

Meaning and Purpose

Reflection for 2026

Humans have learned to count time and plan their time to do things. Animals, too, know their time, but they do things when the time is right. Unlike animals, most humans would rush to do things or could not find the time to complete or even start the task they have in mind.

When we force ourselves to work, we either tire or become bored. Animals simply work, and they seem to know what to do instinctively. Humans have to learn from others to do things. However, unlike animals, humans can be creative, that is, come up with new or better things.

We are so used to living the year and to planning things by the year that we often forget to enjoy what we do. The most important work in our lives—what we love doing—is never seen as a task. When we love doing something we just do it, especially when creating beautiful things and what are of true worth.

We sometimes work to create beauty that is outside of ourselves, transferring and transforming our energies, even our lives, into some kind of work we hope will live after us.

There is another kind of work where we feel that the beauty and joy are within ourselves. This means that we have a purpose but we do not need to have a goal. Is this possible? Indeed, when we enjoy doing our work, we just do it without a goal in mind. We do not work with a goal; we stop when we are tired or when we feel bored. We work as much as we can or as little as needed, but somehow the work gets done.

Doing sutta work for over 2 decades has taught me that we cannot see it as “work” in the normal or daily sense of the word. We do it because it is something we love to do. It’s like being in love with someone. You just want to do what needs to be done and never tire. You just want to give to that person.

When we remove the limits of self and other in such “work,” it becomes Dharma work. We do it because we love it, and loving it we learn that it is not work, but an expression of love. Love for truth and beauty. We feel this purpose when we love working with the Buddha’s teachings, like doing translation work, proofing sutta translations, or teaching and sharing the Dharma.

There is a purpose in our Dharma work, but there is no goal, no numbers and no dates to limit us. Yet the work always gets done—that’s what I’ve noticed over the last 20 years of sutta work. And with the work today, I think the sutta proofers also know this when they see sutta proofing not as work but as something they love and something they are learning from.

Sutta proofers who really understand our translation work also understand that this is our life’s work. Then they also know that this is not to complete translating so many suttas or proofing them in some allocated time (that’s samsaric work). We discover ourselves in the sutta work we

do. We deepen friendships in this kind of work.

When this work is completed, the suttas reach out to others who further benefit from the Buddha word. Still, we know such sutta work is a human effort, and we make human errors. Sutta proofing is about correcting human errors and refining and beautifying the sutta translations and writings to reflect better understanding and new connections with true reality that helps us live better lives.

As the years pass, we see that we have been building this amazing store of good karma. What we have read, studied, proofed, revised and shared with others help us prepare better sutta translations and teachings to benefit others who are keen to know the suttas and to be better people themselves.

As 2025 ends and the new year 2026 dawns, we then do not feel that we have lost a year, but happily that we have spent the last year, and many years before that studying, understanding, translating, proofing and sharing the Buddha's teachings. We see the teachings getting clearer and deeper, not in words, but in how happy and wiser we have become.

The new year gives us new opportunities to be better at what we are doing. As the years pass, we feel how we can move closer to the path of self-knowing and true happiness.

Please join us in this happy journey of meaningful purpose where every day we wake up with the light of love and learning.

Happy new year 2026.

Piya Tan ©2026

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