



## Path of Devotion

**D**evotion is essential to awakening, whether it is devotion to God, devotion to the spiritual path or devotion to awareness itself. Without devotion we are never going to feel any real intimacy between ourselves and the path we are on to find freedom from suffering.

Devotion develops in stages and I have found it incredibly useful in my own practice to understand and explore these stages. First is the *invocation stage*—reaching out to that which we trust, asking for connection even though we don't yet feel the connection. We might pray "Please God show up" or just become mindful of what it is that is blocking our heart. We are trusting the innate tenderness of our heart but not yet surrendering into it. Trusting that mindfulness will reveal this tenderness. It's easy to get stuck at this stage, feeling that little, inadequate "I" is reaching out to something external and better and even perfect. I spent a few decades here myself. We must learn to trust both the pain and the light. Feeling the wanting but not getting lost in it.

Eventually, as we become more comfortable relating directly to the pain and the joy of our human embodiment, the heart-mind begins to relax and the connection that was there all along is revealed. As Rumi says "*The longing you express is the return message.*" Our prayer or mantra or meditation is no longer reaching out for something not present. Now we enjoy a glori-



ous loving relationship with that which we invoked. We fall down and adore where previously we only bowed. We believe it when Maharaj-ji said "*I am always in communion with you.*" We have deep compassion for the suffering of ourselves and others. Our heart is broken open in this love stage devotion. The "I" fixation remains but is one small point in the boundless heart.

In this vastness of the open heart, the truth is revealed that what we invoked in the beginning of practice is none other than our own true nature, in fact the true nature of all that exists. The prayer, the mantra, the practice

is the deity, not just a tool to connect or a means for asking. Every thought, every action is always sacred. We realize the impossibility that there is anything but grace, blessing. This *tantric stage* from the Hindu perspective says that all energy and form is a pure manifestation of the Divine Mother. Even the difficult, even the chaotic reveals the sacred feminine. When asked what is the best form in which to worship God, Maharaj-ji said "*Every form.*" You, me, your difficult friend, the agitated mind, the pain in your body, all is the Beloved. We open to grace in every moment.

Throughout these stages of devotion,— *invocation, love, tantra* — there has always been an "I" experiencing devotion. Now finally the delusion of being only a separate "I" dissolves in the realization of wholeness.

There is only one. No one separate is saying the mantra. The great Indian Saint Namdev said "The whole universe is densely permeated with God's name." Nothing is a distraction since nothing is other than the living Self. Rather than worshipping divine image we know God/directly.

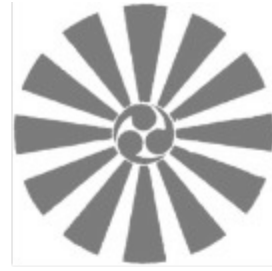
Of course this path is not straight. We move from stage to stage and back again, devotion sustaining us wherever we may be on this journey. Love is all we need.

— Dale Borglum

*In response to one who said his prayers were never answered, he never heard anything back.*

*"The longing you express is the return message. The grief you cry out from draws you toward union. Your pure sadness that wants help is the secret cup."*

Rumi



*Now is the time to know  
That all that you do is sacred.  
Now, why not consider  
A lasting truce with yourself and God?*

*Now is the time to understand  
That all your ideas of right and wrong  
Were just a child's training wheels  
To be laid aside  
When you can finally live  
with veracity and love.*

*Now is the time for the world to know  
That every thought and action  
is sacred.  
That this is the time  
For you to compute the impossibility  
That there is anything  
But Grace.*

*Now is the season to know  
That everything you do  
Is Sacred.*

Hafiz

## Faith and Surrender Can Heal

I learned during the early years at the Dying Center I ran in Santa Fe, New Mexico, under the auspices of the Hanuman Foundation, that care given to people who await death can on occasion lead to healing. We might call such events miracles but we may also consider them honest expressions of the sacred to be found in everyday life. A recently added member of our Board of Directors, an old friend and fellow devotee of Maharaj-ji, accepted an invitation to share a journey with Millie, a young woman challenged in the most profound ways who was ready to die. In her surrender and with her faith, healing happened.

Dale

In the beginning of April, Dale Borglum invited me to join the Board of Directors for the Living/Dying Project. I very happily accepted. At that time I was also asked to work with clients since I had experience some years back, working with Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Stephen Levine.

