

BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

Vol. 6 No. 4

October 1984



Despair and Empowerment at Plum Village

At the end of the conference on "Buddhism in Action" held in Amsterdam in May, the group of 75 attendees discussed what to do next. One of the people raised his hand and said that he thought we should be in touch with our feelings about a possible nuclear war. Thich Nhat Hanh invited him to come to the head of the room and say more on this subject. He did so, and before we knew what was happening, we were launched on a pocket version of a workshop on despair and empowerment.

It was too sudden. The Dutch are very much in touch with their feelings about war. Memories of the German occupation and the holocaust are painfully fresh. People started weeping and walking out of the meeting. I took it upon myself to intervene, and told a story about Plum Village to illustrate how despair and empowerment are the same thing.

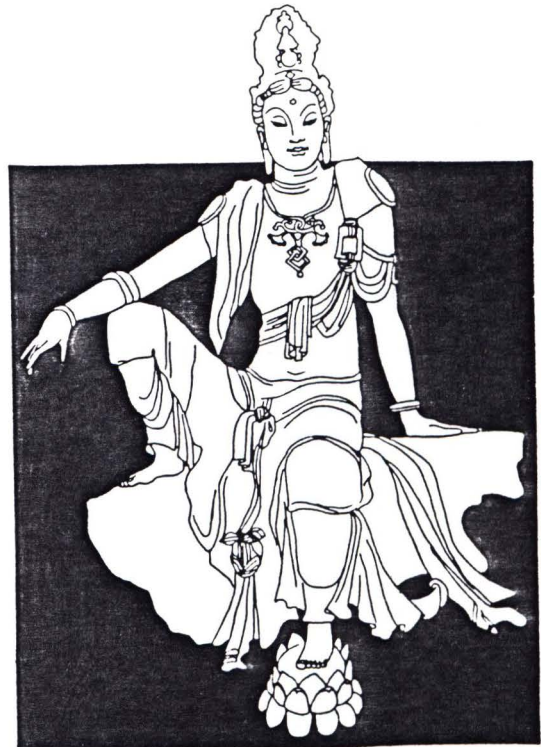
Anne Aitken and I were visiting Thich Nhat Hanh and Cao Ngoc Phuong at Plum Village to renew old friendships and establish new ones before coming up to the Conference together. Sister Phuong was called to the telephone at the Lower Hamlet, and when she returned an hour later her face was utterly tragic, and she was in tears. It seems that their friend Doan Quoc Sy, a writer in Vietnam who had served four years in a forced labor camp, from 1976 to 1980, had been arrested again, and his fate was unknown.

However, Sister Phuong had in hand a stack of a press releases about Mr. Doan's arrest, which she had typed up and reproduced in that hour in the Lower Hamlet. She had also already called Amnesty International, Pen Club International, and other organizations that could give help. That night, she stayed up late, not only to pack for our trip north the next day, but also to address and stamp envelopes for the releases. Then in Paris the next afternoon, she was able to mail them at a central post office for a speedy delivery to perhaps forty more organizations and individuals that could be useful in effecting Mr. Doan's release.

I remarked to the conferees that I thought Sister Phuong, Thay Nhat Hanh and their friends at Plum Village could not be as effective as they are, as empowered, in the best sense of that word, if they were not also filled with despair.

How do we use despair? The people who walked out of the meeting were not using it; they were being used by it. The Plum Village community uses the despair that everyone there feels, and together the members inspire their friends who remain in Vietnam, their friends in the expatriate Vietnamese community, and us all.

(continued on page 9)



President's Column

As I write my column, I am struck by the fact that the year is two-thirds over. So many new developments have taken place in BPF since the beginning of the year that it is surprising so much of the year remains. Yet so many important tasks need to be completed by the end of the year that there doesn't seem to be enough time to do it in. You probably don't know what I am talking about and are wondering if the pressures of the presidency haven't gotten to me.

It may seem to be somewhat early to be recapping the year. But I feel that I need to do it for my own sanity. It's like climbing up a steep grade and feeling the need to look backward and forward periodically to check one's progress or lack of it. It doesn't seem to do any good but I do it anyway.

BPF has shown much progress in 1984. The steady growth of BPF continues to amaze me. The dues-paying membership has increased more than 80% since the end of March and now numbers about 450. We recently added a New York City chapter and a reorganized Los Angeles chapter, and there is talk about forming chapters in Portland and Seattle. The formation of the BPF International Advisory Board, the publication of our first book on 'engaged Buddhism', and the development of the BPF newsletter into a highly-respected quarterly Buddhist peace publication has led to wider recognition in the world community.

Because of its great progress, BPF is faced with many questions about its future. What had been a small and intimate network of Caucasian Buddhists loosely coordinated by two or three interested volunteers has blossomed into a truly national, multiethnic, multi-sectarian organization run by a six-member Board of Directors, a national office and a computer. Although all of the Board and staff members are serving on a purely volunteer basis, this arrangement may not be possible in the future with the increasing volume of administrative and clerical work.

Should we continue on the present course of growth and increasing complexity? Or should we limit or even cut back our operations to an easily manageable level? I think many of us yearn to return to the intimate and friendly network of Buddhists working in our own ways to realize peace in our lives and our world. Yet we realize that the goal of BPF is "to bring a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement and the peace movement to the Buddhist community," and we need committed numbers and organization to accomplish our stated goal.

Although we on the Board feel this conflict very deeply, we are committed to the realization of the BPF goal. We have many plans for development and expansion on the drawing board (e.g. regional and national conferences and workshops, membership drives, non-profit corporation status, more publications). However these plans remain in the planning stages because our enthusiasm is tempered by the realization that there

probably aren't many BPF members who would volunteer to do the administrative and clerical work needed to carry out the projects. There is no money for salaries, and many seem to have other commitments and priorities.

