



beginning to see

a collection of epigrams
about the problem
of living

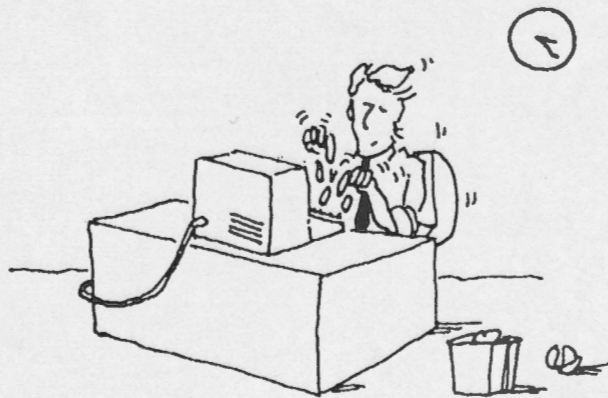
and the freedom to be
gained through the
buddha's insight
meditation

by a. sujata

much suffering
comes into the
life of one who tries
to be anywhere but
here in the present
moment



are you content with
where you are right now?



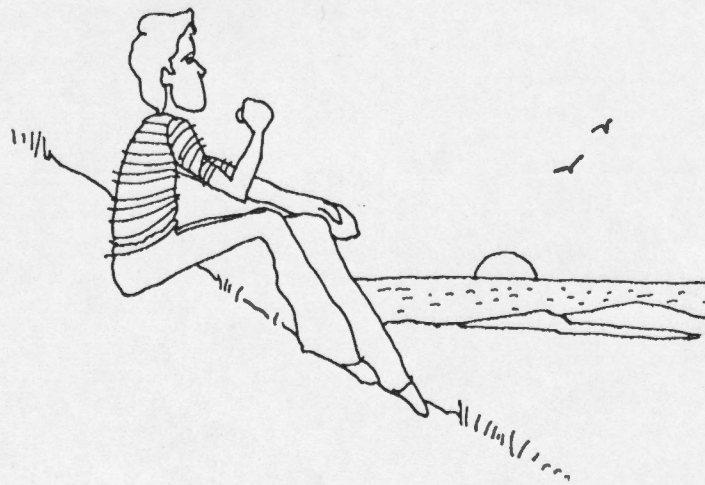
because "right nows" are
all you have

there is nothing in
this life that we can
have for very long

things and people come...

then leave us...

and we are left sad and
aching because of
our attachment



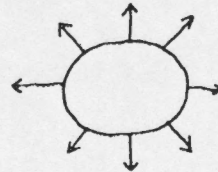
because we are only
accepting of pleasure
in our lives...

an immense
amount of
fear is created
as we spend
our lives
dodging pain

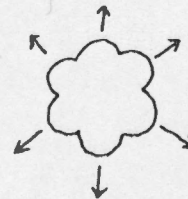
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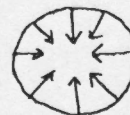
the world continually
demands that we
direct our attention
outside
ourselves



meditation teaches
us to revolt

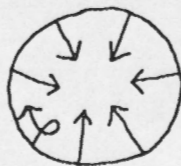


and turn that
awareness toward
our neglected
dimly-lit
insides...



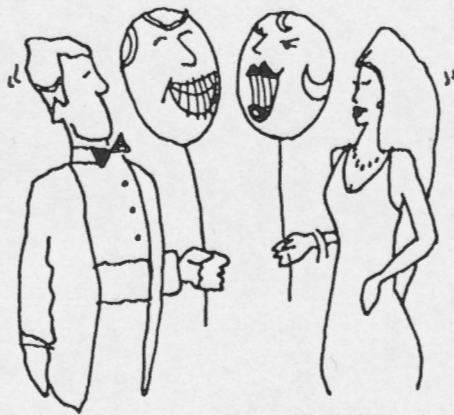
painful feelings* in the
mind indicate wrong
attitudes about life

a meditation retreat
can show us what we're
doing wrong



* jealousy, envy, hatred
loneliness, frustration,
depression

we live our
lives fearfully



to such an extent
that we live dishonestly

there is dishonesty
in any mind

which demands
that reality
occur in a

specific way

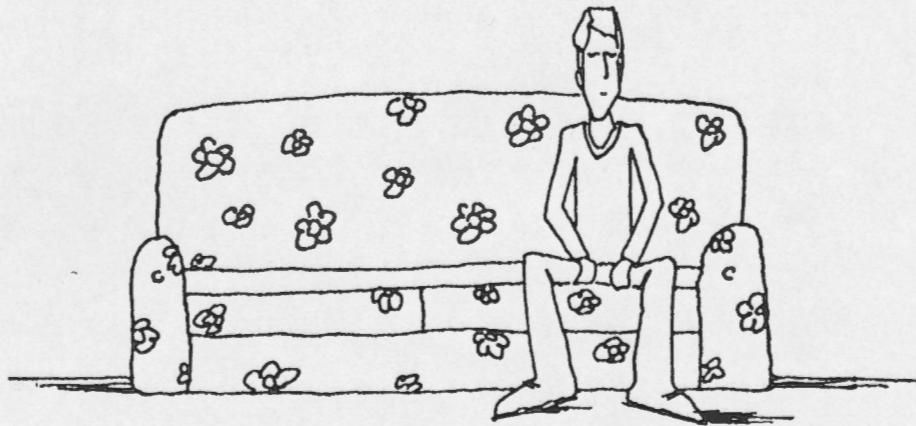
we progress in this
life according to our
honest wisdom.

honest wisdom is
realizing what you feel,
knowing what you think,

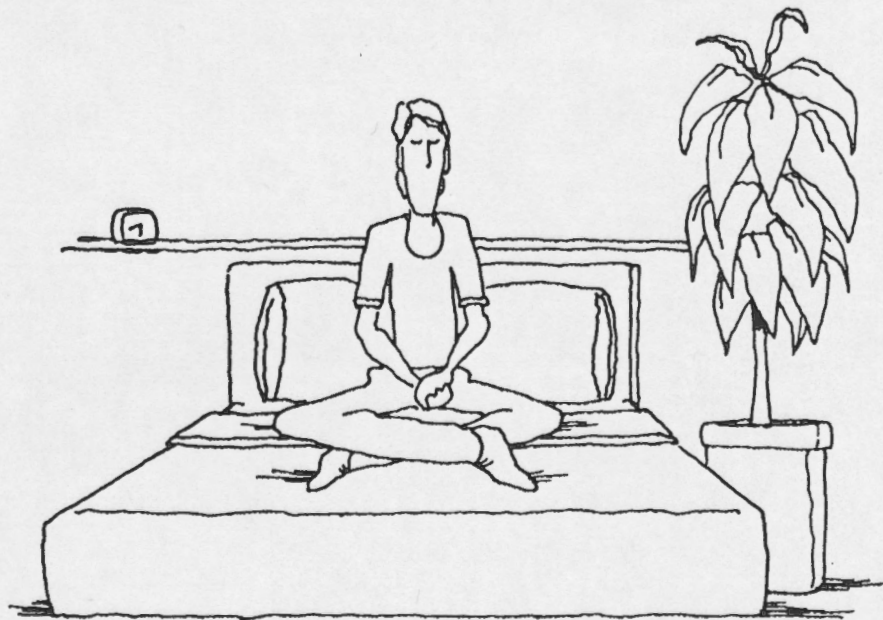
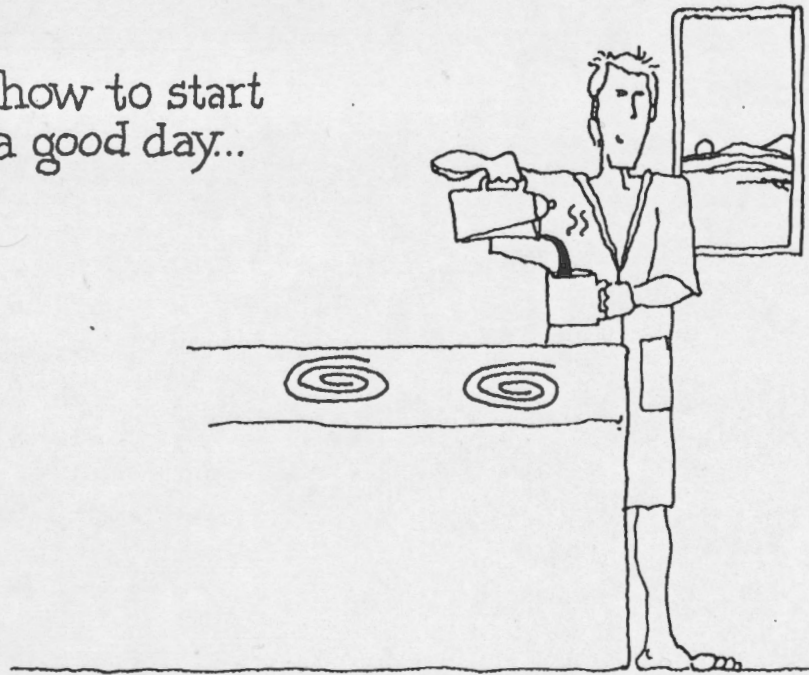
and opening
your attention
to everything
which comes
before you.

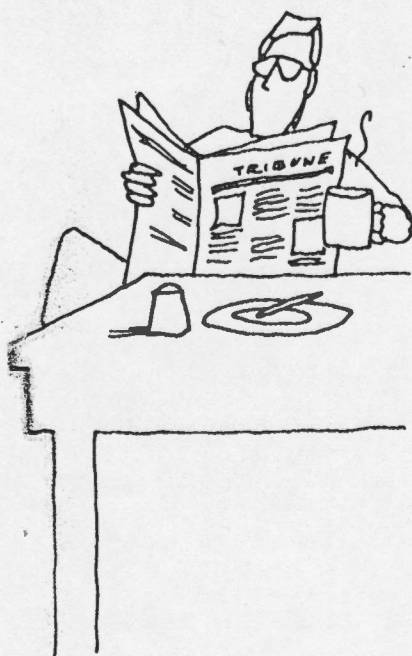
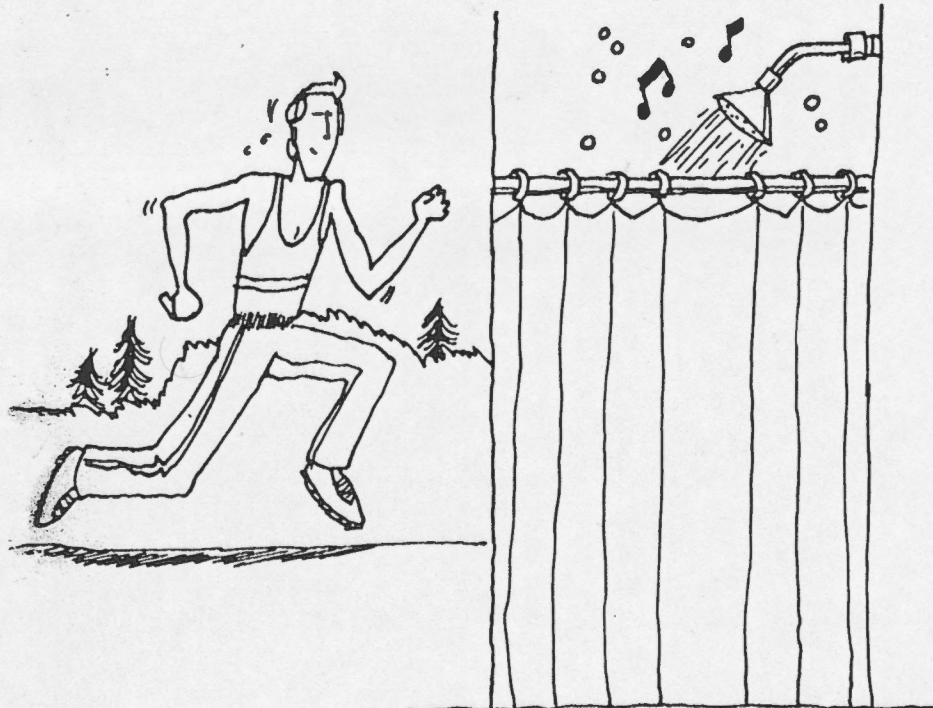
we should take time
each day to understand
ourselves

to watch exactly
what we experience
in walking and
sitting meditation.



