

Transitions

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Chapter 0: Introduction

Introduction

Today you are awake, fully engaged with a world in a state of transition. All seems to be imbalanced. Uncertainty is running high. This has become a time of extremes rather than moderation. The number of those on the sidelines appear to be dwindling. No longer can one afford to be blind to the concerning trends -- the depletion of resources, the fraying of community bonds beyond recognition, and the striking back of the environment against humankind's abuse.

Each of us has to find our own way to right ourselves continuously. This offering is a new set of stories focusing on this effort against the backdrop of *anicca*. (The Buddhist term for impermanence.) The Buddha's last words were along these lines: "The world is always in transition and things do not last long. It is up to you to figure how to deal with these unfolding events. Work hard to become self-reliant and bring about your own awakening." This is something that many of us have taken to heart in these interesting times.

Good luck in your practice. Strive on with diligence. If you meet another kindred spirit on this path, then treasure the encounter. Finally, always make the time to find joy and to be at peace in a good book.

HG

Second Edition

Some months have passed and the world continues to be a verbal and physical battleground. Therefore, now more than ever, a second edition is in order. Two *Transitions* story collections are planned. This book, *Transitions 1* contains stories inspired by the teachings of the oldest school of Buddhism – Theravada. This new edition includes extensive rewrites and a new story called *My Dinner with Ananda*. The first draft of the story was written while waiting for a train at Penn Station in New York City. *Transitions 2* will be a short story collection based on the Mahayana tradition. (Such as Zen, Pure Land, Tibetan, etc.)

Those seeking to learn more about the teachings of the Theravada Path can visit these resources:

<http://en.dhammadana.org/> -- Overview on meditation and Theravada teachings. Available in multiple languages.

<http://www.dharma.org/resources> – The Insight Meditation Society's talks, reading suggestions, and more.

<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/> -- A comprehensive portal of Theravada resources.

Theravada has a rich tradition of teachers and schools. A good book to start with is *Living Dharma*

<http://www.shambhala.com/living-dharma-2654.html>. While reading about the Dharma can be helpful, active investigation through meditation and daily practice is more likely to bring about fruitful results. Good luck with all your efforts.

On the writing approach

This work follows a different methodology. Much of it just happened. At the time of writing, there was no goal in mind. No label was applied to the output. I did not have thoughts such as “This is going to be a story. Or this story will be part of a collection of stories.” Three of the works were written on the road in pen. All versions of the stories were kept. Each piece was retained in its own file. It was only assembled into a book at the very end.

The stories are more experimental than usual. Subject and object meld together (In a nod to Alain Robbe-Grillet). Endings are unclear. Topics are unusual. It was a unique and meaningful experience to go through.

Chapter 1: Gain and Loss

[Our lives are consumed by running towards or fleeing away from the eight worldly winds mentioned in the Buddhist texts. These are presented as four pairs: pleasure/pain, fame/disgrace, praise/blame, and gain/loss. Once we do not attach to these emotionally starving situations, then our lives become freer and happier. A translation of the Buddhist text on this topic can be found at <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/an/an08/an08.006.tan.html>.]

After all of these many years, I can still remember the pain caused by that forgotten gap in time. The moment before and after the event are quite clear. An attractive stranger stopped me on a busy street. They asked me if I wished to be happy. I nodded yes. Then, all became blank.

After that, my body was rudely blanketed by a harsh coldness. There was an overwhelming numbness and shock. I had held it and it was gone forever. The secret to a life of contentment was firmly in my hands. And just like that, it was abruptly pried away. I felt empty and hollow. There was a gnawing feeling in the back of my mind that I knew where this treasure of knowledge resided. However, a growing doubt said not to trust that feeling.

My life was consumed with finding the answer. I racked my brain recalling the whole sequence of actions until at the end I no longer knew what was true and what was the pleasant fiction that my mind created to comfort me.

Although I knew my desired outcome, things were unclear and I was stumped on how to make it happen. So, I mulled it over thinking and thinking. I walked around hoping for any clue, no matter how tenuous, to be revealed. Then I thought and walked even more.

I gave up having any semblance of a normal life. I traveled aimlessly with the barest semblance of any hope. The years passed and I grew older. Any faith in my quest was completely eroded. My emotional and mental wellbeing was seriously threatened. My legs gave out at last and I was unable to move any further. Paralyzed by an unseen power, I cried to the universe to ease my helplessness. Motionless, there was nothing else to do.

Finally, have exhausted all options, I simply gave up. Then at that moment, what happened that day became clear.