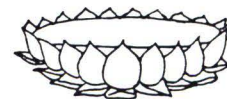
Do you care? Although your suggestions are appreciated, what we really need is your personal contribution of talent and sweat. We have new openings on the National Board every year, the office and newsletter need staff people, and every chapter can use a shot in the arm. If you can help, please contact the national office or your local chapter.

I had the pleasure of attending the Fellowship of Reconciliation National Conference at Santa Clara, California, in late July. There were close to a hundred representatives from the nineteen religious peace fellowships affiliated with FOR in attendance. I was immediately impressed by the commitment and groundedness of the conference participants, who were generally older and more spiritually-connected than those one usually sees at peace gatherings.

They were so happy to get their first glimpse of a Buddhist Peace Fellowship member that I became an instant celebrity. Our literature became sought-after souvenirs and everyone wanted to know what Buddhists thought about everything. Some even wanted to know if we had any Caucasian members in BPF (if they only knew). They expressed their wish that BPF, as the first non-Judeo-Christian peace fellowship (the Jain Peace Fellowship is the second), would become more active and visible within FOR.

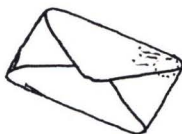
FOR is planning a conference of all the peace fellowships to be held somewhere in the Eastern part of the U.S. in the latter half of March of next year. They are asking BPF to send two representatives to the conference and to suggest workshop topics and also speakers who could provide guidance and inspiration to the conference. You may send your suggestions to me c/o the BPF office.

Ryo Imamura



Board Member Addresses

- | | |
|--|---|
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Chapter News

St. Paul/Minneapolis, Minnesota

After a low-keyed summer, with one member away at a northwoods lake and another starting graduate school, the St. Paul/Minneapolis BPF has taken as its foremost project voter registration. Working with two other local groups, the BPF is going door-to-door and attending cheese lines to register people to vote in November's elections. It's patriotic, it doesn't take sides, and it gives people their own power. We feel that this is an election of particular importance, and that for the hungry, the forests, the non-Christians, and the kids who wonder where their future is, the last four years have been plenty.

Catherine Parker

Los Angeles, California

In July 84, LABPF was working with the Vietnamese Buddhist Temple to launch the biggest demonstration in the history of the Buddhist Sangha in the Western hemisphere. To protest the arrest (in Saigon, on July 7th) of 12 high-ranked Buddhist Monks and Nuns from the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam and many of the intellectual lay people by the Socialist Republic Regime, fifty monastics from all parts of the United States came to sit in vigil for one day in front of the City Hall of the city of Los Angeles. Joining them were the Sanghas from the Theravadin tradition, the Sri Lanka Vihara, the Chinese Buddhist Community, the Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji and several American Buddhist centers and communities. Lay Buddhists arrived from as far as Japan and Australia to mourn the tragic death of their Master, the Most Ven. Thich Tri Thu and his disciple Thich Thanh Tri who had refused to testify against the members of the Sangha in jail. One never saw so many saffron robes at one time. A huge mass of fluffy fabric ranging from bright yellow to orange burgundy covered the steps of City Hall. They sat under the July sun unmoved; their voices soared in the air in mysterious mantras, then fell down like water falls. In the morning, a great number of supportive organisations came to give speeches; reading telegrams took a good 20 minutes. Then after all of them went home, including the Press, the TV cameras and reporters, we all sat quietly in meditation for almost three hours. Emptiness. A bunch of tourists coming from the Music Center tiptoed in and tiptoed out. At 4 pm, Thich Man Giac called the lay people in to sit on the grass with the sangha and we all started Avalokitesvara's Great Compassion Chant. Now the monks were chanting their hearts out; some of the lay people could keep up with the chant, some couldn't. There were at least ten American Buddhists with us till the end.

During the Olympics, the following activities prevailed: Members of LABPF participated in the Hiroshima "Survival 84" day by marching very quietly with a great number of peace groups from different nationalities and ages. A "Free Boutique" (practice of giving and receiving with grace) seems to be a very

helpful idea and has been very successful since May 84. At the moment, we are assisting the National Office to update its mailing list and getting ourselves ready for the meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Oct. 21 at 3 pm. Jenny is planning a luncheon for some members of the Buddhist Sangha to meet with His Holiness; she acts as coordinator, translator and will represent the BPF at the luncheon. Present will be also Tenzin Tethong, His Holiness' representative in the US and member of the BPF International Advisory Panel, and Geshe Gyeltsen who sponsored His Holiness' Dharma tour to the West Coast.

Professor Pham Thien C., a well known Vietnamese scholar and friend of the BPF is kindly taking up the task of writing a series of articles introducing Gary Snyder to the 20,000 Vietnamese in S. California. This is part of the poetry reading fund-raising project with Gary early next year. The UCLA Department of Asian cultures and languages is our co-sponsor. They are working hard to get us a theater on campus. If everything goes well, the Long-Hoa Buddhist youth will be with us to present their famous "hat dance." *Long Hoa* means dragons and flowers, symbols of Great Union, and is the name of the festival on Earth when Maitreya Buddha will appear in physical form.

The voter registration project will continue through Oct. and early Nov. The future also holds involvement with the "Beyond War" anti-nuclear group.

Jenny Hoang

Providence, Rhode Island

The response to the monthly newsletter has been good. Over 50 people receive it each month and even though very few people are active in the local chapter, people say that they enjoy getting it. One person says that it helps to bridge spirituality and politics.

The next few months we are focusing on having more people involved with BPF with a general meeting this month. We have been talking with people from other dharma centers.