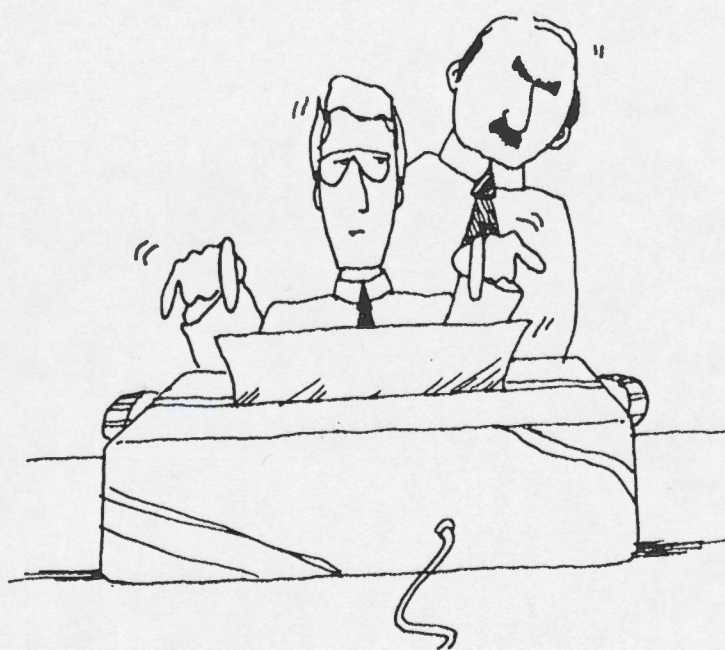
how to start
a good day...





every day you are
responsible for how
you feel

no one can make
you unhappy
or nervous

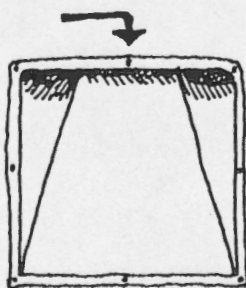
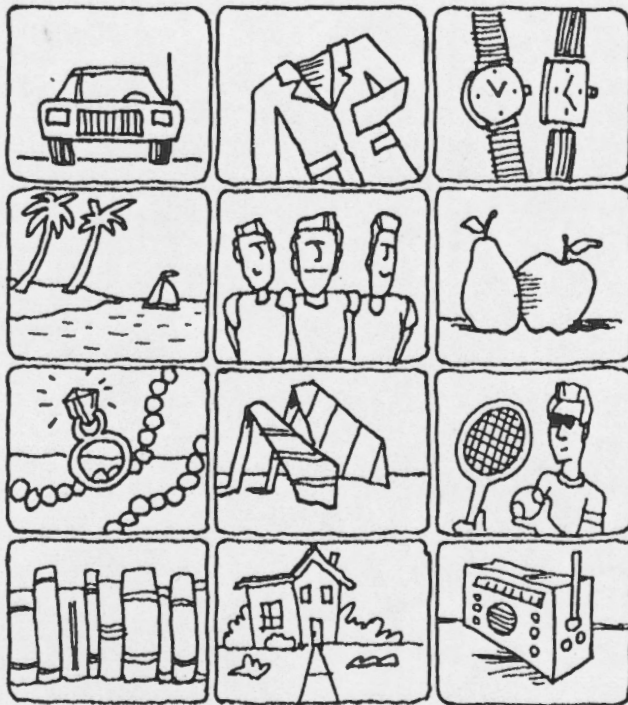


choices in a meditator's
life are very simple:

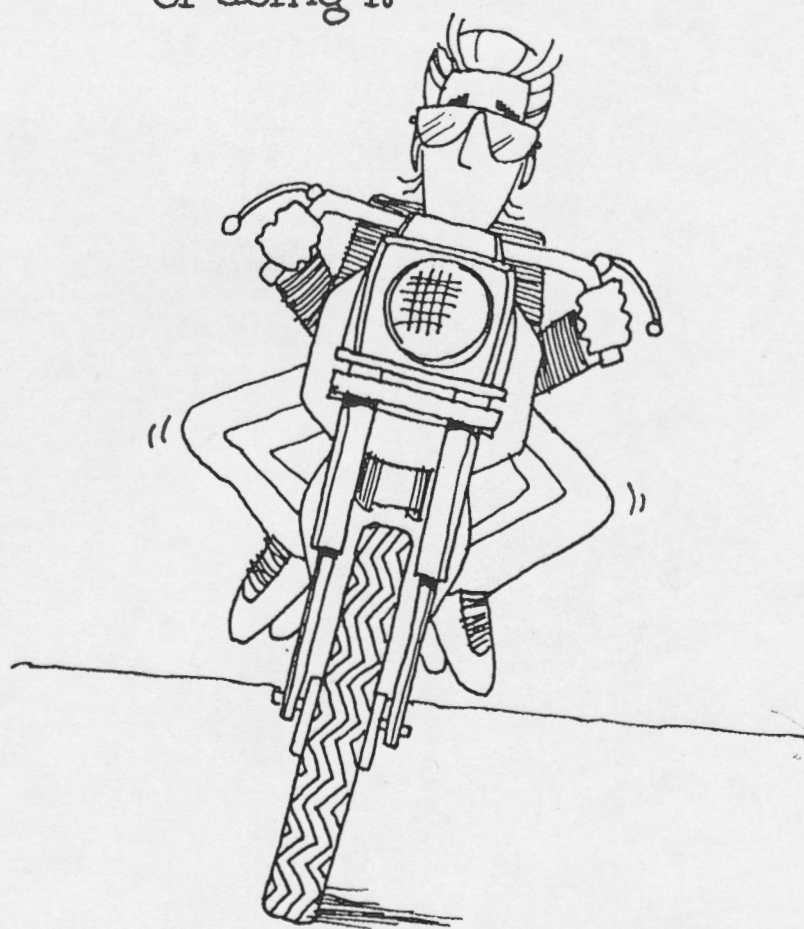
he does those things
which contribute to
his awareness

he refrains from
things which do not

Choose



the first step in
spiritual growth is to
do what we love to do
and to become aware
of doing it



in what direction are
you taking yourself?

(is it worth your effort?
is it exactly where
you want to go?)



the buddha taught
insight meditation
to those wise ones
who were tired of
the ups and downs
of living
and desired
lasting peace

have you ever
considered
cessation?

not suicide,
cessation... something
very constructive



insight meditation
systematically trains
us to be aware of every-
thing "we're up to"

for the enlightened
meditator life is merely
a process of experience,
then awareness, then wisdom,
then detachment, then bliss,
then lovingkindness.

the mind is only a
sophisticated mirror

it is what it sees
if it is what it sees

be careful what
you show it
because you
can be

anything
anything

anything
anything

ego...
is but a worrisome pro-
duct of unmindful, wan-
dering thoughts
when powerful awareness is
cultivated, we gladly learn
that there is
no one who thinks...
only thinking
no one who walks...
only walking
no one who sees...
only seeing
and finally the great
burden is dissolved

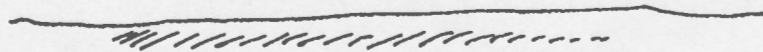


detached
does not mean
dead

rather, it is made of...

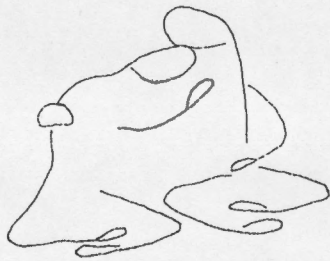
lovingkindness
compassion
sympathetic joy
and
equanimity

one of the highest
blessings is a friend
with whom we can
respond openly and
freely



it is hard to be
constantly loving

but it is harder
to be unloving



this living is
so hard
how can we
be anything
but loving?

Besides teaching insight meditation, the Buddha also taught a meditation to develop loving kindness for all creatures — he instructed that we sit in a quiet place and reflect first on the dangers of hatred, anger and resentment, and the benefits of being kind — these reflections remind us of the importance of maintaining a loving attitude in all circumstances and give us energy for the meditation.

because only when there is love for one-self can there be love for others, we first practice loving kindness towards ourselves by thinking of our own good qualities and kind actions — warmth for ourselves grows as we repeat over and over the loving thought: 'may I be free from my troubles (anger, fear, tension, anxiety, hatred, etc.) may I live happily.'

when we first begin the practice of loving-kindness, we may be surprised to find that we have difficulty in reflecting on our good qualities — we may feel shy or guilty in thinking of ourselves in such a positive way, or there may be self-hatred conditioned in our minds by years of comparing ourselves with others or with some ideal to which we might cling.

when we begin practice, it may be helpful to start each period of practice by writing down a few reflections to help us focus our attention.

for example, one day our reflections might be:

dangers of hatred and resentment

- 1- makes me fearful
- 2- creates restlessness and agitation
- 3- makes me feel miserable
- 4- makes me critical and hard on myself

advantages of lovingkindness

- 1- makes my mind clear
- 2- frees my body of tension
- 3- makes me feel good about myself
- 4- makes it easier to be with others

my own good qualities

- 1- I try to be patient
- 2- I am willing to change and grow
- 3- I want to be more loving
- 4- I have pretty toes

spend some time each day writing and reflecting in this way - then spend the last ten minutes of the meditation time specifically cultivating that warm and open space which thoughts of lovingkindness produce, by gently and silently repeating your own wish for yourself: 'may I be loving,' or 'may I be free from restlessness,' or 'may I be free from anxiety,' in whatever way feels appropriate for you.

if we work ardently at this meditation, we will begin to see a healthy change happening within ourselves.

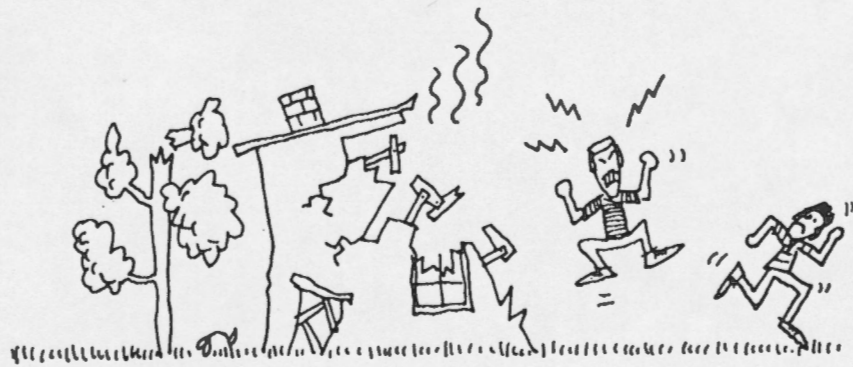
in time, when loving thoughts flow freely for ourselves, the lovingkindness may be extended to all beings everywhere without distinction -

may all beings be happy.

anger is most dangerous

it destroys you,
the person next to you,

and the place where
you live

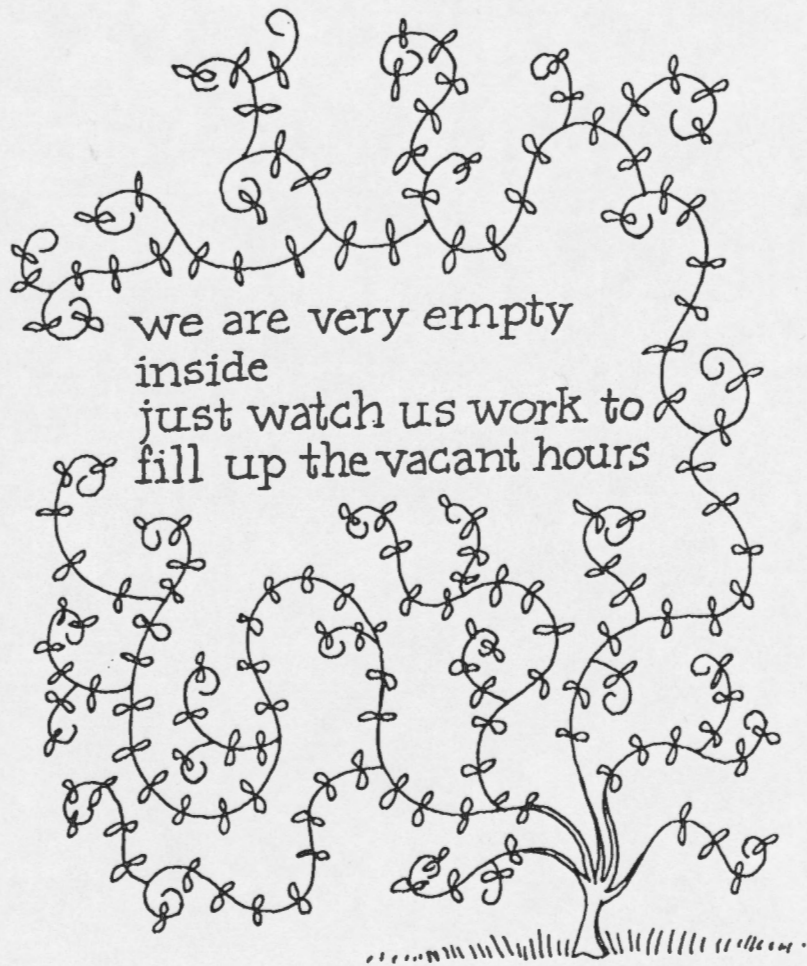


when aversion arises in
our minds,
we must either mindfully
drop it
or start communicating

hatred
is a crime
in any of its forms--

resentment, aversion,
jealousy, anger, harshness,
disgust--

if we watch carefully
what it does to our
feelings and what we
do to other peoples feel-
ings when motivated by
it, we have no choice
but to give it up



time on our
hands is very
dangerous

we might stop long
enough to notice that
we are very unhappy
people

going nowhere
special...

the buddha did not
come in the 6th
century b.c.

to reassure us
that

the world was
moving in the
right

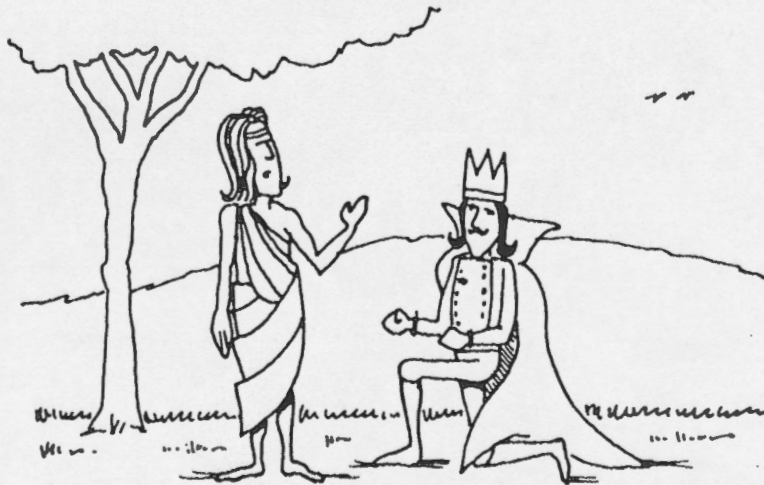
direction

once a King who was marching to war came near the place where an enlightened teacher was living—the King was in a great hurry but he wanted to learn something from the saint—respect—fully the King approached, paid homage, and asked the holy one:

“will you tell me the buddha’s teachings, for i have little time and may even be killed this very day”

