



## *Live To Love*

Live To Love is the guiding theme of a humanitarian international movement, which the Gyalwang Drukpa, head of the Buddhist Drukpa school of Himalayan Buddhism, has launched ten years ago. The different international and national projects in the area of nature, climate and animal protection are examples of the realization of the secular ethics, which His Holiness the Dalai Lama proclaims for several years.

Live to Love - everybody wishes for that. But how can one really live universal love? Gianna Wabner, president of the foundation Live To Love – Germany tells in this interview from her longtime treasure trove of experience, how by realizing compassion it shows itself as love and can become a key to happiness.



***What has prompted the Gyalwang Drukpa ten years ago to found the humanitarian initiative Love To Love?***

The Gyalwang Drukpa has referenced the increase of great environmental problems and social upheavals for many years. 2007 he described in a very moving letter to the community of the Drukpa lineage his vision of a secular organization with the beautiful name “Live To Love” - “live to love”.

Our formal spiritual practices like the recitation of prayers and mantras, group- and single retreats, as he wrote, strengthen our mind and lead us to develop more compassion. But now the time has come to bring these formal practices actively outwards and implement them.

“If natural disasters happen in our societies, where are we then? If our vital environment is increasingly confronted with all kinds of threats how can we help in that moment?”

So a movement came into being which spread step by step internationally. The first Live To Love foundation was then founded in Hong Kong.



***And how did it come to the name of “Live To Love”?***

Love is a universal power, which regulates all painful processes and can even heal them. Here it is about an all-encompassing love, which rises from a very profound and far-reaching understanding about the wide relations of life and the resulting compassion, and not only about a personal feeling of love.

The Gyalwang Drukpa wrote at that time:

“On this small planet positive deeds are highly recommended, because we were born to help one another. By expressing our love in different ways, by the realization of generosity, ethical conduct and understanding, we fulfill our meaning to be born as a human.”

He then created a beautiful logo out of five interconnected hearts, which clarify five pillars and explained it in this way: “These five hearts stand for the love from the five directions, which join together in unity and harmony. The orange light in the middle represents the sun of hope, which grows with the glow of its rays and gradually becomes red. Red stands for strength and energy.

All of this symbolizes a heart full of love, which radiates from its own self to everything that exists and through continuous blossoming of selfless energy finally in the form of manifold humanitarian activities extends to all beings.

The outer orange circle symbolizes the achievement of helpful activities, which are conducted with fearless confidence and sure success.”

***Live To Love - actually everybody wants that - what is so difficult to really live it?***

Our inner nature, our spiritual nature, is love. The guiding theme of life in general is love. We all long for love and for lucky circumstances. We people, the animals and the earth as well on which we live and from which we live. Since the industrialization the loving and conscious contact with the earth and its resources has given way to an increasingly destructive consumerist attitude. The aftermath of this unkindness appear worldwide by now, especially through the distinct symptoms of climate change.

Actually it isn't difficult to dedicate oneself to love in life. It is our self-absorption, our egotistic tendencies, which initially block the implementation of



love. As long as we realize ourselves from the ego in the world, we live life somehow with reverse meaning... The palindrome (in German) of the word life is fog (Leben – Nebel). We walk as through a fog and don't see clearly. Therefore we can fall and walk against walls.

The antidote is: Live to love! Our activities not only inspire ourselves,

but also many other people. They lead us step by step into our true spiritual nature, into love. After all activities – and this is also visible on the photos – the result is well-being and happiness. The faces of all participants, of the children as well as of the adults, beam with joy and satisfaction. One cannot produce that artificially. People experience the happiness to move something collectively. At our tree planting activities the happiness results from the direct contact with the earth, we feel the trees, are physically active and come together afterwards, to celebrate the accomplished after the work is done, to laugh together and to exchange experiences.