Ongoing activities are a World Peace Vigil every Wed. 12-1 in downtown Providence—we hold signs which read, "40,000 children starve to death today, 1 billion \$ spent on arms today, see the connection, please think." "Having enough bombs to destroy this world many times, is this really defense? security?" The response from many people here has been uplifting. And we have been participating in the International Fast for Life with the 6th of each month a day of fast, focusing on raising people's consciousness to the connection between Hunger and Militarism.

We continue meeting with other groups with discussions on spirituality and social action.

Phil Edmonds



New York City Area Chapter

The New York Chapter of the BPF began monthly meetings on March 7 this year. We started from a shared need to explore how Buddhist practice might address the threat of nuclear war and the realities of starvation, homelessness, violence and environmental destruction.

On May 8 we participated with the Downstate Nuclear Freeze in a ten-kilometer walk to publicize Freeze efforts. BPF members conducted a public meditation at Central Park West at the beginning of the walk.

August 6, to commemorate the nuclear devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we held a day-long meditation vigil at the Isaiah Wall in Ralph Bunche Park opposite the United Nations. We invited participation and provided chairs. An effort was made to talk to anyone who asked for information about who we were, what we were doing (sitting so sternly) and why.

We are forming a discussion/study group on "Conflict and Resolution, Personal, Inter-personal and Impersonal: a Buddhist Approach to Peace."

Anyone wishing information on the NY contingent please contact Larry Christensen, 118 E. 93rd St., New York, NY 10128. (212) 860-3817.



Boulder/Denver, Colorado

The main event for the summer in Colorado for the BPF was helping to organize an event on Hiroshima Day in co-operation with the Interfaith Peace Fellowship, the Boulder Council of Churches and Synagogues and the Buddhist-Christian Conference of Naropa Institute which was taking place at the time. An overflow crowd attended the gathering, held at the Trinity Lutheran Church, which included slides of Hiroshima accompanied by classical piano and cello, silent meditation, an address by Brother David Steindl-Rast and another by Eido Shimano Roshi. Mother Tessa Bielecki led us in a "Prayer for Peace" and we then all proceeded several blocks downtown where we held a candlelight vigil for 30 minutes in front of the courthouse. The event was altogether quite moving and was an excellent opportunity for members of the BPF to work in harmony with other peace and religious groups. We are particularly happy that we have been invited to meet with and participate in the newly formed Interfaith Peace Fellowship.

Otherwise it seems that summer is a difficult time for people to attend meetings; we are hoping there will be a renewed interest this fall and we can proceed with our plans of offering a series of workshops on Peace and Meditation.

Barbara Meier

Rochester, New York

During the past summer the Rochester BPF had one fairly large project. That was bringing Joanna Macy to town in early May for two workshops that she led over one weekend. The first one had to do with her Despairwork—coming to terms with the feelings and

fears that we share as part and parcel both of working on nuclear disarmament and other vital current issues, and of simply being conscious of the horrible realities and possibilities that infect the whole planet. She helped us to express these feelings and to find ways to become empowered by their energy rather than feel defeated and hopeless. We began to see that our fears were not just self-centered, but came also out of compassion for all, which was in itself greatly empowering.

While the first workshop appealed to anyone in the community at large, the second one had a specifically Buddhist content. Joanna spoke at length about Buddhism, giving us a very broad perspective on it. We acted out a self-help project as it might occur under the direction of Sarvodaya workers in a Sri Lankan village. Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, the lay Buddhist leader of the Sarvodaya Movement in that country, actually showed up during the last two hours of the day. He also spoke about Buddhism and the world situation and led us in one of the compassion meditations common in the Tibetan and Vipassana traditions.

We found it very helpful to have Joanna Macy and Dr. Ariyaratne work with us, just as it was to have Thich Nhat Hanh come last year. In July our BPF held an outdoor meeting one afternoon, in which we shared a lot of feelings about our practices and our work, and together did some of the practices taught to us by these three people. We hope to have them and/or others like them visit again.

Bob Brown

British BPF

The British BPF began last year with a few people wanting to harmonise their "spiritual" and "political" practice. Since the concepts of "engaged Buddhism" had been developed principally in Vietnam, Sri Lanka and the USA, they arrived in Britain as a kind of transplant rather than growing from seed. So there are many people who are inspired by the ideas, and the dissemination of the texts of engaged spirituality has been one of the main activities of the BPF secretariat. The danger for British BPF is clearly that it will remain on the level of theory, and the bulk of activity limited to the fingers tapping away on this typewriter. One way we hope to counter this centralisation of effort is by establishing specialised groups which will be more or less autonomous. There is a women's group which will produce a women's issue of the newsletter in Autumn, there is an Amnesty group which will co-ordinate work for Buddhist prisoners, there is an eco group which was set up independently of BPF but with whom we share members, there is a group planned to work on the relation between psychotherapy and spiritual practice, and they will produce one of the newsletters; then there are in formation groups concerned to act as supports for persecuted Buddhists.

The Summer newsletter, somewhat late, is galloping towards completion. This is an eco-issue, with the bulk

Letters

Dear BPF,

I live in a small city in rural Virginia, and recently a group of people, including myself, opened a Peace Education Center. Personally I value your newsletter as support for my small Buddhist practice, which I try to incorporate into all aspects of my life. For the Center, I value a non-Christian viewpoint, if only to emphasize the "one-ness" of humanity, particularly concerning an issue like peace and justice.

My practice is irregular and haphazard, my sangha includes only my family, and they are not "Buddhist" by name. This is to say that I receive much encouragement by reading of your works reported in the newsletter. I feel part of a larger group as I read of the various activities. Thank you.

