. He walked right onto the battlefield to stop the conflict. In the West, we call this "conflict resolution."

How do we resolve a conflict, a battle, a power struggle? What does reconciliation really mean? Gandhi said that the essence of nonviolent action is that it seeks to put an end to antagonism, not the antagonists. We implicitly trust his or her human nature and understand that ill-will is caused by ignorance. By appealing to the best in each other, both of us achieve the satisfaction of peace. We both become peacemakers. Gandhi called this a "bilateral victory." We Buddhists must find the courage to leave our temples and enter the temples of human experience, temples that are filled with suffering. If we listen to the Buddha, Christ, or Gandhi, we can do nothing else. The refugee camps, the prisons, the ghettos, and the battlefields will then become our temples. We have so much work to do.

This will be a slow transformation, for many people throughout Asia have been trained to rely on the traditional monkhood. Many Cambodians tell me, "Venerable monks belong in the temple." It is difficult for them to adjust to this new role, but we monks must answer the increasingly loud cries of suffering. We only need to remember that our temple is with us always. We are our temple.

Peace Is Growing Slowly

There is no self. There are only causes and conditions. Therefore, to struggle with ourselves and others is useless. The wise ones know that the root causes and conditions of all conflicts are in the mind.

Victory creates hatred. Defeat creates suffering. The wise ones wish neither victory nor defeat.

We can oppose selfishness with the weapon of generosity. We can oppose ignorance with the weapon of wisdom. We can oppose hatred with the weapon of loving kindness.

The Buddha said, “When we are wronged, we must set aside all resentment and say, ‘My mind will not be disturbed. Not one angry word will escape from my lips. I will remain kind and friendly, with loving thoughts and no secret malice.’” Peace begins in the mind. Yes, we show loving kindness, even for the oppressor.

After a great darkness, we see the dawning of peace in Cambodia. We are grateful for the Buddha’s compassion and light, his realization of peace, unity, and wisdom. We pray that this unity, the heart of reconciliation, the middle path, will be present at every meeting and dialogue of Cambodia’s leaders.

We seek to learn and teach the skills of peace. When we live the Dharma, we develop inner peace and the outer skills needed to make peace a reality. With peacemakers of all faiths, we can accept no victory except peace itself. We have no need for personal honor, title, or glory.

Loving kindness is alive in every heart. Listen carefully. Peace is growing in Cambodia, slowly, step by step.

Self-Determination

The suffering of Cambodia is but a mirror of the world. The Buddha tells us that enlightenment begins when we realize that life is suffering.

This may seem negative or pessimistic to many people, but it is not. It is only a statement of our shared circumstance, to be seen without regret or attachment.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “When the satyagraha practices ahimsa and suffers voluntarily, the love that develops within has a tremendous power. It affects and elevates everyone around, including the opponent.” Gandhi called this “The Law of Suffering.” The Buddha also taught that suffering teaches us compassion. Whenever I think about the suffering of the Cambodian people, I am filled with compassion.

The Buddha said, “You must work out your own salvation with diligence.” What does this mean? Each of us is responsible for our own salvation. This is self-determination in its purest, most essential form. All understanding of liberation, personal or national, must begin with this point.

The idea of personal salvation has been debated among different religions and schools of thought. Personal salvation does not mean salvation exclusive of the rest of humanity. If we follow the eightfold path, the path toward an end to suffering, our growing union with the universal spirit unfolds naturally, and our love comes to embrace all living beings. Personal salvation is but a microcosm of human salvation.

If we meditate on the ten perfections, we gradually become selfless, and we cannot help but inspire those around us. Gandhi said, “The satyagraha seeks self-realization through social service.” The Dalai Lama recently told me, “To exterminate the root cause of all suffering, we must seek refuge in the three precious gems - the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. We must develop altruism and

strong will.” He said that it is his firm belief that this will bring lasting peace and happiness to the entire human race.

The key to social service and social ethics is loving kindness. Loving kindness is no different from ahimsa, non-harming. It includes the well-being of everyone. According to the Buddha, even when our body is dismembered we can radiate good will toward all beings, remaining patient toward those who caused the harm and causing them no injury, even in thought. Hatred is never appeased by hatred. Hatred is only appeased by love.

Who Is The Enemy?

In 1981, the United Nations held a conference to discuss the future of Cambodia. During that time, we held a Buddhist ceremony for peace.

At the end of the ceremony, a Khmer Rouge leader came up to me, very cautiously, and asked if I would come to Thailand to build a temple at the border. I said that I would.

