



Cambodia Update

IWA's Jeff Hardin just returned from his second scouting mission to Cambodia. While there he met with several aid workers, Cambodians and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to prepare for IWA's first mission to Cambodia. In addition to touring the nation's capital Phnom Penh, he visited two of the country's poorest provinces, Mondulkiri and Takeo. Jeff will be giving an update on the Cambodia Project at the IWA event on February 29.

Responding to Tragedy

adapted from a talk by Gil Fronsdal, October 1st, 2001

At the heart of Buddhism lies both realism and optimism. The realism entails an honest and unswerving recognition of the suffering and violence in our world. These existed at the time of the Buddha and they continue in our modern world. The optimism comes from recognizing the potential for alleviating suffering and violence. We can in fact remove from our hearts the toxic forces of greed, hate, and delusion. We can replace them with peace, loving-kindness, and compassion. For Buddhist practice, it is important to be both realistic and optimistic. Realism alone leads to despair. Optimism alone obscures the ground of spiritual practice.

In the face of unimaginable tragedy, violence and hate, we are called upon to honestly recognize our own fear, confusion and anger. Fear ignored produces more fear; confusion unacknowledged churns up more confusion; anger not confronted spawns further anger. To develop our mindfulness of all three is to learn how to be free of their forces.

This is a slow and gradual process. But the more free we become, the more we are able to organize our lives around our best intentions. The intentions to be kind, compassionate, helpful, happy, and liberated are among the most beautiful qualities we have as humans.

These qualities are not luxuries. They are not optional. We need to be able to call upon them when we respond to the cries of the world around us. The optimism of Buddhism is that we can make a difference to the world around us. Our thoughts, words, and deeds of empathy, love and caring are the needed counter-forces to hatred, violence, and despair. Our own efforts to find inner



Benefit Evening for Insight World Aid

Wednesday, February 29th, 7 - 8:30 p.m.
Insight Meditation Center with
Gil Fronsdal, Jeff Hardin & Nancy Smee

Being able to translate our compassion into action that helps others is one of the greatest fortunes. When such action helps free us from our clinging, it is a wonderful way of maturing along a path of liberation. When it brings forth the good in others and ourselves, it is a source of joy. When it connects us to people we normally don't meet, it knits our world into a closer human family. In this evening, Gil Fronsdal, Jeff Hardin and Nancy Smee will discuss their experience with compassion in action and how it comes out of their Buddhist practice. They will also describe their vision and plans for Insight World Aid, a new non-profit that is a vehicle for expressing wisdom and compassion in the service of individuals and communities in need throughout the world.

The evening is offered as a benefit for Insight World Aid. Donations will be used to help poor communities in Cambodia.

Location: Insight Meditation Center
108 Birch Street, Redwood City

peace, our example, can be an important force of wholesome change for people who don't know of that possibility.

The history of Buddhism offers many examples of how influential the peaceful presence of one person can be. When prince Siddhartha was dismayed by sickness, old age, and death, the sight of a peaceful renunciate inspired him with the possibilities of the spiritual quest which culminated in his awakening as the Buddha.

One of the more dramatic stories concerns the conversion of the violent king Ashoka in the third century BCE who was bent on conquering as much of India as possible. In his own words, which have survived on stones he ordered carved, he tells of being horrified at the carnage of the 100,000 deaths by which he won a battle. As he stood in grief on the battlefield, a single Buddhist monk walked by with a peace and radiance that moved the king to ask for teachings. Propelled by his own despair, the monk's serenity, and these teachings, the king renounced conquest, violence, and capital punishment. While he retained his army for defense, his efforts were redirected from war to the social and spiritual improvement of his subjects.

We can't be sure what teachings Ashoka received from the monk. The Buddha had much to say about violence and hatred; perhaps the monk repeated these verses from the Buddha:

*Hatred never ends through hatred.
By non-hatred alone does it end.
This is eternal truth.
Victory gives birth to hate;
The defeated sleep tormented.
Giving up both victory and defeat,
The peaceful sleep delighted.
All tremble at violence:
All fear death.
Having likened others to yourself,
Don't kill or cause others to kill.
If you surveyed the entire world
You'd find no one more dear than yourself.
Since each person is most dear to themselves,
May those who love themselves not bring harm to anyone.
The person who day and night
Delights in harmlessness,
And has loving-kindness toward all beings,
Is the one who has no hate for anyone.*

In Buddhist teaching, we have available two healthy responses to the suffering of the world. One is compassion. A tremendous motivation to change the world for the better can arise out of compassion. I believe that compassion is a more effective motivation than aversion. The other response is called samvega, which is the passion for practice. In our contact with suffering, we find the motivation to come to terms with our suffering, to find freedom for ourselves and others. Both responses contribute to peace.

May we all remain confident that we can make a difference.



Support Insight World Aid

1. **Volunteer:** Insight World Aid is in need of volunteers. We appreciate help from both people with medical training and qualifications and also people with non-medical skills. If you would like more information regarding donating your time and skills to IWA please visit our website and download a volunteer description list and application.
2. **Donate** - Insight World Aid is now accepting donations. As a non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization, donations made to IWA are tax-deductible. If you would like to make a donation at this time please send your check to our mailing address below or visit our website to donate through PayPal.
3. **Spread the word** – If you know someone who may be interested in our work, please forward this email to them or give them the link to our website. Bring a friend to our IMC event on February 29, 2012.

How to contact us

Our Website: <http://insightworldaid.org/>

Our Mailing Address:

Insight World Aid
108 Birch Street
Redwood City, CA 94062

Phone: (650) 241-9616 (voicemail)

Email: insightworldaid@gmail.com

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/InsightWorldAid>

Photos: Wat Opot Children Community co-founder Wayne Matthyssse distributing medications to a child. Lotus in pond.