An attractive and mysterious stranger had caught wind of my presence and they had stopped me.

They said, "Do you wish to find true happiness?"

Hungrily, I replied "Yes."

They looked intently in my face, smiled and said simply. “No, now is not the time for you to know the answer. Without another word, they moved down the street not looking back.

I realized now that I was full of disbelief and shocked in not getting what I wanted. In reaction, my mind compensated and consoled me that it had received an answer when it had clearly not.

Now much older after it happened, I realized that I had been given an answer that day. After some reflection, I came upon these truths:

- 1. Everything is constantly changing.*
- 2. What makes us happy today may not necessarily make us happy tomorrow.*
- 3. So, cherish those rare moments of true happiness that we receive rather than seeking something that may never happen.*

I am grateful that it did not take my whole life until I understood what I truly needed and was actually seeking. Frozen in fear and frustration no more, I am bathed with light of satisfaction from the many joys and many sorrows that each day brings. That alone is sufficient for me, no longer seeking other than what is so close by.

Chapter 2: The Device

[This was written after hearing a talk by Alain Robbe-Grillet on the blurring the subject and object. As keeping with this style of writing, the true nature of the device is not revealed.]

I was told that machines were something to help us, free up our time, and make things more comfortable. That is to help get us from here to there, to cook our food, to keep us warm or cool, to serve as a repository for our

literature/films, and much more. Yet, I was not given guidance about their dark side.

One day, a Device arrived at my lodging. My hopes were so high given the strong product ratings and incredible functionality. All started well at first as the Device exceeded my every need. It was fast and I was elated with having such a helpful tool. This continued for some time.

Then one day, I noticed that the Device was entering its Middle Age. It increasingly struggled to do its job and mechanically wheezed its way through each task. I became more frustrated and tried to return it to the store. They said that it had a limited life and was working as well as expected. They told me a faster and more reliable model would be out later in the year. Perhaps I could come back then and they may give me some sort of discount. I fumed and was resigned to an increasingly higher probability of Device instability and eventual failure. I became grateful for those rare days when things worked as expected.

Finally, the inevitable end of days came to the Device. It sputtered, irregularly flashed colors, and more often shutdown than stayed happily in operation. No longer angry at the poor excuse of a tool, instead I felt pity. After all, it was just following the whim of its creators. It felt as if I was watching a long-term family member slowly go through their last moments on this planet. The day came and the Device was now cold and silent. I honored my lost companion with a burial by the flowing waters. I was heartbroken and inconsolable. Then time came to decide what to do next. Do I undertake the drudgery that the Device thanklessly performed or purchase an updated successor? Eventually realizing there was not much choice, I once again was sucked into another purchase and yet

again and again watched my former reliable Devices have its usefulness gradually disappear.

“Here is a song for long lost friends.

We worked together

until your usefulness ended.

Rest away, Rest away my former mechanical companions

You were used to the limit. You were loved.

Tragically, you are now broken and quiet.

And I tearfully say goodbye one last time”

Chapter 3: Protest

[This was written in Santa Clara, California on a steno pad using a pen. The original title was “Back against the Wall.” However, the protest could be anything. Because every day, we resist actively what a situation asks of us.]

I do not know when it began. Perhaps I read about some Buddhist practitioner that meditated for years staring at a dark wall. Or I broke up with another potential mate disappointed in me or me in them. Perhaps, I just wanted a way to proclaim a loud “I am not playing this game anymore. Forget you.”

Once it started, it gathered its own power, aggravating the world. I did it as much as possible in restaurants, airports, streets, work, other people’s homes, and libraries. A visible but a silent reminder that someone was obviously ignoring their apparent self-importance.

A woman screamed at me, “What is your problem?” Men thought I was insensitive. Children thought it was strange. Only one man got it, “Ah, my friend. I see you wish to be not in the world. This is the closest way that you can achieve your goal. Congratulations.”

Spurred on by his words, I continued demonstrating wherever I could. It felt good to stick it to the cosmos. I did not wish to play any expected role or meet anyone’s expectations.

Then one day of doing this, I felt a small hand tap me and a warm voice saying, “You don’t have to ignore the world any more. You have taught it what you wanted to. Celebrate your triumph. Still for sanity’s sake, do not dwell in an emotional rut. Do you know what your effort even means anymore or what you want to achieve?”

I should have been angry and offer a nasty retort. However, she was right. This game had grown tiring. Curious, I turned to face my speaker. I saw a pair of calm eyes, a steady gaze showing patience. There was no anger, no hate, and no anxiety. It was like nothing that I had ever seen before.

