

THE BUDDHIST REVIEW

FALL 2018

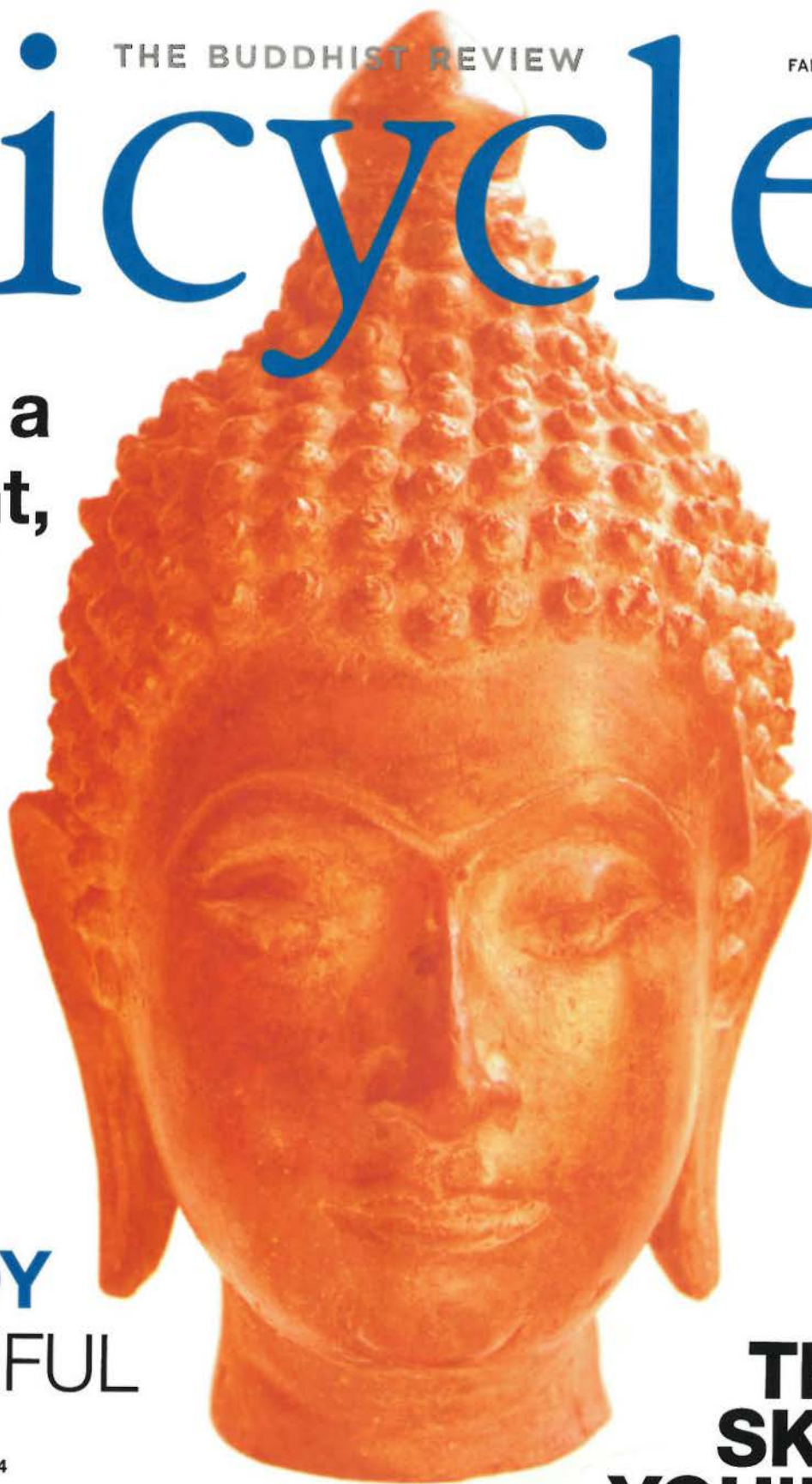
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Everyday Spirituality

We have an absolute life and a relative life—the eternal and the everyday—that exist together without separation. It's important to recognize this dual quality of our nature, otherwise we'll attach to one side without noticing or appreciating the other. We should avoid thinking, "Daily life is more important," or, "Spiritual life is more important." We live in both realms simultaneously, and if we don't notice this, we will be off balance.

