

THE PHOENIX RISING FROM THE ASHES

Reflections on life in lockdown

Three weeks ago, I evacuated with my sister Llysse and 90-year-old mother from our homes facing a dense tract of bush in Merimbula, to the last available room in a solid brick hotel set in acres of concrete and bitumen in the heart of town. Mum had only just come home after a long stint in hospital where she'd been receiving treatment for five broken ribs and a collapsed lung and we didn't want to take her to sleep on the floor of a jam-packed, noisy and chaotic evacuation centre. Unless you've seen the sky turn from burnt orange to blood red to pitch black at four o'clock in the afternoon, it would be impossible to imagine the fear that we felt that day.



They are calling them the 'forever fires' because raging infernos have been going for weeks now and with a long hot summer ahead of us, it seems like they have been raging and will continue to rage forever. As I write, the smoke is getting thicker and the sky is turning its familiar turmeric colour. I can hear but not see the helicopter whirring above Merimbula Lake as its dangling pouch scoops up water to dump on one of the massive fire fronts closing in on this remaining pocket of unburnt terrain. I know, with sickening dread that not far from here millions of native creatures are being burnt alive. We've seen blue sky maybe twice this year and I've had to borrow one of my sister's inhalers to use when I'm finding it hard to breathe. I wake up and cry, I cry before I go to sleep and during the day I burst into tears at the slightest trigger. I don't know if the pain in my chest is from smoke, a broken heart or an imminent cardiac arrest. 'You've got bushfire brain,' a neighbour said yesterday when I forgot what day it was.

It's not like we can curl up in a foetal position under the covers and pretend it's not happening. We have to stay glued to the TV news, social media and emergency and weather apps to know what is going on in case we have to drop everything and leave in a hurry. So, even if people aren't out fighting fires, rescuing burnt animals, picking through the charred remains of their homes or fleeing for their lives, they are constantly exposed to horror; constantly anxious and grieving. It's exhausting. To drive through mile after mile of blackened and lifeless landscape is to die inside. To swim in an eerily still grey ocean under a smoky grey sky silently raining down ash and burnt leaves is like living on another planet.

The Phoenix Arises

Katherine Boland's response to all of this trauma was to contact the council and put her hand up to do Guided Autobiography Sessions in the library, to help people to process the whole experience.

Through the writing, reading aloud and sharing, strong bonds can be forged within the group. The benefits are tremendous. Unfortunately, when it was ready to be launched, Covid-19 struck and it couldn't go ahead. Hopefully, it can begin in the near future. Katherine, Llysse and their mother are all well now and putting their lives back together.

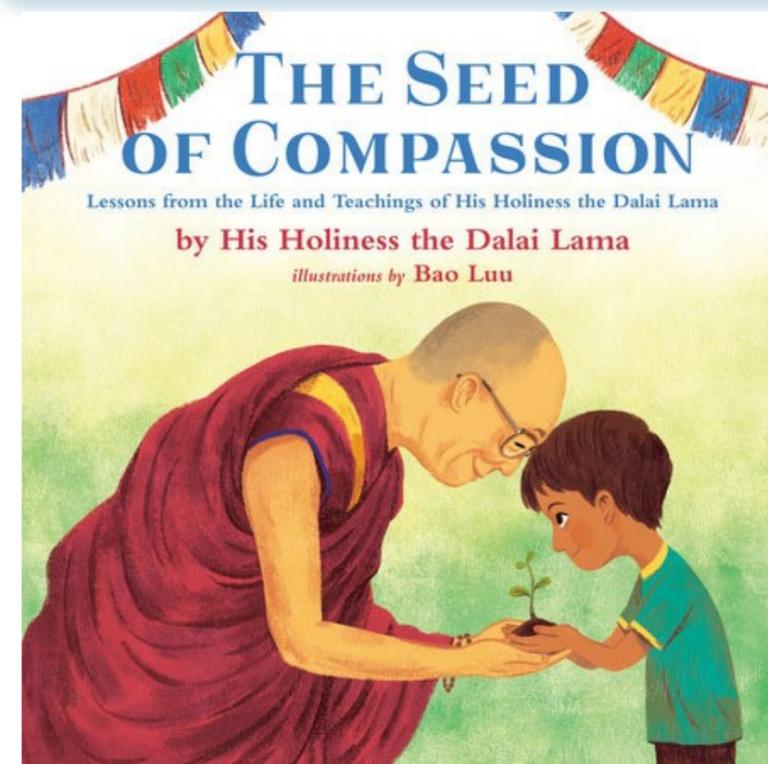
You are welcome to contact the Tara Institute newsletter editors **Allys Andrews and Sandra Kinread** at allys.andrews@gmail.com for issues relating to the newsletter.

