

# Living Buddha, Living Dharma, Living Sangha

or

What's the problem? What can I do? What can I realise? How can we help?

*(a modern Buddhist's response to a Donald Trumpian world)*

by Tarchin Hearn, Feb. 2017

*Late afternoon sun and it's hot. With passing rainless days, everything has been drying out. Browning hills. Drooping foliage. Cicadas and crickets are droning on and on – a hypnotic rhythmic chant punctuated by tuis, and silver eyes and other invisible feathered friends; chirping and threeping and tick tick ticking. Walking by the stream of burbling water; tumbling and pooling, braiding its way, down from the Kaimais, through the rounded volcanic rock. A ringnecked pheasant startles, and shoots through the trees with a noisy helicopter-like beat. The air is thick with heat. And then, floating on my back in liquid coolness, gazing at the patterns of totara needles against blue sky, I wallow in the stream, cooling my blood; like fresh air to the brain. Deep green moss banks beside me, this cradle of living mystery far from the hum of radiation machine and daily cancer treatments. And I think of life and stillness and web workings of knowing; and frantic media and crazy world; and the minds of great pines, grasses, birds, insects, the living earth, all around.*

We all live with assumptions. I felt I should begin this essay by telling you some of mine, so that you can better understand the approach I am taking and why I have titled this piece the way I have.

Each one of us is alive and will continue to be so until we are no more. All of our experience, both conscious and unconscious, arises through the inner workings of our bodies – composite entities of form and function – continuously responding to and with a living world. By 'body', I really mean *body/brain/mind/community*, but this is too long a phrase to constantly repeat, so I will just say, body.

As the world changes, our bodies change, and so too our sense of ongoing lived experience. For you and me and all of us together, our living is a dancing of ever fresh 'now-ing'. Each of us is a cresting wave of universe-in-process and so I have titled this essay "Living Buddha, Living Dharma, Living Sangha", to emphasise that the only Buddha, Dharma and Sangha that can exist, exists in the knowing of somebody in the act of living somewhere. This is intimate, personal and direct. It's happening in me. It's happening in you. It's happening in the Donald Trumps of the world. It's happening in all of us, and to find a way forward in this climate changing, human challenged world, we will need to understand this well.

## The Problem

In traditional expositions of Tibetan Buddhism, there are four contemplations to help turn our attention towards a life of profound sanity.<sup>1</sup> One of them is called, "contemplating the suffering of saṃsāra". *Saṃsāra*, which literally means 'to wander about blindly', refers to the everyday world of human experience in which we move through life with eyes – metaphoric and or physical – either closed or at best half open. Unable to discern a clear path ahead, we end up crashing into things. We fall over cliffs and run into walls. We collide with each other, which can hurt. Being pulled apart and suffering loss, can be equally painful. Not being able to see a clear way forward is often frightening. In short, 'saṃsāra' is full of problems.

Some degree of suffering inevitably accompanies blind wandering. You wouldn't want to drive a car while blindfolded. Nor would you like to drive on a road where the other drivers are blindfolded. Our growing appreciation of this suffering of saṃsāra, in both our personal and communal living, can help strengthen our determination to open our eyes; to wake up and to live in ways that, even if not creating immediate well being, at least don't support further suffering.

Today, millions of people are being unintentionally driven into this contemplation as the new administration of Donald Trump, promotes disintegration and dysfunction in myriad areas of human and non-human living. Policy directives are leading to increasing divisiveness, distrust, military expansion, wall building, prison building, torture, everyone for him or herself-ism, the breaking of social contracts: health, education, civil discourse, social services, along with escalating abuse and exploitation of the entire non-human world. We are witnessing the unfolding of a stupendous pathology.

Everyday we are regaled with new examples of horrific policy but all this suffering only hints at the extent of the mess. Beneath the brutality and ignorance is the fact that this world will become the world that children are being brought into. Touted by so called experienced and gifted leaders of politic and commerce, these policies along with the attitudes accompanying them, will begin to look like normal and acceptable ways of behaviour. Leaders provide examples to followers – a kind of passive yet insidious conditioning. This is becoming the way of the world, 'the new norm'; where to be sane is to be insane and to be insane is to be sane. George Orwell's double-speak world of 1984 has truly arrived.