“Oh!” thought many people, “he is talking to the enemy. He is helping the enemy! How can he do that?” I reminded them that love embraces all beings, whether they are noble-minded or low-minded, good or evil.

Both the noble and the good are embraced because loving kindness flows to them spontaneously. The unwholesome-minded must be included because they are the ones who need loving kindness the most. In many of them, the seed of goodness may have died because warmth was lacking for its growth. It perished from coldness in a world without compassion.

Gandhi said that he was always ready to compromise. He said, “Behind my non-cooperation there is always the keenest desire to cooperate, on the slightest pretext, even with the worst of opponents. To me, a very imperfect mortal is ever in need of God’s grace, ever in need of the Dharma. No one is beyond redemption.”

I do not question that loving one’s oppressors - Cambodians loving the Khmer Rouge - may be the most difficult attitude to achieve. But it is a law of the universe that retaliation, hatred, and revenge only continue the circle and never stop it. Reconciliation does not mean that we surrender rights and conditions, but rather that we use love in all of our negotiations. It means that we see ourselves in the opponent - for what is the opponent but a being in ignorance, and we ourselves are also ignorant of many things. Therefore, only loving kindness and right mindfulness can free us.

Gandhi said, “The more you develop ahimsa in your being, the more infectious it becomes, until it overwhelms your surroundings and, by

and by, it might oversweep this world!” We are each individually responsible for our own salvation and our own happiness. Through our service, we find a road to salvation. This service is nothing but our love for all beings and the uplifting of ignorance into light.

The Human Family

During his lifetime, the Buddha lobbied for peace and human rights. We can learn much from a lobbyist like him.

Human rights begin when each man becomes a brother and each woman a sister, when we honestly care for each other. Then Cambodians will help Jews, and Jews will help Africans, and Africans will help others. We will all become servants for each others rights.

Is is so even in my tiny country. Until Cambodians are concerned with Vietnam's right to exist and be free, and with Thailand's rights, and even China's rights, we will be denied our own rights.

When we accept that we are part of a great human family - that every man and every woman has the nature of Buddha, Allah, and Christ - then we will sit, talk, make peace, and bring humankind to its fullest flowering.

I pray that all of us will realize peace in this lifetime, and save all beings from suffering!

Peacemaking is at the heart of life. We peacemakers must meet as often as possible to make peace in ourselves, our countries, and the whole world.

Any real peace will not favor East, West, North, or South. A peaceful Cambodia will be friendly to all. Peace is nonviolent, and so we Cambodians will remain nonviolent toward ass as we rebuild our country. Peace is based on justice and freedom, and so a peaceful Cambodia will be just and free.

Our journey for peace begins today and every day. Making peace is our life. We must invite people from around the world to join in our journey. As we make peace for ourselves and our country, we make peace for the whole world.

Building Bridges

Cambodia has been torn by death, starvation, and strife.

Our people have turned against each other, brother fighting brother. The whole world has been supplying guns to our people to help us kill one other.

Now we are brought to our one common element - the middle path of the Dharma. There is no other path for us. We must travel the middle path together, step by step. On our journey, we seek to awaken the Buddha nature, the Christ nature, the burning light of peace in all our people. We seek to awaken the nonviolent resolution to all of our problems. We seek to rebuilt the sangha, the Cambodian Buddhist community. We want to support Buddhist monks and nuns and to help temples grow in Cambodia and throughout the world. We seek to rebuild the bridges among our people, no matter how grave the differences may seem.

We are united by our own Buddha nature, and with our Buddha nature we can build bridges of unity, understanding, and peace. We will journey to Cambodia and to every corner of the world where there are Cambodians. Each step will be a prayer, and each step will build a bridge. Our pilgrimage is one with all the world's religions and with all the world's religion leaders. Each persons's prayer and meditation is a powerful vibration of peace for Cambodia and the entire world.

Preserving Our Heritage

North America is a melting pot. We Cambodians have been here for just one generation. In recent year, we have also resettled in Europe, Australia, and throughout Asia. As we rebuild our lives in new lands, as we become part of new societies, it is important for us also to preserve our cultural identity. Without our culture, we will become lost and confused, like fish out of water.

Cambodians have precious heritage. The richness of Cambodian culture includes many gifts:

- * Cambodians are fearless because they can overcome greed, anger and delusion.
- * Cambodians are humble, courteous, and noble.
- * Cambodians are grateful to their mother and father, to their leaders, to their land, and to the whole world. Cambodians keep the five moral precepts, the constitution of humanity, and the Dharma of goodness.
- * Cambodians have mindfulness and clear comprehension as their protectors.
- * Cambodians practice loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity.
- * Cambodians have patience. They can bear great difficulties, suffering, and hardships.
- * Cambodians forgive and forget the wrongs of other people. They learn from the lessons of the past. They use the present to build the future.
- * Cambodians are truthful and well-behaved. They follow the middle path.
- * Cambodians are soft and smiling. Their speech is truthful, loving, and practical, clear, vibrant, and sweet. Their speech has the power to free the mind from anxiety, to purify the mind from delusion, and to make the mind strong.