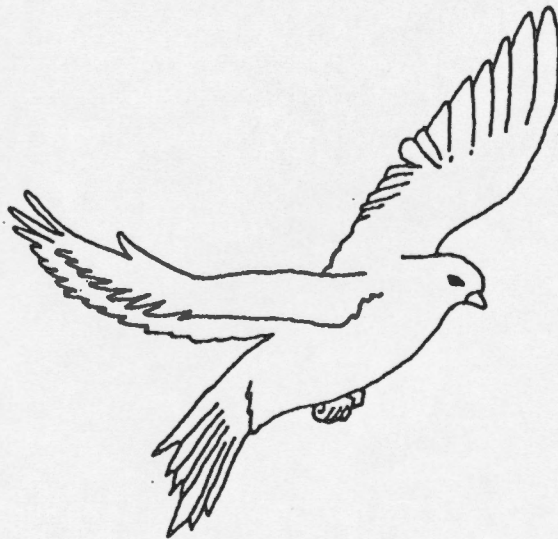
the sage looked upon the man in the royal cloak and answered with but one word:

“awareness”



meditation is
for those who are
born without having
it all together

mindfully attending to
the sensation of the
breath —
a tranquility and insight
exercise —



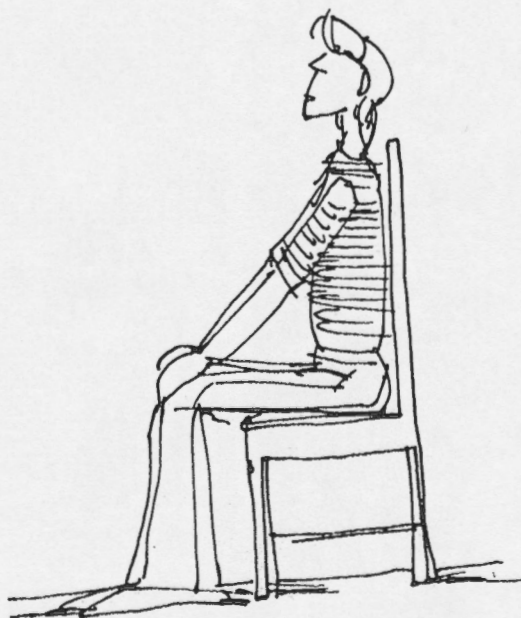
is politically, economi-
cally and spiritually the
practice of peacefulness

meditation is not
straining or striving

it is a relaxation



the back should be straight
not tense





a vipassanā meditation exercise

for the development of clear, mindful awareness, the buddha taught us to observe closely the movements of the body and the mind. a good way to develop your attentiveness, concentration and insight is to watch carefully the rising and falling of the abdomen. In this meditation exercise we begin by observing these obvious bodily movements. When these become clear we will also be able to be aware of the more subtle movements of the mind.

Go to a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position with eyes closed and back straight but not rigid. the movement of the abdomen is always present: place your attention on its natural in and out movement, making a mental note of each part of the process as it is occurring. It is not necessary to verbally repeat the words "rising" and "falling" or even to think of "rising" and "falling" in the form of words. Instead, only be aware of the actual process of rising and falling. as you become more and more alert and can follow the movements more carefully, you will become aware that the breathing is sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow and calm. These variations should be noted, however there should be no effort to control or to interfere with the breathing in any way. Just choicelessly watch the movements as they appear when you are breathing normally.

while you are watching the rise and fall of the abdomen, the mind may, by itself, go towards other objects, such as thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations. These new objects should be noted as soon as they arise. If a thought comes to your mind, be aware of "thinking." If a sound comes to your attention, make a mental note of "hearing." after each such note, firmly and calmly return your attention to the primary objects of meditation, the movements of the abdomen.

as you develop more concentration on the primary objects, you will quickly notice any other object as it arises. however, until the mind is alert enough to notice these objects as soon as they arise, it will tend to wander unmindfully after these thoughts, feelings and emotions. sometime later, the meditator becomes aware that he has been daydreaming. as soon as one is aware that his attention has drifted away from the present moment, he should patiently note that his mind has been "wandering," and that he is now "remembering to be mindful." Then one should lovingly return the attention to watching the rising and falling.

mindfulness can also be practiced during walking meditation, with the lifting, placing and putting of the foot as the primary objects of awareness. with head upright, keeping your eyes on the ground about six feet ahead, walk at a moderately slow pace, with steps small enough so that, without losing your balance, you can place one foot firmly on the ground before moving the next foot. remember to note each part of

the movement as it occurs. It is a good idea to spend equal amounts of time in walking and in sitting meditation -- for example, thirty minutes of walking, then thirty of sitting; later, one hour of walking, then one hour of sitting.

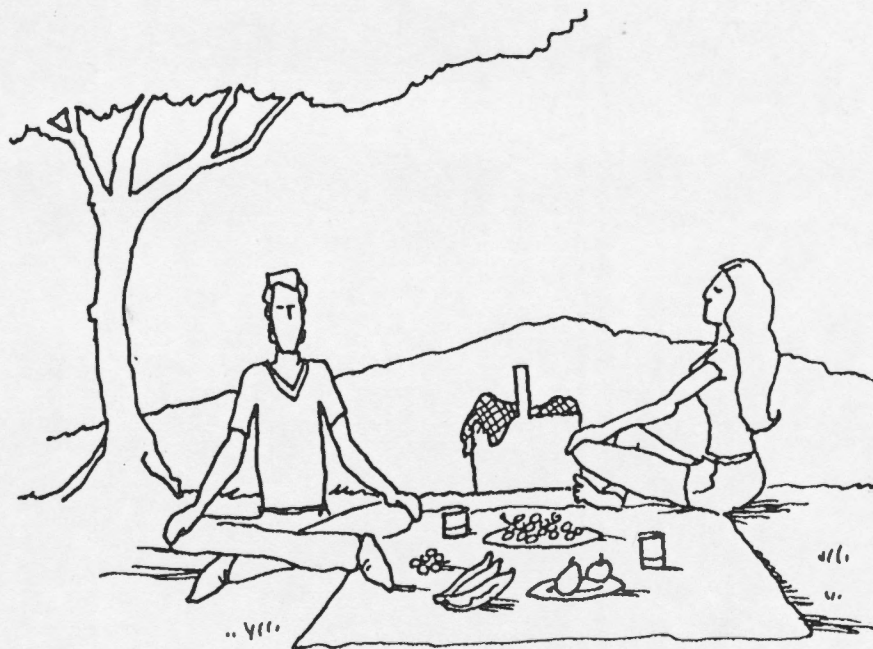
during all movements and activities of the day -- eating, washing, moving from place to place, job to job -- one should be aware of the movements of the body necessary for each activity, or of any thought, feeling or physical sensation which arises predominately.

one who persists in noting all objects as they come to his attention will develop increasingly clear awareness. noting should be done neither too fast nor too slowly. It should be immediate, firm and clear, but not harsh. one is not to be lazy and sit daydreaming, but rather to develop an awareness of the objects which is accepting and alert. at a certain point when the mindfulness is well developed, awareness will be automatic, and there will be less and less need for making mental notes. however, whenever attention weakens, one should return to making clear notes.

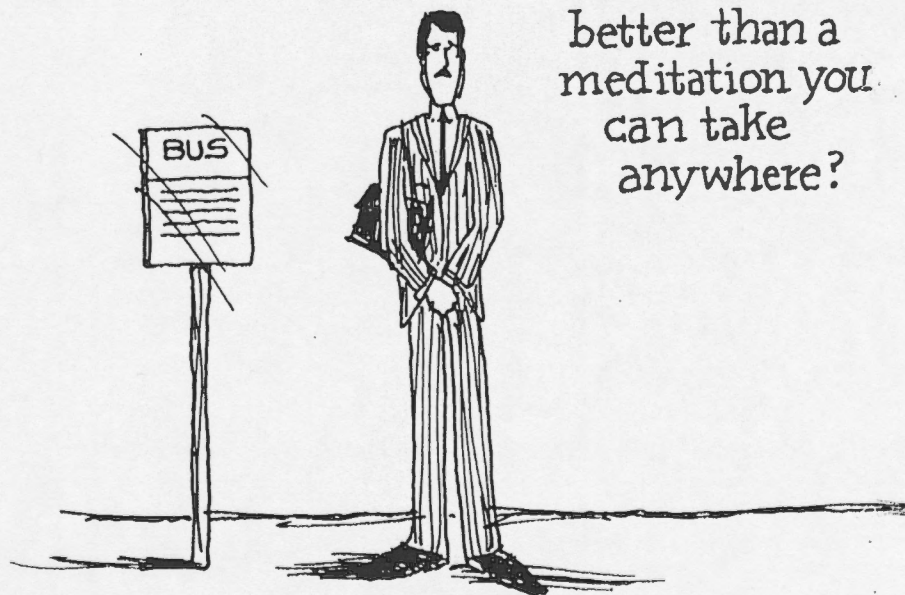
it would be convenient if one could simply "decide" to be aware. however, we are conditioned not to be aware. our minds are trained to be complicated, and so it is necessary to re-train ourselves in order to be simply aware. The most skillful way for a beginning meditator to develop mindful awareness

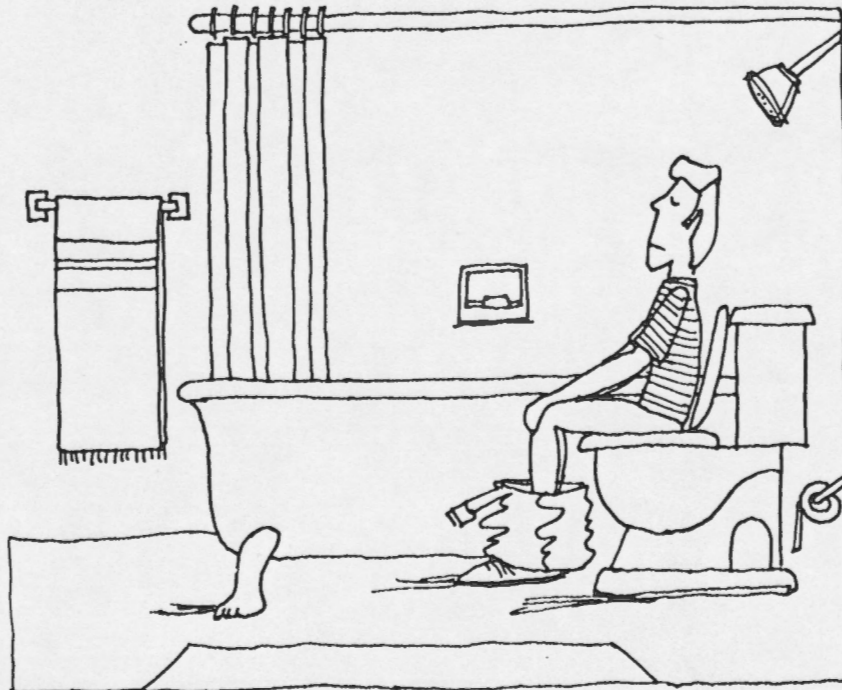
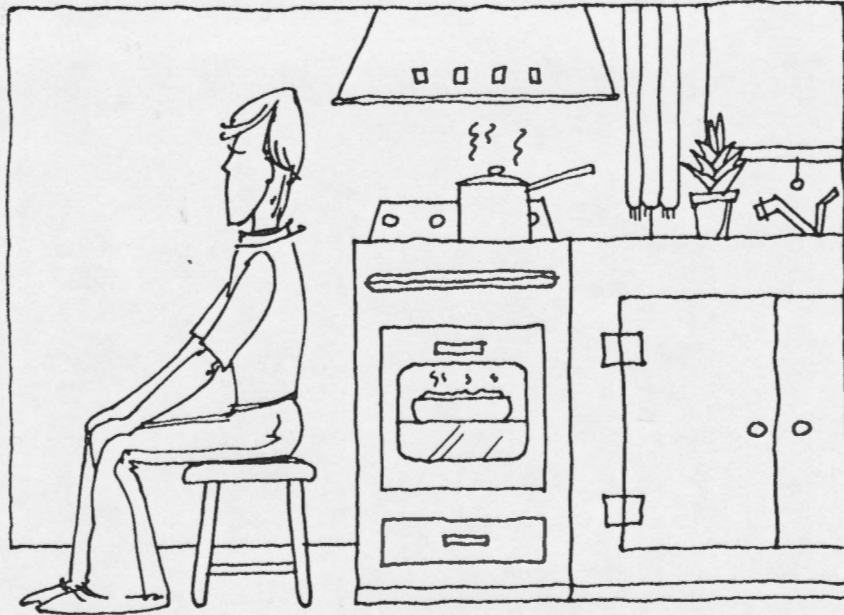
is to place himself under the guidance of a qualified meditation teacher for a period of intense practice. during a meditation retreat one leaves behind for a time the rush and trouble of his daily life, and in an atmosphere of quiet mindfulness and lovingkindness, devotes his energy entirely to the development of awareness. The minimum length of time usually needed for beginning westerners is one month. after completing such a period of intensive meditation, one is better able to continue the development and practice of mindfulness in daily life.





what could be
better than a
meditation you
can take
anywhere?





a saint is a very
simple man:

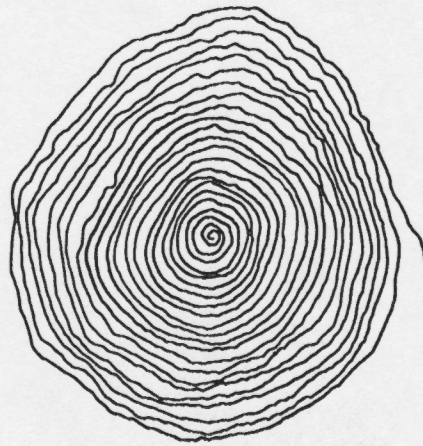
when he walks,
he walks
when he talks,
he talks
and thats all

he doesn't think while
listening,
daydream while walking
see while touching

that is very hard
that is why he is a saint

that is why there is
trouble in our lives

tension
is the first noble truth:



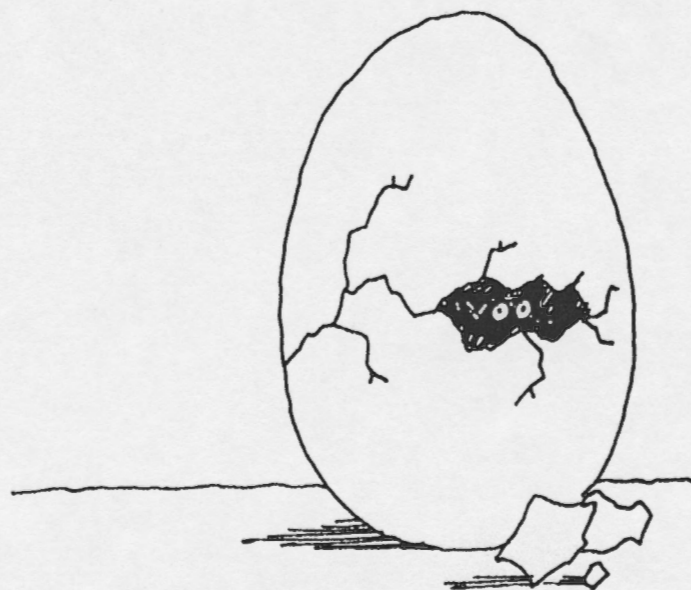
life is suffering

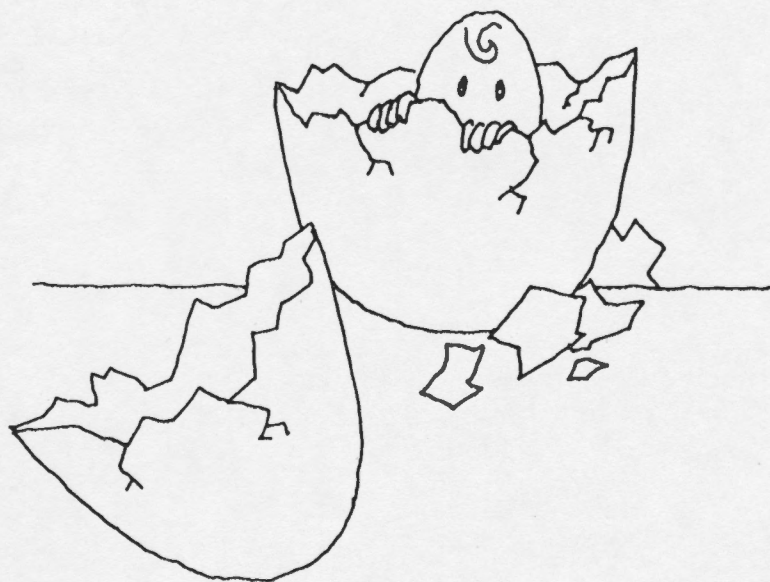
the price of wisdom is
pain:

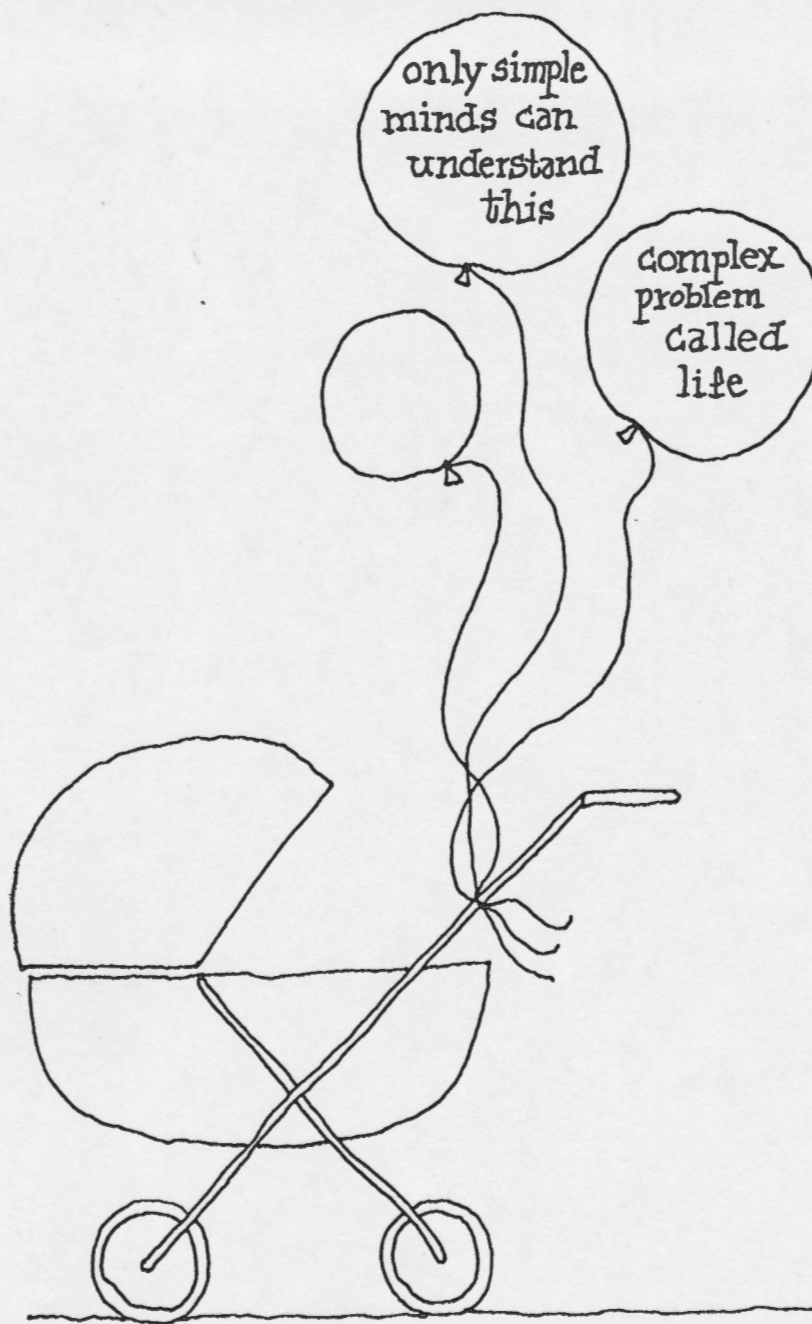
but it is this wisdom
that cuts off the
suffering

finally, there is no
choice but to bleed
freely

your pain can be
the breaking
of the shell
which
encloses
your
understanding





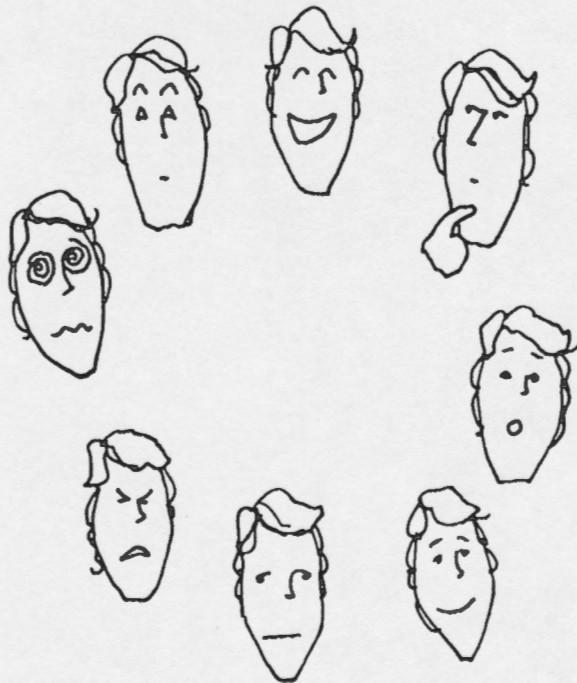


if we accept everything
in life as our teacher
we will soon be
free
from the pain of
unnecessary resistance
and
unnecessary desire

we run here and there
all our lives
trying to be successful,
correct and right

when the
goal of life
is learning

meditation does not
necessarily make us
feel good but it does
awaken us to the many
things we do feel



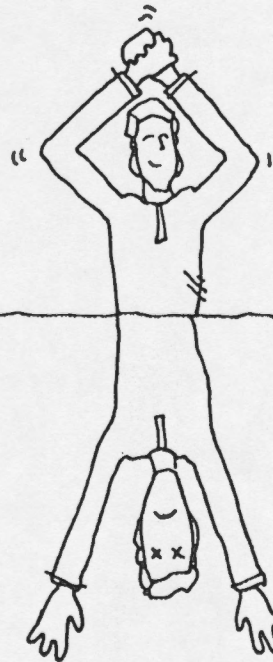
a meditation retreat
brings great relief because
for a time we don't have
to take our mind and
its problems seriously,

we don't have to act upon
its thousand wandering
thoughts,

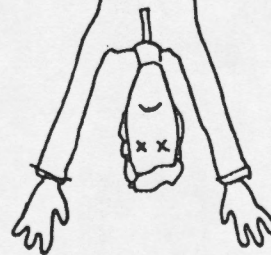
we just note them mind-
fully and they
pass away.....

the untrained
mind is so
vulnerable to
circumstances

something
good happens
and it is
happy...



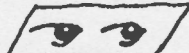
something
bad happens
and it is in
pain...

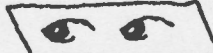


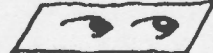
one who has suffered
the attachments and
aversions of his mind's
uncontrolled wanderings
quickly becomes

watchful  of

any direction 

in which 

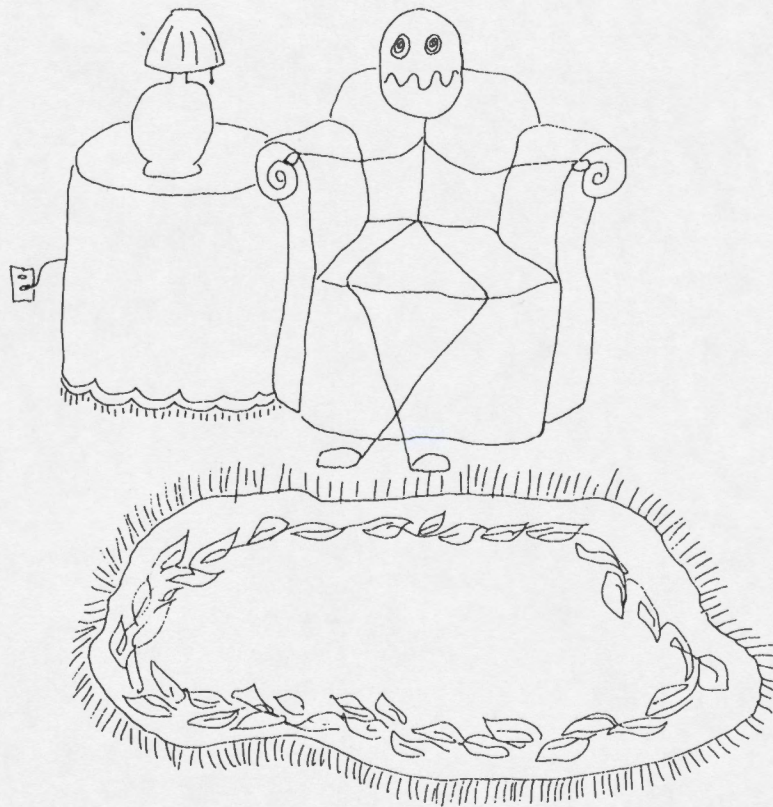
 the mind

 moves

your mind has a mind
of its own

(where do you
fit in?)

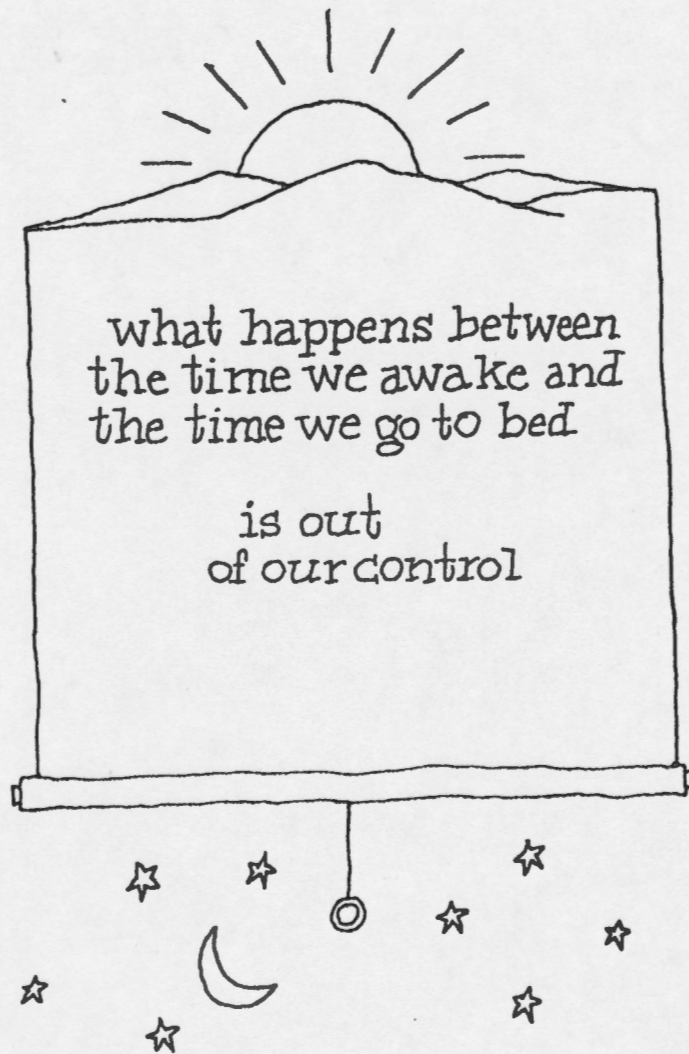




if we think the noise of
traffic is loud, we should go
into a quiet room and listen to
our minds.

