



# TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Spring 1999 \$4.00

## Buddhist Feminism



BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP  
P.O. BOX 3470  
BERKELEY, CA 94703-9906

Rita Gross • Sandy Boucher • Dogen on Lust  
Putting Women on the Altar • Transgendered Dharma  
Wicca Zen • New Books by Buddhist Women



# FROM THE EDITOR

I've been a feminist since the fifth grade, when I had to start wearing a dress to school, just because I was a girl. I wore dungarees under my dress, so I could still hang by my knees—an early sign, perhaps, of my interest in Buddhist nondualism.

What about this word: “feminist”? I like Rita Gross's definition of feminism as a belief in freedom from the prison of gender roles. So if it applies to both sexes, why do we call it “feminist”? Couldn't it just as well be “masculinist,” or better yet, “humanist”? In theory, yes, but women are the marked gender. Men, including Buddha, are unmarked as to gender. It's the default mode. So feminist means: Let's each be our own default mode.

Alice Walker uses the word “womanist.” Many women of color feel that the “feminist” movement of the last 30 years has not addressed their concerns. It has been a movement of mostly white women, women of privilege, women who may fail to question the entitlement of their race and class. So whatever word we use, let's remember everybody.

Let's admit that inequalities *do* exist, that what is seen as female gets squashed down, and that while this is particularly hard on women, it isn't so great for whoever else happens to be around either.

We have to go out of our way to change old cultural habits. At first it seemed contrived to say “he or she,” instead of simply “he.” But habits can be changed. It was a lot harder to stop smoking than to stop saying, “mankind.” I also try to remember that when someone does say “mankind,” they may not intend to leave me out. (By the way—notice my pronouns in the previous sentence. While “they” is not strictly grammatical, it sometimes sounds better to me than “he or she.”)

Just as we construct our roles and our pronouns, we construct our Buddhist practice. We can find in Buddhist teachings support for practically any position—for or against the death penalty, for example, as you can see from the letters column. Buddha lived an awfully long time ago, and we are constantly making choices about which of his teachings to emphasize. We constantly reinvent Buddha. Whoever he actually was, historically, doesn't have all that much to do with how we practice now. If he came back for a visit today, would he know that people in black robes facing a white wall were practicing “Buddhism”? Or people in red robes constructing statues out of butter? Or people in no robes chanting in front of scrolls? We are responsible for how we practice and how we live, not Buddha.

And always there is the tension between relative and absolute. Buddhism goes beyond the realm of the opposites, so how can we get hung up in woman and man? It's the whole problem of identity politics. Years ago at Berkeley Zen Center, we had to struggle to have women's sittings. Now it's no problem.

We live in a conditioned world. There are social factors that need to be considered. For example, there are many places where women can't be ordained as Buddhist nuns. Anybody can be a Buddha in theory, but we've still got a big job ahead of us making a world where anybody can be a Buddha in practice.

I want to mention some gaps in this issue. Abortion. Abortion is a really painful subject for Buddhist feminists. Personally, while I think abortion breaks the first precept against killing, I also feel that we must have the opportunity to make that choice, and to accept the karmic consequences. I hope we have a dialogue about it in future *Turning Wheels*.

I wish, too, that there was more here about the relationship between feminism and activism. It's all of a piece. I recently read Frederick Douglass's autobiography, and learned among other things that he was the only man to sign the Declaration of the Rights of Women at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. These women were abolitionists, and he, an escaped slave, was a feminist. An inspiring reminder of that old Buddhist saw: nobody's free until everybody's free. ♦ —Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Fall, '99: **Pilgrimage**. Deadline: July 12, '99.

Winter, '00: **Class**. Deadline, October 1, '99.



## TURNING WHEEL

Editor

Susan Moon

Advertising Director

Lewis Woods

Book Review Editor

Barbara Hirshkowitz

Consulting Readers & Editors

Denise Caignon, Tova Green, Shannon

Hickey, Mushim Ikeda-Nash, Mark

Kunkel, Karen Payne, Jon Stewart,

Meredith Stout, Lewis Woods

Production & Design

Lawrence Watson

Production Assistants

Melody Ermachild Chavis,

Sandy de Lissovoy, Leslie Isaac,

Lisa Rappaport, Isabella Rosekrans,

Barbara Selfridge

International Advisory Board

Robert Aitken, A.T. Ariyaratne, V.B.

Dharmawara, Christina Feldman,

Maha Ghosananda, Ane Pema

Chödrön, Lodi Gyari, Mamoru Kato,

Joanna Macy, Thich Nhat Hanh,

Sulak Sivaraksa, Gary Snyder,

Christopher Titmuss

Director

Alan Senauke

*The Buddhist Peace Fellowship was founded in 1978, to bring a Buddhist perspective to the peace movement, and to bring the peace movement to the Buddhist community.*

*See insert card for subscription information. Single copies \$5.00 postpaid from:*

BPF National Office

P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704

T: 510/655-6169; F: 510/655-1369

www.bpf.org/bpf

© 1999 Buddhist Peace Fellowship

ISSN 1065-058X

printed on recycled paper

Cover by Mayumi Oda

*“Isn't it about time for us to ride  
an ox too?”*

# C O N T E N T S

## REGULAR DEPARTMENTS

- Letters/5
- Prison Page/9
- History Column/10
- Family Practice Column/11
- Ecology Column/12
- What You Can Do/49
- Director's Report/50
- BPF Activist News/51
- Announcements and Classifieds/53



## BUDDHISM AND FEMINISM

- Wendy Egyoku Nakao, *Just Trust Yourself*/13
- Rita Gross, *Pouring Water into Water*/17
- Time for Us All to Come Out*
  - Joanna Macy & Susan Moon Interview Catriona Reed/21
- Sandy Boucher, *Bending the Gender Lines*/24
- Susan Moon, *My Big Self*/26
- Kuya Minogue, *Fudo Meets Cerrewin*/29
- Susan Murcott, *Women and Water*/31
- Zen Master Dogen, *What Wrong Is There in a Woman?*/34
- Yifa, *Love of the Law, Love of the Dharma*/35
- Phelps Feeley, *Unity and Diversity*/37
- Yolanda van Ede,
  - Colliding Images: Western Buddhists and Nepali Nuns*/40

## BOOK REVIEWS

- Alan Senauke on *Prisoners of Shangri-La*/44
- Barbara Hazard
  - on Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown/45
- Tova Green on Rita Gross/46
- Joan Ward on *At the Root of This Longing*/47
- Marianne Dresser on Sandy Boucher/48