In Peace,
Scott Christian
Martinsville, VA

Dear BPF—

Thank you so much for your works—there are many people in the Northwest working for peace—I am inspired by the publication—with active movement.

Susan Stalnaker

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you in connection with your stand with regards to war.

In South Africa all white males are confronted with two years compulsory military service; however a board has recently been formed to hear cases of conscientious objectors on religious pacifist grounds. I regard myself as a Buddhist and in accordance with its precepts feel I cannot in any way morally support any military organisation.

If one is accepted as a religious pacifist one is required to perform six years continuous community service within a government department outside that of the military, one in which they place you. I feel I will, therefore, also have to submit an argument, in accordance with my conscience and religious convictions against apartheid and racism.

As I will be the first person to object on religious grounds outside of the Christian faith, I feel a need to substantiate my argument as much as possible. I would, therefore, appreciate any material you could send me with regards to your organisation's work in promoting peace and understanding. Some sort of description of the history of your group and your function would be most helpful. I am totally open to any ideas or advice.

In peace and unity,
David Hartman
Grahamstown, S. Africa

(Readers may write to David c/o BPF in Berkeley.)

We love to get mail; please write letters and articles for the Newsletter and send them to the BPF office.

of the US BPF "Protection of All Beings" reprinted, along with other deep ecology texts.

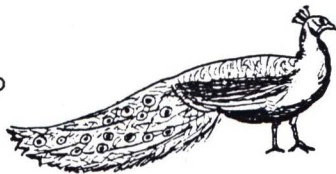
Bob Aitken was here in June and gave elegant discourses to the BPF, the Buddhist Society, a couple of zen groups and a well-attended meeting where he "dialogued" with Canon Paul Oestreicher, a peacenik cleric and Quaker. Bob described this meeting as an "interesting failure" but most people I spoke to about it thought it a great success, and a useful move towards the interfaith peace activities I see on the horizon.

The BPF hosted Ven. Aggravansa Mahathero, the Chakma Rajguru, when he was in England *en route* to Geneva to make a submission to the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, on behalf of the Chittagong Hill Tract Tribal peoples. He and his interpreter made lots of contacts in Geneva, and read out their statement, which accompanied submissions made by IFOR and the Anti-Slavery Society (who arranged for the Rajguru to come to Europe, and have recently published a useful report on the CHT situation, available from ASS, 180, Brixton Rd., London SW9. Price £3 + p & p.)

Note: Chapter news items should be sent to the Newsletter care of the Berkeley office no later than the 15th of the month preceding the upcoming issue. Items for the January issue are due December 15th. News items should be typed, *double spaced*, and ready to print without editing.

Current Buddhist Peace Fellowship Chapters and Overseas Affiliates

● National Office
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
P.O. Box 4650
Berkeley, CA 94704
USA



● Bay Area BPF
2490 Channing Way #503
Berkeley, CA 94704

● New York City BPF
118 East 93rd St.
New York, NY 10128

● Denver/Boulder BPF
2838 4th St.
Boulder, CO 80302

● Providence BPF
38 Ring St.
Providence, RI 02909

● Minneapolis/St. Paul BPF
2629 Fremont Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55408

● Rochester BPF
56 Brighton St.
Rochester, NY 14607

● Oahu BPF
2085 Makiki Pl.
Honolulu, HI 96822

● Los Angeles BPF
706 S. Mariposa #206
Los Angeles, CA 90006

● Australia BPF
PO Box 368
Lismore 2480, NSW
Australia

● British BPF
"Gilletts"
Smarden, Nr. Ashford, Kent
England

BPF Fall Board Meeting, October

October 2, 1984, 5:00 pm PST to 8:40 pm PST

Present: Ryo Imamura, Jenny Hoang, Joanna Macy, Gary Snyder, Fred Eppsteiner, Catherine Parker, Patrick McMahon, Wendy Tripp, Kent Johnson.

Staffperson's Report Since Patrick McMahon will no longer be the BPF staff person, the Board discussed different ways to staff the national office. A local BPF chapter may take on the office as their project. The Board is also considering hiring one person to do the job.

Newsletter Fred will be out of the country from November to March, so he is collecting articles for the January issue and finding a guest editor for April. The board talked about accepting advertising and passed a motion to empower the editor of the newsletter to accept advertising that enhances the BPF and serves the interest of BPF membership and readers of the newsletter.

Nominations Catherine presented a report from the nominations committee and will be collecting statements of candidacy and brief biographies from the candidates by November first.

Engaged Buddhism Publication This is due out in January 1985. The Rochester chapter is distributing the book, and Bill Anderson is taking book orders. Fred is still looking for \$2,000 more in loans.

News Release A news release and letter about BPF will be sent out to all US Buddhist groups in the next couple of months.

Visit by Thich Nhat Hanh The Board discussed and then passed a motion to invite Thich Nhat Hanh to come to the USA in 1985 and sponsor his visit, with the details left to the Board.

International Advisory Board Seven of the ten people asked have now accepted, and the Board passed a motion to have the names of the International Advisory Board members inscribed on the next set of BPF stationery. The Board talked about the role of this advisory board, that they are resources on the spiritual path, sources of Buddhist wisdom. We will be asking them questions, seeking guidance for followers of the Dharma who are in the United States.

Non-Profit Status We need legal help to get this and it will take five months to a year. The board decided to begin this process and is looking for a lawyer who can donate his or her services.

1985 FOR Conference Ryo suggested that Board members and other BPF members attend this conference, which will be in Bangor, Pennsylvania, in late March 1985. The theme is "Non-Violence in the '80's."

Farewell Ryo Imamura, Joanna Macy and Gary Snyder signed off from their last Board meeting. All said this would not end their active participation in BPF.