***There are five pillars: Education, environment and animal protection, equality, medical emergency relief and the protection of cultural heritage. So many topics get pooled – there are many projects, both internationally and also in Germany – where is the central theme, is it distinguishable at all, what you are about?***



These five pillars describe the activities, which are based in the already mentioned five jointly intertwined hearts. They are interconnected – are in interdependence - and together restore the balance on this planet and in society. One brings about the other – these five pillars are like the five petals of a flower, which we also find again in spiritual geometry. Here in Germany we support the big international projects and implement them in regional grassroots activities. At first we started with the help for homeless people and have added the other pillars step by step. We protect nature and animals through activities, at which we collect plastic garbage, or we plant trees to improve the climate. We protect lives through acute crisis intervention as for example the fund-raising campaign after the earthquake in Nepal or also refuge relief.

***At the first international Live To Love activity, which the Gyalwang Drukpa initiated, many trees were planted in Ladakh. What has that to do with love?***

Very much, indeed! With the love to mother earth and to all beings, which inhabit it and are dependent on a healthy planet. 2010 was this devastating mud flood in Ladakh. Many people lost their lives in this flood or their existence, their houses. The climate change showed its horror face. The Gyalwang Drukpa immediately traveled to Ladakh to give the affected people comfort and moral support. He also studied the causes of this flood very closely. Earlier Ladakh was a very fertile, green, wooded country. But there are no more mountain forests, and that was one of the reasons for the gigantic mud flood.

Reforestation is therefore part of the solution to be able to encounter future heavy rains. So the children of Ladakh can hike through forests again in the foreseeable future.

Small streams will dig their creeks through the woods and there will be more drinking water again present for the people and the animals in the area.

So the big tree planting campaign has something

to do with a very big, in perspective very wide, universal love. There will follow many more.



By the way, many climate researchers have been pointing to this for years that through tree planting the CO2 problem can be regulated. It is also about the preservation of the earth for the future generations.

***When I listen to you, I realize that every act of Live To Love is very clearly shaped by the awareness of the context of cause and effect...***

The connection between cause and effect is definitely a profound lesson that we explore deeper in each of our actions. Whether we visit the homeless, do animal protection activities, collect plastic or plant trees - we learn a lot about causes and their effects. We also strive from the beginning, to connect the respective activities with the aspect of further education. We all have thereby attained a considerable general knowledge. That would have remained closed to us without such grassroots actions.

By the way, it's absolutely fascinating to work with children. They have such a joy and are of quicker comprehension as we adults. We also observe that the children thereby gain confidence in the future. When we are together doing such good things, they feel comfortable in their world and take things to their classes, take them to the breakfast table and say: "Mom, but I do not want cheese any more from plastic packaging."

At our plastic waste collection campaign "Mutiny on the Elbe" in the summer the children sieved and collected microplastics and informed themselves, how the welfare of the environment and of animals and the protection of our health are connected. One boy said quite spontaneously: "Why do adults eat mussels when they are contaminated with microplastics?" Children are sometimes actually much more consistent in refraining from harmful behavior as we adults.



***The Gyalwang Drukpa has established the self-defense method kung fu for the nuns in the monasteries. What is the effect of that?***

First of all an unbelievable fitness on the part of the nuns. The training also offers them a perfect balance, since next to their diverse live-to-love activities they sit in the monasteries in meditation posture hour after hour practice and pray. To stretch and move the bones, the ligaments, the muscles is very healthy

in this context. It strengthens the body. In addition to the physical fitness kung fu certainly also helps a lot to strengthen the self-confidence of women.

The kung fu nuns recently taught women in Ladakh in a workshop in this self-defense style. The women was shown how they can defend themselves and mediated that they are also expressly allowed to, because the frequency of sexual abuses and violence have increased not just worldwide, but increased alarmingly especially also in India.

The kung fu nuns teach the women how they can protect themselves and thus can go through life more self-confidently. This is a real revolution, because the young women who participated in this workshop had also an opportunity to talk about their experiences. We know the taboo to talk about sexual assault also in the West. In India it is even stronger.

### ***Why is it important to advocate stronger for equality?***

Maybe it helps if we envision the Daoist symbol of Ying and Yang. Two polarities, which mutually condition and produce each other. Yin, the female principle, and Yang, the male principle. Both poles in a circle. Both take an equal space. Black and white describe the qualities of the moon and the sun. Night and day. During the day we are active, at night everything settles down, becomes still. Yin and Yang each have individual energies, which preserve the creation in harmonious interaction.