Tara Institute news

If undelivered, please return to -
3 Mavis Avenue, East Brighton 3187



**HAPPY 85th BIRTHDAY to
HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA 6 JULY
and VENERABLE GESHE DOGA 13 JULY**



The Seed Of Compassion – Lessons from the Life and Teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama illustrations by Bao Luu

A children's book by H.H. Dalai Lama. For the first time ever the Dalai Lama addresses children directly, sharing lessons of peace and compassion, told through stories of his own childhood. With simple, powerful text, the Dalai Lama shares the universalist teachings of treating one another with compassion, which Bao Luu illustrates beautifully in vibrant colour. Available in the bookshop at T.I. **The bookshop is now open Wednesday and Saturday by appointment, email Pam.bookshop@tarainstitute.org.au to arrange an appointment.**

The Seed of Compassion ~ His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Excerpt of a conversation between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Pico Iyer on the theme 'The Seed of Compassion'.

He introduced His Holiness as someone who describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk, a man of peace and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for his consistent advocacy of non-violence.

"Welcome, and thank you for joining us," Pico began and asked His Holiness, "How have you been?"

"Check my face," His Holiness replied. "Listen to the strength of my voice. My regard for the thousands of years old Indian traditions of 'ahimsa' (non-violence) and 'karuna' (compassion) gives me both self-confidence and inner strength.

"How do you practise 'ahimsa' and 'karuna'? Is it something we can try?" Pico asked.

"Because of this pandemic, I've been asked not to meet people physically face to face, so I've had a holiday," His Holiness told him. "But I say my daily prayers and do four hours of meditation in the morning as usual. As soon as I wake up, I think about 'karuna', which is the method side of my practice. On the wisdom side, 'ahimsa' reflects 'pratityasamutpada' or dependent arising, which can also be expressed as 'shunyata', emptiness, free of assertions.

continued next page ...

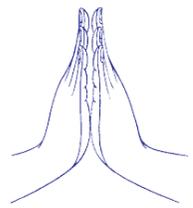
His Holiness continued from front page...

“Anger and jealousy, which are destructive emotions, are based on our having a strong sense of ‘I’. So, cultivating an understanding of selflessness reduces the hold destructive emotions have over us. Quantum physics makes a comparable observation that appearances differ from reality. The appearance is that things exist independently, but if we examine them deeply, they’re not like that. Destructive emotions are based on that kind of appearance. Understanding nothing exists as it appears reduces the influence negative emotions have over us.

“As I said, when I wake up, I ask myself, ‘Where is the self? Where is the ‘I’? Where is the Dalai Lama? When I can’t find it, I realise it is only a designation. This is what the Buddha’s explanation of selflessness (anatman) is about. And it’s very useful when it comes to tackling the negative emotions. These emotions are negative because they destroy our peace of mind and in that way damage our health.

Pico Iyer noted that His Holiness talks about educating the heart and asked what that entailed and how it was different from educating the mind.

“It can’t be done through prayer alone; we have to use our intelligence. Whether or not we’re healthy is related to having a more detailed acquaintance with our minds. We often think of our minds only in terms of sense consciousness, but we need to be better acquainted with our mental consciousness. We need to analyse the mind, to use our human wisdom. We need to examine which emotions are useful and which are harmful. We also need to examine the causes of our emotions. Ask yourself what gives rise to anger in you and what is the source of compassion. This is something to think about deeply. As a result, we’ll be able to enhance the causes of positive emotions and reduce the sources of those that are negative.



THANK YOU ADELE

Rave reviews for Big Love

Thank you Adele Hulse.

Everything about this book is Big Love —Lama Yeshe, your devotion to years of meticulously accurate research, the collection of photographs and your very readable style of writing.

Best of all it is wonderful to meet Lama Yeshe and walk with you through his extraordinary life.

Kimberly Salaj

Marie Cook

Reading it I feel like I am there. The hardships willingly endured by the Lamas to keep a spiritual tradition alive as well as themselves, has affected me deeply. I have such gratitude to these teachers and the original students who, against all the odds, started up Dharma centres all over the world. **I really feel like I am there when I’m reading it, it’s so alive.** Just amazing. I wish it was even longer. Thank you, Adele.

Sandra Kinread

This delightful book is very aptly named. Not only is it absolutely HUGE, you can literally feel the love emanating from each page. I never met Lama Yeshe and have always had a somewhat wistful feeling of having missed out on the hippie scene and those early days with the Lamas.