It's highly likely that the ongoing, already dysfunctional social structures and belief systems, that led to the rise of 'Trump and Co', will not self-heal before doing great damage to our

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<sup>1</sup> The four contemplations are: the potential value of human existence, death and impermanence, causality and interdependent arising, and the suffering of saṃsāra. Another way of expressing these four is: the potential opportunities in being human, dynamics of causal relations, life as a matrix of responsive activity and the dysfunctional assumptions and patterns of the particular culture one is raised in. For a modern approach to these themes, see my essays, <http://greendharmatresury.org/blog/six-contemplations-for-entering-the-path-of-living-dharma> and [A Life of Dharma](#)

living world. For many people, this recognition is both disempowering and depressing. They fear they are losing their footing, their sense of belonging, and their feeling of fundamental dignity and value as they are swept up in this tsunami of greed, lust for power, anxiety driven defensiveness and frozen adolescent fantasy. For some however, to realise or recognize the extent of this mess will bring relief. Recognition can liberate us from waiting or hoping for a messiah, a guru, or a strong charismatic leader to fix the system, or for the system to fix itself. Recognizing how bad it is can free us to get on with doing what needs to be done – namely rebuilding functional community from the grassroots up – and doing this now, immediately, breath by breath, each of us, living together in local collaborations of multi-species communities. Healthy families. Healthy societies. Healthy ecosystems.

In Mahayāna Buddhism, we believe that a human being has the potential to realize and manifest vast, sensitive awareness along with ceaseless compassion and caring. I am a human being, yet in moments of bleakness I find myself asking, perhaps like you, what should I do? What is the best action? In the face of this nightmarish situation, what is my response?

A few days back, sitting in silence, holding these questions, breathing with the birds, and the sun, and the wind in the leaves, the following words reminded me of the way.

*I take refuge in pure and total presence.*

*This is living buddha.*

*I take refuge in love and clear seeing, deepening everywhere.*

*This is living dharma.*

*I take refuge in the diverse ecology of bodhisattva activity.*

*This is living sangha.*

*Through cultivating generosity, wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry and deepening understanding*

*May I be the sangha, practising the dharma, realizing the innate buddhanature for the sake of everything and everyone.*

### What can I do?

*Through cultivating generosity, wholesome relating, patience,  
skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry and deepening understanding<sup>2</sup>*

#### Generosity and Giving

New Zealand is a land of earthquakes. Here, buildings are designed for give – for flexing and bending. It's not good enough to give at the time the need arises. We need to fore give. The buildings are constructed for giving, *before* the earthquake happens. In a parallel sense, life is also built for 'give', and this giving also entails a lot of flexing and bending. Molecules shape-shift, flexing and bending in response to each other and through this process they generate the living system/communities we call cells. Cells are also responding to each other, adjusting their internal chemical processes and through this collaboration and structural coupling, organs and tissues emerge. In a similar way, organs collaborate together forming organisms which in turn, flex, bend, give, and respond with and to other organisms. Many different types of organisms function together, thus comprising complex, evolving ecosystems which themselves interweave to form a planet changing biosphere. Through this incessant multi-realm giving, the world is generated. Dāna pāramī is more than it seems. Generosity generates. In this way, dāna is a fundamental core and foundation of beingness. It is deeper than humanity and broader than ethics.

Healthy living systems have a wondrous capacity to flex, bend and give. (We all know how increasing stiffness and tension in the body, along with prejudice, bias and rigidity of mind, is an indicator of approaching dysfunction and disease.) Giving is how the world has been built. At the human level this generosity extends into the domains of mind and culture. Through generosity, through giving and genuine mutual care, we bring forth healthy community. We link together in love and cooperation thus bringing forth an ever fresh now – a wonderful inheritance for grandchildren yet to come.

This is something I can do. I can nurture and extend the capacity for generosity and expansive open heartedness both in myself and in others. Flexing and bending physically. Flexing and bending emotionally. Flexing and bending conceptually.