## Beginner's Mind BOOKSTORE at San Francisco Zen Center

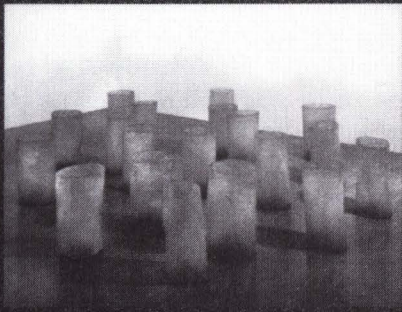


- Buddhist titles  
children's books  
poetry  
peace & social action  
cookbooks
- Audio, video tapes
- Cards, malas
- Zafus, support cushions,  
zabutons, seiza benches
- Statues, incense, bowls, bells

300 Page Street, SF CA 94102  
415-255-6524 or 415-863-3136

### Elaborations on Emptiness

Uses of the *Heart Sūtra*



Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

### *New in paperback* **Elaborations on Emptiness**

Uses of the *Heart Sutra*

**Donald S. Lopez, Jr.**

The *Heart Sutra* is perhaps the most famous Buddhist text, traditionally regarded as a potent expression of emptiness and of the Buddha's perfect wisdom. In *Elaborations on Emptiness*, Donald Lopez explores for the first time the elaborate philosophical and ritual uses of the *Heart Sutra* in India, Tibet, and the West.

"*Elaborations on Emptiness* is a superb achievement: It is by far the best and most complete treatment of the *Heart Sutra* in any Western language."—*Journal of Buddhist Ethics*

"This book presents an ambitious and rigorous agenda for the study of Buddhist texts. . . . [A]n evolution of Buddhist Studies that ought to excite a fresh response. . . ."—*The Journal of Asian Studies*

Paper \$15.95 ISBN 0-691-00188-X

## LETTERS

[Please write to us. We welcome your responses to what we print. When you think we are one-sided, or leave out important perspectives, let us and our readers know. Tell us what you like, too. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.]

### Turning Away from Opposition

• *Turning Wheel* really speaks to my current koan: How to effect changes and what changes need to be made?

After years of protests and jail, I became aware that we were creating oppositional energy. No matter how strong we become, they become stronger.

Now I live in a functional community, a very diverse group where we honor our diversity and are strong in it. We try to honor every person we meet, help who we can, and stand up for the species who can't. Peace seems to come from the act of helping and the environment of practice. —*Marjorie Reynolds, Washington, D.C.*

### The Death Penalty Issue

• The entire issue of *Turning Wheel* on the death penalty was superb, and Melody Ermachild Chavis' article was the cornerstone, every word resonating. Most interesting to me personally was her assertion that upon close examination "the guilt in my client...begins to come apart in my hands." It strikes me that this is related to the larger Mahayana doctrine of emptiness, the ultimate unfindability of all phenomena.

I, too, am involved with prisoners to the degree that I correspond with a number who have expressed a desire for a Buddhist pen pal. Without question it is the most rewarding activity I have yet undertaken. These correspondences center on the prisoners' questions about Buddhist doctrine, and on the Buddhist perspective on their more mundane concerns such as broken relationships with family or spouse. One of my correspondents in Indiana had his copy of the latest *Turning Wheel* denied him on the grounds that it is racist!! Such is the level of ignorance and paranoia that frequently prevails!

Ms. Chavis, good luck to you in your wonderful work. I fully appreciate the periodic discouragement to which you allude in your article, but I am sure that from time to time things come together in a way which convinces you that you are on the right track.

—*Victoria Huckenpahler, Washington D.C.*

• I just finished Melody Ermachild Chavis' piece on the death penalty. It moved me to tears several times. I always like her articles, but this one was one deep touch after another. —*David Grant, Alkmaar, Netherlands*

• Abandoning the death penalty will happen when the last bodhisattva is ambling toward nirvana. The discussion of the death penalty is vital, but the Winter '99 issue was way too one-sided, nearly demagogic, and tried to impose an absolute in a *hopelessly* relative world.

If someone believes the justice system needs to reform the death penalty procedure to reduce financial burdens on government, and we tell them they are violent violators of sacred life, we sound like fools. We should stick to our practice: knowing there is more benefit in raising bodhicitta than in getting caught up in the "exploitative" sway of political processes. Did the Buddha ever refer to anyone not following the precepts as violent destroyers? So far I've spent my life learning that you can't call someone else wrongheaded and advance your point while doing it.

Bill Lucero says in his "Healing..." piece that he is "saddened that in all this time, we, who call ourselves civilized, can't find a better means to deal with crime and murder." It may help to begin by looking at the prison as something that houses hundreds, with only a handful on death row. Are we really helping anything by waving flags for that handful, seeming to ignore all the rest?

It's just my opinion, which I hope fits in somewhere, but I think we should offer death row inmates a chance to hear the Dharma, beginning with the preciousness of our human birth. If they get into it, commute their sentence to life—no thought or chance of parole—and have them teach the next death row arrival. If they don't want the Dharma, they want death. I say let them have it. How that would be administered is a discussion that quickly crosses over to medical-ethical issues such as assisted suicide.

So, thank you. My opposition to your collective words has deepened my appreciation for the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

—*Tom Vogler*

• Again it's time for me to complain that Buddhist Protestantism is diluting our movement for peace and social justice. This time it's your issue devoted to capital punishment.

Most of the views expressed were liberal Protestant. To see what I mean, re-read the articles looking for quotations from the Buddha. A couple of them say, "All of us will die." This is hardly an argument against capital punishment unless you believe "One life, one chance for salvation." For a Buddhist the rest of the story is, "And you will be reborn in a state that accords with your karma."

In one article I find the *Dhammapada* quoted to say that killing is wrong. This is not an argument against capital punishment either. When he says "Don't kill," the author of the *Dhammapada* is not talking about state executions. He assumes that the business of the state is to punish criminals. My point is that Buddhism is even more radical. As far as I can find in the early

We're  
**TRICYCLE**  
 and



**WE'VE  
 GOT  
 ISSUES**

**31 of them in fact,  
 and  
 a new one each quarter.**

\$24 for one year/4 issues  
 Call 1-800-873-9871 for subscriptions

**tricycle**  
THE BUDDHIST REVIEW

sources, Buddhism—the original teachings of the Buddha, if you will—does not acknowledge the right of the state, or anyone else, to administer *any* injury or imprisonment as punishment. Karma is the only legitimate justice; persuasion is the only legitimate interaction with an evil-doer.

There should be some discussion of what the ideal is for a Buddhist, even in a journal devoted to action.

—Mark Tatz, Oakland, California

• Here is a quote from Bryan Stevenson, death penalty appeal lawyer and director of the Alabama Equal Justice Initiative, that fits nicely with the conversation about the death penalty, and provides direction for developing a more compassionate view of criminal defendants:

“I was brought up in a church where I learned at a very early age that where there is life, there is hope. And my faith has forced me to recognized that each of us, including my clients, is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. If you tell one lie in your life, you’re not just a liar. If you take one thing that doesn’t belong to you, you’re not just a thief. And even if you kill somebody, you’re not just a murderer. You’re never beyond redemption.”