From *A Sense of Something Greater: Zen and the Search for Balance in Silicon Valley*, by Les Kaye and Teresa Bouza © 2018. Reprinted with permission of Parallax Press (parallax.org). **Les Kaye** studied with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and is the head teacher at Kannon Do Zen Meditation Center in Mountain View, California.



The Heart of Meditation

What is meditation? Please try this example out. While you're reading, be aware of your breathing. Once you've made that adjustment—being aware of breathing and aware of reading—see if you're more grounded, more able to connect personally to what you're reading, more available to digest whatever's especially true for you.

Good news! You can do this all the time! You can breathe while you sit; you can breathe while you walk. You can breathe no matter where you are or what you're doing—in a car or in an elevator, washing a dish or waiting in line. You're breathing!

Our mind wanders, but our

body's here and now, breathing. Conscious breathing can be our anchor. We can get dragged back into the past, which can lead to depression, or we can become anxious about the future, which can lead to fear. Conscious breathing returns us to the here and the now, where we really belong. It's a process requiring care, like training a horse: a slow learner in the beginning but, eventually, a champion.

From *Pause, Breathe, Smile: Awakening Mindfulness When Meditation Is Not Enough*, by Gary Gach © 2018. Reprinted with permission of Sounds True (soundstrue.com). **Gary Gach** is an author, translator, poet, and teacher living in San Francisco.

SUBTLE SURPRISES

A true practice is a repeated activity with mystery. We pick something that suits us and we do it over and over again, but it's really not so much because we think we are going to get it perfect, or even exactly right. It's more because the repetition silhouettes the changes, and the format of constancy lulls us into the best surprises when the internal continuity breaks up. Because we keep doing the same thing, the fact that it's never the same keeps yielding the surprise we need.

From *A Buddhist Journal: Guided Practices for Writers and Meditators*, by Beth Jacobs, PhD © 2018. Reprinted with permission of North Atlantic Books (northatlanticbooks.com). **Beth Jacobs**, PhD, is a clinical psychologist, a lay teacher in the Soto Zen tradition, and the author of four books on writing and Buddhism.

TO PRACTICE IS TO TRANSFORM

No matter what Buddhist practices you do, training and transforming the mind is always the ultimate goal. Perhaps you are doing special Buddhist ritual practices or specific meditations. Whatever you are doing, if there is no inner change, no transformation, then this isn't truly a Buddhist practice. Without inner transformation you are cheating yourself, and maybe cheating others too.

From *Karmamudra: The Yoga of Bliss*, by Dr. Nida Chenagtsang © 2018. Reprinted with permission of SKY Press (skypressbooks.com). **Dr. Nida Chenagtsang** is the cofounder and medical director of Sorig Khang International, which trains students in Tibetan medicine.

Exonerating Pleasure

It is important to understand that there is nothing wrong with experiencing pleasure. The path to awakening does not involve torturous self-denial and asceticism; the Buddha opposed such activity. Pleasure is not a problem. We run into trouble when we become attached to the pleasure and to people and things that bring it. It's the attachment, not the pleasure itself, that leads us to lie to get what we want, to steal others'

property, or to kill to protect our possessions or honor. So the trick is to experience the pleasure without clinging to it, being depressed when it's gone, or trying to recreate it later.

From *The Compassionate Kitchen: Buddhist Practices for Eating with Mindfulness and Gratitude*, by Thubten Chodron © 2018. Reprinted with permission of Shambhala Publications (shambhala.com). **Thubten Chodron** is a student of H.H. the Dalai Lama and is the founder of Sravasti Abbey in Washington State.

Looking Beyond the Nose

The opposite of death isn't life but birth. The door swings both ways: we enter, live for a time, and then exit. We take our first breath and, not so long after, take our last. In between is our lifetime, basically a momentary display of color, sound, movement, feeling, awareness, and complex dramatization in which we're ever so briefly immersed. We might pity insects that have a maximum lifetime of just a few days, but we're in the same basic position from the perspective of what animates the infinite galaxies of form. Recognizing this at our core is immensely and wonderfully humbling; we see our extraordinary tininess and brevity in the boundless presence of all that is, and we end up not in despair or existential shadowlands but in deeply sobering awe, embodying an openness that holds it all.

From *Bringing Your Shadow Out of the Dark: Breaking Free from the Hidden Forces That Drive You*, by Robert Augustus Masters, PhD © 2018. Reprinted with permission of Sounds True (soundstrue.com). **Robert Augustus Masters, PhD**, is an integral psychotherapist. His many books include *Transformation through Intimacy and Spiritual Bypassing*.