“You can call me Friend Claire. I am part of an organization that quietly tries to balance the world by helping adjust those needing our assistance. You are an unusual case. I have watched you from nearby. Most of the time was trying to figure you out. Why were you shunning yourself from the world? Were you an introvert and there was a good deal of fear? No, I quickly observed you had no problems interacting with people when you wanted to. Was it from a sense of feeling superior to others? Again, I observed that you treated others with respect even if they

did not like your action. And time after time, I would form hypotheses on what was bothering and motivating you. Finally, I decided it was partially random and some sort of vague protest. It made you feel good and useful against a world that you were seeing as increasingly lost in its way.”

“But the world has not gone astray. It is just transitioning to something else. Just like a child growing into an adult, there will be times of beauty, love, and forgiveness. And you are missing all of it.”

I listened and what she said made sense. Yet, if I accepted her advice, what would I do next? I looked at her with questioning eyes. She confidentially and confidently spoke.

“For you, it’s very simple. Do not avoid the world. Embrace It! Do not work hard to shut off the world. Work harder to fight for it. Stop seeing the planet as one collection of things to ignore. Listen to each story that you hear and the emotions and motivations behind them. Forget yourself and help others.”

I snapped, “But I cannot forget myself. It is always in my face. My lustful thoughts about some woman, the constant desire to eat, the ongoing drive to buy something, the numbing fear about tomorrow, the terrible anxiety about today, and tortuous pain about the past.”

My watcher continued, “Do you wish to be more in control of those feelings?” I nodded yes.

She caringly spoke, “Forget yourself and help others. Time will be more precious and important. By helping others, you will learn more about yourself. You have tried exclusion without success. Now accept a path of inclusion

and see what it brings. Just observe. No judging. And just help.”

I agreed to try it for a year. I watched the world around me. There was so much going on. There was a man looking sad. Concerned, I went up to him and asked what was wrong. And I listened and listened some more. I had no suggestions or judgment. I gave him all of the time he wanted. At the end, he seemed happy releasing all of those feelings out of him and thanked me. I am not sure for what. Thankfully, I felt a little better about myself.

After that, I continued to help others as the need arose. Actually, I just listened. Over time, I became more patient and trusted. One day I met the woman that said, “What was my problem?” during my time exiting myself from the world but still being a part of it.

“I was so mad when I saw you. You were just there saying, “I don’t want this anymore. Whatever you have is meaningless.” I went back to my room angry and not sure what to do next. I just thought about it. Then, I realized the world is what it is. I cannot change that. However, I can adjust my feelings to it. So, that’s what I did. Afterwards, I felt lighter and things look brighter. I am glad that I had a chance finally to meet and talk with you again. God bless you on your journey. “

We parted and this experience of forgetting myself became the operational mode for the rest of my life until something better comes along. Still whatever it is, it will not involve hiding myself from the world again.

Chapter 4: Hungry Ghost

[If walking the streets of Asia, you may see some unusual rituals. Stores are closed for a holiday. The front row of chairs are unoccupied at a performance. Or food being left outside a house. Many of these are the tributes to the unhappy and unfortunate creatures called by many hungry ghosts. These creatures are traditionally drawn with small necks and large heads. They are doomed to roam the earth and their own realm. This is due to past life of evil and greedy actions. However, hungry ghosts are also found living all around us. This is a tale about such a creature.]

I do not know when I started to go down this slippery slope of being a slave eternally to my senses. Life began well. I found out early in life that I enjoyed tormenting and taunting life's weaker creatures. Oh, the delight unleashing the mental catalog of petty suffering and tortures that I could inflict on all that I met on my journeys.

Then one day, an incessant craving for banana ice cream seized me. This insatiable demand commanded my life. Nothing else was important. I started to work at the supermarket so I was closer to purchasing this wonderful dessert. The only way that I kept working was by knowing at the end of my part-time job that I would have more than enough to pay for my growing refrigerator and frozen dairy bills.

Part of me started to watch myself and was disgusted increasingly with what I was seeing. Then one day I decided to change my life. I made a simple vow. To buy one less box a day and not eat any of these delights for thirty minutes. At the start, it was pure torture. I had these massive cravings screaming at me to be satisfied. All I had to do was eat just one bar. It seemed so simple and life would be good. It was such a modest demand. Just then, a quieter saner voice took hold and said calmly,

“Remember your vow.” At the end of thirty minutes, I felt like a real hero for having won over my mental overseers. From that point onward, I made steady progress with a few setbacks. Then I reached that amazing day when I could pass by the freezers mentally unscathed.