The experience of reading this book makes you feel like you are actually there. Meticulously researched and with teachings of Lama Yeshe interspersed throughout this is very much a Dharma book while at the same time a compelling and entertaining read.

Ingrid Uhlherr

If you would like to order a copy of *Big Love* (\$148.50 members / \$165 non-members), please contact Pam in the bookshop (bookshop@tarainstitute.org.au).

HOW TO BE OF BENEFIT TO SOMEBODY WHO IS DYING
Venerable Geshe Doga



Excerpt of a Talk given to the T.I. Healing Program Volunteers July 1994

There are people who have a deadly disease or the strong belief that they will die at any moment. This person’s mind is very restless and they feel nothing is helping. I believe in this case it is important to give advice something that is suited to that person’s need. For this you must know their background. Whatever the belief may be, we need to find out whether the person still feels strongly about the religion, whether it is depending on Jesus Christ or God or whatever. If the person still has that faith, this is very useful because the situation of the person is such that no external things can help reduce the suffering. Their fear and restlessness is because there is nothing for their mind to turn to for help. **If the person can reinforce the connection with their religious belief, and try to develop their faith – this can help to pacify and calm the mind.** Even though everything has so far been of no help to them, if they feel there is still something, God or Christ or whatever – they can put their faith in that, and their mind becomes calm. Whether they live or die there is something they can trust, something that will not deceive them. Even if the person dies very soon, the process can be peaceful and calm because of the faith they have maintained in their mind. **When you are close to death it is not good if the mind is still attached to friends, family, possessions.** With such attachment you have a sense of loss, a fear that you are losing these things, leaving them behind. As a result there is much suffering in the mind. You need something to turn to you can trust. For example, if you are facing a very difficult situation and among all the people around you can’t see a friend you can wholeheartedly trust, you will be very sad and unhappy. But if suddenly an old friend arrives, the moment you see their eyes you feel as though the problem is reduced – you immediately feel more relaxed. In a similar way, a person close to dying needs something to turn to that they can trust. **At such a time if the mind can think of something like a religious practice – a holy object, an ultimate refuge, an ultimate protection – if you can think of that, then, depending on the depth of your faith, there is something your mind can rest on.** If you have no faith, it is difficult to think of the object, but with good faith your mind rests easily. That is the most important thing: such an object helps the mind to die more peacefully. So how much you can help depends on your knowledge of the person. Whatever advice or support you can give must suit the need of the person. You might think it is good advice but for a certain person some advice might generate anger in the mind; that is not beneficial. To a large extent it is up to the person what they really want.

QUIET ACHIEVER ~ Pat Geary



I first came to Tara like so many do by attending the Monday night teachings where solutions to the complications of life began to come to mind. After some weeks, I realised that this was a group that I was attracted to join and became a full member twenty-three years ago. Soon realising that Tara needed practical support from members to help, I first volunteered to join the team collating and preparing the newsletter for posting out to members long before it was available online. Making friends and learning about TI gave me an added sense of involvement.

Over the years there have been many opportunities to practise generosity giving time preparing lunch before pujas in the kitchen, annual cleaning of the centre and helping at fundraising events, etc. Another task I enjoyed was setting up for the monthly Tara or Guru Pujas with offerings. I found it was a very beautiful and good practice of mindfulness setting up an altar.

In 2002, I joined the Healing Group as a volunteer supporter, a weekly commitment that I did until 2017 with a break to meet grandchild duties. Working with and meeting so many inspirational people, I felt that I gained far more than the time given. I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Healing Group making my Dharma practice more meaningful and so joyful.

Volunteering for a range of simple tasks to assist Tara Institute or contributing some of one’s life skills enhances friendships and the experience of belonging to Tara.

The situation for religious gatherings in Victoria is rapidly changing, we will update the webpage when further information is at hand. Please visit our website at www.tarainstitute.org.au. We will email all members and friends when we have a definite opening date. If you would like to sign up or confirm your subscription to the mailing list, please email admin@tarainstitute.org.au.

Auspicious days in July are calculated according to the lunar eclipse. On these days the benefits of actions are greatly multiplied, so are especially good for spiritual practice.			
Sunday 5	Tibetan 15	Full Moon Lunar eclipse	Precepts
Monday 6	Tibetan 16	Birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama	Guru Puja
Wednesday 15	Tibetan 25	Tsog Day	Precepts
Monday 20	Tibetan 30	New Moon	Precepts
Friday 24	Tibetan 4	Lord Buddha’s first teaching	
Tuesday 28	Tibetan 8	Tara Day	Tara Puja
Wednesday 29	Tibetan 10	Tsog Day	Guru Puja