* Cambodians have the tradition of solidarity, united by Buddhism and their love of Dharma.

When we are in the river, we flow with the river, zigzag. But we cannot forget our bout, which is our tradition. As Buddha's all, may the Cambodian people be peacemakers. In the tradition of our scared land, may we celebrate unity, loving kindness, and peace with our deepest gratitude.

Four Faces, One Heart

During the Angkor period of our history, the ancient kings built elaborate temples. These stone temples reach to the skies and extended for miles, and so they were called “temple mountains.” One of the most famous is Angkor Thom. Parts of Angkor Thom still stand today.

At Angkor Thom’s main gate, there is a beautiful sculpture. It is a very large head with four faces of the Buddha, gazing out in four directions. The faces stand for great qualities of the Buddha - loving kindness, compassion, equanimity, and sympathetic joy.

Why has this sculpture endured for so many centuries? Because it holds a promise - the nearly forgotten secret to peace in Cambodia: loving kindness, compassion, equanimity, and sympathetic joy. Four faces, one heart. Four factions, one Cambodia. Peace is coming slowly, step by step.

An Army of Peace

History is being made. Four armies are putting down their guns. Four Factions are joining to govern. We are all walking together.

All Cambodia weeps for the dead. Every act has a consequence. Years of violence have brought great tragedy. More violence can only bring more harm.

Now is the time for peace, and Buddhist monks will bring a fifth army to Cambodia - the army of the Buddha. We will shoot people with bullets of loving kindness.

The army of the Buddha will maintain strict neutrality. Mindfulness will be our armor. We will be an army of so much courage that we will turn away from violence. Our goal will be to bring an end to suffering.

We will work for unity, freedom, and for an international policy of friendship. In the day ahead, we will continue to broaden the spiritual ground for peace. We will continue to strengthen our skills for peace. We will seek to organize ourselves as an army of peace.

As we go forward, let us remember these seven basic principles:

1. Cambodia embraces a distinctive people, culture, and religion tradition that must be preserved and maintained.
2. Cambodian people overwhelmingly desire nonviolence, disarmament, and neutrality.
3. Cambodian people must obtain all basic human rights, including of self-determination and rights to freely pursue economic, social, and cultural development.
4. Nonviolence is the primary precept of Cambodian history, culture and religion.
5. Cambodian people everywhere need to be invited to join in this meditation and peace effort.
6. Buddhism offers a reconciling, universal, and unifying spirit.

7. The way of the eightfold path - right understanding, right mindfulness, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right attention, right concentration - will bring peace.

May the richness and power of our heritage, the goodness of Cambodians everywhere, and the wisdom and compassion of the Buddha move us to a peaceful reunification.

Love's Embrace

Cambodian people have a special way of greeting each other. They cup their hands in a prayerful pose and bow their heads low. This is called sompeah „I bow to your Buddha nature.“

When Cambodians greet persons of special importance, they offer a long and warm embrace. Then they gently lift the honored one into the air. This gesture places the honored one's head above the head of the greeter. It says, “I have deep reverence for your being.”

When I met Pope John Paul II on the Vatican steps, we shared a warm embrace. Then, to show respect, I tried to lift him. But I am a small monk and the Pope is of great stature. My arm was sore for weeks afterwards. Compassion must be met with wisdom!

Some people say Buddhism and Christianity can not live together. I say, “Why not?” Love can embrace everything.

I bring love to the Pope, the Pope is happy. He embraces me, and I embrace him. We are fearless together because of love.

Each Step Is a Prayer

The Buddha called the practice of mindfulness „the only way.“ Always in the present. At this very moment. From moment to moment. In all activity. In this very step.

This is why we say, “Step by Step. Each step is a meditation.” When the children in Providence see me off at the station, as I walk up to the train, they shout, “Slowly, slowly, step by step, each step is a prayer!” and all the passengers look and smile. This saying has become famous!

The children do not know English well, but they know this sentence by heart. They are the new Cambodia, and already they know the way to peace.

In Cambodia, we say, “A journey of 10.000 miles begins with a single step.”

Slowly, slowly, step by step. Each step is a meditation. Each step is a prayer.

Text transcribed from the book “Step by Step”

