

# In Memory of Jotika Hermsen: The Practice Continues

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It is so beautiful to be able to practice together. It really doesn't get any better than this.

I made some notes about what I wanted to say, but honestly, I don't know if I'll follow them. I could just read them—but so much has happened since we last met, only a month ago. The world feels more chaotic than I've ever seen it in my life, and I've lived a long time.

And closer to our Dhamma lives, there has been the passing, just last week, of Sister Jotika—a very precious being. Many of you may be feeling that loss deeply. Or perhaps there is someone in your own life whom you miss intensely.

And yet, the practice goes on—no matter what the world does.  
The practice must go on.

That is really what I was speaking about last month: refuge. Finding faith and confidence in ourselves and in each other. Discovering the independence that comes from trusting our own capacity to practice—while also recognizing that we need each other. This is something we do together. And for that, there is so much gratitude. Thank you to everyone who helps make this possible. It is truly precious.

Because the world needs our diligence. You may have noticed how dramatic and difficult things have been recently, on so many levels. But we cannot indulge in the luxury of constantly lamenting, “Oh, how terrible everything is.” Yes, things are difficult. That is the nature of saṃsāra. This realm is flawed. Painful things happen—even to good people.

So the question is: how was it for you this past month?  
Were you able to access refuge?

Were you able, even for a moment, to connect with your own capacity for clarity, kindness, and fearlessness?

Even a moment matters. And I'm sure each of you has had many such moments—because you practice. And that is something deeply good.

The world, with all its instability, loss, and uncontrollability, naturally makes the heart tremble. We respond—we want to know how to respond. But uncertainty is the nature of this realm. It is our natural home here. That is why we need refuge—not to escape the world, but to find a place of inner stability from which we can act, speak, and cultivate kindness, wisdom, and compassion.

Because vulnerability is universal. Every one of us is vulnerable. Not just in a fragile, psychological sense, but in a deeper, wiser sense: we live in fragile bodies, in an unstable world. Everything is in flux.

This vulnerability can be experienced in two ways: as weakness, or as wisdom. Hopefully, we learn to rest more often in the latter—the strength that comes from understanding that this is simply the nature of things.

We do not know what will happen next. We do not know when our last breath will be. So we pay attention to this breath, now—simply because we can. This is where wisdom is born.

Even in small, everyday experiences, this becomes clear. Recently, where I live, we had electricity for only two days out of a week. At one point, there was no water—except what came from the sky. No phone, no computer. And I noticed the mind becoming anxious: “Will there be power when I need it?”

These are things we usually take for granted. But when they’re gone, we see how dependent we are. And we also see how the mind reacts: “I want this. I don’t want that.”

That wanting—that resistance—is what creates suffering.

The bare experience is one thing. Our reaction to it is another. And it is our reactivity that is oppressive—not the experience itself.

This applies to everything: loss, loneliness, the state of the world, relationships, health, even the simple vulnerability of being alive.

In the Theravāda tradition, there is a chant often recited at funerals:

“All conditioned phenomena are of the nature to arise and pass away.  
One who realizes this finds the deepest peace.”

Everything arises and passes. This is the natural flow of cause and effect. It is not personal. Nature is not personal. It is vast—far bigger than our preferences or desires.

And there can be great relief in remembering this. From birth to death, this process continues. Sister Jotika passed away because she was born. These are inseparable. It is simply the law of nature.

When we fight this reality, we suffer. It becomes exhausting.

So we begin to observe cause and effect—both in the world and in our own minds. We see how suffering arises, often through resistance. And sometimes we see what happens when there is no resistance—a kind of ease, even in difficult circumstances.

Moment by moment, we learn. We gather small insights:  
“With this, that arises. With the ending of this, that also ends.”

Over time, these small observations form a larger understanding.

It’s like looking at a painting. Up close, you see only small brushstrokes. But when you step back, a whole image appears. In the same way, when we observe carefully, we begin to see the full picture: suffering is created—and it can also be released.

The storms of life will come. Wars may happen. Loss is inevitable. But suffering is not inevitable.

That is what the practice shows us.

And this understanding also shapes how we live. We become more careful about what we cultivate—what seeds we plant. Because whatever seeds we plant will grow under the right conditions.

So what are you planting today?

We all wish we could do better. And that's okay. We are doing the best we can. Just keep planting wholesome seeds.

There will always be storms, loss, and uncertainty. But we do not want to add to the suffering of the world. Instead, we cultivate peace, understanding, and care.

Everything is impermanent. Everything is beyond our control. But we do have choice in how we respond. That is our refuge.

And we also have each other. The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha—and our shared practice.

So we continue. Again and again, we return to awareness, to kindness, to wisdom.

Thank you for your practice. It is more important than you know. Every moment of mindful awareness contributes something positive to the world.

And thank you for being, in a way, like Sister Jotika for one another—for carrying this practice forward, each in your own way.

She was special. And so are you—each of you.

We carry this teaching into the world, into the future, in our own small ways. And that is something truly good.

Thank you.

INMA