



**LETTING  
GO**

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**Thankyou to everyone for contributing to MMC, its been a  
pleasure to read and edit.**

***Buddham saranam gacchami  
Dhammam saranam gacchami  
Sangham saranam gacchami***

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## NOTES FROM AN EDITOR WHO'S JUST HANGIN' ON

It's been a strange year of dark and light, light and dark.  
For the first time ever, I've been without regular work – just a few scraps here and there.  
It felt like a time to let go and trust that life will continue to flow through me and that control is largely – or perhaps completely – an illusion.  
So it's been one day in paradise after the other – Zen, Lifeline, exercise, afternoon sleeps, motorbike rides, Heidi and our island of love in the Blue Mountains.  
But the uncertainty and grasping of the unknowable future and my relationship to career, money and all those hard necessities have played on my mind.  
There was a time when my sanity was slipping.  
Then I came across a song called Letting Go by Melbourne singer Angie McMahon, it spoke to my pain and to my hope:

*I might've spent six months lying on my living room floor  
I might've been sick, then well, then sick some more  
I might be prouder of me  
Than I ever have been  
I've been learning 'bout letting go  
How to do it without my claws  
Scratching the surfaces  
I've been learning 'bout wasting time  
And closing some doors  
Hoping to open more, down the line  
I knew from miles away that I would detonate  
I tried some magic tricks to skip my fate  
And then gave up the ball as a defender  
The trick was simply to surrender*



It seemed like a subject worth sitting with, and worth calling upon the collective wisdom of the sangha to help explore.  
The sangha! Our wonderful sangha! You stepped up, you did not let me down.  
There are no highlights in this edition because every piece is a highlight – an expression of unique creativity and insight.  
It's hard to imagine life without Zen – the Buddha, the Dharma and (especially) the Sangha.  
What a privilege to mix it with a community where explanation is not required.  
My deep gratitude to all who contributed to this edition, but especially to my dharma brother Ryan O'Connor, who stepped up to do the layout. Salute!

The next edition (deadline February) will be “Zen and Relationships” and will be edited by Helen Sanderson and Zoe Thurner. All contributions to: [zoethurner2015@gmail.com](mailto:zoethurner2015@gmail.com)

# THE FRAGRANCE OF A BEING

## WHERE DO WE GO?

*Subhana Bazarghi*

While death is the ubiquitous gateway through which all beings exit, yet each person dies their own unique death.

Its shape emerges mostly out of our deeds and life imprint. How we have lived seems to cast the dice to a large extent in how we die. At the end of the day, we are all asked to let go of everything that is dear and precious to us. Death insists upon it. If letting go and relinquishment is not an over-arching philosophy, a natural act, then the frailty of body and mind and the finality of death's door slamming shut on one's life is scary and foreboding. Zazen abounds with presence and the art of letting go the clinging self. It is an invitation to the Way of non-grasping, with the open hand of thought that holds all phenomena with a light touch. If we practice the art of letting go throughout our life, generously circulating the gift we have received, then death is just another transient moment, another window to climb through, sliding out on a moonbeam of light.

The traditional closing message that the Jisha calls out from the darkness at the end of each evening at sesshin is a poignant reminder of our transience and the urgency of being fully present, awakening in this very life.

***“Life and death are a grave matter  
all things pass quickly away,  
each of you must be completely alert  
never neglectful, never indulgent.”***

Death is called by many names in different cultures and mythologies - the great remover, the great thief, the extinguisher, an angel of death or Kali the Hindu Goddess of death. In Buddhism, Yama is known as the king of death and considered one of the great messengers for awakening. Ultimately, we don't go anywhere, there is nowhere to go. Zen emphasises that when someone dies that we return to our origin. The origin being the vast emptiness at the heart of all things, where there is no birth and no death. There is no fixed separate self to die. Crossing over, can be painful, it requires letting go our grip on life, it can be an act of mercy, at best a peaceful parting even a sacrament. Mary Oliver's masterful poem *White Owl* flies in and Out of the Field, portrays life and death, and the mystery of moving through one toward the other as a passage of light.

***“Coming down out of the freezing sky, with its depths of light,  
like an angel or a Buddha with wings.....  
so I thought that maybe death isn't darkness,  
after all, but so much light wrapping itself around us.....  
that is nothing but light – scalding, aortal light  
in which we are washed and washed out of our bones.”***

Four close friends steeped in the dharma plus my dear younger sister have died this year. It has been a year marked by grief and love celebrating the richness of their lives and honouring endings. As I reflect upon each person, feeling the emotional aftermath of each dear soul's passing, I'm curious about what is left in their wake? It is like looking up into the starry

night sky of the milky way, the light from stars that have long gone, yet their silvery trail is still travelling, unimpeded. The light of dear friends who have passed away, is still present amongst us, reflected in the hearts of those left behind. I ride waves of loss for their particular voice and expression.

Sometimes, I sit with an empty hole with no shape. Then I remember a smile that sparks joy, savour some kind words, remember sharing some ordinary yet sublime moments over a cup of tea. Where are my friends now? Their legacy, the ripple of light and shadow, their unique indelible mark now stamped upon my soul, folded into my heart. So often we discover at a memorial service, the many facets of a person's life, the eulogies create a rich tapestry of a purposeful, impassioned life, revealing their struggles and joys in how they overcame those challenges, making a life worth living. I am curious about what remains? Sitting with these memories, I want to honour the fragrance of each being, a fragrance that lingers on. An image that is present with me now is they are nestled close together, sitting in a circle at the table, inside my heart. Each one stripped down to their essence, a perfume of their life's residue, resolute in their uniqueness. Tears still emerge, yet I lean into the fragrance that permeates beyond their death.

Joyce passed away on New Year's Day the 1st of January, 2025. Her death, seemed to set the tone for the year. Her gentle spirit overflowed with compassion; she embodied an enormous capacity to hold an accepting space for human suffering. As an acclaimed writer and Buddhist teacher, her soulful depth and loving presence have become internalised as a wise inner feminine guide. In times of doubt, I check in with Joyce, what would she do and say? Her voice, steady and strong, yet softly spoken, rises up through my chest, "Keep writing", she says, "writing is a way of healing".