—Email correspondent

*“Before the white man came, there was no hell.”*

• I read Melody Ermachild Chavis’ article, “Seeking Evil, Finding Only Good,” after returning home from a burial for Charlie Chief, a highly respected elder of the Kaska Nation. (The Kaska Nation is made up of about 6,000 Canadian aboriginal people.) I wish the Catholic priest there had read the article before conducting Grandpa Charlie’s funeral ceremony.

Charlie Chief was a 93-year-old Kaska elder who had hunted and trapped in the BC/Yukon territories when there were no white man’s boundaries to divide up his home. He lived to see his traditional territory being torn apart to feed the exploiter’s greed for money and control. He watched his children being taken to residential schools where they were brainwashed into believing that, if they were good they’d go to heaven, and if they were evil, they’d go to hell.

The Catholic priest who attended Charlie’s funeral service used the grief of Charlie’s people to drive home this same dualistic message. After a very moving traditional death chant by the head singer of the Kaska Nation, the priest explained that after we die, we meet with God and Jesus, and if we are judged evil, we burn eternally in the fires of hell, and if we are judged good, we sit at the side of Jesus and live in eternal bliss.

The 300 Kaska people who had gathered from all over the BC/Yukon territory to honor their elders sat, as they had done in residential schools for so many years, taking in these teachings. Grandpa Charlie would not have agreed with the priest’s analysis. As one elder told

me, "Before the white man came, there was no hell."

After his burial, we set Grandpa Charlie's spirit free at his "Last Supper." The guests gathered at the Community Center, and Grandpa Charlie's son put some moose meat and bannock (fried bread) in a fire that had been lit outside the log building. We all circumambulated the fire three times in a clockwise direction as a way of joining Charlie in his final meal. Then we ate heartily, with many tears, much laughter, and many (non-judgmental) stories about Charlie's lifetime antics. Jokes were made about how he was still getting into trouble, wherever he was.

It seemed like the priest's message hadn't penetrated the inner places of the people's minds. To them, Charlie had lived and died in the old way, in spite of the priest's attempts to terrify them into seeking redemption in the Roman Catholic Church. I wonder if the Kaska people will again be able to bury their dead without the intrusion of these oppressive ideas into their own teachings about the interconnectedness of all beings.

—Kuya Minogue, British Columbia, Canada

### Welcoming the Prison Project

• Thank you for the subscription to *Turning Wheel*. It felt good to know that a prison project is being launched. There are so many Buddhist prisoners who are without resources or any contact with other

Buddhists. I hope that someday the prison project may reach Texas prisons.

I used to be in a unit where the prisoners were mostly older men, around 40 and older. It was a laid-back, easygoing place. In Texas prisons there have to be 15 or more persons of the same religion to get any recognition and be allowed to use the chapel or any other facility for services. However, even though there may be 15, they cannot meet anywhere unless a free-world sponsor comes to oversee everything. One prisoner offered to "just claim to be a Buddhist" to give us our 15, but we didn't want to acquire anything through deception. Later a prisoner who converted to Buddhism "for real" helped us out. Three very nice Buddhists came and taught us a little about meditation. The visit lasted two hours. I haven't been in contact with any Buddhists from the free world since then.

Now I have been transferred to another unit. It is very unpleasant here. It is the ultimate test of my discipline. The majority of the prisoners here are teenagers through late twenties in age. They are rowdy and feel that they have something to prove, therefore making this place more violent. I am 34, but I am considered an older man here, and am even called "Pops" by some younger prisoners.

In less than three months since my arrival I have been through four lockdowns. Here, the only contact with

NAROPA 1999 25 YEARS OF CONTEMPLATIVE EDUCATION - 2500 YEARS OF TRADITION

### SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISM, M.A.

Engage Your Mind  
Engage Your Heart  
Engage the World

A unique Masters Degree.

Study traditional Buddhist philosophy, ethics and meditation.

Practical training focuses on "engaged" ideas of Buddhism as they apply to resolving the challenges of our rapidly changing world.

Students study skills that will enable them to be effective in the areas of helping others, leadership and conflict resolution.



The Naropa Institute / 2130 Arapahoe Avenue / Boulder, CO 80302 / 303-546-3528 / 1-800-772-6951  
www.naropa.edu / NCA accredited / BA, MA, MFA degrees / credit and non-credit

another Buddhist that I can hope for is to offer a nod of recognition when we pass one another in the hallway.

Because of reconstructive surgery on my left shoulder I have to go to another unit with a Regional Hospital for physical therapy. On my first trip, in my temporary cell at the hospital unit, I noticed that someone had scratched on the wall: "Buddha Loves you and I do too." On my second trip I was assigned a different cell, where someone had scratched "Buddha" in very large letters on the wall. I find it fascinating that out of 140,000 prisoners, some Buddhists wound up spending time in the same cell.

—Mark Loewe #567560, Ferguson Unit  
12120 Savage Drive, Midway, TX 75852-33654

• I began Buddhist practice in prison and while I was not on Death Row, I do have some understanding of the world behind bars. Right now I have been communicating with Rev. Kobutsu Malone of the Engaged Zen Foundation and have offered what assistance I can provide at this time. It is a privilege to be able to give back even a tiny portion of what was given to me.

The Buddhist Peace Fellowship, Turning Wheel magazine, and your staff played a major part in the difficult and of course ongoing change in my life. I remember reading one of my first issues of Turning Wheel while I was in the Hole. (Interestingly enough, I was in there for refusing to make a derogatory state-

ment about a guard, who I knew had done nothing wrong!) For the first time in many, many years, tears started to roll down my face as I read. This old Hippie/Junkie/Convict was slowly starting to soften and melt into a genuine human being. Anyway, keep up the good work. Gassho.  
—Doug

• I am a Buddhist prisoner at the U.S. military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Today I came across the article in the Summer 1998 *Turning Wheel* about the Tibetan Refugee Children's Project. I can't enclose a check; we aren't paid in this prison. But I'm sending you some stamps to offset the cost of your postage. Even if the turn of the wheel is small, it is still good, I think.

I someday hope to be directly active in programs such as yours, and I envy your ability to work hard for these children. Prison has taught me many things, but one lesson remains: there is always someone worse off than you.

I read about the BPF plans for a prison project. I think it is a super idea. I'm concerned about the fact that military prisoners are almost invisible. My goal is to open this place up. We are but a few Buddhists (three or four), unorganized and unaided. We need people to know that we are here, but the military prefers that civilians know as little as possible about us. I would like to help bring our military inmates into the Sangha.