Respectfully (and hastily) submitted,

Catherine Parker
BPF Secretary

[The complete minutes are available from the office.]

Resources

- *Exemplars of Engaged Buddhism*. Compiled by BPF Members. Anecdotes and stories, from ancient times to our day, of Buddhists demonstrating the Way as one of peace and protection of all beings. 12 pp., \$1.50
- *The Development of the American Buddhist Peace Movement*, by Paul Jaffe. A history of engaged Buddhism, from India to China to Japan, with particular attention to the involvement of the various Buddhist schools and sects in America today in the peace movement. 30 pp., \$2.50
- *A Talk by Thich Nhat Hanh* at the Berkeley Zen Center. How to be at peace while working for peace. 7 pp., \$1.00
- *Mahasangha Meeting* at the San Francisco Zen Center. Questions about Buddhism and peace activism, fielded by Robert Aitken Roshi and Gary Snyder. 12 pp., \$1.50
- *Peace Conference with Thich Nhat Hanh* at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. Discussions between peace activists, Buddhists and "fellow travellers," on being peace. 11 pp., \$1.50
- *Japanese Corporate Zen*, by Daizen Victoria. A hard look at some highly questionable aspects of Zen's sociopolitical role in Japanese history. 8 pp., \$1.00

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Articles may be ordered a la carte, or a whole banquet (all of the above for \$8.00) from the BPF office.

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Buddhism and Social Action: An Exploration is a 64-page pamphlet by Ken Jones. It is published by the Buddhist Publication Society in Sri Lanka. ("Wheel" series, no. 285/286.)

The pamphlet includes sections on "Buddhism and the new global society," "The weight of social karma," "Conflict and partisanship," "The good society" and "Organising social action."

"This fluently written little book achieves the considerable feat of saying something significant about the implications of Buddhism for education, social welfare, politics and economics in the space of some sixty pages..."—*Buddhist Forum*.

"This booklet is most opportune, for it appears at a time of uncertainty among Western Buddhists about whether or not social involvement is part of the Buddhist life. I believe Ken Jones argues convincingly that it is..."—*Western Buddhist*.

Copies may be ordered from the Vihara Book Service, 5017 16th St. NW, Washington, DC 20011, \$2.40 postpaid.

Attorney Needed

BPF is looking for an attorney who is willing to donate his or her services in helping BPF qualify for non-profit status and federal and state tax exemptions. Please contact the BPF office if you wish to offer your assistance.

Hungry Children

This is a koan that was thrown into my lap a few months ago:

A ten-year-old girl in a small village near Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, is hungry almost every day. Her father works on a government farm and is paid only enough to buy rice for the family four or five days a month. The rest of the time they eat only thin soup. From Berkeley, California, I send a small amount of money each month—hardly noticed, the cost of two movies—and sometimes the family receives enough rice for a few meals. If they want to write to me, they must eat less for weeks in order to pay for the stamps. They do write, call me "sister," thank me for my "golden heart," and quote ten-year-old Tram: "Hope we can survive in these dreadful days and pray that we will be born again in a happy place."

How do I hold these paradoxes? Whose chest can I beat on to ask "How can this be? Why?" There is no one's chest but my own, and often, when I sit, the questions beat from inside.

Nguyen Anh Huong, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh's niece, is coordinating the sending of packages from this country to the starving families in Vietnam. She is close to all the ironies and pain, and she writes, "I have to confide to you that, while reading the letters from Vietnam, I find myself suffering as much as my people. Their suffering has become my suffering. I often have to walk, following Thich Nhat Hanh's method of walking meditation, after reading such letters. Walking meditation is truly a miracle. It has been helping me a lot while I am doing this work for the hungry children."

The process of getting food to these families is complicated and often doomed in advance. Packages of medicines are sent to social workers in the city who then sell most of them, using the money to buy rice. (The rice, incidentally, according to Anh Huong, is "bad" rice: the "good" rice produced in the country is either used by government cadres or exported.) The packages, however, are severely taxed, so that half their value fills government coffers rather than children's stomachs. Further, a good proportion of packages gets confiscated by government troops or police, and two or three out of four sent will be stolen. Further still, the social workers, men and women, who are making all this possible, are often under surveillance, have been interrogated relentlessly or put into jail. The social worker responsible for my family was questioned daily for a month, morning till night. "That brother is now broken-hearted, but he dares not go back to bringing rice and medicines to these starving children yet," writes Anh Huong. He has been replaced by a "sister" who visits families at dinner time, but if security police are around, she must escape quickly into the jungle. "But my brothers and sisters are always there, appear and disappear at different times of the day at the jungle edges, with bags of rice and medicines on their shoulders."

I have begun trying to inform myself about the political and economic realities in Vietnam today. Would the situation be more efficiently addressed at the level of international diplomacy or established organizations like the Institute for Food and Policy Studies? Or would such efforts also break down at the local level in similar ways? How often does this happen without our realizing it? In any case this program is not a substitute for higher level interventions. It does, though, go to the heart of the matter. It holds up a mirror to the fact that people hurt each other, deprive each other, cause each other pain. And that it is possible to choose to do otherwise. Nhat Hanh has said that "If we do this work for the hungry children awefully, with open and compassionate eyes, it is a very real work for peace. It is not just gathering money. It is generating brotherhood, nurturing love and compassion." Anh Huong writes, "I like to think that through this work, we have all become part of one family. Can't we join hands to bring peace?"

