

A Spiritual Odyssey For A Better Tomorrow

H H The Gyalwang Drukpa

What is compassion? To be compassionate is to understand. If you don't understand, no matter what you do in the name of compassion, you won't get anywhere. You need to practise compassion but in order to do that you need to not only talk compassion but also do compassion. Going on a yatra or pilgrimage with other people, for instance, is a good opportunity to interact with others, tending to each other's needs and doing all this selflessly. More than 600 people will join the yatra, and most of them are women.

We need to integrate Buddha's thought to modern life. Which is why the spiritual padyatra that is to commence today from Manali will seek to raise public awareness on the significance of education, health care, environment and heritage and in the process, also help us on our journey towards enlightenment. Going on a pilgrimage is one way of finding the innate enlightened nature that resides within each one of us and use it to empower ourselves and serve humanity.

It is important to live in the world in an environment-friendly manner so that the future of coming generations is not compromised on account of our selfish actions. We need to be aware of other beings, too. Selfless service and being aware of all beings is integral to a spiritual outlook.

The Drukpa lineage respects both spirituality and material life. We need to bridge the two. We believe in higher philosophy and abstract metaphysics as well as practical living. It's just that mentally, you should not be dragged down, but you are on earth, so you cannot avoid it and so you cannot be indifferent to beings that are suffering as part of existence.

Walking, eating, sleeping or any other activity ought to be undertaken selflessly. Walk, sleep

and eat for others. You drink water to satiate your thirst, but also be mindful of all the many bacteria in your body that are also drinking that water and benefiting from it. The interdependence becomes evident.

There is nothingness and there is everythingness. Nothingness is within everythingness and everythingness is in nothingness. It is necessary to contemplate on the practice of nothingness. Everythingness is all about practising the precept, "Live to Love" – the essence of which is to act for the benefit of all. The Drukpa lineage believes

in getting enlightened for the benefit of others. The goal is to enable practical application of Buddhist teachings to everyday life. If someone is suffering, it is our duty to try and alleviate that suffering. Contemplation is good, but not without offer-

ing a helping hand to those who need your help.

So the practice of everythingness is the practice of relative truth and the practice of nothingness is the practice of the ultimate truth. What we are doing now is to move more towards everythingness because it is important to be able to meet modern challenges, keeping in mind the principle of interdependence. Buddhism means progress in our mind – how much you have achieved in respect of developing compassion, and how strong your understanding of wisdom has grown. How many hours you are sitting cross-legged and how many mantras you are reciting is not the main question.

Sometimes, a spiritual journey is all it takes to find the simplest solution to the greatest problem.

The XII head of the 800-year-old Drukpa lineage will lead a padyatra, 'Walking on the world's rooftop', from Manali-Ladakh, May 23-July 3, with 285 nuns, 170 monks and other volunteers. He spoke to Narayani Ganesh in New Delhi.



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