—Jens Karney, Box 75617-7W, 310 McPherson Ave.  
Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1363 ♦

## Christopher Ikeda-Nash, CPA

### INCOME TAX and SMALL BUSINESS SERVICES

Tax Preparation, Planning  
Audit Representation  
Business Formation  
Accounting and Payroll

... Supporting the Buddhist Community

436 14th Street, Suite 1201  
Oakland, CA 94612-2710  
email: ina@dnai.com

Voice (510) 267-0171



Fax (510) 267-0172



## PRISON PAGE

*First of all, welcome to Diana Lion, Coordinator of BPF's Prison Project, and the latest addition to our staff. Diana works inside and outside the prisons, networking support for prisoners, working with other organizations, and supervising volunteers, among other things. There are more words of welcome for her in the Director's column.*

### *Good-bye to Jai Siripongs*

Jaturun "Jai" Siripongs was pronounced dead at 12:19 AM on Tuesday, February 9, 1999, at San Quentin State Prison, California. A large crowd of Buddhists sat in silent witness, while right beside us about 500 concerned progressives stood listening to speakers and singers, and chanting their opposition to the death penalty. It was a dramatic night for weather, as we sat on plastic-encased zafus in high velocity winds and torrential rain. Only a few pro-death penalty folks showed up, and the mood at the vigil varied between caring, somber, and angry. A line of 15 riot-outfitted guards stood in formation facing us as we sat trying to include everyone in our wishes of compassion—Mr. Siripongs, the families of the murder victims, the prison guards, the Governor who had refused to grant clemency, and the many other people in this widespread web.

Jai Siripongs was known as a peaceful and sweet presence during his years on Death Row. He was able to turn his very deprived early life around and, in the most difficult of circumstances, to become a skilled artist and a man who practiced very sincerely. People who knew him said he was deeply remorseful for the enormous pain his actions had caused. One of his gifts to us was his ability to draw such a large crowd to come to his support and revitalize the work being done by the Death Penalty abolitionist movement. We hope that this momentum will carry on.

We supported clemency in his case not because he was a Buddhist (though he was), and not because there are doubts about the facts of his case (though doubts remain about the killer's identity). But as Buddhists, along with people from many other backgrounds, we hold that murder is never right—whether done on the streets or by the state. Clemency used to be granted to prisoners in about one third of capital cases. But under Pete Wilson, former Governor of California, it was *never* granted, which reflects the general American trend. In addition to the reasons for clemency mentioned above (his deep spiritual practice, his being an artist, and his sincere ongoing expressions of remorse) Jai Siripongs was a perfect candidate for clemency for other reasons. He was a model prisoner the entire time he was incarcerated. An extraordinary number of pleas came in on his behalf from such people as the Pope; the

former warden of San Quentin, Daniel Vasquez; several prison guards; and some members of both victims' families. The Thai Government also asked for clemency, promising to extradite Siripongs for life in prison there, so that there would be no cost to California taxpayers. None of these reasons swayed Governor Davis, who was faced with the first execution of his new term.

We extend deep condolences to the family and friends of Jaturun Siripongs, as well as the families and friends of Ms. Packovan Wattanaporn and Mr. Quach Nguyen, the two people murdered in the crime.

—Diana Lion (BPF Prison Project Coordinator)

### *Being Here*

*(The following is an excerpt from a piece written in a weekly journal-writing class facilitated by Terry Stein of BPF's Prison Committee.)*

My life here is limited, it feels very small in many ways, and it is the way my life is now. I work, do crafts, read, walk, meditate. We laugh a lot, and wait a lot. People come and go and really not much happens, not much to write home about. Mostly it is petty here. We are often impatient or intolerant with each other. I believe the staff is also petty and back-stabbing with each other. Our interactions with staff are rarely uplifting or inspirational. Month by month it seems to slide downhill, as the Bureau of Prisons moves to cut the budget, and "frills." And it is in this life here, the way it is, that I can find freedom in my mind, that I know peace and even joy. I feel grateful often, whenever I remember.

Women with short time or children at home have the most challenge disengaging from their lives outside; all the ways that life intrudes on our consciousness tend to take us out of the present possibilities, and push us up against the walls. While I was living outside, contemplating my future inside, a friend told me that two of the freedoms inside are freedom from stuff and freedom from the illusion of control, especially in our outside life. Illusions about control inside are shattered very quickly. Easy time is anything that absorbs my attention, from chatting while waiting on line to Ram Dass' description of being stroked. Hard time is wishing I were somewhere else. The scene in "City of Angels" when Nicholas Cage goes to the seaside, removes his boots and lets the breaking waves wash over his feet and cuffs, and then dives in the surf brought me to tears, missing the feel of the ocean on my skin.

I take pleasure in the return of the seagulls and the Canadian geese, the scarlet on the wings of our black-birds. The four persimmon trees in front of our building are turning color and are more glorious every day. Flowers grace my eyes and our skies are gorgeous. When I remember that I am surrounded by the Buddha nature, I am happy.

—Sage Appel, Dublin Women's Prison

## HISTORY COLUMN

### SENG-MENG

by Diane Patenaude Ames

Things were pretty tumultuous in southern China during the Period of the Six Dynasties (A.D. 265-587). The great aristocratic families of China, having fled south to escape barbarian invasions and general military upheaval, could not establish a stable government down there because of quarrels among themselves. But, although nobody knew who would be emperor next week, the certainties of Confucianism, with its insistence on the absolute subservience of women to their fathers, their husbands, and eventually even their own adult sons, remained to assure elite men that they deserved to be on top of the social and familial heap.

However, a small but significant crack was appearing in the Confucian edifice. As people found less and less to depend on in this world, they began turning to Buddhism in droves. And with Buddhism came the strange foreign idea that women, if they became nuns, could be respected scholars and religious teachers, living by the regulations of their order rather than the dictates of any man.

A case in point was Seng-meng (418-489), whose official biography portrays her as a rebel. Her civil-servant

family, besides undoubtedly being Confucianist in their outlook like everybody else, were devout Taoists and "also...worshipped demonic spirits" (i.e., believed in Chinese shamanism). Nevertheless, she, while still a mere female child, dared to make the unconventional decision to become a Buddhist. Her father died when she was 12, and she mourned him in what was considered the proper filial fashion (which was to vomit blood, go into a coma, and then mope beside his grave for three years). She then somehow managed to become a Buddhist nun despite her family's coolness to the idea. Because she soon became known for her asceticism and scholarship, she was asked to be the teacher of the governor's family in I Province. By 482, at the age of 64, she had established enough of a reputation to enable her to found a convent, called Brightness of Ch'i, in her native Yen-kuan, and remain the abbess there until her death in 489.