Anyone interested in joining hands, write:

Nguyen Anh Huong
The Committee for Those Children Who Are Hungry
416 Walnut St.
Audubon NJ 08106

Lenore Friedman



Arrest of Sulak Sivaraksa

On August 5, Sulak Sivaraksa, progressive Thai Buddhist leader and member of the BPF International Advisory Panel, was arrested by the Thai Government on two charges of Lese Majeste—affronting the king, the crown and the state. The cause for his arrest was his frank criticism of the government in his latest book, whose title can best be translated "Shedding the Old Skin of Thai Society" (i.e. as a snake sheds its skin in the natural process of renewal).

He is scheduled to receive a military trial on November 6 at which time it is virtually guaranteed that he will receive a sentence of 3-15 years in prison and/or exile without the opportunity of appeal. It seems that the only way for Mr. Sulak to be released is to have the charges dropped through a pardon from the prime minister or king. It would be most helpful if someone knows of a direct channel to either Thai leader. And your personal letters of encouragement and support to Mr. Sulak at GPO Box 2930, Bangkok 10501, Thailand, are most appreciated.

Green Buddhist Declaration

We believe that as Buddhists we are called to compassionate action both as a means to overcoming egoism and as the fruit of a growing empathy with other beings' sufferings. Since economic, political and social structures condition and coevolve with consciousness, we must constructively engage with them to produce conditions conducive to spiritual growth. While this engagement may present certain spiritual dangers, it is more dangerous to ignore these responsibilities.

Buddhism is a non-theistic humanism, emphasizing that human potentials are superior to any divinity, and that our salvation lies with ourselves; we cannot be saved by others. The Buddhist scriptures reflect the revolutionary nature of early Buddhism. The Agganna Sutta denies a racial basis for social hierarchy, pointing to the role of private property and differences between the sexes in the co-evolution of delusion and deluding social structures. It attacks the divine right of kings, and suggests the social contract theory of government. Buddha taught the importance of the ten virtues of righteous kings, one of which is liberality. The Cakkavatti Sutta condemns a punitive approach to crime, advocating instead government support for the poor. The Kalama Sutta ("the Buddhist charter of free thought") advises critical examination of all authority, traditions, and teachers. Buddhism emphasizes the indivisible, interdependent nature of spirit and society, denying idealist or materialist reductionism.

The Buddhist Order or "Sangha" grew out of an insurgent opposition to expanding monarchies and the brahman-dominated caste system, especially among the warrior caste from which the Buddha came. Buddhism does not say to change individuals "first", then change society, but rather to change both in an integrated way. The monastic Sangha both embodied this principle in its social presence and within itself. The example of the Sangha is held as the prototypical ideal society, not yet able to be approximated in lay life, but to be achieved in a millennial future. Historically, the Sangha has worked for the spiritual and material well-being of the society by advising kings and acting as teachers and leaders of the people. In the Sangha, meditation and intellectual inquiry were reinforced by non-exploitive, egalitarian community-life. Some disciplines are equally applicable to lay and monastic communities though, as in the Buddha's advice to the Vajjian republic and the Sangha on the importance of achieving consensus in the local community through regular democratic meetings. Dissident communities were tolerated, and the Sangha was decentralized. The Buddha taught that spiritual progress was only possible when the basic human needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and medical care, were fulfilled in a moderate way; he eschewed asceticism. Monks and nuns shared a common discipline of voluntary simplicity and communal property, with previous caste and status distinctions dropped. The social options of lay women were expanded by the founding of the

Sisterhood, within which nuns were freed from the patriarchal property relations of the family.

We also today are called to change ourselves while we change society, building a world community that encourages the awakening of each individual's potential. It is not utopian to think Buddhists can make a difference; Buddhists are in every country in the world, from Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe to the Middle East, though our most direct influence is in Asia. In order to build an alternative to the current state and economic system, we believe it is necessary to start change from the grassroots up and from the level of international cooperation down. We must "think globally, act locally." Acknowledging the important contributions to the development of a Buddhist democratic socialism from leaders such as Burma's former Prime Minister U Nu, Sri Lanka's former Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranayake, and the Komeito Party of Japan, we believe it is generally inappropriate to identify the Buddhist community with a political party. While it may be necessary to work with or within the party system towards some goals, political parties are seen as organized dissension in society, able to represent factions and elites but not all people. Government, as the organization of coercion in society, is only seen as necessary to the extent that people's needs cannot be met by voluntary cooperation. Buddhism's priority is not the creation of a particular kind of state, but a culture based on non-violence, sharing and participatory democracy, putting the full development of human potential in community before the pursuit of gross national product. As in the Sangha, direct participation in democratic decision-making is seen as an important means of human development, and collectivization of property as a means to overcoming individualism.

Editor's Note: This statement is excerpted from a pamphlet that was "prepared by members of the International Buddhist community on the occasion of the 14th General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (Colombo, August 1984) as a basis for discussion and action... This statement is the result of comments to an earlier draft from more than 60 Buddhist scholars, monks and laypeople, though Mr. Hughes takes full responsibility for the final working." For a copy of the entire pamphlet or for more information contact:

James Hughes
c/o 98, Rawatawatte Rd.
Moratuwa
Sri Lanka



Personal Reflections on American Buddhism and Peace

It's a broken fact of life that so much good energy is put into bombs. The refinement of warfare is a love of mankind. The popularity of war is an old dream of mankind climbing along the towers of ego. An old habit of man, not woman. The White Male System that runs America is infallible, technological, superior, always right, logical, rational and objective. Don't you agree? It created a bomb. Then it created astounding accuracy and split the bomb into 30,000 poised-for-delivery nuclear warheads.

I can't reason with this situation. I can't even understand it. It's pure raving madness and we have to face it. It doesn't feel very good. So, what do we do if we're citizens or even Buddhists? We can try to reason, we can read and try to understand the various logics, we can get scared or mad, we can deny it, we can go to workshops, we can keep up this sibilant awareness, this high karmic scream. How many years ago was it when we pummeled the Native American race into submission and ignominious decay? We can still hear that American karmic scream along the sleek skin of the cruise missile, that whisper in the computer's paranoid brain, that destructive Buddha nature welling upward out of the deep insatiable hole of ignorance—But what can we do about it, really?