Every time I think of Julia, her irrepressible joyful spirit makes me chuckle. Her indomitable smile reminds me to not take myself so seriously, to kiss the joy as it flies. Even in Julia's last year even with cancer metastases she squeezed every bit of joy from being fully present. We laughed that joy was on steroids. Filling up my bucket of joy, starts with my daily ritual of preparing, brewing, drinking and savouring the first cup of tea while sitting zazen. Each sip, so replenishing. Joy re-affirms that singing and dancing are also the voice of the law. Some days, Julia's smile, walks me out the door, down the street, to join Maria's Joy of Moving Zumba class.

The Buddha encouraged us to 'squeeze the honey out of one's experience'. A metaphor for extracting wisdom from one's life experience and practice', integrating those insights and embodying its revelations. It's a practice that requires us to deeply transform and let go our old habitual ways of thinking and reacting to live a more awake embodied life. Zazen drops me into a sublime silent spaciousness that underlies all the coming and goings, the highs and lows of daily life, it is a sublime joy has no obstacles, no bounds.

There is a deep ache left in my heart from my younger sister Narelle's death on the 1st August. I feel like I'm living a bit lop-sided as if my left arm is missing. I wore her pink winter pyjamas to bed through those cold wintry nights, trying to keep her close. I was not ready to let her go. I put on her long flowery printed gardening gloves to prune my roses. The love of roses, those fragrant beauties have delighted over four generations of gardeners in our family. Her creative spirit, her love of art was something that all three women in our family shared. At

one point, Narelle and I ended up in art school together; she went on to become as a successful award-winning artist. The family inherited some of her much-loved paintings, mostly framed landscapes. Yet, what I hold dear is her creative spirit, the unframed well-spring of her artistry that touches and inspires me.

Deb embodied the Buddha dharma throughout her daily life, her fearless presence and acceptance as she faced death was inspiring and revelatory. After a year and half of living with pancreatic cancer, there was a natural acceptance of things as they are. Days before she died, at the end of August, she was sitting up in the hospital bed, cognitively clear and articulate. It was to be our last conversation. I asked her how she was, knowing she had very limited time left.

She said, "There is a presence a shining light behind me that is growing bigger and bigger". I inquired, "How do you feel about that?"

She said, "I'm ok with this."

I then suggested, "Can you turn towards the light, lean and rest into the light of awareness?"

Without hesitation Deb said, "I am not afraid; I am fine with this."

That simply ok-ness at the threshold deeply touched all who were present. Deb's dharma practice served to the last breath and beyond. Deb was clear about the inevitability of her passing which fell into a natural acceptance that was not a defeated resignation but a deep ok-ness. The family maintained a vigil throughout those last days surrounding her with love. Rob her devoted husband reported that there was so much peace around her bedside, all who were present bathed in it. The very special essence that was Deb is now unlimited and unbounded and is dancing freely.

When fear dissolves the dualistic barriers fall away, the self dissolves into the empty ocean of essential nature. The light of awareness is stripped bare; it is not touched by existence or non-existence. Mysterious and indescribable, the vastness of our true nature is intimately full and over-flowing with each moment, alive within each one of us. It whispers awake, this moment and the next, a rolling party of many rivers emptying into the boundless ocean. The fragrance that remains is peace.

There are some wonderful and most mysterious koans that I return to over and over. Tou-shuai's three barriers appear in the Miscellaneous koan collection and in Case 47 of the Gateless Barrier. The priest Tou-shuai set up these barriers in order to examine his students.

***"You make your way through darkness of abandoned grasses in a single-minded search for your self-nature. Now, honoured one, where is your nature?"***

***"When you have realised your self-nature, you are free of birth and death. When the light of your eyes falls (for the last time, how are you free?"***

***"When you are free of birth and death, you know where to go. When the four elements (earth, water, fire and air) scatter where do you go?"***

The first barrier faces us with the single-minded search for our true-nature. What and where is our true nature, when things fall apart, when we are caught up in the weeds of the clashing

thoughts and emotions of our shopping trolley mind? In the very search we are asked to realise that we are the honoured one, right where we stand. Our true nature does not come into being or go out of being. Realising our self-nature is the act of letting go the self, to forget the self. This is sometimes referred to as 'the great death' dying before we die. The second barrier asks how then do we meet our death? When our eyes are fading for the last time can we recognise this freedom in the fading away. The act of dying itself, that co-arises with no birth and no death. And finally, the third barrier, the destination, where do you go?

There are many wise ones who have gracefully let go and embodied this freedom in their life and dying hours. Anne Aitken was a pragmatic soul, wise with insights about the great matter of life and death. Anne had been through the whole koan curriculum twice. When Yamada Roshi, checked her insight and understanding about death, Anne's response was, "When the bus comes and stops, I just get on and go". She had made it vividly clear that she did not want to be put on life-support. When the time came, that is exactly how she left us, with no fuss, no drama, just closed her eyes and left.

Sometimes the fading of the eyes for the last time is drawn out, even when the mind has already gone ahead. This happened to our dear friend Jean, long-term member of the SZC, who died on Friday 3rd Oct, 2025. Her love of Zen was the backbone of her life and dedicated 15 years to koan study. Jean had been a senior academic at Macquarie Uni, she had won awards for teaching and her outstanding book, "China: A Handbook in Intercultural Communication", which focuses on cross-cultural orientation, intercultural communication, and social life in China. I enjoyed Jean's dry sometimes black, wicked sense of humour. She was strident about politics and social injustice and at times annoyingly judgmental. Mari and I dined out with Jean nearly every Friday night for many years while she was the primary carer for her mother Barbara. Friday night was one night that Jean had off from her carer role, so us gals hit the town. About six years ago there were signs of her strange behaviour and mental decline. Jean was diagnosed with a disease called Erhind-Chester, a rare form of blood cancer. The cancer seized and destroyed her bright mental faculties, leaving her with dementia and severe Alzheimer's. The Jean we all knew had died five years earlier, she was almost unrecognizable, a ghost of her former self. Unlike other deaths, Jean's death brought release. The family and her Zen friends all took a sigh of relief that it was finally over. In Jean's case, death was a welcome act of mercy. I'm grateful she is free at last, resting in deepest samadhi. Jean requested in her will that her ashes be scattered at Kodo-ji Temple, a clear signal of the importance and love of Zen in her life, it is the flavour that remains.

One of the extraordinary meetings, I had was with Father Bebe Griffiths, an English Benedictine monk at the Zen Centre in Berkley, California. He greeted us dressed in an orange Indian loin cloth and khadi shirt. He was a wizened, old lively man in spite of his recent stroke where he nearly died. As the story goes, after he regained consciousness, he had a major awakening experience. He said, his head had fallen into his heart that was now one with God. A friend who I was with who had been a Jesuit priest, asked him what he thought about death? Fr. Bede immediately sat upright, bright-eyed and fully present, declaring in an excited voice, "Death is a sacrament, I am so looking forward to my death."