*Giving,  
giving,  
at every level of being.  
Generosity generating generosity,  
flowing with each other  
growing this living world,  
beautiful to behold.*

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<sup>2</sup> These six, generosity wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry and deepening understanding, are referred to in Buddhism as the six pāramitā or pāramī. In Pali/Sanskrit they are dāna pāramī, sīla pāramī, ksanti pāramī, virya pāramī, samādhi pāramī, and prajñā pāramī.

## Wholesome Relating

Walls between countries do not support wholesome relating. Fear between people – and between communities – doesn't invite love and mutual support. All beings live in dynamic relationship with their environment. From the perspective of biology, this is obligatory. It's not an option. On earth – our mother-like planet – complex multi-levelled relating has been taking place for nearly four billion years. Collaboration is an act of creativity. Our meetings bring forth newness. Cell walls only *appear* to be walls when, in fact, they are dynamically permeable. They allow two seemingly autonomous beings to meet and to dance together in love.

Multi-celled creatures are themselves communities of relating; structural couplings and mutual respondings which, when summed together, give rise to the world in which we live and the worlds which each of us are. Everything is profoundly interconnected and interdependent with every other thing. As said above, relationship is not optional. We share this world together.

Wholesome relating arises from understanding this situation. It is wholeness (the whole universe) that is relating and the whole of me that relates with you. Everything is included. Nothing is left out. So, how can we live together – we myriad individuals, cultures, species and biomes – in ways that honour and support this ongoing relating?

This is something I can do. I can learn the subtle arts of wholesome relating. I can wrestle with the conundrums of how to do this well, and I can learn to live in ways that support the situations and circumstances for other's learning to live this way.

*I will train myself to support and appreciate  
the life of all living beings.*

*I will live with a sensitive and responsible awareness  
for the whole ecology of life.*

*I will train myself to dwell more and more  
in the mind of spontaneous generosity.*

*Daily I will give material support, emotional support,  
and an example to others of awakening in action.*

*I will train myself to use the senses to further awakening,  
explore Dharma, and to come to know the world  
more profoundly and more compassionately.*

*I will train myself to listen deeply and speak truthfully;  
to commune with others in a skilful and compassionate manner.*

*I will train myself to be ever more directly aware  
of how nutriment affects the mind and body.  
I will eat and drink and nurture myself and others,  
in ways that support awakening.*

## **Patience**

In a dynamic world of interweaving living systems, every compounded object – every 'thing' that is composed of, or arises from, the activities of other things – has its own timing. Many factors have to gel or come together, in order for something to manifest. Healing takes its own time. Grieving takes its own time. Gestating takes its own time. Schedules and time tables express aspired times, but that is not necessarily the same as their actual interbeing timings. For example, a train may be scheduled to arrive at 9am but then is delayed due to a traffic accident in some other part of the country.

Patience is a quality of resting in the ebb and flow of life's unfoldings, while appreciating the vast interdependent mystery of things. It is often accompanied by the recognition that frustration or irritation followed by the compulsion to act, while at the same time remaining oblivious to the natural timing of situation and circumstance, ("It's better to do something than nothing!") is just that, a compulsion – a habit.

*Ksanti*, the Buddhist term for patience is sometimes rendered in English as “poised readiness”. I like this phrase. It seems to acknowledge and combine qualities of exquisitely balanced resting with the sensitive capacity to respond – when the timing is right. It's reasonable to ask when that might be? The timing is right when all the necessary situations and circumstances come together. Fussing won't make it otherwise. When strongly present, this quality of patient resting or poised readiness, feels like a fluid, malleable, deeply settled state of trust – relaxed and at rest. In these Trumpian days of anxious fear and uncertainty, this is something I can do. Whenever I get swamped by the agonizing feelings of needing to act but not knowing what to do, I can pause and breathe and learn the art of poised readiness.