We can entertain the basics of Buddhism. We can be mindful and remember it all the time. Don't shut it out. Don't avoid it because it is painful. We can change our heart. And speak to our mother about it and just listen to what we say. We can try with about twenty years of our own life in and out of today's difficult marriages to tame the anger we hold for all mankind, especially when we stub our toe or the phone doesn't work or our wife/husband sleeps with another human being. We can try to tame our own lack of peacefulness and, as we work with that, we might unearth holy compassion, for the whole world of hatred and ignorance—two of the three poisonous klesas that Buddha taught.

And we can practice the quiet space of meditation day after day and see how our own mind works, and we can penetrate further toward maybe seeing how other people's minds work and try to understand whether they stopped learning at age twenty-five and succumbed to fear and violent protection of a material belief system based on a dream dharma. And why. We can understand the incomprehensible and have empathy for all the violence. We can find in ourself a soft being, a heart, a kind warrior being, intelligent, who truly wants peace on earth for ourself and for others. We can become a human being! And we can cultivate that humanity through the Buddha's wisdom of our own being, with our teacher, our books, our fellowship sangha, our wife, our husband, our children, our parents (do you argue with them about Russia like I do?).

Paul Shippee

Plum Village

(continued from front page)

More on on Doan Quoc Sy: He was adopted by Amnesty International as a prisoner of conscience after his arrest in 1976, and was elected to honorary membership of the Pen Club of France. His friends hope that these and other organizations will again work for his release. At the time of his second arrest, he had received an exit visa for himself, his wife, and his youngest daughter, and was in process of obtaining an Australian visa, in order to emigrate to Australia where another daughter lives with her family.

Mr. Doan, 62, is a novelist, an essayist, a writer of stories for children, and a scholar of folklore. One of his better-known works, Khu Rung Lau (Jungle of Reeds), is a personal account of resistance against the French that is widely read as an important statement of national identity.

He was arrested with the journalist Dong Hung Cuong, who had earlier also spent four years in a forced labor camp. Their arrests followed a wave of arrests of 12 Buddhist monks and nuns, and the death of Thich Tri Thu, a leader in the conservative wing of Vietnamese Buddhism who had maintained a conciliatory position in relation to the government. His death followed his arrest, and has not been adequately explained. A number of Buddhist delegations that were invited by the government to attend his funeral either refused to attend, or came and then walked out in formal protest against officials they considered responsible for his death.

Many other intellectuals are detained by the Vietnamese authorities. Hoang Hai Thuy, Quach Tan, and Duy Trac are among those recently arrested. Political prisoners do not receive trials in Vietnam, and conditions in the labor camps and prisons are very poor, according to the Amnesty International report we received at the Conference. Malnutrition is used as a device for controlling the inmates, and there are many deaths.

Courteously worded letters inquiring about, and urging the release of Mr. Doan and other prisoners of conscience may be sent to Mr. Pham Van Dong, Office of the Prime Minister, Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Letters to Mr. Bob Hawke, Office of the Prime Minister, Canberra, Australia, urging inquiry into Mr. Doan's case through diplomatic channels would also be useful.

Letters of encouragement of Mr. Doan's daughter and her family in Australia should be addressed: Mrs. Doan Thi Ngoc Thanh, 22 Marampo Street, Marayong, NSW 2148, Australia.

Please send a copy of all letters to the Delegations of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, 7 rue de 8 Mai, 92340 Bourg La Reine, France (Attention: Cao Ngoc Phuong).

Robert Aitken



Thoughts on the Jatakas

The Jataka tales (jataka simply means "birthlet"), or tales of the Buddha's earlier births, are the record, through countless lifetimes, of both the historical Buddha's, as well as any ripening Bodhisattva's, compassionate and often, heroic, self-giving. Today, as we think about such seemingly modern movements within the worldwide Buddhist community as engaged Buddhism and work to bring Buddhism alive in the West, it might be helpful to us to become a bit more familiar with these traditional Jataka tales.

Two major collections of such tales have come down to us. Five-hundred and fifty tales are retained in the classic Pali Jataka, and another thirty-five, with some overlapping from the Jataka, in the Sanskrit Jatakamala (or Garland of Jatakas) of Aryasura. These written records are just a small portion of a much larger oral tradition of "avadana" or "noble deed" (noble giving) literature which has largely vanished. The Pali Jataka contains many kinds and levels of tales from monkish moralizings and simple animal fables to often moving and compassionate animal-birth stories and fragments of larger heroic epics. Each is accompanied by a verse, and was presented by the Buddha himself as a way of explicating a life-situation then of concern to his monks and lay followers. The Jatakamala is a more literary, devotional, and centrally Mahayana work. Its core is the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion and self-sacrifice.

In both collections, however, the Buddha is shown, not as withdrawing from the world but as acting with compassion and wisdom for the benefit of all living beings. These untold lifetimes of effort, caring, and often self-sacrifice, underlay his six years of lonely and ardent formal meditation practice when as the ex-Prince Siddhartha he finally attained his long sought goal of Buddhahood. In fact, just prior to his Enlightenment itself, legend records that Mara, the tempter, appeared before the Future Buddha and tested him asking if he was truly worthy of attaining so high a goal as Enlightenment. In response, the Future Buddha touched the earth lightly with his right hand and asked the humble earth to witness for him. Then the earth replied, thundering, "He is worthy! There is not a single spot on this globe where, through countless lifetimes, he has not offered his own life for the welfare of others!" All those past lives to which the earth bore witness are recorded in the Jatakas. They are the hidden foundation upon which the Buddha's great, historical attainment necessarily stands.