I am not sure I share Fr. Bede's excitement, but his comments still inspire and is the fragrance that remains with me today.

"When you are free of birth and death, you know where to go. When the four elements (earth,

water, fire and air) scatter, where do you go?” It is not enough to say “Nowhere or Right here.” Don’t think before or after. The only thing to do is to be fully present. What is this freedom that does not come and go and as the heart sutra states there is no ending to coming and going, old age and death? Recognising the ocean of essential nature, you are free of birth and death then you will know where to go. Aitken Roshi was visiting a dying friend, her question was, “Bob, where am I going?” Roshi responded, “Wherever your toes will lead you.” The phrase is a metaphor for non-attachment, not trying to control or hold onto the inevitable, but simply let go, “follow” wherever it leads. In realising the Way, the practice boils down to the act of letting go, bringing us right down to this one nien moment, seeing through the one who sees, sees eternity.



### **Reference.**

*Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems, (1992) White Owl Flies In and Out of the Field, Beacon Press, Boston.*

*The Gateless Barrier; (1990) Translated with a commentary by Robert Aitken, North Point Press, San Francisco.*

# IN MEMORIAM

Sarah Walls

*On the kitchen table  
A vase of flowers,  
brown-tinged yellow iris  
glowing from stiff leaves,  
peach-coloured little roses  
full of scent and thorns –  
gathered from two gardens  
where now no gardens are –  
gathered where the grasses  
grow thick on bedroom floors.  
The broken stones and chimneys  
tumble, hearths are cold.  
The families, the laughter,  
the angry words and shouts,  
the daily life and movement  
are gone – their past speaks from  
my kitchen-table vase.  
May such flowering spring  
from my own dead past.*

# GRASSES

*Glenys Jackson*



*Glenys Jackson*



*Glenys Jackson*

# TO MY YOUNG DAUGHTERS

*Ameli Tanchitsa*

What happens at Death?

I'm not sure, but I had a beautiful dream about it once.

It's a glistening day. I can see my hands holding the fishing rod. Suddenly, the fishing line is pulled hard! The way the pull is changing direction, I can tell there is a fish at the end of it. I pull the fish up and hold it in both of my hands like it's the most precious thing. I observe it very closely. Its pearly scales, silvery colour of its body, the fins and the gills moving, opening and closing. As I notice how incredibly beautiful it is, I also realise at that very moment how Life and Death are both present at the same time. The fish is dying and will not survive even if I put it back in the water. At that moment, the fish lets out a last breath, which sounds like a generously deep and loud exhale, "Aahhhhhh ...". As I hear the sound, I recognise it as unmistakably as my own. I recognise my exhale in the same way as I would recognise my own face in the mirror. That morning, I woke up with my heart and mind in a deep state of peace, like water pouring into water.

What happens at Death?

I sense that it really depends on what happens in Life. It depends on the clarity with which we ask Life's questions.

What happens when I realise that I don't need to know what happens?

Life and Death seem inseparable. When I free myself from the need to know, I am free to be and die as I am right now. To let go entirely and generously is to let our Life fully open and deepen.

Take the wave.

If I were born a wave, my Life and everything that happens in it, including relationships, work, all of my thoughts, sensations, feelings, memories, and words, would be like bubbles in the whitecaps of the waves.

The shape of the wave is like an idea of myself, my parents, my grandparents, and so on, extending back into time that is without beginning. Each one of us is a wave rising and falling back into the vast Ocean. Each birth and death, including mine and yours, my dear ones, is like a wave on the surface of an endless sea. Now here and now gone. Like an idea.

What happens when I don't hold on to any ideas about who I am supposed to be?

Without ideas about myself, I am simply all of this! An embodied direct experience of Life and Death, of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. Without an idea of myself, this is me without an idea of who I am. Then, everything in the direct experience flows like an essential ocean, whole and complete. Like Life and Death.

The everyday phenomena and ideas are like this. Like the most beautiful and precious pearls in the sea. Each is unique and will never be repeated. Remember, they are bubbles on the surface of your vast heart-mind. Be grateful for each one of them.

Wanting to know what happens at Death is like the Ocean wishing to understand what whitecaps are made of. Please don't be fooled by others' ideas about who you are.

Stop, and you will know who you are. Find the space between thoughts and sink deep to the bottom of your own pure nature from which we come to be and to which all waves return.

This is where you will find your intuitive, unique, compassionate heart. Hold your Life and Death in this luminous place. The place of self-compassion. Extend it into the world and to all beings.

What happens if I let go of ideas of Life and Death?  
Let go of the Ideas of being and non-being.

What if this direct experience is what happens?  
Just this as it is right now.  
Complete. Original. Vast and uncluttered.

I hope we all live such a Life and embody it wholly and directly.

I love you both always with my ocean heart.

Dad. AT.

### **In Search of the Other Shore**



### **The Other Shore Straight Ahead!**



*from left: Milla, Ameli, Luna, Lola*

# ANCHORS UP

Annette Devilee

Isn't the purpose of sitting on our cushions, letting go of thoughts that crowd the mind, to help live our lives fully conscious and mindful? Do we not clear our mind so that we can let go of unnecessary thoughts that may only drag us down. This song is 'Anchors Up' and it's about my decision to let go of my old life in Sydney.

You can find it by searching my stage name, Annie Wish, and 'Anchors Up'.

