



altruism in a maid's uniform

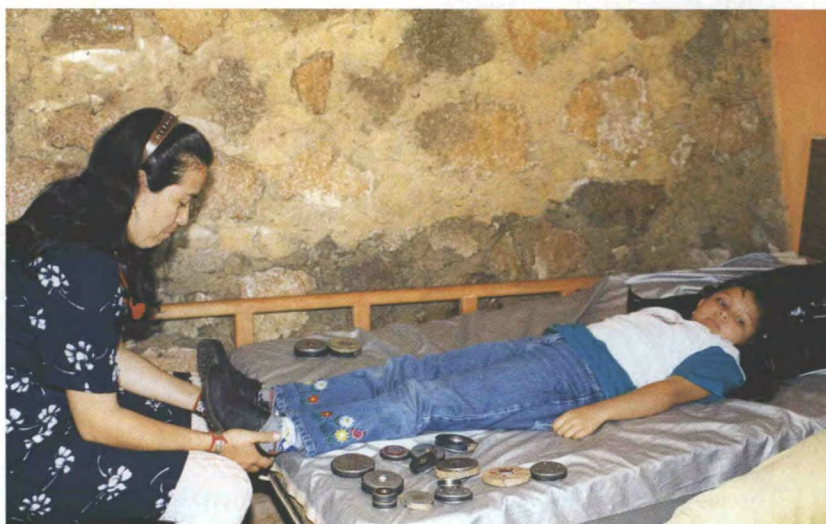
At the beginning of ROCIO ARREOLA'S medical career, 24 years ago, she met an iridologist who surprised her with his accurate diagnosis of patients she was acquainted with, but whom he did not know. She became his student. For 18 years she has used various alternative therapies, including modern Western acupuncture, homeopathy, Reiki, massage, energy healing, nutrition, emotional therapy and healing meditations. Dr. ARREOLA now runs a retreat center in Mexico, wears a maid's uniform and cooks and cleans like the paid help.

At 16 I got involved with an organization for world peace known as CISV (Children's International Summer Villages), where I learnt about altruism and working for the planet's benefit without personal expectations. Here I met —people interested in the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti, an Indian philosopher. I traveled to Switzerland and California on three occasions to hear his teachings directly. I was 18. For the next nine years I looked for teachers and techniques that would purify my whirlpool mind. When I finished medical school and despite being considered among the best students, I did not feel happy or satisfied. My soul was not fulfilled. It was then that a friend gave me a book about Tibetan Buddhism. I immediately felt at home. Two months later I was on a plane to Nepal, a country I had never heard of, with the certainty I was on the right path. I was at Kopan Monastery the next morning.

I felt fortunate to have come into contact with the concept of altruism at a relatively young age; it trained me to automatically focus on helping others, no matter what. I used to spend a lot of extra time off-duty in hospitals in the emergency room comforting those in pain and despair. I was always ready to volunteer wherever needed. At that time I didn't know about the accumulation of merit. Maybe this positive merit, in hindsight, brought me to the right place, with the right teachers, and getting the right teachings.

I dedicated a year to take teachings and doing a three-month Vajrasattva retreat at Tushita in India and Kopan Monastery in Nepal during 1986. I returned to Mexico with much more than I ever expected. That's why I have put so much effort into building Serlingpa Retreat Centre, a place like Tushita, in my country, which might give others as much as it gave me, without having to travel as far!

The busyness of my work prevents me from spending a lot of time on my cushion. I run the retreat center as well as tending patients. I also contribute to local poor communities through the Rotary International Club. As little time is left for formal practice I meditate in motion — wherever I am and whatever I am doing I observe my mind, its reactions, its



Rocio treats a patient with magnets

mistakes, its real motivation. I love the Eight Worldly Dharma's teaching so I check them out on myself. To remember spirituality all the time I make altars everywhere. I have six altars at home besides the one in the gumpa. I visualize myself always surrounded by crowds of buddhas wherever I go.

When one engages in a successful healing practice it is normal to be praised by others. When someone praises me, my mind automatically remembers emptiness so the words don't increase my ego. Then I change the topic and ask the people something about themselves. Since people are happy to talk about themselves, they forget about praising me — a helpful trick.

I cook, sweep and clean at the same level as the paid cleaners and cooks, which is great to surrender the ego. Most participants in the retreat groups that come see me as a maid. I keep in mind Lama Zopa's teaching: "Always be the servant of others." I wear a maid's uniform since we are all the same humans serving people and running the place. No difference.

No matter what group they are engaged with, people have similar goals — to become a better person and to create a better world. If people come to Serlingpa they are making a connection with Buddha, whose breath can be felt in its air and earth. The children who come here for camps say being at Serlingpa is like going to heaven. Working for Serlingpa is the most satisfying of all jobs I could be engaged with. ☸

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