

Reflections and Prayers

Nurturing A Life Of Natural Awakening

*simple presence
daily bread
reverence for life
beyond words and symbols*

*May our living serve to deepen awareness,
Ripen the fruits of wisdom,
and
Water the flowers of compassion,
That we may we bring health and joy to all beings.*

Expressions of inspirational poetry have always accompanied those who walk the path of authentic spiritual practice. Traditions are often identified by the metaphors and poetic allusions used to illumine this enriching capacity for radical inclusivity – a participatory wholeness – that can render rational explanation tongue tied and mute. Such verses in their ever inspiring presence can become treasured companions and a delight to be with. In this booklet, you will find a number of poems and encouragements that aspire to do just that. Contemplating these themes, thinking about them, reflecting on them and experimenting with ways of creatively putting them into practice in the course of your daily living will surely help nurture wisdom and compassion both in your self and in those you meet.

In the hermitage of life-unfolding,
these words blossomed in my mind.
Though still a work-in-process,
may they benefit many beings.

Tarchin (2021)

A Circle of Blessing

I pray to the wetlands,
I pray to the deserts,
Include me in your embrace.

I pray to the rainforests,
to the grasslands,
to the tundra, and the boreal forests,
Bless our families with health, curiosity, and great compassion.

I pray to the coral reefs,
to the tidal fringes,
to estuaries, deltas, benthic depths
and the great oceanic empty zones,
be firm in the midst of our extending human madness.

I pray to the volcanic hot zones and the boiling mud pools
to the icy caps and mountain peaks,
to rolling hill country,
rills and rivers, creeks and braided waterways,
pray care for this adolescent tribe.
Heal our rambunctious self infatuation,
our tunnel vision and above all,
our blinkered pride.

I pray to the living wind and rain,
to the sun, moon, planets and stars,
all my cousins near and far,
pray wrap us in your solicitude.

My eyes are moist,
this vulnerable striped bareness;
remembering communion deep and wide.

How to name it . . . ?
joy? sadness? frustration? awe? confusion?
reverence? gratitude? love?
We belong with each other.

Feeling your feeling.
Sensing your sensing.
We are woven intimacies, through and through.
We are alive.
We are blessed.
We are spacious and luminous.
We gaze at stars and empty vastness, and feel our fluid bones;
a great symphonic cry of longing and joy,
a dancing of solidity, flux and knowing,
histories revealing, stories concealing,
I care for you all.
Each and every part
and every moment of every part
all included, nothing ignored.

We are life,
praying with life,
to life,
for life,
in all its abundance.

We are a circle of blessing.
We are suchness ¹
beyond words.

Silent Prayer

Left Palm <-----> Right Palm
gazing at these wondrous hands.

Mind and matter
form and function
knower and known
work and play
inner and outer
micro and macro
self and other
one and many
worldly and spiritual
animate and inanimate
brain and body
individual and community
creature and environment ²

Contemplating these graspings at reality.

Then,
sensitively, lovingly, gently and respectfully,
bringing them together at
the heart.

Releasing into the mystery of union,
this unbreakable wholeness of life unfolding,
with flowing breath and the profound blessing of healing
presence,
we realise our true home.

The Heart of Practice

love . . . not push
presence . . . not future-ness
forgiveness . . . not judgement
humbleness . . . not arrogance
gentleness . . . not jumpy, twitchy, start/stop
breathing now . . . not dreaming of elsewhere
smiling now . . . what else is there?
simplicity now . . . not frantic-ness fractionating
watching the sun rise
hearing the bird call
feeling the earth turn
tending the garden . . . one weed, one plant, one leaf at a time
sitting when sitting is good
lying when lying is good
moving when moving is good
flowing with nature
honouring fullness
smelling the flower
savouring the coffee
answering the phone
embracing the healing
 this wholeness
 this mystery
knowing our roots, our 'back-up', the triple ground of being³
contemplating the great mystery of the (so-called) ordinary
praying for the well-being of everyone
such is the heart of practice.