*This ship has sailed, gone, gone gone  
Wind in my sails, movin' on  
Anchors up, won't drag me down  
Onward, bound*

*Goodbye Sydney Harbour, goodbye Rushcutters Bay  
Gone the red ochre, hello sea spray  
I've left my home, not going back  
Not sure, Where I'll go.*

*Anchors up, anchors up, anchors up  
Won't drag me down.*

*Movin' on, letting go  
My sweet babe, I love you so  
Movin' on, letting go  
Little darling I won't forget you  
Angel I'm always with you.*

*Anchors up, won't drag me, Won't drag me down.  
Anchors up, won't drag me, Won't drag me down.*

*This ship has sailed, gone, gone gone  
Wind in my sails, movin' on  
Full moon is high, sailing at night  
Misty moonshine, giving us light.*

# LETTING GO... TURNING POINT...

Caroline Josephs

*Is it*

*Turning point when  
Dark turns to Light?  
When sunshine bursts  
On bedroom curtains?  
Is it the moment  
Of touch, when lover  
Turns to snuggle?*

*Is turning point  
A baby birthing--  
When pain, fear  
Transform, to  
Wonder, joy?*

*It Is a turning point --  
Meeting my tall  
Long-haired  
Grandson –  
Musician,  
absence  
Turning to  
enfoldment?*

*Or dissolving into  
Love, holding  
My grand-daughter  
After her long absence  
Uni-verse...*

*Looking after children*

*In America?*

*For farmers, it is  
turning point--  
With teeming rain  
After long long  
Drought?*

*Or the birth of new calf?  
Or simply, the feel of a loved  
Canine, licking a hand?*

*It is always a letting go,  
A turning point,  
each morning --  
For body-mind-spirit –  
Sinking  
Into cool  
Ocean pool,  
Rippling with fish,  
Molluscs, crabs,  
Sea-stars...  
Immersing,  
Swimming  
Into stillness...  
Escaping mind  
Flurries...  
In an oceanic*

October 2025.

# ON GRIEF

*Gillian Coote*

I offer this wisdom from Frank Ostaseski, founder of Zen Hospice Project in San Francisco, the first Buddhist hospice in America, who writes about what he knows - grief, its 'four phases' ringing ever more true for me, three years after Tony died.

## **Facing loss**

Loss is the first period of grief, and it's visceral. It's like being punched in the belly. It takes your breath away. Even when death is expected, our bodies and minds can't seem to take it in right away. We don't want to accept the reality of this loss; we don't want to believe that the person we love has died. And at the same time, acceptance is the task in this period.

Shock and disbelief usually give way to guilt and regret. We judge ourselves mercilessly: "I should have taken her to the hospital sooner. We could have tried other treatments. I wish I'd spent more time with her. I wanted to be there at the moment she died."

Our capacity to be cruel to ourselves never ceases to amaze me. At our time of greatest vulnerability, when we most need our own kindness, we club ourselves with self-judgement. If we could only just stop for a moment and listen to the sound of our voice, surely our hearts would open to embrace this pain.

## **Mourning**

Grief may be the greatest healing experience of a lifetime. It's certainly one of the hottest fires we will encounter. It penetrates the hard layers of our self-protection, plunges us into the sadness, fear, and despair we have tried so hard to avoid. Grief is unpredictable, uncontrollable. There are no shortcuts around grief. The only way is right through the middle. Some say time heals, but that's a half-truth. Time alone doesn't heal. Time and attention heal. In grief we access parts of ourselves that were somehow unavailable to us in the past. With awareness, the journey through grief becomes a path to wholeness. Grief can lead us to a profound understanding that reaches beyond our individual loss. It opens us to the most essential truth of our lives; the truth of impermanence, the causes of suffering, and the illusion of separateness. When we meet these experiences with mercy and awareness, we begin to appreciate that we are more than the grief. We are what the grief is moving through. In the end, we may still fear death, but we don't fear living nearly as much. In surrendering to our grief, we have learned to give ourselves fully to life.

## **Letting go**

This is the painful period that goes on for some time, months, even years. When someone we love dies, it's not a single event. We keep on losing that person. At holidays, times of difficult decisions, or in those little personal moments we want to share, we are painfully confronted with the absence of the person we love. We see clearly the roles that person has played in our life, and we grieve for those also. We don't just lose our wife when she dies. She's the person who worked out all the battles with our kids, or made the money, or the one who touches four bodies with love and tenderness.

When our parents die, we may find ourselves feeling fragile. They were the buffer between us

and death, and suddenly we are more aware of our own mortality. This is the period when we feel most alone. Friends drop away in exhaustion. Others tell us to keep busy or to get on with our life. This is the individual's fear of pain and our cultural predisposition toward avoiding anything unpleasant. Advice doesn't help. Listening does.

## **Moving on**

Grief is like a stream running through our life, and it's important to understand that it doesn't go away.

Our grief lasts a lifetime, but our relationship to it changes. Moving on is the period in which the knot of your grief is untied. It's the time of renewal.

Not a return to life as it was before the death you experienced – you can't go back, you're a different person now, changed by the journey through grief. But you can begin to embrace life again, feel alive again. The intensity of emotions has subsided some. You can remember the loss without being caught in the clutches of terrible pain. The armouring around our hearts begins to melt, and in this period of moving on, the energy that had been consumed by resistance, is now available for living. Now we move forward, but we're not abandoning the one we love. We understand that even when someone dies, the relationship continues. It's that the person is no longer located outside of us. We are developing what we could call an internal relationship with this person, and that allows us to reinvest in our life. If we follow the path through grief to wholeness, we may discover an undying love.



# SPRING CLEANING

Helen Sanderson

*Spring, old man grey gum sends down great ribbons of bark, curling the whole trunk length, right to the ground, and Angophera Costata's bark cracks opening to a new coat, gorgeous in orange red and purple. Making room for growth.*

*Down in the earth, somewhere around tree roots, a cicada chrysalis makes its way to the surface. It leaves its shell on a tree trunk, or a leafy plant, before emerging green or black, wings still folded before drying, then spreading singing into the air on its mating dance.*

*And banksia seeds, opened by last summer's fires, emerge small and green grey. New shoots from the blackened earth.*

*Diamond python, sunning on the forest floor, slips out of, splits out of her old dry skin, to reveal the new, glistening and jewel like, making room for expansion and for dinner.*

*Spring and I am cleaning and clearing, piling up bags of detritus, old stuff, once precious now superfluous. Shedding the old and unnecessary, opening to space, and a small state of grace.*

# LETTING GO.....

Greg Try

*I had a dream I was clinging to a branch  
At a great height, then I let go and found  
I was gently falling and I fell into the sun.  
And my body was completely incinerated.  
It was all gone!  
So, I decided to let go, I was letting go...  
of my petty hatreds,  
of my victim identity,  
of expecting you to fix my hurt feelings.  
Because life just isn't fair &  
because I didn't end up  
with as much money as I thought I would.  
And because others became celebrated and famous  
and I didn't.  
And then I found I was facing the great Void; Absence.  
And all I could feel was gratitude.  
Because I was freed from needing to be 'right'!  
'I' had fallen away, and was just floating in the ocean of not knowing.  
Being content in letting go.*

# SPRING SESSHIN

Janet Selby



Janet Selby

*At the end of the day,  
Last rays touch the hill  
And beyond.  
Two old friends catching up.*



Janet Selby

*The waterfall,  
Three drips -  
Enough to be called water  
falling.*

*Gorrick's cairn,  
Wombat's cairn.  
Debris from moments past –  
Ahh! The sound of the lyre-  
bird!*



Janet Selby



Janet Selby

*Brain fog with the full moon.  
Full moon with the brain fog.  
Full. Brain. Moon. Fog.*



Janet Selby

*Twilight by the creek,  
The conversation begins  
On our day of no words.*



Janet Selby

*Encouraging words from the Wonga Pidgeon.*



Janet Selby

*Koala encounter*

# LETTINGO

*Linda O'Connor*

*LETTINGO*

*LETTING*

*LETTIN*

*LETTI*

*LETT*

*LET*

*LE*

*L*

# A SONG FOR CARLOTTA

*William Verity*

It was during the pandemic that everything changed for Carlotta.