Seng-meng made her convent an early center of the charitable activities that were always a mark of Chinese Buddhism, distributing most of the donations given her by the pious to the numerous needy and dispossessed people of those troubled times. She was also known for the zeal with which she protected wildlife on her convent's grounds. Stories which have her throwing herself between hunting dogs and their prey reflect the active concern of organized Buddhism for wild animals throughout Asia, where the grounds of Buddhist temples invariably functioned as wildlife refuges. ❖

SOUTHERN  
DHARMA  
RETREAT CENTER



ESTABLISHED 1978

SOUTHERN DHARMA RETREAT CENTER

is pleased to host  
**MINDFUL LIVING**  
**The Path of Understanding and Love**  
with  
Therese Fitzgerald and Arnie Kotler

June 17-20, 1999

During this retreat, we will practice mindfulness...  
to help us develop calmness and concentration...  
so that wisdom and peace can flower in our hearts.

*Southern Dharma offers silent meditation retreats  
from a variety of spiritual traditions in the beautiful  
mountains of Western North Carolina.*

1661 West Road,  
Hot Springs, NC 28743

Phone / Fax:  
828-622-7112

sdharma@main.nc.us  
www.main.nc.us/SDRC

## SAMADHI CUSHIONS



### Sitting anyone?

Samadhi Cushion sales support the retreats at Karmê Chöling Buddhist Center here in Northern Vermont. Our 100% cotton cushions are sewn and hand-tufted by local residents. Our quality is guaranteed. We also offer a Buckwheat Hull Zafu and Kneeling Benches.

Quantity  
discounts  
available

To order or receive our brochure call  
**1-800-331-7751** Fax to 802 633-2387.  
International calls 802 633-4440. Credit card orders shipped  
promptly. Visit us at: [www.samadhicushions.com](http://www.samadhicushions.com)

SAMADHI CUSHIONS · DEPT TW, RR1, BOX 1 · BARNET, VT 05821

# FAMILY PRACTICE COLUMN

## OBAACHAN'S DHARMA

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

"Namdabs, namdabs, namdabs..." Obaachan is muttering. I smell something strange and smoky, and when I look up from my crayoned drawings, my grandmother is standing in front of a small shelf, fingering a bracelet of beads. I'm too short to see exactly what's on the shelf. Grandma isn't making a big deal of it, the muttering doesn't last long, and so I don't give it much thought. After all, I'm five years old, visiting Hawaii from my home in Ohio, and my mother, who grew up in this house, has never mentioned the word "Buddhist" to me. Obaachan and I don't speak the same language, so I can't ask her what she is doing. Hawaiian life and culture feels mostly foreign to me, anyway. Everything is so different here, like the soapy, black-skinned avocados Obaachan sometimes serves for breakfast, cut in half and sprinkled with white sugar, or her Japanese-style wooden bathtub in the shed behind the family's dry-goods store on Cane Street. You have to wash yourself *before* you get in the tub!

I was five in 1959. It wasn't until 1985, when I was on a pilgrimage of North American Buddhist centers with my Zen teacher, that I visited a Jodo Shinshu church in San Francisco and first saw the words "Namo Amida Butsu" written out. And I'm not sure when I finally connected that phrase to Obaachan's mumblings, and realized that my grandmother had been doing her spiritual practice right in front of me. Something that transparent easily becomes invisible. So, when Obaachan died ten years ago, I wrote a poem for her. The poem contained these lines:

*It took me years to know  
you were really chanting  
Namo Amida Butsu!—Hail to the Buddha  
of infinite light and space,  
the golden one from the Western Paradise.  
But it was nothing I needed to know then.  
You were enough.*

It wasn't until this past year that I realized I am part of four generations of strong American Buddhist women on my mother's side of the family—from my grandmother to my niece. I had never thought much

about it, for a couple of reasons. First of all, I didn't grow up in Hawaii, my mother and father didn't seem to like any form of organized religion, and I never heard the words "Buddha" or "Buddhism" in the public schools. Second, after I read a lot about Zen in various books, I happened to connect with a Korean lineage Zen temple. Our practice consisted of long hours of sitting, chanting, and prostrations; it bore no resemblance to anything I'd experienced as a child. What *was* my grandma's practice, anyway?

My grandmother Haruko Sawada was less than five feet tall, but a formidable presence nonetheless. She immigrated from Japan as a young teenager, found work, and later married my grandfather, Kinjiro Sawada. Together they raised three daughters and two sons. During the war she had to endure having her house searched by U.S. agents, who peevishly confiscated my grandfather's pen-knife as a possible enemy weapon, and she must have known about the internment camps on the Mainland. But I never heard that she was resentful or angry. In fact, she passed the exam for American citizenship when she was quite old, all the more amazing since I had never known her to speak more than a few words of English. Although energetic



*The Sawada girls—author's mother Alice on the left*

and hard-working, Obaachan knew how to relax, and during the '70s she used to amuse her grandchildren by holding out her hand, saying in English: "Gimme five!" We simply felt good when we were around her.

Now I think that Obaachan's practice was very much a family practice and a woman's practice, an almost invisible practice that summoned abundance from scarcity and confidence from

uncertainty. I remember how wonderful it felt to see her in 1976, when she and my two aunts flew to Ohio for my brother's wedding. Sitting on a motel bed, tiny Obaachan looked happy among her three grown daughters, the former "Sawada girls," her opened suitcases overflowing with sweets and clothing and flowers from Hawaii. I remember relishing soft yellow chunks of Portuguese sweetbread, listening to Obaachan and her daughters laughing and teasing one another in Japanese, English, Hawaiian, and pidgin.

Obaachan never considered herself a feminist, and her name won't appear in any books on Buddhism and women. She didn't leave many marks. The soft yellow sweetbread has been eaten, the orchids and fragrant leis have died, the baby vests she crocheted from cheap, brightly colored yarn will never end up in any museum. The years of cooking, cleaning, and love dissolve like gentle laughter and leave nothing behind. ❖

# ECOLOGY COLUMN

## AFFLICTION

by Stephanie Kaza

Body-hating. There is an epidemic of body-hating in the U.S. of A. Young women, older women, certainly some men, even small girls are afflicted. Symptoms of depression and insecurity manifest as a chronic sense of "not good enough." The disease starts from negative seed thoughts: *my thighs are flabby, my breasts are too small, I hate my hair.* Responses range between two extremes: overcoming the hated part with will power or giving in to the paralysis of self-doubt. The sickness develops insidiously, driving the afflicted to extremes of compulsive exercising, compulsive eating disorders, or compulsive consuming. Anything to remove the hated part. Anything to be free of the self-hating feeling.