Refuge, Life Roots and Profound Sense of Belonging

*(Six verses are offered here. Some are expressed with 'I' and some with 'we'. Two of them employ Buddhist terms thereby honoring roots that have been so important in my own unfolding. Use whichever verse speaks to you most directly. After reciting the words, sit for a while; smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, and offering – settling in the knowing of refuge, exploring life roots and a profound sense of belonging.)*⁴

I take refuge in wisdom, compassion
and non-clinging awareness.

I take refuge in the full richness of here.

I take refuge in the ever present immediacy of now.

Truth is all-pervading

It is the thusness of this moment,

the suchness that we are.

My refuge, is to live within the Truth.⁵



We take refuge in the multidimensional ground of becoming.

We take refuge in spacious openness and engaged presence,
the nature and activity of this ground.

We take refuge in this planet-wide communion of
life-unfolding.

May we actively cultivate:

generosity, wholesome relating,

patience, skilled use of energy,

a continuity of caring and enquiry,

and profound understanding.
May all beings realise awakening,
for the sake of everything and everyone.



I take refuge in Buddha;
pure and total presence.
I take refuge in Dharma;
love, compassion and clear seeing deepening everywhere.
I take refuge in Sangha;
the diverse ecology of bodhisattva⁶ activity.
Through actively cultivating the six parami,⁷
may I be the Sangha, practising Dharma,
realising the innate Buddha mind
for the wellbeing of everyone.



In the immeasurable expanse of nature in process,
In faith and trust and wonderment,
We give ourselves to this suchness,
This seamless mystery of birthing and dying.

Spacious, loving, with feet solid in the earth,
We nurture the hints at blessedness,
The myriad faces and masks of luminous knowing.

Moving in this flow of compassion and deepening enquiry,
we engage with all beings in ways that support the integrity,
the stability and the beauty of the entire field of life and living.



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.



I realise refuge in the actual state of affairs
the vast ungraspable suchness
that is this living world / universe.
This is ever fresh buddha in action.

I recognise, celebrate and cultivate
the paths, teachings and encouragements
that support our realising the true state of affairs.
This is dharma put to good use.

Releasing into a profound sense of being and belonging
with the community of all life,
I am home.
This is the knowing of true sangha,
the fruition of all refuge practice.

Gradually, the three refuges of buddha, dharma and sangha
appear to merge and mingle until we realise that
each one contains and reveals the other two.
This is a wondrous three-in-one refuge.
It's where we belong.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, and offering ⁸ –
*settling in the knowing of refuge, exploring life roots and a profound
sense of belonging.*

Bodhisattva Vow

However innumerable beings are,
I vow to meet them with kindness and interest.
However inexhaustible the states of suffering are,
I vow to touch them with patience and love.
However immeasurable the dharmas are,
I vow to explore them deeply and thoroughly.
However incomparable the mystery of inter-being,
I vow to surrender within it fully.

From this moment on,
with wisdom and compassion as my lamp and staff,
I dedicate all my life energies to the welfare of all beings.

*Resting with this aspiration – smiling, breathing, present,
appreciating, and offering.*

Five Wholesome Life Trainings

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.

Reflections and Prayers, Tarchin Hearn, www.greendharmatreasury.org

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.

*Activating these five trainings – smiling, breathing, present,
appreciating, and offering.*

The Wisdom of Embodiment

(Two forms are offered here. Use the one that speaks to you most directly.)

This body of mine is composed of atoms born in stars,
molecules, cells, tissues and organs.

It is a union of uncountable viruses,
bacteria, fungi, plants and animals.

It is conditioned by families and societies,
by thoughts and dreams.

It is moulded by sun and gravity
and the whole of the ecosphere.

It is an inter-being of all these processes,
from micro to macro.

Wondrous! Transient!

May it teach me wisdom!

~ ~ ~

The ancients said, look at that body,
foul, corrupt, full of filth,
a bag of faeces, urine and blood,
of vomit, gases, fats and oils.
And so they did, those monks of old,
and came to release all lustful selfish clinging
to this walking breathing corpse.