After that, I was much nicer than I was mean. I started to help others being controlled by their cravings. It is hard work but if I can save one poor soul drowning in their senses, then my descent into mental captivity was well worth it. Now, when I hear my mind demanding something or other that is bad for me, I run, not walk away. Because it is too easy to get trapped into the alternative.

Chapter 5: Transient

*[This is the first story written in this collection. It was completed while on vacation using a pen and steno pad. A recent reading of *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Nyanaponika Thera inspired its creation. That book is about the Satipatthana Sutta, which teaches us how to know, refine, and liberate our minds just by monitoring our breath, emotions, mental states, and more. The unusual approach of a one-sided interview with each paragraph starting with a question was used.]*

Our lives are nothing but a series of fleeting moments. Born out of the physical embrace of two beings that will likely not feel the same about each other afterwards. In some cases, they may never see each other ever again. We arrive into the world without choosing our circumstances. After creation, we move between parents and stepparents, states and countries, jobs and relationships. It is all transition after seemingly endless transition.

You want to interview me? Sure, I have a few minutes.

You asked what is my name? Does it so matter? It has lost its importance to me very long ago.

It is just a tag, a convenience to label a body, to classify a personality. Nothing more.

Where do I live? Well, as long as I can remember, I have been a transient. I am always on the go. The borders of the world are porous to me. I don't worry about the details about sleeping and eating. Opportunities arise and things just happen to work out. There are those that steal and then pay the consequences for an act that took seconds. If I can help it, I try to avoid society as much as I can. It is the shadows and the fringes that remain my home. The bright lights and the crowds are to be avoided at all costs.

What are my belongings? Well to move quickly, I travel light. So all I own are a week's worth of clothes, a well-worn map, an address book that I have ignored for some time, a notebook, and a pen. However, I do not keep a journal. From time to time, I write down a thought or two that strikes me as interesting.

What was the most interesting moment on the road so far? Well there have been many. Yet, I will tell you of one that stayed with me. During that time, I was roaming though the South. *Somehow*, I ended up near the coast. The heat was real oppressive that week and it was the height of the vacation season. That is a funny idea. People needing to take a vacation. The terms tourism, vacation, holiday, etc. have been alien to me for some time. For a very short period of my life, I had the semblance of the so-called normal life. This included a steady job, an apartment, and fine prospects. Then after one Friday ending the workweek, I had a realization. Continuing this life was shallow and

would lead me to nowhere. I would always feel incomplete and waiting for something to happen before I felt satisfied. It was just participating in a hollow dream where I just am grabbing on to anything that I thought would make me happy. As a result, I took a few things and just started walking. I kept on moving. Living in areas abandoned and forgotten by humankind.

Where was I going with this? You have to be patient with me. I don't often talk much to people so I may not be able to express myself without meandering from time to time. So, I was on the coast down South during a hot summer period. The nice thing is even on popular beaches, there are always places to hide. In this case, too many hotels were built and went out of business. Or, maybe the owner went bankrupt from being financially reckless. Later these vacation palaces were abandoned. Thankfully, I spent my evenings in one of these all but forgotten hotels. I would stop there from time to time.

So what happened there? I am getting there, youngster. As the moon arose, I was surprised to see some other transients stop by. We had never met before. The apparent leader, an old man with a healthy-sized beard warmly greeted me. "Welcome friend. Like you, we are just passing through. I am called Pilgrim. Along the way, I met Seeker and Trekman. To make the journey bearable, we decided to travel together. Who might you be?"

So what name did I give? Well I responded with the following. "Welcome all. It is good sometimes to share time with other nomads. Having a name is not important to me. So just call me Nameless." Pilgrim nodded and said, "Fine, Nameless it shall be. We have all taken various difficult and twisting roadways to get here."

Then what happened after that? I paused and thought about what took place. “We talked for many hours. It was a rare chance to interact with another. In turn, each of us disclosed what life was like before being on the road. Then we told about the series of events that made us transients. And the endless wandering afterwards. Then we all agreed it was time to sleep.