But self-hate, it turns out, is extremely lucrative for producers of consumer goods. The diet industry in America alone makes \$33 billion in annual profits, thriving on a 98 percent failure rate of dieters. Women spend \$100 million each year on products to remove hated cellulite. The mega-store *Toys R Us* offers one long aisle of make-up products for 3-9-year-olds. Teens

as young as 14 are getting breast implants. As consumer industries promulgate a white western model of beauty to global markets, women around the world fall prey to even more degrading self-hate messages. To attain the American ideal, some Asian women alter their eyelids surgically; some African women bleach their skin with chemical whiteners.

Body awareness. *Sitting in silence, following the breath. Noticing the sensations, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness around the body, the flowing energy that moves in and through the body.* Mindfulness is core practice for developing awareness and presence. Body hating comes up here too, here alone in the silence. Separation, distancing, the body struggles with unwanted thoughts. But there they are—so disturbing, so poisonous, so intractable.

Buddhists study the body; feminists study the body. Buddhists practice inner personal subjective awareness; feminists organize. Which will stop the epidemic? Feminists understand body-hating as social oppression, generated by powerful institutions who benefit from perpetuating such states of mind. The oppression is so pervasive it requires fierce resistance to stop the plague from claiming even more generations of healthy women. From a feminist perspective, body-hating is located in the individual *because* it is located in the social structure. Carefully noting the sensations of hate, depression, and anger about this state of affairs is only a first step; alone it will not change the social structure. This affliction calls for *engaged* Buddhism, getting off the cushion and saying: **STOP—we're sick of this!**

Young women in my Ecofeminism class are signing petitions to urge Calvin Klein to quit portraying women's bodies as sex objects. The campaign has spread to 33 campuses. These bright and lovely women are sick of comparing themselves to the models in these ads, sick of not being accepted for the bodies they are, sick of being manipulated by corporate profiteers. "STOP!" they are saying. "Stop the spread of looksism. We are more than our looks." They are outraged at the way women's bodies are air brushed, "cleaned up," and digitally reshaped to produce unattainable physical ideals.

*Body sweeping...checking for sensation, checking for cultural conditioning, checking for anger.* Feel the pulse of resistance: this body does *not* want to hate itself. This body wants to move and be heard—as beautiful, powerful, and *free* of internalized oppression! So let the body speak. Let the body stand up against the oppressors. Let the body organize with others and stop the disease. This is big and important work. Let the meditation serve to restrain the killing mind from its deadly projects and liberate people everywhere from structural assaults on the body. ❖

*For further insights, see The Beauty Myth by Naomi Wolf and The Body Project by Joan Brumberg.*

For the First Time on Both Coasts

# CHANGE YOUR MIND DAY

SATURDAY  
JUNE 5, 1999  
12:30 - 5:30

**SAN FRANCISCO** in Golden Gate Park, at Marx Meadow  
**NEW YORK CITY** in Central Park, at The Great Hill

Co-sponsored by:  
Bay Area Shambhala Centers  
San Francisco Zen Center  
Spirit Rock Meditation Center

presented by  
**Tricycle: The Buddhist Review**

City of New York Parks and Recreation  
Sponsor: United Way  
© 1999 Tricycle Project, Inc. Photo © James Lee

# JUST TRUST YOURSELF

by Wendy Egyoku Nakao

[The following article is based on a talk given at the North American Conference of Buddhist Women in Claremont, CA in June 1998.]

I fell into Zen practice quite by accident. It was the summer of 1975. My husband and I had just bought a house in Seattle and were in the middle of remodeling it. I was attending a summer program at the University of Washington, and the teacher announced that there would be a Zen sesshin—a meditation retreat—for seven days on Vashon Island, a small island in Puget Sound. I thought, “Gee, that sounds interesting.”

I went up to the teacher and said, “I want to do this retreat.” And he said simply, “Okay.” No questions like, “Have you ever meditated? Do you know what you’re getting into?” I told him many years later that it must have been because I have an Asian face that he assumed I knew all about meditation, but I knew nothing.

When I returned home, I told my husband and a friend who was visiting, “A Zen retreat is going to happen on an island in Puget Sound—you sit still and are quiet for seven days.” Our friend said to me, “I’ll bet you 50 bucks you can’t do that.” And I said, “Okay, I’m doing it!” My husband was not at all thrilled about this, but he went along with my little plan.

I took a ferry to Vashon Island with a group of people I had never met. There were about 15 of us. We sat in an old Baptist retreat center for seven days, and it was absolutely grueling. The retreat was led by a Soto Zen priest who spoke no English. We sat for 50-minute periods. Then the priest would ring a bell, we’d unfold our legs, and then he’d ring the bell again and we’d fold our legs back up and sit for another 50 minutes. I’d never been in a situation like that.

We did walking meditation for about twenty minutes after lunch, and the rest of the time we were put through this grueling regimen. I had no idea what was happening to me. Every so often the priest would quote Dogen Zenji, whom I had never heard of, and I’d think, “What in the world?!”

I don’t know why, but it never occurred to me to leave that retreat. Perhaps because it was hard to get off the island. And besides, I was totally mesmerized. When the retreat ended, I went directly home, walked into the house, and said to my husband, “I’m leaving you.” Just

like that. “I don’t know how to tell you this,” I said, “but I haven’t the foggiest notion who I am.” When I think about it today, it sounds so trite! I said, “All I know is that I need to get out of here.” And that was the beginning of my Zen journey. Everyone who knew me then thought I was crazy. When my mother called my husband asking for me, he said, “She left.” “What do you mean, she left?” she asked. He replied, “She doesn’t know who she is.”

Well, it’s been a great journey, this journey of not knowing who “I” am. I’ve learned to trust the unfolding of life. If there’s one message I have for all of us today, it’s trust yourself. Students come to me wanting to know: Should they do this or should they do that?

And I say, “Trust yourself. Just trust yourself as the Buddha Dharma. Is that so difficult?” Yes, it is.

One day during my early years at the Zen Center of Los Angeles, my teacher Maezumi Roshi asked me, very quietly, “Egyoku, what does it mean to be a woman?” I was in my early thirties, and I’d never thought about it! What does it mean to be a woman? He was asking me not for my answer, but so that I could turn the question over and over and over. It’s a question I still come back to. At times I’ve hated this question, and thought it was a big pain in the ass, to put it bluntly. At times I’ve wondered why none of my dharma sisters were asking

this question. At times I’ve wondered why my dharma sisters *were* asking this question. And today, I come back to this question.

In the summer of 1996, I was preparing for Dharma transmission with Roshi Bernie Tetsugen Glassman in Yonkers, New York, and part of the preparation was to do a solitary retreat and study our lineage. Roshi Glassman was about to remodel a convent that had been owned by a group of cloistered nuns for about 70 years. Their order had shrunk to the point where they had to sell the building.