We had known each other for a quarter of a century by then after working together as journalists. I was even her boss as one stage, although I never thought of the relationship in that way.

We had kept in touch off and on, but it was only when I moved back to Glebe in 2019 that our friendship became more frequent.

Then Covid hit.

We all stayed inside and became socially distant so it must have been nine months before I made it around to her flat on the 12th floor of a massive tower block overlooking Wentworth Park.

I was shocked.

I found her sitting alone in a wheelchair.

She'd been struck down by a mystery illness which made it difficult for her to walk around her small flat and impossible to leave it.

## I HAVEN'T BEEN OUTSIDE FOR SIX MONTHS

"I haven't been outside for six months," she said.

"It's too hard to walk, and I could fall down at any time. I'm not strong enough to push myself in the wheelchair.

"Anyway, I've become anxious. So I stay inside."

At that moment, I made a commitment to her – to us really – that we would go out for lunch once a week, or more if that was possible.

And that's what we've done.

For the past five years, we've been going out for a few hours a week, having noodles in Chinatown, Malaysian at Malacca Straits on Broadway or seafood at the Glebe Fishmarkets. I find her waiting for me in her wheelchair, beautifully dressed, made up for the date, floppy sunhat and sunglasses.

I say: "You look like a Mafia matriarch whose taken control of the business after her husband died, but who runs the operation with a ruthless cruelty."

We recently travelled out to Cabramatta on the train to relive old friendships when we used to work on the local newspaper in the 1990s.

## WHEELCHAIR ZEN

If I'm honest, my motivation was certainly compassion but (like all the best motivation) it was also about myself.

I quite consciously want to be the kind of friend to turns up. To be a person who can be relied upon. To believe myself to be worthwhile.

Yet this wheelchair Zen practice has proven to be far deeper than that.

For one thing, I like Carlotta.

People treat you differently when you're in a wheelchair, but they also treat you differently when you're pushing a wheelchair.

We only rarely encounter the classic response where people's discomfort means they talk

loudly at Carlotta (she's not remotely deaf) or where they talk to me when they need to talk to her.

Carlotta doesn't put up with that kind of treatment.

Cars stop for you earlier than they need to when you approach a zebra crossing, people part like the Red Sea in a crowd, teenage boys offer a seat on the bus. When we come across steps, men emerge from nowhere to offer their muscle.

We even had the author, Christos Tsiolkas, help lift Carlotta and wheelchair up a flight of stairs at a book launch because the lift was broken.

People ask her if she's my mother, or if I am her carer, as if you need a reason to spend time with someone in a wheelchair other than friendship or love.

I say: "No, she's just my friend."

When we first went out, the unexpected joy was to share in Carlotta's wonder at a world that had been lost to her for half a year.

She says: "Oh, my. Look at that. A baby!"

"Can you feel that beautiful cool breeze on your skin?"

"What a day it is today."

We would talk about old times, about the book she was writing on the political assassination of Cabramatta MP John Newman and the doubtful conviction of his killer, Phuong Ngo.

We would talk about my work, our hopes and dreams, about Heidi, about mutual friends.

One topic that we touch, but not dwell upon, is Carlotta's health, which is worsening by the day.

These days, the illness has a name but it's too long and complex to remember. Does it even deserve a name?

All I need to know is that her body is slowly closing down while her mind stays as sharp as ever.



### ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE

These days, her speech is becoming slow and difficult and she's can't walk at all. She can't even shift from her wheelchair into a car, her typing is with a single finger and the simple act of placing her phone in a bag is a challenge.

She says: "I have one foot in the grave."

This final act of letting go is as hard as hard can be – how could it be different?

There are times, Carlotta admits, that she becomes furious at her inability to express herself or at her lack of independence. Other times she fights the Black Dog.

But the gift she gives me is the sheer grace with which she accepts what she cannot change.

She says: "I have to celebrate what I still have. What else can I do?"

Acts of self-pity are foreign to her though she has plenty to complain about.

Carlotta has friends, and plenty of them. They support her when she launches a book. She's hosted two book launches this year. Age does not weary her.

Carlotta is a champion and one of my most valued friends.

I say: "Thank you, Carlotta, for all that you've given me. I wrote this piece for you."

# THE OLD COAT

*Linda O'Connor*

*The old coat kept me warm many years  
I clung to its warmth and memories  
Although each year it became more worn  
and threadbare,  
And the cold seeped in  
I could not part with it  
It became so thin and ragged  
As did its wearer  
One day the last shred dissolved  
Cold and exposed  
I was forced to find a new one*

# LEAVING THE MOUSE HOUSE

*Ayla Ryan, aged nine.*

*“Let go”, they said, let go of the bad things in the past.  
Like a mouse letting go of  
her children when the time has come  
that they must take care of themselves.*

# EVEN TREES IN THE OXFORD BOTANIC GARDEN

*Maggie Gluek*

*Early December  
and still bright in autumn foliage,  
“That liquid amber,” says the young  
horticulturalist  
“just can’t let go.”*

*Heaven, this is heaven—  
where you may not know  
the hour, the day, the week—  
You can taste the deepest freedom that you seek  
when you're sitting here alone at Daiyu Peak*

*Oh, oh*

*Heaven, this is heaven—  
like a kooka with a lizard in its beak  
Having porridge in your bowl that's made of teak  
When you're sitting here alone at Daiyu Peak*

*Oh, it's you when you're out walking  
and when you take a leak  
It's when you finally lose the plot  
and when you're up shit creek.*

*It's sitting here and breathing,  
thinking neither bold nor meek  
There is nothing that compares with  
living as a Dharma geek.*

## HEAVEN

Maggie Gluek

*Dance with me!  
We're not two after all.  
Though I'm short and you're tall,  
still there's nowhere to fall.*

*Dance with me!  
Who's the host, who's the guest?  
In Buddha we rest  
Hey - we all past the test*

*Heaven, this is heaven.  
Knowing life's a dewdrop,  
bubble, lightning streak  
I can look at my neuroses and not freak  
Who is sitting here alone at Daiyu Peak?*

*(reprise)...there is no more reason  
anything to seek  
When it's all right here  
(where you are! Wherever you are!)  
at Daiyu Peak*

# NOTHING WILL GET IN THE WAY OF THE FUTURE

*Brendon Stewart*

Each day lived is one closer to the future.