*Keeping the options open  
Feeling my feet on the earth  
Breathing with the living world  
Gathering data  
Allowing things to flow  
Awake and poised  
Ready to move – to help when the time for action is ripe.*

## **Skilled Use of Energy**

In a very general way of speaking, it seems that there are two ways I can function<sup>3</sup> or apply myself. One way tends to increase fragmentation and dissipation of energy. The other way

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<sup>3</sup> By function I include body – interior, physiological functioning; and mind – exterior, a sense of oneself relating with the myriad objects composing one's surround.



tends towards integration and an increasing sense of wholeness. Fragmented and bitsy usually feels unwell and unsatisfying. Integrated and whole tends to feel good. How do we use our life energy? Do we use it to break things, or to facilitate healing? Although I have used the phrase, 'skilled use of energy', this factor when applied with confidence, is also called 'enthusiastic perseverance' or sometimes, 'applied effort'. How am I applying myself? What should, and could, I do? When my buttons are pushed; do I send a tweet? Do I say the first thing that comes into my mind? Do I shoot first and ask questions later? Do I unconsciously yearn for security and mother love while outwardly building walls of cement and coercive law?

Skilled use of energy really comes down to skilled, competent, exercise of attentiveness; how to pay attention, how to engage. Competent attentiveness is inseparable from the capacity to make life affirming choices. This is built upon the presence of generosity, wholesome relating and patience. With these three in place I can skilfully act.

This is something I can do. I can train myself to recognise situations and circumstances that support increasing fragmentation and then reduce my involvement with them. At the same time, I can become tuned to what supports an increasing sense of wholeness, both in myself and in others, and then enthusiastically and wholeheartedly give my energies to that.

*Wholeness as physical health,  
– well being in all creatures.*

*Wholeness as mental health,  
– well being in communities.*

*Wholeness as caring speech,  
– well being through interpersonal exchange.*

*Wholeness as a living world unfolding,  
– well being of everything and everyone.*

### **A Continuity of Caring and Enquiry**

Let's review. *Generosity*, a natural tendency to give, is a fertile ground for growing the variety rich garden/forest of this world – a vibrant ecology of *wholesome relating*. Deepening appreciation of this integrated community-in-action invites natural *patience* which effortlessly blossoms as *skilfully directed energy*. These four together support an increasing capacity for steady and stable attentiveness. Some people call this attentiveness 'mindfulness' but I prefer to think of it as 'a continuity of caring and enquiry'. In ancient times it was called *samādhi*; concentration, absorption, or utter stability.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to become deeply absorbed in something that we dislike. We are naturally more absorbed in something when we care for it. At the same time, it is unlikely we will care for someone or something if we are not interested in them. Hence, absorption, or *samādhi*, is inseparable from a continuity of caring and enquiry. This is an invaluable attribute that can be consciously encouraged and skilfully cultivated.

Our minds are potentially flighty. Like butterflies in a mid-summer garden, we flit from one thing to another, alighting for a second and then flying on, attracted by colour, or moved by air currents. 'Attention deficit disorder' and 'attention deficit and hyperactivity disposition', 'ADD' and 'ADHD', are extreme examples of this. Trawling the internet, tweeting and texting; steeped in simplistic sound bites, beguiled by flashing images, many things vie for our attention; oughts and shoulds and if, buts, and maybes. In the process we lose our sense of grounding in the ancient, continuously evolving, planetary biosphere – this ever evolving weaving of knowing that we are. Instead, we set up transient encampments, pitching our tents and taking them down; seemingly dedicated to being scattered and habitually busy.

The world is an awesomely complex living system which itself is part of an unimaginably larger universe that was in process long before our sun and planet came into existence. Symbiosis, the communal living of life systems is fundamental for all multi-celled organisms which make up pretty much all of life that you can see. Tweets and sound bites will hardly suffice to explain how it works. To deeply understand we need a much firmer approach. In humans this firmness, this samādhi, manifests as a continuum or continuity of caring. We need each other. We live in and through each other. We have a vested interest in each other's thriving and well-being. At the same time we are curious. We were born with functioning eyes. Our taste buds were already orienting the digestive system, preparing it to receive particular chemistries. Our caring is flavoured with interest. Our interest is rooted in caring. A continuity of caring and enquiry is the music we humans can make with others.

Here is something that I can do. I can nurture this innate capacity for caring and enquiry, both in myself and in others. I can value attentiveness and thoughtfulness and the ability to focus all of my faculties on what I am doing, body, speech and mind; one blessed moment at a time. This is the heart of effective meditation. I can cultivate skills in resting, calm, love and acceptance. I can sharpen the edges of question, curiosity, awakesness and interest. In merging the two I feel bright and awake and fluidly engaged.