So we decided that I would do my week of practice in this enormous three-story convent, and I moved in with an attendant. The nuns had left, and the remodeling had not quite started. I thought it would be scary, but it was the most peaceful space. I could feel the spirit of the women who had lived there, keeping their round-the-clock vigils for all those years.



My retreat was mainly about the lineage—a long list of Patriarchs, from start to finish. There I was, at least three times a day, bowing to all these guys. And once a day, Roshi Glassman would come and ask, “How are you doing?” and I would reply, “Where are all the women? We need written documents about the transmission of women.” And he said, “You write it.”

That was my beginning point in consciously acknowledging and supporting women in Buddhist practice. From a long, long time ago, and even longer

*I said, “Is that what teaching is to you? Going into a little room, saying your blah-blah, listening to me say my blah-blah, and then going happily on your way?”*

ago than that, there were women, like you and me, practicing. Women have always accomplished the Way. But I hadn’t been aware of that for most of the years of my training. We have practiced, we have manifested, we have realized, we have accomplished. There’s no question about it. And it was important for me to acknowledge the obvious and say, “Hey, that’s the way it is. That’s the way it’s always been.” So in the document, I wrote, “The spiritual attainment and practice of women has flowed in a continuous yet sometimes hidden stream down to the present time. You and I are entrusted with this lineage. Please cherish it forever.” Isn’t it the most wonderful thing?

In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha proclaimed the attainment of Buddhahood for women—for the nun, Prajapati, for the nun Yasodhara, for the six thousand female disciples present. And yet we’ve had to struggle, haven’t we? We’ve had to rediscover, reconnect, reclaim, and rejoice. I love all those words; each one reveals some aspect of our journey.

After Maezumi Roshi died, I moved to Yonkers, New York. I returned to ZCLA several times to help sort through his belongings. It was a long and sad process. During one of my trips, a Dharma brother of mine was leading a sesshin. He said to me, “By the way, I told everyone that you’re going to give the talk tomorrow.”

And I said, “Did you happen to mention what I am going to talk about?”

“Yes,” he said, “I told them you’re going to talk about women. There are a lot of young women new to practice here, and all they have is an old geezer like me. Why don’t you say something about being a woman in practice?”

“Okay. I’ll say something.”

I went to the zendo the next day and began to talk about the trials and tribulations of being a woman in Zen practice—this very masculine, male-dominated, Japanese, hierarchical form. And as I talked, a young woman in the back row began to cry. She cried and she cried. I wondered to myself: Did she lose a child? Her partner? Does she have an illness? But it would have been intrusive to ask her, so I just kept talking, and looking out of the corner of my eye at this beautiful woman just sobbing her heart out.

Days later, at the end of the sesshin, my Dharma brother told me, “She’s still crying.”

“Why is she crying?” I asked, “I would like to know why she’s crying.”

He said, “When she came to see me this morning, I asked her as gently as I could why she was crying. And she said, ‘I’m crying because I didn’t know that a Buddha could be a woman.’”

She’s a religious studies major now and writing a paper on women in Buddhism. Recently she interviewed me. I said, “I’ll never forget the way you were sobbing in that zendo.” My eyes teared up just recalling that moment, and I asked, “What *was* it?”

She said, “I felt this energy in me, and it was unstoppable. I felt something move in me that I hadn’t even known was there. They were tears of discovery.” It’s amazing how such an obvious thing has been so hidden, so hidden from ourselves.

Maezumi Roshi was a strong proponent of the practice of women, in spite of the system he came out of. Before any of us even thought of asking the question about women in the practice, he raised it. He ordained

*We had spent years sitting silently, side-by-side, never having to say anything. We didn’t know how to talk to each other.*

several women, including married women and women with young children. This really goes against the grain of Japanese Zen. He would always say to me, “I can plant a seed, but you have to make it grow. In your own time and place, you must nurture it and make it grow. Have confidence that you can do it, and you will do it. Because nobody can do it for you.”

After Maezumi Roshi’s death, Zen Center of Los Angeles was run by one of my Dharma brothers, and within a year, the center was embroiled in a scandal involving student-teacher relationships.

When I first heard of the scandal, my whole body went into spasms. I had this sinking feeling that I might be asked to go back. I didn’t want to. I liked my life in Yonkers. (Those of you who have been there might

wonder why.) But when the situation worsened, Roshi Glassman did ask me to return. Reluctantly. He said, "How about if you go back for just three months and work on healing the Zen Center?"

I'd been through so many scandals in my life in Zen, and I just didn't have it in me to go through another one. But I knew the people there, and the Dharma is my life. So I decided I'd return for this period of healing, but on my own terms. I said, "If I return for this work, I want to be paid for it. I want to have my time off. I want to be free to experiment with the changes I think we need. And I want to go back with the understanding that I'm going to do what I can, and if it doesn't work, I'm out of there."

Roshi Glassman agreed. He said, "You can go back on those terms, and we'll work together." I felt I would be supported, and I especially appreciated his capacity to let go and see what arises in any situation.

Returning to ZCLA was very difficult. What made it possible was that there are terrific practitioners there and I loved them; but what was difficult was the invisible hold the forms had on us—the patriarchal forms, the male-dominated forms, the dominator forms, the Japanese monastic forms. It was an invisible system, but you could feel it everywhere.

Fortunately for me, the Center was in chaos. There were some very old-timers there who were used to the established forms, and there were new people, who were eagerly taking in new forms.

The first thing I said was, "I'm not holding any private interviews for an indefinite period of time." At ZCLA, this is a sacred cow. The one thing we don't give up is our private interviews with the teacher. So people asked me how I was going to teach, and I said, "Is that what teaching is to you? Going into a little room, saying your blah-blah, listening to me say my blah-blah, and then going happily on your way?"

I didn't know what I was going to do, but I wasn't going to hide in the hierarchy. This caused tremendous discomfort for the community. It wasn't uncomfortable for me—it was great—but for the community it was very disconcerting, particularly since they were already in so much chaos. But I didn't want a hundred people coming to me privately and telling me what was wrong with everything. I wanted them to talk to and to learn from each other.

Several years before he died, Maezumi Roshi began to emphasize strongly the Sangha Treasure, this jewel of all of us working together. When he first started to talk about it, I resisted. I would say to him, "I live with these people, work with these people, and sit with these people. Now you want me to *love* these people. Give me a break!" But he was unrelenting. And when he died, this was the teaching that really stuck in my mind and my heart and my body. And this is the teaching, this jewel of harmony. It's not the kind of harmony where everything's smooth and undifferentiated, but the kind of harmony that is alive, pulsating with our differences.