Naming is the mother of the ten thousand things.

I can't seem to stop naming things. Some people are so good with names not just remembering everyone but also the names we use to describe existence like historical facts for example, or every quote attributed to Dogen, songs from the seventies and then there is prediction naming and computing science, or economics, psychoanalysis and just by way of mentioning the journey through the koan curriculum.

I enjoy putting names to moments, winter into spring is a favourite because it's so poetic and colourful. It doesn't seem possible for me to let go of an urge to name, to delight in names that have stood the test of time. I'd even have a go at naming the ten thousand things.

Naming is the system we humans have developed and use giving us the skill to pick and choose; this is this and it's not that and as the seasons go around and round we gleefully plan for picnics or ski adventures; some of us know the dates for next year's grand-finals.

A calendar is a naming tool, a system that slices the timeless journey of the moon.

We are affirmed along with the grasses and birds and bees when the ten thousand things come forth but mostly we bring the ten thousand things forth to affirm ourselves – look at my attachments.

One of the most critical concepts in Buddhist philosophy is non-attachment, which involves letting go of our attachment to material possessions, relationships and even our thoughts and emotions. Another essential concept is the middle way: finding balance and avoiding extremes – but let's not worry about that here! We are guided in our practice to let go our ten thousand things as we attempt to understand our own suffering: the attachments we make and cling to. Yet it's true that every religious philosophy, or at least most of them have something to say about attachment and the psychological effort needed to let those difficulties and delights go; Matthew 11:28-30 invites “all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”



The burden of attachment is widely understood and discussed in the various schools of psychology. Cognitive behaviour therapy employs the strategy of suggesting to ‘ourselves’ to change our minds.

We function neurologically by way of an over-arching emotional process which makes us feel our thoughts, this is why it’s hard to simply ‘let go’, changing our mind is very difficult. Thought process is precise and tangled all at once, it’s hard to disentangle. Athletes can be taught a precise strategy, the ‘goldfish mind’; where you would reflect on a mistake (a physical mistake and a loss of confidence) for nine seconds - the gold fish. The precision is with ‘that mistake’ only.

Try giving your childhood memories and resurrected scenarios just nine seconds of attention. The fact is habits (attachments) die hard and yet with time we can grow out of certain ways of being and doing; long time zazen helps I’ve noticed. It sort of works without directive, just hanging around with your zazen clears away long held patterns and often you don’t even notice them gone, you’ve just let go. But how and when in the big moments is the right time to let go; when dying for example do you let go an hour before hand, ten minutes, maybe just on the second. The cliché of letting go is big with Zen, letting go of unwanted thoughts, attitudes and hang ups; just let it go we say to others and to ourselves.

So many of our hang ups are kitchen table issues: I’m over-looked at work, my colleagues don’t trust me, I lose confidence, I always get it wrong; but in another universe what might a mother on the Gaza strip let go with some psychological ease?

In my universe letting go of the past doesn’t happen all at once. It unfolds slowly with small insights and everyday shifts in perspective. I carry resentment and wish my childhood had been something else; zazen helps me acknowledge that the load is bearable and at the same time a figment of my mind and sometimes it helps me carry on with humour, honesty, and just enough irony to make the weight feel a little lighter.

Without warning recently, I found myself chanting Kanzeon but instead of using the familiar words:

kan ze on,  
na mu butsu  
yo butsu u in .....

I was chanting  
let it go  
let it go  
let it go.....

until I realised my mistake (was it a mistake?) when I stopped, I let go of this strange flight of words



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There is an enjoyable story about two monks who come upon a flowing stream on their walk, standing on the shore is a young woman uncertain how she might cross over the water. One of the monks picks her up and carries her across, puts her down and continues on his way. That evening the other monk unable to contain himself berates his companion, “Monks cannot touch a woman, it is forbidden”; to which the other monk replies, “I put her down on the opposite shore you have carried her all day”.

How unnecessary are so many of the burdensome loads we pile up in our arms, in our necks and always in our heads and carry all day. It’s easy to say that letting go is a spiritual and/or psychological process that requires relinquishing or lessening our attachment to outcomes, desires, and expectations and accepting what is. But as I have said it’s hard to let go huge fixations and tight aspects of your life all at once.

Take me as I am or let me go said Bob Dylan.

# THE FIELD

Mike Kelly

There can be no greater exhilaration nor grander ecstasy than frolicking in the field where the innate sacredness of life meets the knowing that none of the particulars really ever mattered.

That life exists - the very process of creation - is a miracle beyond the imagination of a mind. To understand creation is to see into the heart of things and realise that all things are of the heart.

From this place, each and every act, every expression, is meaningful and sacred simply because it is. Life is life and because it is life, it is love. And because it is love, it is worthy.

And yet, whatever arises shall also pass. Each experience will change as the seasons do and evolve as we have. Holding on will every time prove fruitless as we clutch for solidity in a flowing river. The passage of time has no equal and is yet conquered simply by simple folks who care not for nought but the now.

Right here. Right Now. See, that's the ticket, my friends. Enjoy the comings and goings with all of your heart though pay their seductive baying no heed. They are only coming to go. Remain firmly here, present to the miracles just waiting to astound you.

When you finally land yourself in this knowing; when you learn to bathe unfazed by temptation nor repulsion in the shimmering flow of creation, you might find yourself in the field an old poet named Rumi wrote of hundreds of years ago.  
A field beyond time where right and wrong have been long forgotten.