So why is this story so interesting? Well it is what follows next. Seeker spoke the following: “Before we drift in our temporary home of dreams and nightmares, we will contemplate on the wonders of the Universe, using our own life as input. “

You are asking how did we do that? Seeker responded as he had done many times before.” Pretty simple actually. Amazingly, we can do it anytime and anywhere. Just watch your breath inhale or exhale, your chest rise and fall, and your thoughts or emotions be born and then die. These sensations are like each of our lives whether on the road or not. We do this for twenty minutes. I still have a watch that works.” Then, we all did that together and individually. It was a powerful yet simple succession of moments. Some thoughts and feelings stayed longer than others did but eventually they all passed. “Time,” Seeker spoke, “It has been twenty minutes.” It felt like an eternity went by. We said our goodnights. Then the next day, we all went our separate ways.

What did I think about the exercise? It was an eye-opener just sitting and watching my breath. I see the similarity of breathing to my life. Things always changing, never permanent. And I started to think about my past for the first time in a long while. Anger, regret, jealousy, lust, anxiety, and fear. All these flew by me. Like a movie. However this

time, I didn't get attached to any of their stories. Focusing on my breath, they rose and disappeared. I was starting to feel more relaxed when...

Do I still practice watching my breath? Yes good friend every night before retiring. I found a discarded watch although scratched that was still working well. Just before I lose all consciousness, I practice the "breath game." Along the way, I taught others as well. Soon among the transient, I was known as Breath Man, which some may see as a step up from Nameless. Doing this made days seem more important.

Did I ever see Seeker and his crowd again? No. Still, I am grateful for the gift he gave me. Time for us to part. What you do with this information is up to you. Maybe I'll find you doing "the breath game" somewhere along the way."

Chapter 6: My Dinner with Ananda

[One interesting icebreaker question sometimes given is "If you could have dinner with three people, living or dead, which three people would you choose? One of my selections would be Ananda for the reasons given in the story. What he might actually say if he was living today is unknown. However, I hope that he would include some of the talking points listed below. There are many links online to the Dhammapada (Dharmapada). One translation can be found at

<http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/dhp.intro.than.html>]

It has been over 2000 years since the Buddha's first cousin and last attendant graced the earth with his presence. Sometimes, fate allows you to experience a true blast from the past. Over ten thousand people entered a contest to have

dinner with a holographic recreation of one of their favorite historical figures. It was sheer luck that I won. I had picked Ananda as my dinner date. He had always appealed to me. There were some probing questions that I wanted eagerly to ask him.

I went into the holographic room to await for his arrival. He appeared on time, looked splendid in his orange robe, was incredibly handsome, and warmly greeted me. He was everything that I expected –compassionate, wise, and formal. The Buddha himself mentioned Ananda’s good characteristics of being loyal, having a great memory, and retaining an excellent understanding of the teaching. This was in no doubt in part due to hearing nearly all of the Buddha’s instruction in person. Those sessions that he did not attend, the Buddha recited to him. He was also encouraged to ask the Buddha questions for the subject areas that he did not comprehend. I sensed that Ananda (whose name means Blissful) may also a good sense of humor. We sat down and began to sup.

So, I started asking him how he was doing. “Well, I am here doing and being. Also, I am hearing, sensing, listening, perceiving, thinking, and feeling. All that we intake from these senses shows us that our surroundings and our being are constantly and ever changing. “

He continued, in your time the scientists will talk about chemical and physical reactions to the brain. Still, they all result in the same thing. Grasping too little or too much to an object whether mental or physical can cause some suffering of various degrees.

He ate his salad with great relish. “This is quite good. I enjoy eating greens.”

As I ate my chicken sandwich, I asked him some questions:

“So what really happened behind the scenes to convince the Buddha to allow women to become nuns?”

“Let us briefly meditate before I answer,” he spoke. We sat in silence for a short time.

Then he started, “That happened during an interesting year; the Tathagata’s (One of the many names for the Buddha.) father had died. And his aunt and also the woman that had raised him (after his mother died), Maha Pajapati Gotami, wanted to end her years as a nun. It seemed like such a simple request. Persistent, she asked the Buddha one, two, three times for this wish. He turned it down politely for various reasons. Then he traveled on to the next city. “

“But Gotami was a tough old lady. In fact, Stubbornness ran deep in the whole family. She was determined to do this. Undeterred, she cut her hair, dressed in the garments of a monk, and walked the many miles to ask the Buddha a fourth time. Once they found out what she was doing, other women decided to join her to become nuns as well. There was no quit in Gotami. Unfortunately, when she reached the Buddha’s presence, she was exhausted and fatigued. I felt compassion for this great woman. I asked her why she was sobbing and she explained what happened. I promised to be her advocate. Confidently, I asked the Buddha about her request and was politely rebuffed. Still, I did not give up and asked some additional times. Again, it was the same response.”