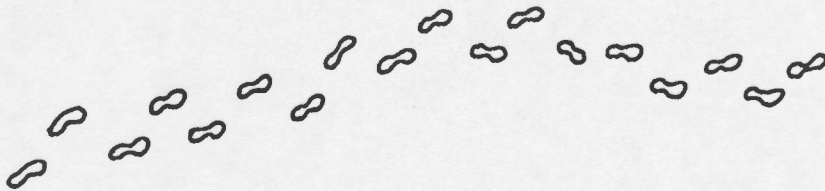
thoughts are not
necessarily connected
with reality

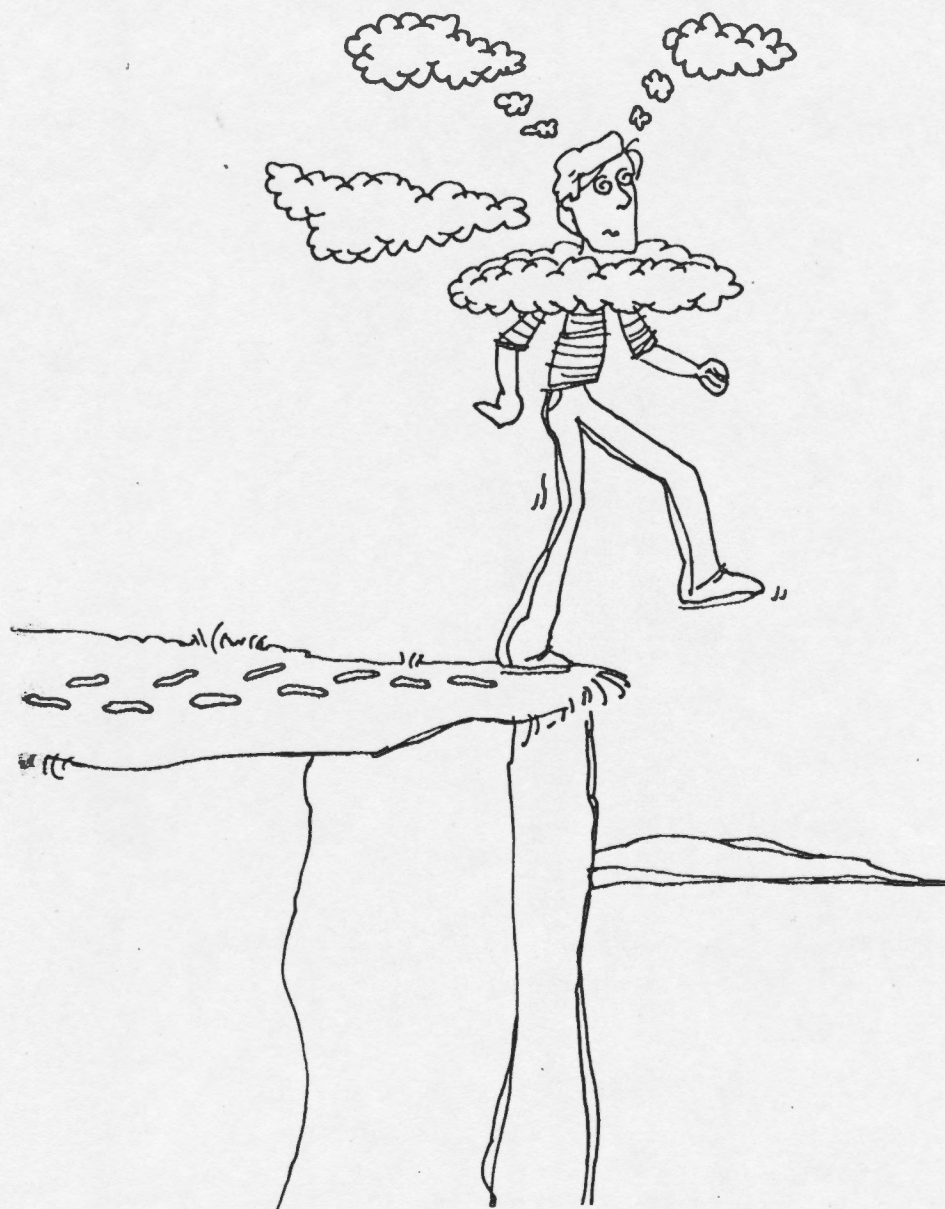
that is why the
buddha taught us
to be aware
of them
before we are
influenced
by them



bittersweet goes the life
of him — that clouded
and distracted stranger
to reality

without awareness, he
stumbles and falls
he hurts himself to death





if living were an easy
thing to do
there would be no need
for mental training

but because life often
becomes very, very,
hard

we often have to meditate
very, very hard

the mind is the only
means we have of getting
out of this mess

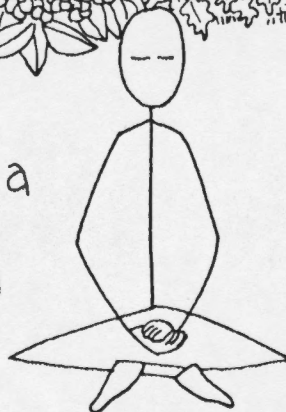
careful with it

immorality, selfishness,
anger and chemicals
dull this single key

meditating is the
kindest thing we can
do for ourselves



our mind is a
garden
by selecting
what it thinks
upon,



we can grow
either
thorny weeds
or beautiful
tender flowers

(but even a
little weed
can learn
to grow
flowers)



our characters are
developed by persistent practice

if we practice love
we become more loving

if we practice patience
we become more patient

if we practice generosity
we become more generous



communication lovingKindness
insight into reality

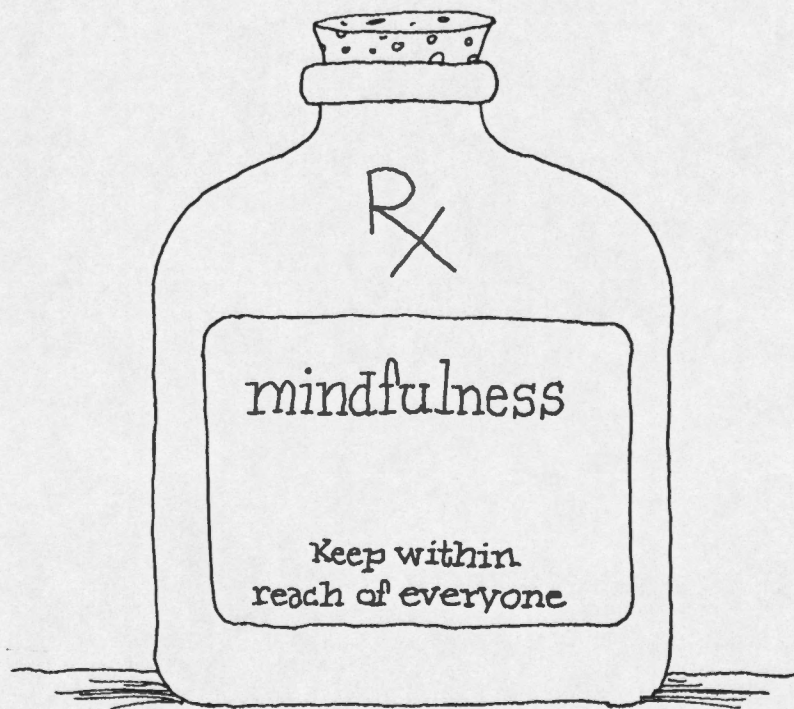
form an interdependent
triangle:

neglect one and we
diminish the other
two—practice one and
all are increased

basically
life is unsatisfactory
because:

- 1) it is not perfect
- 2) we only get two weeks of
vacation each year
- 3) our joys are impermanent
- 4) no one gets out alive
- 5) our bodies have to be washed
over and over again
- 6) the freeway is crowded
- 7) we must be taught by pain
as well as pleasure
- 8) our name sounds dumb
- 9) we must argue that life is
not unsatisfactory
- 10) most of our happiness
depends on mere thoughts
of the past and the future

mindfulness is the
cure for the disease of
suffering

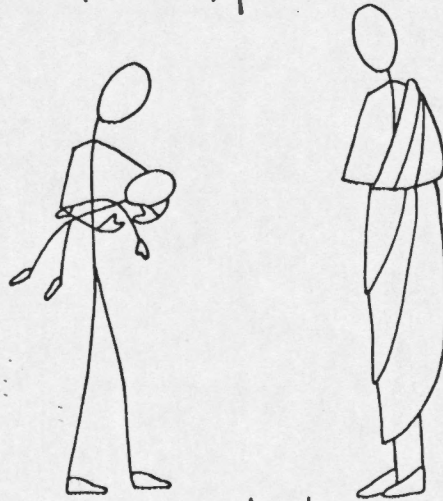


be kind and merciful
let no one ever come to you
without going away
better and happier

mercy is the highest
attitude

one day a mother lost her only child . she went to the buddha in search of a remedy for her dead son, carrying the corpse . the buddha agreed to help her if she could bring to him a bag of white mustard seeds . however, she had to obtain these mustard seeds from a house where no member had ever died.

the distraught mother went from one house to



another asking if anyone had ever died in the house. the answer was always positive ... here the grandfather died 3 years ago, -there the mother died by giving birth to her last child, etc... in every house she was told: "the living are few, but the dead are many".

after a while she understood the nature of life.
she returned to the buddha without the
mustard seeds. the buddha comforted her
explaining that death is common to all living
beings.

she understood that the life of human beings
flickers like the light of the lamp and she
finally stopped weeping and accepted the
death of her only son.

to be wealthy
we must spend our
time making money

to be free
we must spend our
time practicing
mindfulness.

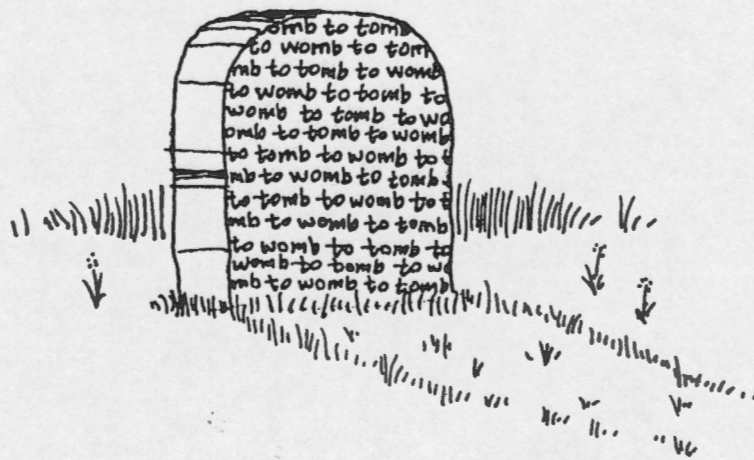
reaching
enlightenment
is just a matter
of continuous
practice.....☼

you can
do
it!

nirvana is an alternative

to life, after life, after
life, after life, after
life, after life, after
life, after life, after life
for life

after life, after life, after life, after life, after life,



 During the time of the Buddha, there was a young monk called Nanda who did not understand the necessity for mindfulness. One day, Nanda began to cherish the idea of giving his best robe to the enlightened teacher Sangara. Nanda was most infatuated with the idea, thinking that it would be an act of great merit to show such generosity towards a spiritually developed being.

He thought to himself, "by this noble deed, surely I will soon attain enlightenment". Because he was not yet well trained to mindfully watch the nature of his thoughts, Nanda did not recognize the selfish desire and attachment which made his intentions impure.

The next day, the young monk waited until Sangara left the monastery. In his absence, Nanda swept his room, brought water for drinking and washing, prepared a seat for him of cushions and flowers, and laid out the gift of the robe. Then Nanda sat down and waited. When he saw Sangara returning, he quickly went out the road, greeted him respectfully, and brought him to his quarters. Seeing the room, the teacher was pleased with the young monk's energy and kindness. Nanda invited him to be seated on the prepared seat, gave him water to drink, bathed his feet. Then Nanda took a palm leaf and began to fan the holy one. He began the presentation of the gift, saying that he wanted with all his heart to give this, his best robe, to Sangara.

The teacher detected that the young monk had not been mindful of his desires and had allowed

himself to become attached to the idea of giving this gift. seeing this as an opportunity to teach nanda the danger of unmindfulness, the holy one replied that he already had a complete set of robes and as he had no need for the gift, instructed nanda to give the robe to some needy monk. at this nanda repeated his request several times, only to have the teacher thank him for offering the gift, but instruct him to give it elsewhere.

this polite refusal hurt nanda's feelings and resentment arose in his mind. in this clouded state of mind, he stood fanning the teacher. rather than practicing mindfulness by dismissing his resentment and attending to the fanning, nanda permitted his mind to dwell on the incident. as his mind wandered concerning the declined gift, his resentment grew, and he thought,

"if sangara is not willing to receive my gift, why should I remain a monk? I will become a householder once more". then his thoughts began to wander restlessly, taking his attention farther and farther from the present moment in which he stood fanning the teacher.