I'll meet you there. (and here we are)

--

*\* 'and here we are' replaces the last line of this spoken prose when being read at the end of retreats and other deep spiritual endeavours, offering a moment to sense our interbeing. Intuited and spoken for the first time at Kodoji's Spring Sesshin's Sharing Circle, 2025.*

# REDEMPTION - A POEM FOR THE LAST PERSON LEFT

Sophie Zaccone

*at the end of our time  
if you are the last one left on Earth  
all you would need to do is love it  
to redeem it all*

*all that has happened and will happen  
cry and love its horribleness*

*childcare paedophiles  
starving children on Instagram feeds  
bombs, lies, billionaires  
orange hitler*

*the Indian woman saving street children  
the brilliant red headed King Parrot  
who peers at me sitting zazen  
as waves crash softly behind  
and children sing, laugh and fight*

*horrifically revolting  
astonishingly beautiful  
suicidally mundane*

*Dave dreams of owning land to grow native  
plants  
to feed, heal and employ his people  
He wants to teach foster kids about culture*

*His dream saves all of it, forever*

*just love it and hold it how it is  
-let tears stream-  
redeem it with every second left  
knowing you can't save it  
knowing you don't need to  
yet in doing so you do*

*Love is all it needs  
just Love*

# THE DHARMA OF DIET: *Meat Through Emptiness*

Ryan O'Connor

## 1.

### THE PRECEPT OF NOT KILLING

*“I say that there are three instances in which meat should not be eaten: when it is seen, heard, or suspected that the living being has been slaughtered for the bhikkhu. I say that meat should not be eaten in these three instances. I say that there are three instances in which meat may be eaten: when it is not seen, not heard, and not suspected, that the living being has been slaughtered for the bhikkhu.” - Majjhima Nikāya 55 (Jīvaka Sutta)*

The first precept in Buddhism is to take up the way of not killing, this precept comes from the buddhas teaching to Jīvaka Komārabhacca, his physician. The story goes Jīvaka went to see Gotama troubled by news he had heard that Gotama was having animals slaughtered for him to eat, after Gotama had put Jīvaka’s mind at ease he then tells a story of a bhikkhu who practices with right intention, who lives on alms. The bhikkhu is one day invited by a local householder to share a meal, when he gets there the meal has meat in it, the bhikkhu eats the alms “without entanglement and not unwarily committed”. Gotama then asks Jīvaka “would that bhikkhu on such an occasion will his own affliction or another’s affliction or the affliction of both?” “No” answers Jīvaka. From this exchange it is clear the caveat that was carved out by Gotama regarding eating meat (it is also important to remember that this exchange happened some 2500 years ago, a time before the horrors of factory farming and when there wasn’t an abundance of alternative protein sources.)

Monks relied on alms runs. In these, they walked door to door with empty bowls, accepting whatever was offered, without desire, without aversion, and without choice. Gotama makes it clear that animals cannot be slaughtered “when it is seen, heard, or suspected that the living being has been slaughtered for the bhikkhu.” How does this apply in the modern world of supermarkets and factory farming? To not see or hear the slaughter of animals is done by design, slaughterhouses are deliberately put out of the way where people don’t have to see or hear them, and most people try their best to avoid ever thinking about them. Activists have gone to great lengths to show people the reality of slaughterhouses, not to shame people, but to allow people to be able to make an informed decision as to whether they want to support it. Being aware of this suffering is part of practicing the first precept in the modern world. To not see or hear the slaughter of the animals that end up in the supermarket comes down to deliberate design from the meat and dairy industry, and the deliberate avoidance from the consumer.

The second part of this is whether one can say that the meat in the supermarket was slaughtered for them. Meat in the supermarket exists because consumers purchase it, in this sense it was indeed slaughtered with us in mind. Unlike a monk on alms run, accepting whatever is put in their bowl without choice. To purchase meat in a supermarket, one must plan their meal, travel to the store, select a specific cut, and then cook and eat it. This seems difficult to reconcile with the buddhas intent. Some may respond by saying “as long as animals are killed humanely and treated with respect it’s not so bad.” Let’s take a closer look at what humane slaughter really means.

## 2. HUMANE SLAUGHTER

*“Some people may argue that if the animals are treated humanely prior to being slaughtered, this justifies their confinement and slaughter. Is it ethical to rob beings of their freedom but give them a comfortable prison and provide them with food until they become fat enough to be slaughtered?” - Sharon Gannon*

Humane slaughter is a term often used but not so often examined by those who use it. Merriam-Webster defines humane as “marked by compassion, sympathy, or consideration for humans or animals” and defines slaughter as “the act of killing.” How does one kill with compassion, sympathy and consideration? Humane slaughter is a term we use to feel better about our treatment of animals. The word humane makes us feel as though we are doing something compassionate and caring. The Cambridge Dictionary adds “especially those who are suffering” to its definition of humane; this gives the idea that it’s an act of mercy. None of this applies to the animals we eat. To see this more clearly, we can look at the expected life span of some animals commonly consumed in a Western diet.

### **COW:**

Natural – 15 to 20 years

Farm – 1.5 to 6 years depending on their purpose.

### **CHICKEN:**

Natural – 5 to 10 years

Farm – 1.4 months for broiler chickens and 1.5 years for egg laying hens, millions of male chicks are slaughtered less than a day old as the industry sees no use for them.

### **PIG:**

Natural – 15 to 20 years

Farm – 6 months to 1 year

I’m not sure what argument can be made that killing an animal within 2.5 percent of their natural life span for pigs, or a shocking 0.03 percent of their life for male chicks, is compassionate, sympathetic, or merciful. The common argument for why we do this is one of necessity—that we kill these animals within a fraction of their natural lifespans out of necessity for food. While this may well have been true for our ancestors and may still be true for many countries in the Global South, for everyone else this has been proven to be false, and many world-class athletes are vegans. All nutrients we need to survive and thrive can be attained from a plant-based diet, with supplementation for B12, and before one claims the need for supplementation as evidence that humans cannot sustain themselves on a plant-based diet: the B12 found in animal products today is derived from supplementation, as cobalt is required in soil for animals to synthesise B12. Due to soil degradation in animal agriculture, cobalt is often absent.

So far, the argument against humane slaughter I have given has assumed that animals are slaughtered with care and compassion, as if it were a grisly task that needs to be done. One must do it with care, but it may be helpful here to take a quick look at what humane slaughter

commonly looks like in reality. Cows are put into tight tunnels, one after the other, so they can't move backwards. If they do, they receive a strong electric shock and often verbal abuse by a slaughterhouse worker standing behind them. Once they get to the front of the line, they are stunned. This is usually done with a bolt gun. This is a gun that delivers a powerful metal rod to the forehead of an animal, penetrating the skull and inducing brain damage. Often, out of fear, the cow will move their head at the last minute, resulting in many painful wounds before finally being stunned. Once the animal is stunned, they then have their throat cut and are left to bleed out. Sometimes an animal isn't successfully stunned and has their throat sliced open while completely conscious, thrashing around on the slaughterhouse floor. Cows are then butchered to be neatly packaged and put on shelves. The fate of chickens and pigs is often worse, with pigs being gassed while screaming, and chickens much more regularly evading the electric stun bath, therefore having their throats cut while conscious. Egg-laying hens and dairy cows ultimately face the same slaughter process, only after a slightly longer life of exploitation. And while many may not see these moments, they exist, recognizing this is part of mindful practice.