*Encouraging question  
building atmospheres of learning  
honouring the intelligence of each other  
looking deeply in order to understand  
listening with all my beingness  
all of me present with and for all of you  
a continuity of caring and enquiry  
this is a meaningful offering to the world.*

### **Deepening Understanding**

The phrase 'deepening understanding' evokes a very different quality than phrases such as 'superficial understanding' or 'glib understanding'. The 'deepening' part suggests an ongoing process that is continuously broadening; enriching in depth and scope.



'Understanding', as a summation of conscious and unconscious or even pre-conscious experience, hints at a foundation of things, something that 'stands under' and thereby supports. It is the understory of our experience, manifestation and knowing. Linking the two words, 'deepening understanding' suggests a continuous multi-domain process, a beginningless-endless flow of being/becoming. In its fullest or most embracive sense, we might call this activity, "*wisdom*". Through the centuries of Buddhism's development, as mahāyāna teachings evolved and matured, wisdom or *prajñā* in Sanskrit, came to be considered in two aspects, or from two points of view: wisdom-as-action' (*sherab Tib.*) and 'wisdom-as-fruit/realization' (*yeshé Tib.*).

As wise activity or wisdom-as-action, *prajñā* manifests as 'the basic inquisitiveness and curiosity of one's own mind which is very precise and playful at the same time'.<sup>4</sup> This form of *prajñā* is referred to as "the mother of all Buddhas". It is from inquisitiveness and curiosity in action that revelation and fresh understanding buds or emerges. As this way of wisdom becomes well established and fully functional in our being, it will gradually reveal wisdom as the presence of profoundly matured fruition or realization. Here everything; self and other, knower and known are experienced as a seamless expression of interdependent arising. This everyday mystery of what is taking place at any moment, is utterly inclusive, ultimately spacious, and fundamentally un-pin-downable. Such is the fully inclusive, spacious openness of interbeing – *śūnyatā*.<sup>5</sup> This capacity to meet life in all its fullness, this wisdom manifest, is perhaps better known as Love.

In today's modern world, technical prowess, power, knowledge, prestige, charisma, celebrity, financial acumen and practicality, are widely valued. Wisdom/deepening understanding/love, on the other hand, seems to have slipped from the list of newsworthy attributes. I think this is a tragic weakness of our culture and time, but maybe, in one form or another it has been the weakness of all cultures. While contemplating this situation, the mid 20th century biologist, Alexander Skutch, penned the following words: "*An outstanding attribute of an awakened spirit is its expansiveness, its insatiable hunger to experience more widely, to know more broadly and profoundly, to cultivate friendly intercourse with the whole of Being. The noblest mind is that which understands, appreciates and loves the largest segment of the Universe.*"<sup>6</sup>

This is something I can do. I can nourish the innate inquisitiveness and curiosity both in myself and in everyone that I meet. I can learn to experience the world lightly, a mirage-like dancing of interweaving appearances. I can invite the deep yearning, to appreciate and love the largest segment of the universe, to infuse all my actions.

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4 I am indebted to Karl Brunnholzl for this eloquent phrase. See Brunnholzl's "Gone Beyond Volume 1" p 30, Snow Lion

5 *Śūnyatā*, is generally translated as 'emptiness'. There are many depths and layerings of understanding of *śūnyatā*, depending on the breadth and subtlety of understanding of the practitioner. Closer to the intent of the word is 'the un-pin-downable, spacious, openness of interbeing'. The experience of *śūnyatā* arises through experiencing the full implications of interdependent existence.

6 Alexander E. Skutch is quoted from "Life Ascending" University of Texas Press 1985

*I look for you in this treasury of vastness.  
A rippling of image and understanding,  
Diaphanous, opalescent – mysteries embodied.  
Matched with my beingness in so many ways.  
Stitched and sewn and creased and folded,  
Our lives, this world  
These rainbow feathers and jewel bright eyes.  
A verdant field  
With wild flowers wilding  
Homes for many.  
My wordless joy and gratitude flow in our inter-bendings.  
These scriblings but tracks in the red dust of life.  
Hinting at living beings who walk here in love.*