"suppose I become a householder once more", he thought, "how shall I earn a living? I will sell this robe and buy myself a she-goat. as the she-goat brings forth young, I will sell them and in this way make a profit. when I have accumulated a profit, I will take a wife, and my wife will bear me a son. I will put my son in a little cart, and taking my son and wife along with me, I will make the journey back here to

pay respects to the elder sangara . as we travel ,
I will say to my wife , " wife , bring my son , for I
wish to carry him . she will reply , " why
should you carry the boy ? you push the cart " .
saying this , she will take the boy in her arms ,
thinking to carry him herself ; but lacking the
necessary strength , she will let him fall in
the road and he will land in the path of the
wheels and the cart will run over him . then
I will say to her , " wife , you have ruined me " .
so saying I will bring down my stick upon
her head " .

so pondered nanda as he stood fanning
the elder . consumed by his reflections , he
swung his palm-leaf fan and brought it down
on the head of the elder . sangara considered
within himself " why has nanda struck me
on the head ? " immediately becoming aware
of every thought which had passed through
the mind of his attendant , he said to him ,
" nanda , you did not succeed in hitting the woman ,
but what has an old teacher done to deserve
a beating ? the young monk thought to him-
self , " I am in disgrace ! the elder knows
the foolish thoughts which have passed through
my mind . "

the teacher told nanda that if he sought
forgiveness he should come and sit before him .
trembling , nanda sat down , his eyes cast upon the
floor he had so proudly swept a short time before .

sangara spoke quietly and patiently , " nanda ,

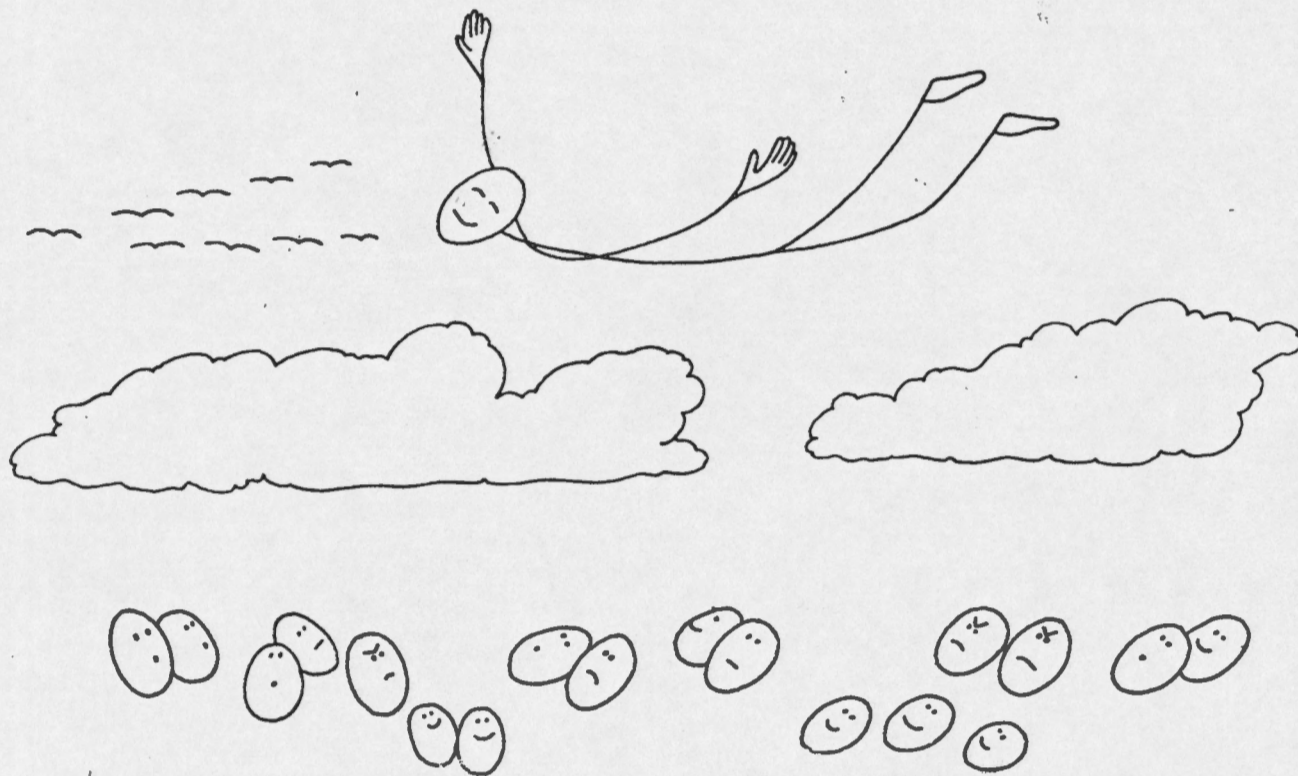
do you see that you have made no effort to mindfully watch your thoughts, and do you see how needlessly you have suffered because of your mind's unwatched wanderings.

"your gift was not freely given because you demanded that it be recieved in a specific way. when your demands were unfulfilled you suffered resentment. the resentment was allowed to grow unwatched until it had made you completely unmindful. as you stood fanning me, you negligently became absorbed in wandering thoughts which had nothing to do with the present moment.

"do you see now the danger of unmindful thinking? do you see that if the mind is not carefully watched, one will become painfully absorbed in unwholesome states of mind? one unwholesome mental state weakens the mind so that it becomes susceptible to another and another. In this way, your mind, weakend by selfish desires, became caught in attachment, which led to disappointment, resentment, delusion and now regret.

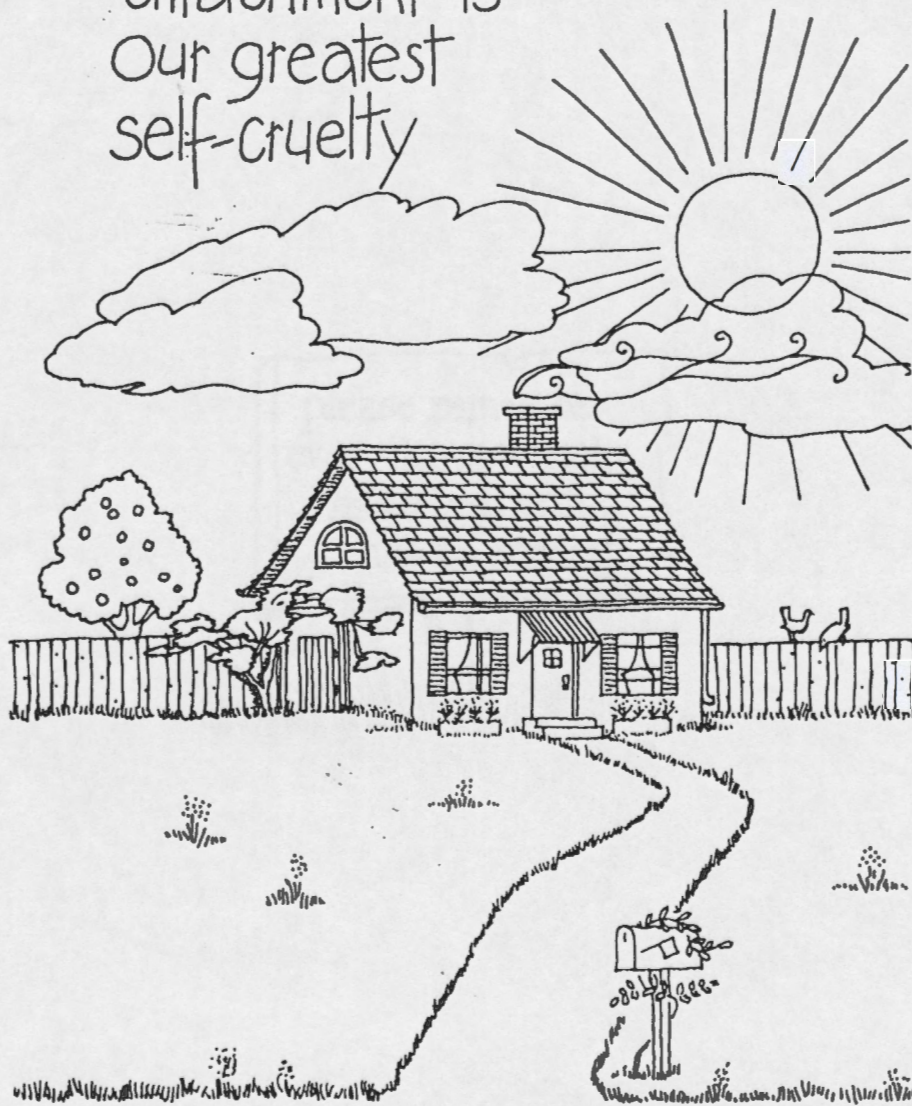
"handa, work gently and persistently to develop the mindfulness. as you have seen, one who does not live each moment in mindful awareness is bound for one painful experience after another. he who learns to watch the restless cravings and painful attachments of the mind will soon give up the suffering."

the innocent mind is willing to try anything... just because of its innocence



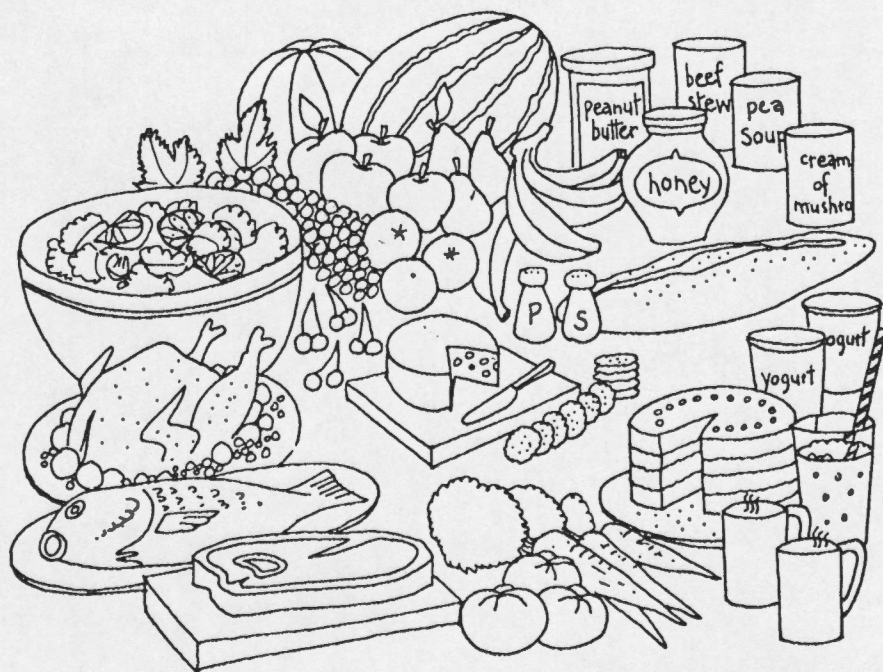
to be free we must
be comfortable in being
someone, anyone or no-
one at any time in
any place

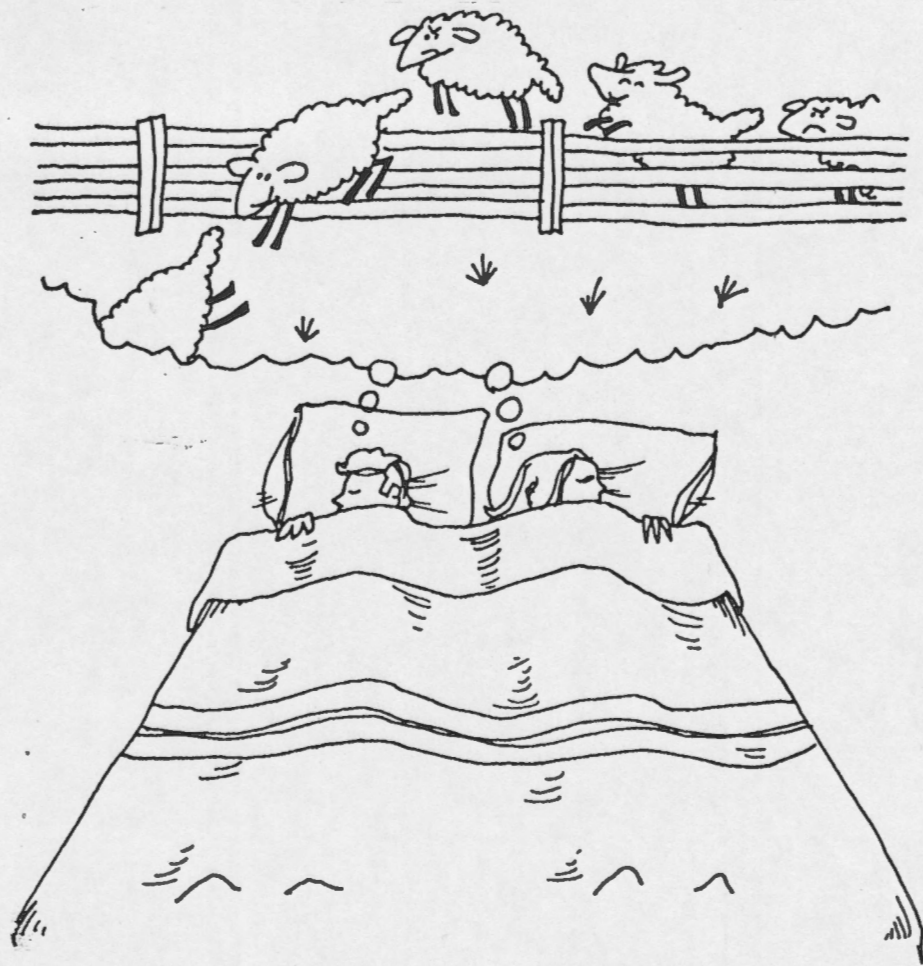
attachment is
our greatest
self-cruelty



if we do not approach the matter of diet intelligently we will only constipate our minds. isn't freedom achieved when we can appreciatively accept any type of food that is offered?

attachment to any diet is
spiritually poisonous. food in itself
is not a means of transcendence. it
only sustains the body while the mind
works for its enlightenment.