In the Jatakas, for example, we learn that, long ago, as a deer-king, the Buddha risked his own life to free all creatures from danger; as a monkey he saved a savagely ungrateful hunter; as a lion he saved all the frightened beasts from their own fears; as a parrot he flew selflessly through flames to save all those trapped in a burning forest; as an elephant he offered his life so that starving men might live; as a King he offered his own flesh to save a dove; as a prince he gave his life so that a starving tigress and her cubs might live. The Jatakas,

in short, dramatically express the actions, in the world, of one liberated from all self-concern—they demonstrate the natural workings of the Bodhisattva mind and heart and preserve for all times the immense compassionate effort of the Buddha-to-be in his countless lifetimes of effort towards the goal of Buddhahood. The Jatakas also turn all of existence into a vast field of spiritual effort in which no life-form, no matter how seemingly insignificant, is outside the path.

The message of Jatakas is especially poignant in our own time. As we grow increasingly aware of the depredations our own twentieth century lifestyles make on the planet, as the plight of whales, mountain gorillas, wolves and other endangered species, as well as the all-too-often cruel treatment which cats, dogs, rabbits, monkeys, rats receive—perhaps to no purpose—in our laboratories, become increasingly clear to us, the Jatakas themselves can only stand out in even greater relief. Who knows, perhaps, as the Jatakas suggest, among the the very animals which we as a species even now maim, torment, slaughter, and devour are many sensitive and aspiring beings, many Bodhisattvas and Future Buddhas.

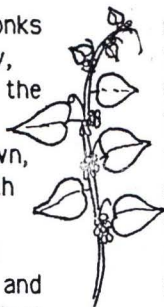
So, as imaginative as the Jatakas seem to be, they realistically pose fundamental questions—questions of life and action which can only be resolved over time through the daily realities of our own practice and life. The Jatakas acknowledge the depth of our own felt interrelation with all living things and remind us that, at some point, we too must act on these deep, true feelings which are not just ephemeral dreams but real forms of insight arising from the ground of our True Nature. Compassion, such tales remind us, must ultimately express itself in action if it is to be real. How one does this, of course, is up to each one of us. There is no one way, no "right way." All sincere efforts are equally to the point, equally part of the great, creative effort of constant letting go and renewal which is the path of practice/daily life that Buddhism unfolds.

Working with others to create communities that liberate the best in all their members; working selflessly to bring an end to the hells of nuclear destruction; caring for the land itself and for the many species which share its bounty with us; exposing the pitiful plight of laboratory animals; working to nourish the hearts and imaginations of children lost in a land of soulless tv dreams—wherever one turns the opportunities are there.

This is the cutting of firewood and the drawing of water for today's world. The modern world of engaged Buddhism, the traditional Bodhisattva Path, and the world in which now we live and work are certainly not-two.

Rafe Martin

Rafe Martin is a Buddhist writer and storyteller who lives in Rochester, NY. He is the author of a new collection of jataka tales titled, The Hungry Tigress and Other Traditional Asian Tales just released by Shambala.)



About the Cover

Kuan Yin (or Quan Yin or Kannon) is the embodiment and symbol of compassion to the citizens of most nations in the East. A lively, playful goddess, she grants the wishes of those who call upon her, especially women, and exerts particular power over childbirth. Her name means She Who Harkens to the Cries of the World, for she is the one who secures forgiveness and relief from suffering, who listens to those caught in poverty and oppression.

She is the female equivalent of Avalokitesvara, the Buddhist embodiment of compassion, and is kin to Tara, the Tibetan female goddess of compassion. Kuan Yin is much loved in Buddhist and non-Buddhist cultures, for she is a folk goddess who speaks directly to the humble in heart. People feel toward her a particular affection and familiarity, and her image can be found everywhere, in temples, wayside shrines, and homes.

Some representations of Kuan Yin depict her as a lissome, very feminine young woman, but there are more commanding aspects of this goddess. The drawing on this card was made after a 13th or 14th century Chinese statue in the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City, MO. Here, Kuan Yin sits in the posture known as "royal ease," a majestic young woman supremely confident of her compassionate strength.

Kuan Yin is available on greeting cards from Karuna Creations, 38832 Cerrito Ave., Oakland, CA 94611.

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This issue was edited by Fred Eppsteiner and produced by Kent Johnson, Steve Walker, Barbara Miao, Marie del Vecchio and Leslie Schneider.



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The Tax Resister and the Buddha's Smile

The Constitution of my mother land
America
promises me freedom
to work out my Buddhist faith.

When did the smile we contemplate occur?

Not while the Bodhisattva
abode in wretched misery in a cave
fasting and sleepless till near fainting in death;

not earlier in the opulent palace of his father;

not when he chose his bride

nor when he first laid eyes on his infant son Rahula.

The Buddha smiled after he had done the full
disciplinary work
demanded of him by his awakening
and according to his situation in life
had suffered the necessary anguish to attain
enlightenment.

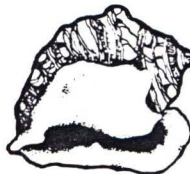
Then and then only did the Buddha smile his abiding
smile.

Only a Buddha tied up in bondage
complacently smiles at stockpiling of weapons,
people's tax money, their livelihood
for heaping up bombs.

What kind of Buddha is that?
A \$305 billion Buddha?

Gautama the Buddha it was
who first evoked the voice of the wayfarer,
saying
Be a lamp unto yourself.

Are we not wayfarers all?



Mariquita Platov



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