



# Listening to the Heart: A Contemplative Journey to Engaged Buddhism

*Kittisaro, Thanissara*

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## **Listening to the Heart: A Contemplative Journey to Engaged Buddhism** Kittisaro, Thanissara

Husband and wife Kittisaro and Thanissara take turns coauthoring chapters in this deeply personal dharma book exploring the inner practice of meditation in support of awakening. Within the context of the lives of the authors, both monastics in their youth, awakening unfolds as a multifaceted process following the archetypal journey of the hero(ine). Traveling from innocence to disillusionment through the fields of trials and despair that lead to maturity, and ultimately to inspiration and a blessed life, *Listening to the Heart* tells the story of two unconventional individuals who have together embraced spirituality as the keystone of their lives.

At the heart of the book, through teachings on the nondual nature of reality, we enter the "intimacy with all things" as revealed in core Buddhist texts. Without ending at the goal of personal freedom, Thanissara and Kittisaro encourage us to go beyond the experience of inner peace to embodying wisdom in acts of service within the world. With a realistic appraisal of our current global crisis in which sustainability is threatened by catastrophic climate change, the authors encourage a preparedness that enables a mindful balance of equanimity and passionate engagement whatever the outcome of our global evolutionary journey.

The guiding refuge for this journey is the Buddha, the historical teacher and—most profoundly—that immediate and direct pure awareness, which we all can access. The book also draws on teachings and stories of Buddhist masters who are fearless, funny, and challenging. Eventually we are led into the Mary-like presence of the goddess of mercy, Kuan Yin who, as a great archetype within Buddhist cosmology, reveals the deepest mystery of our own hearts and our capacity for merciful and compassionate response. As the inner process of awakening unfolds, it transforms seekers and their lives, as modeled by the authors. It both heals the personal self in its journey through its wounds and shadows, and yet at the same time dissolves identification with the self. The book then ends by returning to the simplicity of the authors' primary teacher, Ajahn Chah, with his encouragement to "Be the Dharma."

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