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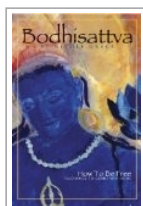
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## Review: Bodhisattva: How To Be Free: Teachings to Guide You Home

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Norm Goldman



Author: Nicole Grace: ISBN: 0-9747852-3-7: Publisher: Mani Press

Reading Nicole Grace's *Bodhisattva: How To Be Free: Teachings to Guide You Home* proved to be quite an intuitive experience. It is difficult to describe just how much her poetry spoke and touched me, although, I have to admit, that I opened the pages with some trepidation, not having a clue as to what is bodhisattva and wondering if I was in for some kind of mundane preaching.

Grace is an ordained Buddhist monk, and previous to *Bodhisattva*, she authored *Mastery at Work: 18 Keys For Achieving Success, Fulfillment And Joy in Any Profession*. She is also a teacher of personal and professional development seminars, as well as Tantric Buddhist Mysticism and meditation, to students around the world.

The term bodhisattva is Sanskrit whose essence is basically "enlightenment" (bodhi) and "being" or "existence" (sattva). Grace informs us in her introduction "that Buddhists believe that a bodhisattva is a particular kind of enlightened being— one whose compassion runs so deep that he or she resists a final dissolution of the soul into Eternity until all sentient beings have themselves attained liberation from suffering." We are further informed that when you practice bodhisattva, you are required to live in the world without becoming seduced by it, nor overly repulsed by it. It is an acceptance of the world with all its tragedies, temptations, and complexities, while remaining inwardly immune to its influences.

According to Grace, the verses in *Bodhisattva: How To Be Free: Teachings to Guide You Home* have become a vital part of her own practice of bodhicitta. And she adds, "I pray that by reading them perhaps at least one person may feel a sense of rapprochement with his or her own struggles and realizations and, with that, the will and joy to persevere in this most unique unusual occupation."

It has been said that a poem can change your life, for in poems we often find words and images that help us understand and interpret the world. It is with this in mind that we can truly appreciate some of the memorable words of wisdom that Grace's lyric voice delivers to her readers. The themes of Grace's collection are soulful, as well as being far reaching, navigating a variety of subjects that reflect the basic tenets of bodhisattva. Moreover, the poems are unified in Grace's skilled presentation and conscientious attention to her message, while she balances straight forward emotional honesty with her relish in language and linguistic play.

An example of this can be seen in *Hope vs Faith*, where she makes a distinction between hope and faith. For Grace, hope is rooted in doubt, for, as she states, "when you hope you are also believing your desires may not come to pass." On the other hand, she writes that "when you have faith you are believing everything will work out for the best, which is why you can be at peace." As she points out, "faith is positive while hope is negative." Her concluding stanza drives home the point that "enlightened minds have Faith, unenlightened minds Hope." Grace also

surprises her readers with her wise choice of appropriate words in sound, sense, and feeling, as exemplified with *Be Mine*, *The Best*, and *The Freedom of Alone-ness*, which are short and intense.

If I had a complaint about this collection, it would be that there is not enough of it. And although I may not become a convert to bodhisattva, at least I can say that I certainly enjoyed picking my way through the many poems that embody Grace's philosophy and teachings.

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