Dale, whom I've known for years as RamDev, suggested I work with a young woman, 20 years old, who has Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, a genetic connective tissue disease that affects collagen throughout her entire body, especially her gastrointestinal system and her neck. Because of this illness, she had GI dysmotility and vascular compression syndromes which were almost starving her to death. She had tried feeding tubes and total parenteral nutrition but her body couldn't tolerate them. Surgery in Germany was out of the question because her weight was too low. She also had an autoimmune disease called Behçet's disease. This young woman, living in a quiet part of New Zealand, seemed to be approaching death. Her name is Millie.

Millie was very weak and weighed less as an adult than she did when she was 10 years old. She could not eat without tremendous pain in her abdomen. She was ready to go and was without fear of death, however, her mother's pain about losing her daughter was more than Millie could bear, so she kept holding on to what was a torturous existence.

Some time passed and she told me that finally her

mother had come to a peaceful place about her leaving. Millie was ready to go. She told me she was enjoying everything daily. She went out in nature and looked at the trees and birds, flowers and sky.

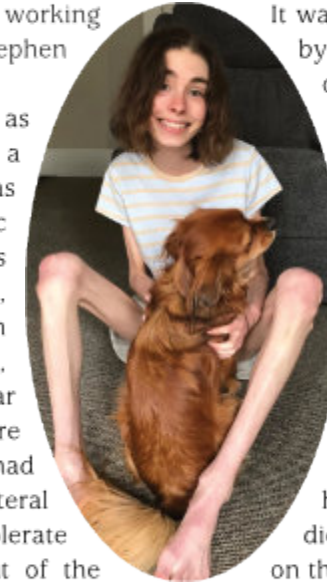
It was all so beautiful. She was saying goodbye to the physical plane. She told me at one point during the summer that she would not make it until September. Then, miraculously, she made a complete turn around. She was able to eat again and began putting on weight. It became clear she was not going to die. Millie said "I don't know how or why I am recovering. A miracle I guess."

She totally surrendered to life and therefore death. Millie courageously embraced everything with an open heart. She experienced that she could not die, only her body would stop manifesting on the physical plane.

When I would sit with her the oneness was profound. We would just sit in silence and feel our breath together. I love this young, beautiful, courageous being without end.

She loved and had faith in Hanuman and Neem Karoli Baba who was an incarnation of Hanuman. I told her that I was praying to Hanuman to heal her. She loved the teachings of Ram Dass. Her faith and surrender healed her.

— Mukti Habsburg  
Living/Dying Project Volunteer



# There Are No Fixed Horizons

## Mimi Chen Ting (1946 – 2022)

*Art is the vision. Art is the voice. Art is life. That's basically what it is. It's the embodiment of everything, of being alive, of your aspirations as well as how you feel in the darkest moments. Life and art are the same to me.*

Mimi Chen Ting was a force of nature. She was a lotus flower born from the rich earth of her homeland in China, who successfully transplanted to the San Francisco Bay Area. I met her first as someone who was drawn to the offerings of the Living/Dying Project. She wanted spiritual sustenance as she faced a cancer diagnosis she knew had a certain endpoint. She quickly became a dear friend, a kind of older sister whom I joined on a two-year journey through illness that was also filled with joy and delight. In the bargain, I also became close with her husband of more than 50 years, Andrew, a man of tender wisdom and quiet strength.



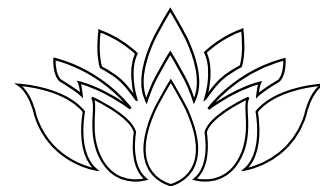
What a remarkable story unfolded as I came to know her. She was just two generations removed from the tradition of bound feet in the grandmother she adored. Her mother was the concubine of a successful banker, and she was the middle of three children in his second family. She attended Catholic school as a girl in Hong Kong and considered becoming a nun while in high school. But her heart called her to another destiny, and she crossed the ocean to attend the San Francisco College for Women. She would soon meet Andrew, and complete her degree in fine art at San Jose State College before marrying him. In the following five decades, she developed a major body of work in painting, printmaking, and performance art, winning critical recognition and be-

coming a presence in the artist community in Taos, New Mexico, which later became her home base.

She was clear she wanted to be remembered in equal parts as mother and artist. And indeed, she took a fierce pride in how she raised her daughter and son, giving them the kind of upbringing she wished she had had. Although she never used the term with me, she was committed to an intergenerational healing that would bring to an end the sorrows she had grown up with.