Today the teachers say,
look at this body / mind / community.
And looking in,
I find the entire universe.
Miraculous voyagings of stardust atoms,
water cycles, chemical cycles, symbiotic
dancings of plants and animals,
molecules, cells and organs.

My breath is the breath of the rainforest.
My excretions the banquet of others.
My muscles and tissues, blood and bone are
the temporary arrangement of carrots,
fish and herbs on the way to being worms,
insects, birds and trees.

How vast and wondrous!

And so they do, those contemplative-scientists of today,
and come to release all self-ish clinging
to a separated "me".
And take a few more steps
on the way to home we never left.

*Smiling, breathing, present – opening into this constantly evolving
mystery of embodiment.*

Impermanence:

– this birthing/dying matrix of responsive relating –

Life is a boundless matrix of dynamic relationships.

Ultimately, every action reverberates throughout the universe.

I responding to you.

You responding to me.

This responding to that.

That responding to this.

Smiling and breathing, enter into this contemplation.

Responsiveness is the living heart of being and becoming;

atoms, molecules, organs and organisms,

families and societies;

entire ecosystems, biospheres, planets and galaxies;

All shifting, responding;

constantly changing.

Each birthing of this

is a dying of that.

Each dying of that

is a birthing of this.

Responsive change is the very nature and fabric of what is.

Permanence is a mental abstraction.

Breathing with this deeply.

Suffering arises through trying to fix, or make permanent,

what is essentially a seamless fluid process.

Resting for a moment in silence.

May we cease grasping at permanence

and with heartfelt confidence, love, enthusiasm

and wide awake sensitivity,

enter fully the great birthing/ dying matrix
of responsive relating;

This ineffable, un-pin-down-able, present suchness of now.
*Contemplating thus – smiling, breathing, present, appreciating,
offering.*

The Four Immeasurables: Lovingkindness, Compassion, Empathic-joy and Serenity

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.
May all beings be apart from sorrow and the causes of sorrow.
May all beings be filled with joy
 when sensing the wholesome activity of others.
May all beings be graced with the serenity of
 unshakable mindfulness and loving presence.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, and offering.

As you breathe, imagine in your heart,
 a jewel-like flower or a soft globe of light,
 radiating loving-kindness, compassion,
 empathic-joy and equanimity,
To every part of your body/ mind/ community.

As feelings of easefulness, spaciousness and clarity
 flower in your experience;
Send the light of these four radiant states in all directions,
 touching beings throughout the universe,
 supporting their health and unfolding.

With each inhalation, invite all suffering to rest in your heart,
 a heart of love, forgiveness, understanding and reverence.

With each exhalation, share your strength and good qualities
with all beings.

Abiding thus – smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, and offering.

Prayers for Eating

(Three forms are offered here)

May this food have been prepared in a state of love,
And may we receive it in a state of love.



We rejoice in the knowing
that this food we eat
nourishes all beings.



This food is an outflowing
of the living of countless beings.

May it nurture wisdom and compassion
for the sake of myself and others.

Through receiving food with love and deep appreciation,
my embodied presence becomes rich and tasty.

Joyfully, I offer my body, speech and mind
to others as nutriment.

May all beings be well and happy.

Smiling, breathing, present, appreciating, offering myself without attachment.

Essential Practices of Awakening

(Two forms are offered here.)

In the natural flow of whatever is occurring,
cultivate a continuity of profoundly nourishing ease,
suffused with serene alertness and vivid discernment.
Whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down,
allow everything to rest in it's own place.



Recognising that the experience of awakening
is not something read about in books
or learned from others,
But something realised and manifested
in each moment of my life;
For the rest of this day,
I will cultivate the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.
*(awareness of body, awareness of feelings, awareness of states of
mind, and awareness of all other phenomena)*

Frequently I will pause to breathe mindfully
and recontact a mode of being
which embodies simplicity, openness, clarity,
connectedness and caring.

I will endeavour to bring a continuum of
compassionate awareness
into all my life's activities.

Frequently I pause.
Mindfully I breathe.