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### **What can I realize?**

*May I be the sangha, practising the Dharma, realizing the innate Buddhanature  
for the sake of everything and everyone.*

### **May I Be the Sangha – the diverse ecology of bodhisattva activity**

In today's world, individuality is celebrated to a degree that obscures appreciating/knowing our own collective inter-being nature. *Sangha* means community and community is what we are. For all multicelled existence, communion is non-negotiable. We need each other. We grow in, and through, and because of each other. What we call life and living is a dancing of communal responsiveness

Conceived inside our mothers, with the assistance of our fathers, each one of us is a universe of interacting cells, a township of organs and organ function, a municipality of interdependent interacting species, a nation of biomes unfolding, and altogether we bring forth a planet spanning biosphere communing with local stars and gravitational fields. Every living being, without exception, participates in this vast multi-levelled mystery of evolving life; Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, agnostics, atheists, scientists, artists, business people, military people, broad minded people and pathologically disturbed people, rich and poor, conventional and unconventional, convict and law abider, indigenous and colonizer, nomadic and sedentary – all of us humans; along with plants, animals, fungi, bacteria and archaeobacterial realms; land creatures, sea creatures, denizens of forest, desert, sea and sky; we are all unique manifestations of the blossoming tree of life. Each one of us is an expression of an extraordinary odyssey of growth and unfolding, a singing of awakening in action. In Buddhist terms, this is *bodhisattva*. *Bodhi* means awakening and *sattva* means being. A bodhisattva is one who is being (this process of) awakening – this life unfolding in action.

As a human being, each one of us is embedded in communities of languaging, conceptualizing, emotioning, feeling and collective imagining. If we look deeply we will see that individually, we are already communities of cells. Collectively, as families, clans and societies, we are community embedded in a wider world – a diverse ecology of bodhisattva activity. Through cultivating generosity, wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry and deepening understanding, may I realize this. May I realise my sangha-nature, and the sangha-nature of everyone. May I *be* the sangha. This is what I do. I 'sangha'! This is what we need to do together.

In the 1800s a melting pot of nationalities, once called the United States of America but today increasing thought of as the 'tragically disintegrating state of America', birthed a man we remember as Walt Whitman. Whitman was an artist who managed to express the immense yearning and aspiration, of displaced peoples everywhere reaching for refuge, communion and a sense of belonging. Celebrating unity in diversity and diversity in unity, in "Song of Myself", he wrote the line, "I am large, I contain multitudes." Much of his work was devoted to unfolding detailed glimpses of this vision. Today, aided by technologies that extend the fields of our perception, we are increasingly seeing this extraordinary fabric of communal life and living.

*Ripening in faith and trust and wonderment, letting be,  
this matrix of seamless creativity;  
the miracle of community that you are, communing with a community of myriad beings  
living around you and through you.*<sup>7</sup>

### **Practising Dharma – love and clear seeing deepening everywhere**

*"May I be the sangha, practising the dharma."* Depending on how it is used, '*dharma*' can mean truth, phenomena, teaching, way or path. In a universal sense, dharma is none other than the path of life unfolding. Each of us experiences this as the living that we are – the living that is freshly arising moment by moment by moment. This is my path of awakening. This is your path of awakening.

To 'practise' means to cultivate, contemplate, value, honour, encourage, study, become adept at, bring forth, make evident, familiarize with, or display in the world; these are various expressions of what is meant by, 'practising'. Cultivating love – cultivating profound acceptance/appreciation of the immeasurable fullness and interconnectedness of self and other – cultivating this in the midst of birthing fresh worlds of experience, is to practise Dharma. Seeing clearly, knowing clearly, experiencing, unfettered by bias and clinging – being the sangha, practising the dharma – we learn the precious arts of love and clear seeing and encourage it's deepening in everything, and everyone; in all that we do, everywhere.