“I knew that we were coming from similar intentions with our arguments. We both were motivated to bring about the end of suffering and awakening for both men and women. Firmly, I decided to try a different tack. I first asked if

women were capable of going through the various stages of becoming Arahants (enlightened beings). He said yes, this was the case. Then I kind of ‘tricked’ him and inquired, if this was true, then would it be good for their welfare if women could become nuns? He assented at last. However, Gotami had to agree to follow eight rules, which she happily concurred. “

“Still, in reality, can you imagine anyone really tricking the Buddha? (No way.) “

“Afterwards, women could become ordained as nuns or Bhikkhuni. This was very unusual for the time. However, there are those in your age that object to the status of nuns as compared to monks. Also, there are others that want women to be ordained as monks. I will not discuss these issues. Instead, I will wish that any being working for their personal liberation as a monk or nun be free from suffering due to their efforts.”

I also wanted to hear what it was like being in the Buddha’s close company for so many years. He smiled.

“He had gone through multiple attendants until I was selected. It was a joy and honor to serve him. I got to see firsthand how he selflessly and tirelessly tried to educate all earthly and heavenly beings in his location. There were so many different questions from those from many dissimilar walks of life. Sometimes he sought them out. Other times, they went to great lengths to find and query them. Due to my memory retention capabilities, I was able to keep track of these many inquiries so I could recall them orally at the First Buddhist Council held after the Buddha’s death. Still, it was a good deal of mindful speech to retain.”

I am glad that he brought up the First Buddhist Council because Ananda almost did get to attend. To join the council, you had to be an Arahant. Sadly, Ananda had not reached enlightenment by the day before the Council. So, I asked, was that not a lot of pressure to become awake? Incredibly, he had only one day to make it happen.

Ananda calmly stated, "Watching over my cousin's needs as attendant took all of my time. So, there were only a few precious moments to practice. My lack of knowledge sometimes resulted in unskillful behavior. For example, I was the only one present that shed tears for the Blessed One's passing. Still before he reached Nibanna (Nirvana), he encouraged me to practice and I would reach my desired goal soon."

"That was a most difficult time. I tried very hard and was unable to reach Arahantship. The morning of the Council, I gave up trying to awake. Maybe I would attempt it sometime later. As a result, I accepted that I was not going to attend the Council. At that moment, a wonderful thing happened. As my head descended to my bed and reached the pillow, I was illuminated as an Arahant. Thus, I was able to attend. So, I believe that anyone can awake with the proper attention to the true nature of their mind and senses. "

I then asked him the difficulty of having a brother like Devadatta that caused personal harm to the Buddha and performed evil deeds. "It is hard to have someone close to you that performs unwholesome acts. However, I am grateful before his death, he too swore to follow the path of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Because of that last intention, after a long period of suffering, he too became an enlightened being. This means that there is hope for all

those that follow this path.” He reassuringly said, “I cannot give you a ready answer on what will work for you. Still, keep pushing yourself and when you are about to give up – let go and watch what happens.”

I asked him for advice on how to find peace in this troubled world given his extensive knowledge of the Dharma. “The path of serving and having compassion balanced by a sense of wisdom will never steer you wrong. Things are always changing and impermanent so trying to hold on to them will result in suffering. This includes whatever your mind, feelings, and senses experience. To counter the grasp of your mind and body, practice, practice, practice. Meditate when you can, monitor your speech and actions, and seek good Dharma companions in your life. Greet each situation with an open heart and an inquiring mind. From there, all good will follow. Always try to do good and avoid evil to have a good karmic outcome. I could go on but those are the essentials”

The meal was long over and he indicated that he was to slated to return to the holographic world. Before he left, he gave me a signed copy of the Dhammapada that would last somehow even after I left the holographic chamber. I am not sure how something real can be passed to a virtual place. I have treasured this book to this day and have passed it on to the daughters that I have borne so they too can have an opportunity to find balance in in a changing world.

Chapter 7: Offering (Olivia Plymouth Series)

[This Qi Gong inspired prayer appears in two of the Olivia Plymouth books. It appears to be the perfect way to the end the book.]

Gratitude to the universe.

Gratitude in every breath.

Peace to All.

About the Author

Hallett German is a fiction and technical subject author on various aspects of IT. His works of fiction cross multiple genres including children, young adult, dysfunctional corporate mysteries/fantasies, historical fiction, and steampunk. His books offer a unique and original ride into other worlds and lives. His books can be found at <http://hallettgermanfiction.ml> and <https://sites.google.com/site/hallettgermanfiction/>