There is also a very real human toll for slaughterhouse workers (SHWs) and the surrounding communities. Slaughterhouses often employ undocumented immigrants or people who have nowhere else to go, people who can't afford to complain about conditions and can be fired with impunity as work in slaughterhouses has been heavily linked with negative impacts on the mental health of workers. Research has shown that SHWs have significantly lower levels of psychological well-being when compared with other professions and have higher levels of depression (four times higher than the general population) and anxiety. SHWs have a higher propensity for aggression and sexual assault compared with the public. Research on the spillover effect into communities surrounding slaughterhouses has shown that "the number of slaughterhouse employees in a community is a significant predictor for total arrests, violent arrests, rape and other sex offenses."

None of this is compassionate or merciful. We use the term humane slaughter to hide the reality of what we are doing when we kill these animals, and that reality is killing. We are killing a sentient being within a fraction of their natural life span for our own taste preferences—or, to put it into Buddhist terminology, for our own desire.

### 3.

### DESIRE AND AVERSION

A plant-based diet has been approved and actively endorsed by many respected organisations and experts globally, from the World Health Organisation (WHO), the British National Health Service (NHS), the American Dietetic Association, the Johns Hopkins Center for a Liveable Future, and experts such as Dr. T. Colin Campbell, former senior science advisor to the American Institute for Cancer Research and currently sitting on the advisory board of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine; Kim A. Williams, MD, former president of the American College of Cardiology, who has said, "There are two kinds of cardiologists: vegans, and ones who haven't read the data." This is just a few of many organisations and experts who endorse a plant-based diet as being a healthier alternative to the standard western diet.

Many more organisations and experts endorse a plant-based diet from an environmental angle. The United Nations (UN) stated that a global shift toward plant-based diets is critical for reducing greenhouse emissions, biodiversity loss, and land use, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has highlighted that adopting plant-based diets can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions compared to a typical Western diet. Research from the University of Oxford in the UK combed through data from the UN and the WHO and showed that if a vegan

lifestyle was adopted globally, we could reduce emissions by 55 percent by 2050, also saving \$735US billion in health-related costs. Although further changes would be needed around renewable energy, we would be well on our way to holding global warming below 2 degrees Celsius.

A shift to plant-based diets would also reduce global agricultural land usage from 4 billion hectares to 1 billion hectares, it takes 50 to 100 times as much land to produce a gram of protein from beef or lamb compared with peas and tofu. This would leave 3 billion hectares of land that could be used for re-forestation, absorbing more CO2 and helping to combat biodiversity loss.

So why do we continue to support the slaughter of animals for the consumption of their flesh when time and again it has been linked to adverse health outcomes, both physical and mental, and also negative consequences for the climate? The true justification is underwhelming, it's our taste preferences, our desires, and our aversion to changing our behaviour. We tell ourselves we are eating meat out of necessity, for our health and survival, and we tell ourselves that we oppose animal cruelty. We recede into cognitive dissonance (delusion) when the topic of animal slaughter or factory farming is mentioned because, if we were to face the reality that we are causing so much harm for our own desire for a certain taste, for our own pleasure, it would be immediately clear that it's a non-defensible justification.

#### 4. EMPTINESS

This brings me to Śūnyatā, or emptiness, as it's commonly referred to in the West. Emptiness can also be referred to as dependent origination and explained as the nonexistence of any inherent self-nature. This can often be better explained with an example. Take a flower: what is a flower? The word "flower" is a designation we use to categorize all plants that form shapes on the end of stalks that we know as a flower shape. These are often bright in colour; they may have a scent and often bring us joy. But what is a flower really? A flower is a complex dance of an infinite many causes and conditions: it's the sun that shines to create photosynthesis, it's the rich soil, it's the rainfall carried vast distances in clouds, it's our very perception of this object as a flower, it's the joy they bring, it's the memory of the flower we gave to our first love, or the flower we put on the casket of someone we deeply cared about. This is the true nature of the flower: we ourselves are in the flower, and the flower is in us. Emptiness is what gives life its richness, and emptiness is the true gate of compassion, for in emptiness there is no room for any separation.

From emptiness, we can now look at what animal products are. A personal anecdote of mine: I had a product in my fridge that was labelled "Gourmet Deli Leg Ham." This was a lot of words to say pig flesh. What is "Gourmet Deli Leg Ham" through emptiness? It's the animal taken as a child from their mother and put into a small cage, where they will live out their short life in misery, having their tail cut off without anaesthetic to stop other pigs from biting it off due to frustration at being unable to turn around and move freely. It's the terror of the pig as they are led to a chamber where they will be lowered down into gas to scream and cry out until dead. It's the further degradation after their death as they are chopped into pieces and packaged before they arrive on the shelf and labelled "Gourmet Deli Leg Ham." And it's your hunger, your reaching for the fridge and putting it onto a sandwich; it's suffering all the way down. When one sees meat through emptiness, we can see that it is not just food, but a complex web of exploitation and suffering. To consume it mindlessly is to turn away from interdependence and ultimately, to turn away from our true nature.

## 5. PRACTICE

*“In every country in the world, killing humans is condemned. The Buddhist precept of non-killing extends even further; to include all living beings... We must look deeply. When we buy something or consume something, we may be participating in an act of killing. This precept reflects our determination not to kill, either directly or indirectly, and also to prevent others from killing.” -*  
**Thich Nhat Hanh**

To live a life as Buddhists involves careful examination of our actions and mindfulness of where desire and aversion are guiding us. We must look deeply at the food we consume, recognizing that our compassion extends beyond our species. Choosing a vegan lifestyle is not about purity, but about practice, it's a way to deepen compassion for all beings and bring the First Precept into the heart of our daily lives. The path we walk as Buddhists is often not the easiest, but it is a choice we make, a responsibility we shoulder when taking on our great vows. The many beings do not end at our species, and we must be careful that they do not end up on the end of our forks.





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