And what did we talk about over those two years? It's a long list of subjects, but it included books, politics, TV shows, culture, and more politics (no shortage of material). We talked about what death and dying meant to her. We sat in meditation together, seeking healing and forgiveness. Andrew joined us for most of these meetings, as her intimate caregiver and unfailing support. When her chemotherapy treatments came to an end, there was no denial or evasion. She met her end with grace and determination, loving her family and ready to step into the mystery that we will all meet one day.

— Doug Wallace  
*Living/Dying Project Volunteer*



*Feeling Those Bayou Blues*  
Mimi Chen Ting

*There are no fixed horizons.*  
Mimi Chen Ting



*My path is smoothest when I am willing to fall.*  
Mimi Chen Ting

*We, who are fortunate to be given the gifts of expression and the opportunities to share them, are privileged fools. I am humbled and grateful to be among the legion.*

Mimi Chen Ting

In work as in life, I am irresistibly drawn to distillation and simplification. Most of my work springs from a restive stream of consciousness to question and relate, to stir up ripples and make waves... My methodology is to initiate, observe, wait, and respond. I do not seek absolute resolutions, but venture forth as an intrepid wanderer, unconcerned with becoming lost. I draw with charcoal on primed canvases pinned to the wall, mix my paints in bowls, and apply them with brushes. I watch and follow the colors and contours as they ebb and bulge, claiming their space and carving out their part in a narrative. When their interaction is dynamical and emphatic, they invite empathy and promise infinite possibilities. They can change hearts and move mountains; sometimes they even crystallize life's more fleeting moments, and brighten its deeper shadows. This meditative and mesmerizing practice ultimately liberates and restores; I am grateful to travel this path, and I am privileged to share it.

Mimi Chen Ting

## Project News

• We offer free-of-charge, volunteer-based spiritual support services for persons with life-threatening illnesses, for their caregivers and for those grieving the loss of a loved one. Our services are offered virtually as well as in person and are available to all, regardless of location. If you or anyone you know could benefit from this support, please call our office at **415-456-3915**.

• There is now a [Calendar](#) of all Living/Dying Project events on our homepage which includes not only workshops, courses and talks we produce, but, also, workshops Dale will be teaching at places like **Hollyhock Centre** and **Esalen Institute**.

• Our Board of Directors has grown from 5 to 13 members plus 2 consultants. The new Board members bring great experience and enthusiasm which is generating much more energy than the old "Dale and friends" model. You can meet our Board and staff using the [Who We Are](#) link on our website.

• Aurora Leonard, our Associate Director, is doing wonderful work with our social media presence, as well as taking over much of the administrative duties that for years were filling Dale's days and nights. Aurora and the Board have taken the Project to the next level in a remarkably short amount of time. You will find links to our social media accounts at the bottom of each page of the website. We can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [YouTube](#).

• We are generating new clients and new volunteers at about double the rate of 6 months ago. Before the pandemic we mostly served clients in the San Francisco Bay Area. We now have 115 volunteers around the world supporting clients via Zoom.

• In addition to our one-to-one support for clients we now offer support groups led by committed Board members.

- *Grief/Bereavement group*
- *Critical illness group*
- *Caregiver Support group*

• We have a large, very sweet spiritual support group that meets via Zoom every-other Saturday between 9 and 11 AM Pacific Time. Email the Project if you would like to be added to the roster.

• Dale's podcast channel on the [Be Here Now Network](#) under his spiritual name *RamDev*, has lots of dharma talks and some great guests. His recent appearance on the [Duncan Trussell Family Hour](#) podcast is available online at the link above.

• Please donate to our [Farm Fundraiser!](#) All proceeds go to help sustain the work we do as well as support regenerative agriculture. Sixty acres are being generously donated by Board Member Chris Beaudry in Saskatchewan. Use the link above to learn more.

• Affordable dharma teachings by guest teachers are regularly offered. On January 21, 2023, as part of our Speaker Series, [Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo](#) will have a conversation with Dale. You can learn more by clicking the link above. Instructions for signing up for the event can be found at our website.

• Dale will facilitate weekend workshops/volunteer training programs via Zoom and in person January, February and March of 2023. California CEUs are available for LCSW, LMFT, RN, LAc & Psychologist. Please see the following page for details or go to the [Calendar](#) on our website.