Simplicity, openness, clarity, connection and caring
flowering forth.

Sitting quietly with awareness of breathing for at least five minutes.

Dedicating to All Beings

– Sharing the Merit –

(Here are two versions.)

Being the fullness of the human animal that I am,
– a continuously morphing collage of sentience.
Abiding in the monastery of a world
that is utterly and profoundly alive,
I wander forth
in unpretentious openness,
wonderment and service.



By the power of these wholesome activities,
may our lives be rich with awakening.
Living thus,
may we abandon all unwholesomeness.
Through the endless storm of birth, illness, old age and death,
May we help all beings to be free from suffering.

Hints from the Heart

It begins as a stirring,
a breath of wonder,
a moment of intuition,
a quiet knowing of rightness
an insight you didn't know you always knew.
Everything is interdependent with everything.

Awesome!

We sit with the implications.
We collide with the world not seeing this.
And through that painful tragic crashing
a yearning for refuge
and a desire to live meaningfully becomes strong.

Details proliferate;
generosity, wholesome relating,
patience, skilled use of energy,
a blossoming of caring and enquiry,
an inherent inquisitiveness, precise and playful,
And we discover a new way of life and living.

Exploring embodiment.
Exploring en-mindment.

Dancings of knowings responding to and with
dancings of knowings,
glimmerings of understanding;
Mind and knowing,
and the inter-being nature of experience.
Dawnings of confidence and capacity,
solid in beingness,
perfumed with loving, wise relating.

A life-long journey of maturing into humanness;
releasing into the mystery,
striding beyond paths and pathways;

Seamless, ineffable, spacious and open,
this body of dharma,
compassion unfolding
celebrating the ordinary,
with lightness and wisdom
we realise true home.

The Heart Breath of Timeless Living

for mature practitioners

– to be seamlessly sung as a naturally flowing quartet –

The phrase mature practitioner refers to someone who is emotionally resilient; has the skills and energy to look after herself or himself at levels of body, speech and mind; has a deep knowledge of, and appreciation for, his or her seamless interdependency with all that is; and has a natural tendency to respond with compassion to the needs of others. For such a being, I offer this practice; a music of contemplation, a naturally flowing quartet, a bare bones glimpse of awakening. May it sing in your depths and act as encouragement to deepen what you already intuit in the fullness of your being.

1. True Refuge

Now is the place to practice,
right here,
just as you are,
this very moment in all its vastness;

A continuity of freshness,
resting resplendently,
at ease in the fullness and flow
of what is presently occurring.

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.

Beginningless – endless;
a mandala of unfathomable knowing,
a mode of experiencing that is utterly inclusive,
a way of abiding, singing with awareness
and capacities for vast engagement;

A solid ephemerality,
a fusion of immense presence
and compassion-filled interest;

In the great river of buddhist teaching,
such knowings and experiencings
are the ground and source of true refuge.

Become skilled in this resting,
 this life affirming freshness,
 this gestating womb of nature becoming;
Deeply belonging,
 profoundly at home;
Where else, and what else, could one be?

2. Healing Through Deepening Understanding

Dwelling as rich immediacy and solid presence,
 allow the long learned talents of preference,
 aversion and indifference

To reveal themselves in the theatre
 of your body / mind / knowing / experience.

In the midst of their occurring;
 look into them,
 feel them,
 reflect on them,
 experiment with them.

Allow a space for fresh understanding to arise.

Explore the singing of the universe
 giving rise to these tendencies.

What is actually going on?

What is going on in the midst of
 you being interested in these experiences?

Look at them in terms of general principles.

Investigate particular situations.

What kinds of new possibilities do you discern?

How do these qualities affect your attentiveness;
the way you engage with other beings?

How do these patternings,
and the experiential study of these patternings,
further life?

How does everything connect?

3. Creative Activity

As the intensity of preference-ing and aversion-ing
softens in the glow of understanding,
and an easeful flowing wonderment
with whatever is occurring,
both within and around you,
dissolves the paralysis of indifference;

Then,

use the talents and abilities that have developed

Over the course of your own rich life

and the evolutionary journey of life-unfolding

To bring forth beautiful mind-states

and life enhancing and life affirming environments

for the benefit of every living being,

And all of us together;

a great community of inter-becoming;
this living earth.