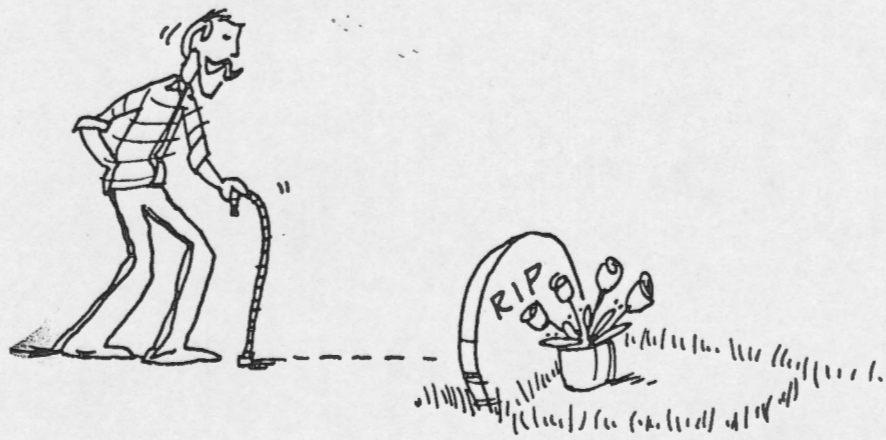
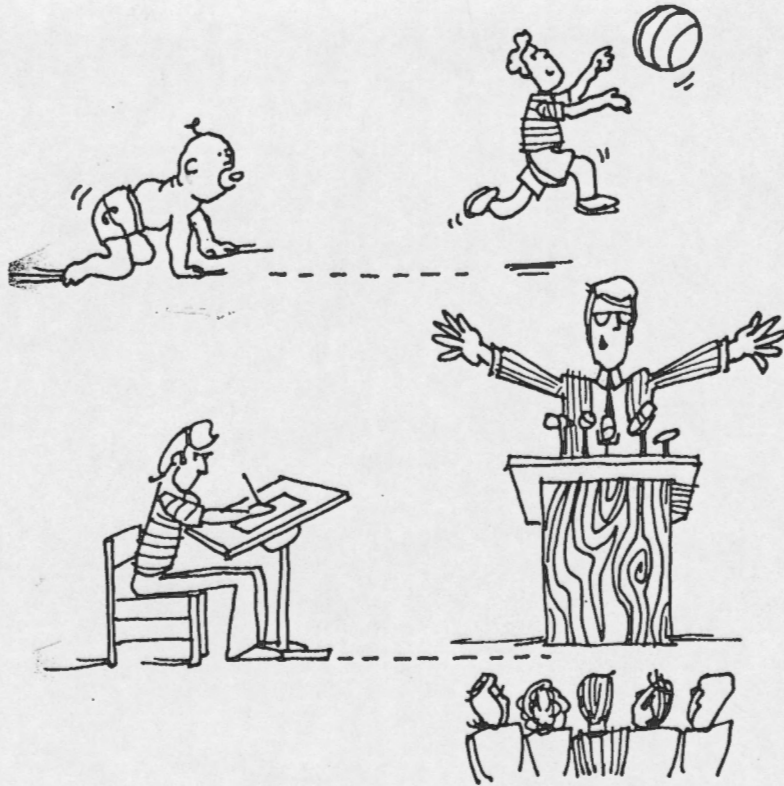




we must sleep away one-
third of our lives because
we wear ourselves out lik-
ing and disliking all
day long

wise people are neither
optimists nor pessimists

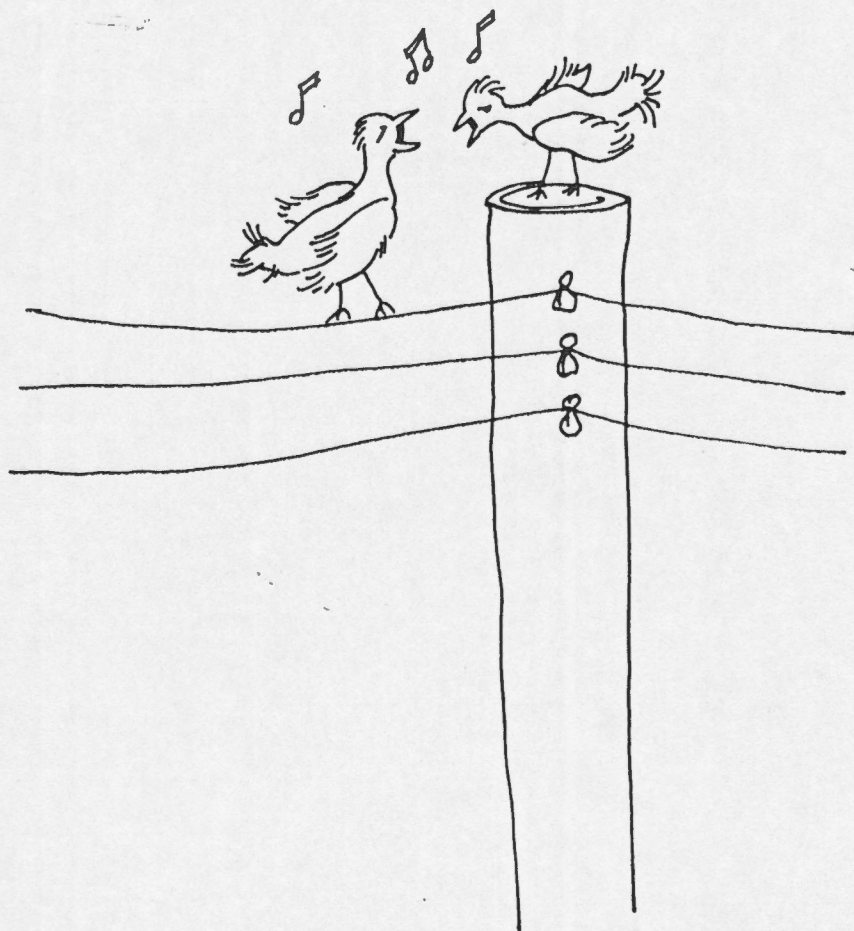
they see things as they are...



each morning if we commit
ourselves to finding the
truth of every situation
then miracles come to
us all day long

when you find out who
you really are
it's beautiful beyond
your dreams

is there anything
better to be than free?



when you're flying

you can talk or not talk,
sing or not sing,
dance or not dance,
laugh or not laugh,
eat or not eat,
play or not play,
be serious or not be
serious,
draw a picture or not
draw a picture
touch someone or not
touch someone
go or stay live or die
and it all
tastes the same...

joyful...joyful...joyful

Karma means
intention

then action

everytime

you do a good Karma
it comes back to you

prosperity .

is

the result of Kind living

get your
but
out of the way

i would
like to...

...but...

...i'd go
there...

...but...

...i could
do that...

...but...



unbalanced reflections on
the negative things in life
will depress you

at the end of the day
make a list of the good
things which happened
to you



the buddhist does not :

hurt things
kill things
harm things

the buddhist does:

bless things with his love
bring prosperity to all
live happily and let live

he is loved
and cherished by his friends

: buddhist precepts

no killing

no stealing

no lying

no intoxicants

no wrong sexual relations



neurotics depend on
holidays, weekends
and days off

those who cultivate
their appreciation
celebrate daily



control your mind
don't be under the con-
trol of your mind...

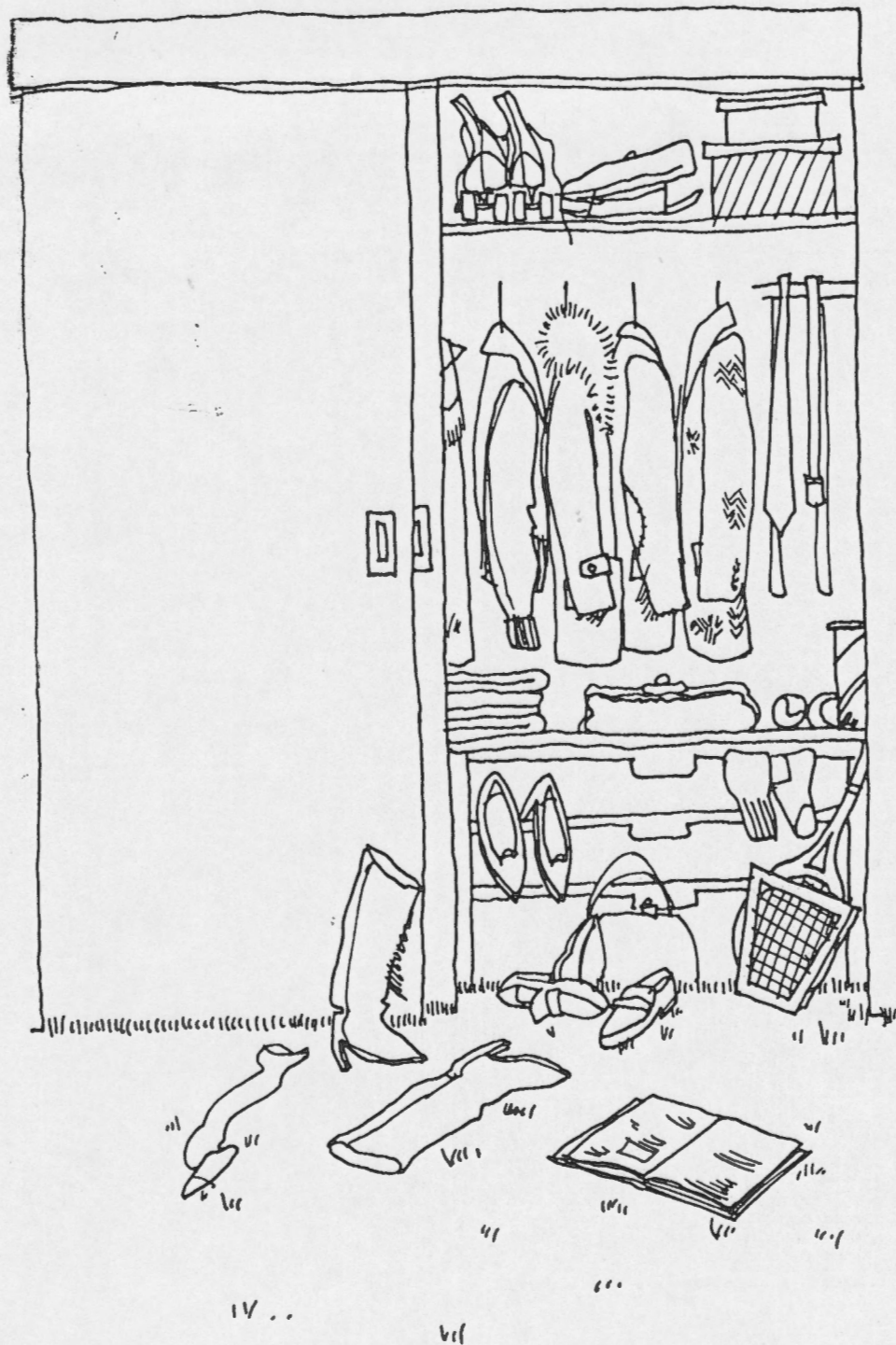
your closets

are

the mirror

of

your mind



relaxation
is
the only cure for

tension

say to yourself
i can learn to relax

irritation

is

natural

warts are
natural
too

in life, we all experience hurts from other people. the unforgiving person clings to these old hurts. we cannot be happy or free if we can't forgive.

the wise person learns to let go of past hurts.

an exercise to practice forgiveness is to write down the advantages of forgiveness and the disadvantages of resentment.

advantages of forgiveness

- 1.) it frees me from anger and hurt
- 2.) it allows me to be positive
- 3.) everyone is a winner
- 4.) nothing is lost but suffering

dis-advantages of resentment

- 1.) it consumes energy
- 2.) remembering the bad, I don't think about the good
- 3.) it blocks communication
- 4.) creates tension

i forgive you - i release you
i let you go

express your love to your
children



tell them everyday
how much you love them

express your love to everybody

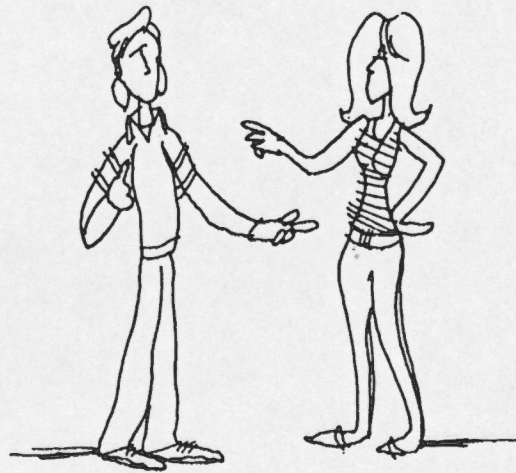
anytime

express what you think

what you feel

always

with love



our relationships
are unfree to the
extent that we
demand things
of other people



love is not possessive



impeccable means:

making conscious
choice of what we eat,
where we live, our friends,
our clothes,

our everything

compassionate
virtuous

loving
intelligent

energetic

informed

wellspoken

intense

respecting

learned

the buddha was the most

refined

prosperous

courageous

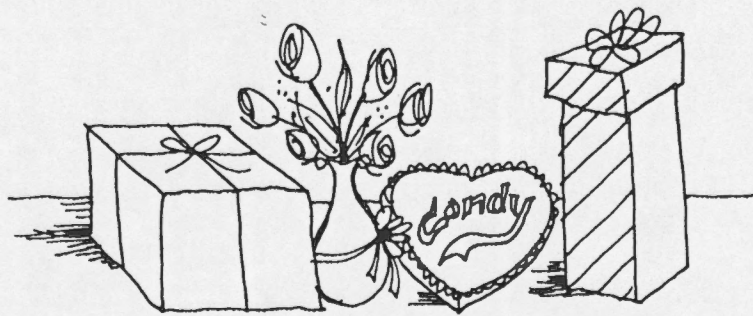
handsome

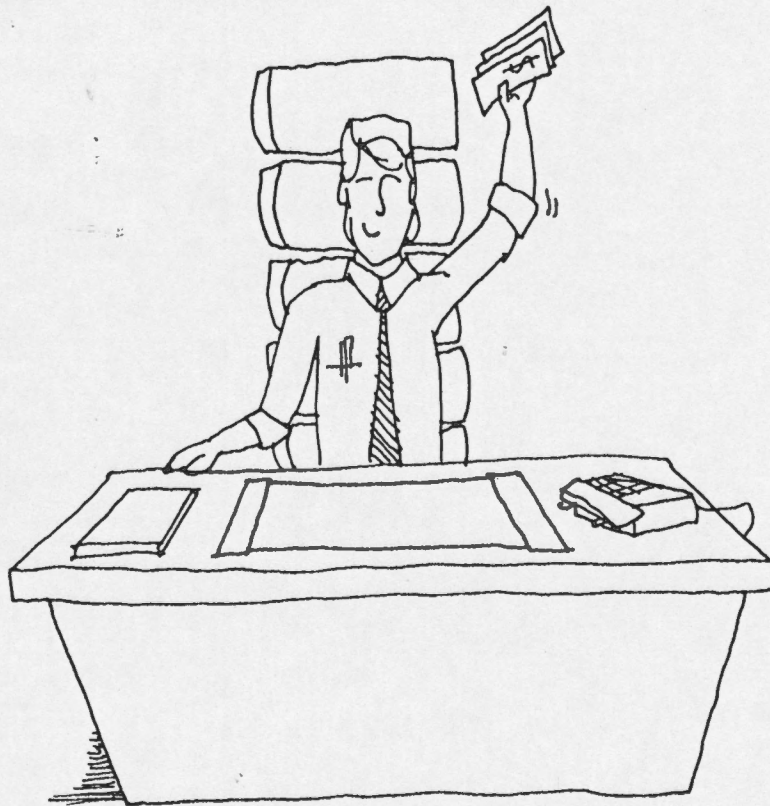
generosity is the number one prerequisite for progress on the spiritual path. without joyful and natural giving, there can be no receiving. the reason for this simple generosity is the direct expression, in action, of non-attachment. and non-attachment is the key to freedom from suffering.

like all virtues, generosity needs constant attention to flower and mature by regularly sharing. you can practice this in the most basic level - the material. the results of this will be immediately apparent in increased prosperity on all levels - (finances, meditation, relationships, emotions) - and soon the act of giving itself becomes an experience of prosperity.

you can give in many ways. it will totally change the way you view your world. it will open you to living more fluidly and dynamically.

where our gift goes is a personal experience, something everyone must decide for himself.





tithing is putting your money
where your mouth is, about gen-
erosity

visākhā was a very generous lady, daughter of a millionaire, and the chief benefactress of the buddha. she regularly gave alms and tended to the monks living in the monastery.

one day she went to visit the buddha covered in her most valuable jewels and ornaments. on the way, she decided her dress was inappropriate and gave all her adornments to her servant for safe-keeping during the trip.

after hearing the buddha's discourse, visākhā returned home accompanied by the servant, who had forgotten the jewels and had left them at the gathering place in the monastery.

ananda, the buddha's disciple and attendant, found the package and put it in a safe place for return to the lady.

when visākhā heard what had happened, she decided to use the opportunity to give a grand gift to the order. she thought first to give the jewels, then decided to sell them and use the money for things more suited to the use of monks. she then found that no one could afford such precious jewelry, so she decided to buy it herself, and use the money for the monks.

the buddha, pleased with her generosity, suggested she build a monastery, which she did. the buddha stayed there with his disciples for six rainy seasons.

rather than chastising her servant, visākhā was appreciative for the occasion to perform this meritorious deed.

the buddha's greatest supporter was anāthapindika, a wealthy businessman from sāvatthi. when anāthapindika first heard of the buddha, a fully enlightened teacher in the world, his desire to meet him was very strong. rather than wait until the next day to visit, he traveled that night through the jungle, alone in total darkness to the place where the buddha was staying, and met him just before dawn.

upon receiving instruction from the buddha, his inspiration was so great that he invited the buddha to stay with him for the rains, along with the entire community of monks.

the buddha accepted, and anāthapindika set about finding a suitable place to build a monastery. he finally came upon the pleasure park of jeta, the prince of sāvatthi. now this park was a wonderful place, serene and peaceful and fulfilling all the requirements. a place such as this prince jeta was reluctant to lose, so he told anāthapindika the price would be determined by covering the entire grounds with gold coins, thinking this would deter him.

when anāthapindika started hauling in the gold in carts, jeta realized this was no ordinary purchase, and when the gold left a small spot uncovered, he gave that as his gift to the order of monks.

the monastery was constructed, and here the buddha spent the greater part of his life giving many discourses.

rather than just think
good thoughts, we should
take the time to
express them...



everyone loves a
cheerful giver

the gift of truth excels all
gifts

there have been many
would be savio rs
in the world

no one
has succeeded
in saving the world

save yourself

rather than trying to convince anybody that meditation is the right path, we can show by our attitude (wisdom, mindfulness, happiness) the benefits of meditation

an american who began his search for understanding at an early age, sujata traveled half-way around the world where he found some very rare people who, unlike all others he had met, were not plagued by the universal human enslavements of hatred, attachment and selfishness.

using the tools of insight meditation which he practiced as a buddhist monk, sujata teaches meditators to watch carefully the ways of the mind. as resident teacher of stillpoint institute, he guides others along the buddha's path, through the difficult process of laying down the burden of "self".

CONVERSATIONS

Steven Ruddell Interviews
MUNINDRA and SUJATA



Munindra and Sujata enjoying rides at Marriott's Great America

Anagarika Munindra is a vipassana (insight) meditation master. For years he was a scholar of Buddhism in Benares, then he decided to experience the teachings he had been studying and went to Burma to practice under the direction of the Mahasi Sayadaw of Rangoon. For the past 22 years Munindra has been teaching students from all over the world who come to receive his instruction at the International Meditation Center, Bodh-gaya. Among his students are Joseph Goldstein, author of *The Experience of Insight* (Unity Press), Sharon Salzberg, and Ram Dass. In his introduction to Joseph Goldstein's book, Ram Dass writes, "For many years Munindra so successfully absorbed the Pali Canon of Buddhism. . . that when I met him in Bodh-gaya I found it difficult to differentiate him from the doctrine." I found him the same when I met him in San Jose.

Munindra's host for his stay on the West Coast was Sujata, founder and resident teacher of Stillpoint, a vipassana meditation center in San Jose. An American, Sujata traveled half-way around the world to study satipatthana vipassana (the meditation of mindful awareness) as a Buddhist monk in Ceylon. After several years abroad, Sujata returned to the United States to begin teaching and to complete his first book, *Beginning to See* (Unity Press), a delightful meditation primer of terse epigrams, which was lovingly hand-printed and illustrated by Julie Wester.

I feel grateful to Munindra and Sujata for the time they gave me to become acquainted with them and with satipatthana vipassana. When Munindra and Sujata arrived for the interview, I felt immediately attracted to their warmth, gentleness, and honesty. Throughout my brief relationship with Munindra I felt deeply impressed by his childlike curiosity, his openness, natural grace, and humility. I realized that here is a man who is a Buddhist scholar, a teacher of teachers and yet, more than that, is completely natural and spontaneously appropriate in each situation. This couldn't have been more evident than in his spontaneous enjoyment of Great America amusement

park. Whether sharing the dhamma (the way things are) or appreciating the movie "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" or enjoying the rides at Great America, Munindra was always completely himself, always natural, generous, and enthusiastic.

Sujata generously offered me the opportunity to participate in a weekend meditation retreat at Stillpoint Institute. I felt tense and exhausted from six months' overextension. The retreat came as a relief, an opportunity to step off the daily merry-go-round of greater America. In the quiet tranquility of the institute grounds I felt myself winding down into slow motion, until I found myself quietly observing my own process during the simple routines of the day—eating, drinking, walking, and sitting. In the evening Sujata carefully answered each person's questions, talked about the dhamma with clarity and wit, and inspired us with loving song.

When I left, I knew that I was laughing more and felt more energy; but I wasn't fully aware of the effects of the weekend until the next day when I resumed my busy schedule. My life looked as crazy as a movie cranked up into fast-motion. As I noticed my craziness, I also noticed that I effortlessly began to make schedule changes and to find more space for myself.

What follows is a sharing of parts of conversation that I had with Munindra and Sujata last June. I hope their simple words will be of as much value to you as they were to me, not so much because we are hearing something new but rather because they remind us of what we already know and inspire us to practice.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Steven: What is the purpose of Stillpoint?

Sujata: The Buddha laid out a path to overcome suffering, in other words hatred, attachment, and delusion. In my experience as a monk in Ceylon, I found that insight meditation is truly the path to freedom from suffering. During my stay in the East, I participated as a student in many meditation centers. From those experiences as a

"When the mind is silent then every moment you are discovering yourself."

student and through learning as a teacher, I have designed as well as I know how a perfect environment and program for the practice of insight meditation. I feel determined and enthusiastic to share my experiences and to help other people out of their own suffering. So the purpose of Stillpoint is to provide the proper guidance and atmosphere for people to practice insight meditation and to study the dhamma, the teachings of the Buddha.

Steven: I like the name, Stillpoint.

Sujata: Stillpoint is a name Americans can understand and what we teach is for Westerners, a Western dhamma. Everyone wants to learn how to obtain some peace of mind, to come to a still point within themselves.

Steven: Is that then one of the purposes of the practice, to come to that still point?

Sujata: To come to that point through understanding.

Steven: I understand that it is possible to come to that still point by means of concentration as well as by understanding. Are these different paths, or the same?

Munindra: They are not contradictory; they are complementary. They are different but not antagonistic. They are helpful to each other. Samadhi (concentration) means one-pointedness. Understanding means insight. In India there are two kinds of practice, you will find. One is known as samadhi bhavana, concentration development and the other is called vipassana bhavana, insight development. Samadhi bhavana is concentrating the mind on a particular object, ignoring everything else. Insight meditation means focusing our concentrated mind inwardly to discover the person, this whole psychophysical process—Who am I? What am I? How is this mind and body functioning? There is no particular object for it, and there is no particular method either. The only thing that one wants is to be mindful. For this practice, mindfulness is the most important factor. Mindfulness means awareness. It is the factor of awakening, deconditioning, self-discovery. From the very beginning to the end it brings a state of self-knowledge. Everything is meditation in this practice—eating, drinking, dressing, seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking. Whatever you are doing...everything should be done mindfully, dynamically, with totality...not mechanically. Everything should be done completely—with thoroughness—then it becomes meditation, becomes meaningful, purposeful. Mindfulness is not thinking; rather it is experiencing from moment to moment, living from moment to moment without clinging, without condemning, without judging, without evaluating, without comparing. Mindfulness is choiceless awareness.

When you go deeper and deeper, then a time comes when the conditions are fulfilled and a spontaneous opening takes place. Then one experiences the supreme silence of mind which has the power to bring about the total transformation of the being. This is the first stage of sanctity. You may call it the first baptism, a spiritual

baptism. Then there is no more going back; you are destined for full enlightenment. There is no time limit. Any time it may happen.

Steven: Could you speak more about what it means to be aware and what this awareness means to us as we are involved in day to day living?

Munindra: Meditation is actually a re-education of man, re-educating him how to see, how to hear, how to be in the eternal present—dynamically, not mechanically. Our mind is always thinking of the past, always planning for the future, not living in the present. Our past is not true, it has gone; our future is not true for it has not come; only the present moment is true. If we know how to live in the present moment, fully being alive, then the next moment comes...all right, then the next moment comes...all right, then the next moment comes...When the mind is silent then every moment you are discovering yourself.

Steven: Why is it so difficult to stay aware in the present moment?

Munindra: Our mind is generally very conditioned with environment, with society, with tradition, with education, with everything; so we are always thinking in the eternal conditioning. Meditation is a process of deconditioning; so we give a training in the beginning. These methods are means, not the end. To start with, we give a man some training and he starts to learn. Everyone is a self-explorer. We do not give any goal to follow. Each discovers daily, moment by moment.

Steven: What is the difference between mind and mindfulness?

Munindra: Mind and mindfulness are two different things. Mind means knowing faculty, cognizing faculty. Mindfulness means not to forget, just to be aware, just to be mindful of what is going on. Mind is always working; but we are not always mindful. If you take your food, many times you will see that mind is not with you, you are not with the mind. Mind is working somewhere else. Eating is going on mechanically. Many times we ask the students just to be mindful while they are eating, to be thoroughly aware of what is going on; but in the beginning it is not so easy. It is an extraordinarily difficult task for an untrained mind which has been conditioned for centuries to cling, to condemn, to judge, to evaluate, and to compare. Just to be with what is...that is a very, very difficult task; and yet, once this way of life is understood, it is the most simple thing.

Steven: Is that then what Stillpoint is about—to study this new way of living?

Munindra: Stillpoint means to collect the mind which has been scattered, diffused. So the question is how to collect the mind? We show the way and they have to do it. So this is a center where people can get together, practice together; then when they go back to their homes they know a new way of living. ☆

An introductory retreat is an opportunity to visit Stillpoint and become familiar with the practice of Insight Meditation. Further information is available by writing or calling Stillpoint, 604 South Fifteenth Street, San Jose, Ca. 95112. Telephone: (408) 287-5307.

Steven Ruddell is executive director of the Institute for Yoga Teacher Education, President of the California Yoga Teachers Association, and a member of the editorial board of the *Yoga Journal*.



Sujata

This collection of epigrams,
refreshing because of its simplicity,
is a clear, basic and insightful introduction
to the value of meditation.

The simplicity of these child-like drawings emphasizes
the clarity of Sujata's message:
to be honest with ourselves, to see the moment as it is,
and to let ourselves be free.