When we paint the Yin and Yang symbol on a blackboard, an empty circle next to it, which represents the consciousness space, and add to this empty circle in color the situation of female and male in our present: the white, male Yang fills almost the entire space of the circle... So, an enormous imbalance.

This situation has developed over the last millennia. Not only in politics, the economy, but this is also the case with religious institutions. So the universal order has not been in balance for a long time. If the circle would be a disk, it would purely through the distribution of the forces tilt to the side. This is undoubtedly already the case. We must return both qualities again to a harmonious balance and equality so that the balance is restored.

So women definitely need the same rights as men, so that they can spread life and the universal connections from the quality of female wisdom. Women probably have easier access to feelings and creative connections. This is how the love of life is founded in the nature of women - only through their ability to receive children and to give birth.

If the child is born and a woman is able to breast-feed, that is a very strong message, because with the mother's milk she also brings a part of her body to the diet. These primordial-female principles give women the potential of easier access to universal love.

In many ethnic cultures, the earth has been and is equated with the mother. She not only carries us, she feeds us, she gives us so much joy with her inexhaustible beauty! The life-sustaining water of the earth is called her milk, her fruits, the grain, the vegetables as her material body, which she gives us as food. Unfortunately the awareness of these universal relationships has been lost in many cases today.

***So many projects also cost a lot of money. How can you finance them?***

Oh yes, that's definitely right. Both international and at state level, we depend on donations and cooperation partners and in this regard are active in all countries in the matter of fundraising. Initially Live To Love - Germany has started with elaborate micro-funding. That required a good communication structure, which takes a lot of time and patience, but in the end has contributed not insignificantly to a level of recognition.

Letters, phone calls, personal conversations - all that matters. Starting with the family, the neighbors, the friends. We still collect donations in kind and money like that today. We regularly receive inquiries by now whether we can use this or that. Sometimes that what is available to us is pretty slender; we then compensate that through more good ideas and also from private means, simply because it gives us pleasure.

We are still looking for supporting members and large sponsors, to be more effective. For example, several brochures and children's books stand on our to-do list. To realize these, it takes time and money. Our grand vision is to start a Live-To-Love-Academy. This should be the frame for philosophical and cultural events, workshops, discussion groups and much more. Since quite a few from us work in naturopathic and medical professions, therapy rooms should also find a place in this house.

***Everyone works voluntarily at Live To Love. To realize all the ideas, it surely needs a lot of members?***

If we look at the Live To Love team worldwide, actually a very big team together comes together. During the past ten years we have built a very working, well-functioning team structure here in Germany and all are now equipped with a great deal of professionalism. I am very thankful and extremely happy, because our core team, in fact still very clear in its size, is by now equipped with many wonderful skills.

***What was the most touching situation for you?***

I can hardly answer that, because in the past ten years, there was an immense wealth of very touching situations. I remember at this moment an experience on the street when we visited the homeless. It was winter and bitterly cold. An old woman sat on the frozen ground. I shook hands with her and in the same

moment she looked visibly surprised and with tears into my eyes. At that moment such a pure and sheer personhood was conveyed, in which all boundaries of self and you were melted away like snow in the sun. Deeply moving and very precious was this moment.

*Live To Love was brought into being by the Gyalwang Drukpa in 2007. Priorities in the work of the international network lie in the topics of climate, environmental and animal welfare, but also education, medical as humanitarian aid, equality, as well as in the preservation of cultural heritage. He is laureate of many international honors, i.a. he was awarded for his initiative by the United Nations in 2010 with the Millennium Development Goals Award, in 2017 he received the Honorary Fellowship Award of the Wolfson College of Oxford University.*

*Live To Love Germany supports since then different larger projects in the Himalayas, and realizes the wish of the founder in regular regional grassroots actions. After the friends' association, which has been in existence since the beginning, the German Live To Love foundation was founded in Hamburg in 2014 under the umbrella of the Gyalwang Drukpa with Gianna Wabner as president.*

*Gianna Waber is president of the Live To Love Germany foundation and has established Live To Love in German-speaking countries. She leads the Hamburger center of the Buddhist Drukpa tradition Druk Kunzig Ling and in addition works for almost 30 years as alternative practitioner, healer and teacher*