*Live life as if everything  
were rigged in your favor.*

Rumi



# HEALING AT THE EDGE CONSCIOUS LIVING / CONSCIOUS DYING

## A WORKSHOP FOR CAREGIVERS, THERAPISTS, NURSES, ACUPUNCTURISTS AND ANYONE WANTING TO DEEPLY EXPLORE HEALING



Sponsored by the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy**, this workshop is offered by the **Living/Dying Project**. Participants from California seeking continuing education as Psychologist, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist or Licensed Clinical Social Worker will receive C.E.U.s from the **Community Institute for Psychotherapy**. The **Living/Dying Project** offers C.E.U.s for nurses and licensed acupuncturists. A flyer for the workshop may be found at the **Living/Dying Project** website at [livingdying.org](#).

Physical healing, emotional healing, spiritual healing, collective healing – the journey to wholeness takes many forms and has many starting points. Each of us is at a particular point on our healing path, confronting our next challenge, often without clearly knowing whether attitudes or practices we have been using to facilitate growth in ourselves or in our clients are becoming stale, without knowing which direction we should turn to create meaningful transformation.

In this workshop we will draw upon the wisdom of Buddhism, the diagnostic message coming from the connection between stages of early childhood development and energetic patterns in the adult body, as well as the softening and the passion of an open heart. Having explored these wisdom traditions during 40 years of being a guide to the dying, a clear and practical paradigm for the healing path has become apparent to me. Healing occurs through direct contact with the Sacred, through realization of our true nature. There are no shortcuts, but certainly neither taking unnecessary detours nor spending time spinning our wheels can inspire us along what is often a difficult journey to a life consciously lived.

During this workshop we will explore together a clear, concise and usable model of the healing process that can specifically diagnose and identify the next step that is transformational for each of us, even during crisis. Short, intensive guided meditations and other practices will be presented to create a healing experience that will lead to a life consciously and compassionately lived and eventually to a conscious death. We're all caregivers and all seekers of healing. These deeply uncertain times are an incredible opportunity.

**San Francisco** one-day workshop will be held **January 26, 2023**

**San Anselmo** two-day workshop will be held **February 11 and 12, 2023**

**Online workshops: February 25 and 26, 2023 AND a one-day workshop on March 4, 2023**

For information about locations and registration please visit the [Living/Dying Project website](#).



Workshops will be conducted by Dale Borglum, Ph.D., who, with Stephen Levine and Ram Dass, established the Hanuman Foundation Dying Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, the first center supporting conscious dying in the U.S. Dale directed the center until moving to the San Francisco Bay Area. He is founder and Executive Director of the Living/Dying Project and co-author of **Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook** (Bantam Books).

Imagine facing death without fear. Imagine using a life-threatening illness as an opportunity for spiritual awakening. Imagine approaching the unknown with an open heart. We often resist change as a natural part of life. Strength and healing can be found in life's most difficult situations.



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## Mission Statement

The Living/Dying Project offers conscious and compassionate support in the spirit of mutual exploration to those facing life-threatening illness and their caregivers. We also offer education and training in the practices of spiritual healing to those confronting life's most difficult situations and to anyone committed to spiritual transformation.

## Supporting Us

The Living/Dying Project is growing like never before, giving us the opportunity to create meaningful transformation for many more individuals and for society as a whole. We offer spiritual support around the world, free of charge to those with a life-threatening illness as well as to their caregivers. As the first organization in the Western world whose mission is to cultivate conscious dying, the Project has offered these services for 40 years. In addition to spiritual support, we offer training and educational services. The mission of our work is healing, both the healing of that which blocks us from full aliveness and the healing of our collective and individual relationships with death. Fear of death separates us from each other and from our own essential selves. Especially now, it is vital to keep what is most meaningful and inspiring to us at the motivating center of our actions.

Our operation is simple and our overhead is small. A great majority of our budget comes from individual donations. We ask for your support, both financially as well as with your blessings and prayers. This support allows us to continue the vital work of the Project. Please make a donation using the enclosed envelope (if you received the printed newsletter). You also can make a donation online using PayPal or credit card by visiting our website [www.livingdying.org](http://www.livingdying.org), and clicking the **Donate Now** button at the top of the page.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who have supported us in any way. May this holiday season and the year to come be filled with wisdom and blessings for you and for those you love. May your actions contribute to peace and healing.

With so much love,

*You take it all in. You let the pain of the world touch your heart and you turn it into compassion.*

16th Karmapa



## Credits

Layout and design of this newsletter was done by Curtis Grindahl, a long-time volunteer with the Project. On page one is a photo by George Ward titled **Rising Moon, Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge**. The photo of Dale on page seven was taken by Heather Swain.

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