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<sup>7</sup> Excerpt from "The Heart Breath of Timeless Living", Tarchin Hearn, Green Dharma Treasury

*We take refuge in love and clear seeing.  
We live courageously in this world of birthing and dying.  
Our hearts embrace all companions on the path of lucidity and freedom.*

### **Realizing Innate Buddhature – pure and total presence**

Carl Sagan once said that to make a cherry pie from scratch, first of all you would have to make a universe. This surely applies to everything. The universe that we know is much more than a cosmic collage of multi-level interacting objects. It is also composed of sentient creatures in whom the knowing of a unique and particular universe is arising – worlds of living experience – universes within universes, bringing forth universes. In this vast web of multi-levelled knowing, activity in any part reverberates throughout the whole. Cherry pies, appreciated in their fullness, are truly immeasurable.

Dear reader; you too are immeasurable. You and myself in the act of appreciating you, and the friends and families and loves and losses that make you up and make me up, this involves the dancing of the whole universe. 'Whole' can indicate 100%, in other words 'pure' – without additives – lacking nothing. Impossible to pollute and inherently marvellous, this is inclusivity on a grand scale – a constant gifting, a present, a presenting. Living is an endless budding. It is the nature of what we are; dwelling, abiding, manifesting as pure and total presence and all that this implies – surrendered into a non-grasping, radically inclusive, ever fresh loving presence now, and now, and now.

*Being the fullness of the human animal that you are,  
the thought may occur that there is no need to practise or cultivate anything  
beyond simply and profoundly opening.  
This way of wonderment is beyond categorizing with words and concepts.  
Impossible to rigorously describe, yet intimately familiar;  
there may be a sense of always having known this.  
Resting with no-thing in particular to do,  
apart from the fullness of the 'doing' that you are;  
utterly ready and able to help when there is opportunity to actually be of service;  
Every action becomes a gesture of worship.  
Every thought becomes an unvoiced prayer.<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>8</sup> Excerpt from "The Heart Breath of Timeless Living", Tarchin Hearn, Green Dharma Treasury

## How can we help?

*for the sake of everything and everyone*

### **Towards a Healthy World.**

Reflecting on current politics and trends in civic organisation, the inner 'demand' that we contemplate 'the suffering of saṃsāra' becomes increasingly relentless. We are pushed into this whether we like it or not. As a concerned person, I don't want to spend my time wallowing in cynicism or self vs. other critiques. I don't think you want to either. The media images of war and suffering and the plight of refugees (beings desperately seeking refuge) sometimes fills me with feelings of overwhelming sadness. How can I live in this? How can we live well together? The recognition of inequity; one percent of humans controlling half the financial wealth of the planet; the unconscionable lack of concern beyond striving for greater fame, power, notoriety and control; the making of vast fortunes through manufacturing and distributing weapons whose only function is killing and spreading terror; this can heat me with anger but more often it fills me with the sinking feeling of being caught up in a terrible illness. In the midst of this, something in me calls out for inspiration. What can I do to help? What can we do?

At night I often stand outside and look up at the vast swath of stars spanning the horizons. I breathe and feel my feet, rooted in the earth. In an expanding field of appreciation I see you and I see us – a living world – ancestors, mentors, fellow travellers in this mystery unfolding. And in this quiet space of deep remembering, the breath of presence, a remembrance of grace and a confidence, rises up uninvited. We are in this together. All I can offer is the best that I can be. Sometimes it feels small – just one little me. Yet the best that I can be arises from the living of all of us, and this is a 'great' all, and I feel both blessed and privileged to be it and to work with it.

This way of being is refuge and it is available, in peaceful gardens, on busy streets, in places of war and gross suffering, in hospitals, birthing rooms, and hospices, in offices and factories, on sunny days and cloudy. Donald Trump is not the problem. Life has always been vulnerable. But vulnerability has a positive side. Along with it goes an open willingness to inter-be, to inter-depend, to engage with life in all it's ephemeral faces and expressions. For the sake of everything and everyone, let's do this well!

*I take refuge in pure and total presence. This is living buddha.*

*I take refuge in love and clear seeing, deepening everywhere. This is living dharma.*

*I take refuge in the diverse ecology of bodhisattva activity. This is living sangha.*

*Through cultivating generosity, wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry and deepening understanding*

*May I be the sangha, practising the dharma, realizing the innate buddhanature for the sake of everything and everyone.*

PLEASE FEEL FREE  
TO SHARE THIS ESSAY WITH YOUR FRIENDS  
IN WHATEVER WAY YOU FEEL IS APPROPRIATE.