4. Union

Refuge, healing and creative activity;
as these practices gradually reveal themselves
to be various faces of a vibrant living whole,
Qualities of bliss/ease,
clarity/awakeness/curiosity,
and a sense of life as an un-interrupted
creative flow of interdependence,
Will certainly deepen.

Being the fullness of the human animal that you are,
the thought may occur
that there is no need to practice or cultivate anything,
Beyond simply,
and profoundly
opening!

This way of wonderment
is beyond categorising 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.

Refuge, healing, creative activity and union:
 this naturally flowing quartet of bare bones awakening,
 is a life long music.

It is infinitely refinable,
 mysteriously fulfilling,
 and profoundly humbling.

It is the heart breath,
 the unhidden secret,
 of timeless living.

*These words have spilled forth as a song of friendship. May they
touch you to your core and reverberate a deep knowing; a knowing
that is truly what we are.*

Concluding Reflection

Life is not a journey,
 we are eternally here.
Life is not a learning,
 there is no knowledge to accumulate.
Life is not a testing,
 there is no authority to judge.

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Dwelling in a space of love,
 tendrils of curiosity
reaching forth in all directions;
 feeling our way,
softening and sensitising into the richness of community,
 a living world,
 within us,
 around us,
 and through us.

Apprentices of wonderment and awe,
 probing and questioning,
 sampling and savouring
with calm abiding and vivid discernment
 together exquisitely intermeshed,
we touch our home,
 this world,
of you, and me, and all of us together,
 precious
 beyond words.

Endnotes

1 suchness => a Mahayana Buddhist term [*'tatha'* (Skt)], used to point out the radically inclusive wholeness of everything and everyone. In a universe where everything is ultimately interdependently inter-being with everything else, it is impossible to accurately name, in a simple positive way, what something actually is. The term *suchness*, or *thusness* is a way of hinting at this vast dynamic of inter-beingness that each and everyone of us is, poetically referred to in the *Avatamsaka Sutra* with the phrase, 'worlds interpenetrating worlds without obstruction'.

Suchness is sometimes used interchangeably with the term *dharmadhatu* which Namkhai Norbu Rinpoché once eloquently defined as "the total field of all events and meanings."

2 We could continue this list: easeful presence and skilled engagement, samatha and vipassana, stillness and movement, coming into being and passing away, explicit and implicit, private and public, free-will and determinism, profound and mundane. For each pair, contemplate one as right hand and one as left hand, bring them together, and then contemplate how they inter-relate as a unity.

3 "Triple Ground of Being" The ground of being/becoming is where our roots find strength and sustenance. Triple ground refers to the ecological ground, the ancestral ground and the ground of inspiration, mentorship and wise guidance. Each one of these three can be found in the interbeingness of the other two. To explore this more completely, see "Touching the Earth in Six Prostrations" – in the web site www.greendharmatreasury.org under Writings/Practices

4 Many other refuge verses along with a considerable exploration of the meaning and importance of this central contemplation can be found in "*True Refuge*" by Tarchin Hearn

5 Truth, with a capital 'T' => Ultimate Truth or 'Truth' embraces everything. It is radically inclusive, fundamentally un-pin-downable and utterly beyond concepts and verbal constructs. In some Buddhist teaching the primary character of Truth is indicated as having "One Taste". (For more on this, see *The Samdhinirmochana Sutra*)

6 bodhisattva => *bodhi*: awakening, unfolding + *sattva*: being. In this sense all living beings are bodhisattvas in action.

7 six parami => six perfections: generosity, wholesome relating, patience, skilled use of energy, a continuity of caring and enquiry, and profound understanding

8 Each section of contemplation is followed by a variation of *smiling, breathing, present, appreciating and offering*. Supported by these five, allow the theme of the contemplation to suffuse your currently arising body / mind / community. This is a fundamental practise.