Our sangha relationships were very weak, partly because everyone was fixated on the teacher. We didn't truly communicate about our issues until there was a scandal, and then it was too late. And yet, over and over, Maezumi Roshi had said to us, "Learn to work together." The Sangha Treasure heals. Embracing our oneness and our diversity—this is where our practice can rest. We did not know how to

meet together. We had spent years sitting sesshin silently, side-by-side, never having to say anything. We didn't know how to talk to each other. What were we going to do about that?

So I sat the sangha down in circles and councils: circles for this, and councils for that. I sat in the circles, too, like everyone else. At first that was confusing to



*Kannon (courtesy of the Rochester Zen Center)*

people, and when they spoke, they'd look at me, as if I was the authority in the room. But we all learned together, and now they don't pay any special attention to me. It's wonderful for me, because I can have a practice, too, and people can see that.

When we sit in a circle, there's a flattening of the hierarchy. Everyone gets heard, and everyone realizes the tremendous wisdom and compassion that is inherent in every single person, not just the teacher. We have learned that our diversity is not a problem, it's our strength.

I grew up in a Japanese-Portuguese family, and my koan was: how can I be both? My Portuguese friends talked a lot and laughed a lot. My Japanese friends were much quieter. Where did I belong? I agonized over this true-life koan of mine. I was still agonizing over it when I was in my twenties, and one day a friend said to me, "You're so lucky to have all of that!" Then I realized the obvious. I am all of it. The diversity is me.

So the question comes: How can I include all of it, truly realize the all-inclusive nature? Can I be that open? Can I include all of these people, all these lights and shadows? And the answer of course is, "Yes!" This is, after all, what we are.

So the circle and council practices have challenged us to trust ourselves, to trust that the teachings of the Buddha Dharma are active in our life, and that our lives, as we are living them now, are manifestations of the teachings. That's a big leap.

What are the forms that we as women will create? What practice structures will come out of our own lives? What skillful means will we bring forth out of our being? People say, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water." And I say, "What's the baby? What's the bath water? Throw it *all* out and let's see what arises from the vast unknowing."

Of course, form and practice are inseparable. However we practice is our form. But what we throw out is the belief that we have to do things in one particular way. Just be willing to step over the edge. You know the Zen koan: How do I step off the top of a hundred-foot pole? This is where we have to trust ourselves, our understanding, our realization, our practice. When we go deeply inside, the voice we hear may tell us some surprising things. Listen carefully!

Open the practice up in the context of your life as it is; experiment with forms and let them teach you. Be open to so-called new forms that may naturally arise to bring the teachings to life.

So have the courage to stand deeply in the ground of our teachings and let go of all you know. Trust yourself. We are the Buddha-Dharma itself. Isn't it wonderful? ❖

*Sensei Wendy Egyoku Nakao, Head Priest and Teacher of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, will be installed as the Center's Abbot in June of this year.*

## QUESTION BOX

1. What would a Buddhism that fully supports women's growth look like?
2. What would a feminism that fully supports (Buddhist) liberation look like?
3. How has feminism influenced your understanding and practice of Buddhism?
4. How has Buddhism influenced your understanding and practice of feminism?
5. Both Buddhism and feminism are concerned at their core with liberation. How are their different concepts of liberation compatible or incompatible?
6. Is women's teaching of the dharma different from men's teaching? If so, how?
7. How might women want or need a different path toward liberation?
8. Is Buddhist discipline overly tough in a masculinist way? What is the effect of female vs. male conditioning in responding to the discipline of Buddhist practice? How does a feminist analysis understand disciplines such as sleep deprivation, sitting with pain, bowing, etc.?
9. Does Buddhism view heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men, and people in sexually active or celibate lifestyles as equally able to achieve spiritual liberation? Do our sanghas?
10. How can we as engaged Buddhists work to overcome gender inequalities in different parts of the Buddhist world?
11. How important is it to have female images on the altar?
12. How does the First Precept affect your views on abortion and women's reproductive rights?
13. How can we all make sure our feminism includes the concerns of women of color?
14. How can feminism be helpful to men?
15. Can feminism transcend dualism?

*(Questions compiled by Karen Payne and Mushim Ikeda-Nash)*



# POURING WATER INTO WATER

by Rita Gross

Many people assume that the relationship between Buddhism and feminism is something like that between oil and water: They don't mix very well. But I want to propose the possibility that the relationship is more like that of water poured into water, which is a metaphor that's used in some of the Tibetan texts for talking about individual enlightenment merging with universally enlightened mind. When water is poured into water, the waters become indistinguishable. Maybe that's the proper way to talk about the relationship between Buddhism and feminism.

To illustrate this point, I'll draw a little from my own experience and background. I was a reasonably well-known young feminist scholar some time before I became involved in Buddhist practice. In fact, I was a fairly angry feminist, as many of us were in the late '60s and '70s. It was pretty hard not to be very angry about the things we were discovering at that time.

So I was a feminist first. But then I got involved in meditation and, despite some initial resistance, I became involved in Buddhism. At first I thought I was going to have two tracks in my life: my feminist track and my Buddhist practice track. I didn't particularly see them merging or affecting one another, in part because I still had two sets of friends. My feminist friends thought that I had lost my marbles, and my Buddhist friends were saying, "When you become mature in your practice, you'll give up this whole feminist thing. It's just an attachment." But believe it or not, very soon these two tracks were no longer parallel; they started to merge to an extent that I could no longer pull them apart.

So maybe the metaphor for Buddhism and feminism is not exactly water poured into water, but colored water poured into water of another color. Each color is transformed, each is changed by the other. When you pour Buddhism and feminism into the same vessel, each is transformed in ways that are helpful and positive for the other. It's not that Buddhism needs to be "fixed" by feminism, or that feminism needs to be "fixed" by Buddhism. Both are true.

## Feminism Defined

I have learned that it's not very wise to talk about feminism without defining what one means by it, because people have a lot of projections. I have two definitions that I use routinely. The longer definition is that *feminism is the radical practice of the co-humanity of women and men.*

That definition, of course, has been influenced by Buddhism in that I regard feminism as a practice. It's not just a belief system. I'm not interested in people who *say* they believe in the equality of men and women. I actually want to see the practice, because one's life does change once you understand things in terms of the prison of gender roles. There's no question that one's life is going to change if you really get it, and there's a practice to it. By "radical" I mean simply that we must go to the root of things.

My other definition of feminism is much simpler: *Feminism is freedom from the prison of gender roles.* When I look at my own life, it seems quite clear that most of the unnecessary suffering in my life has been due to the prison of gender roles. Certainly there is suffering in our lives that has nothing to do with our sex, and feminism isn't going to cure it. But the unnecessary suffering, the suffering we humans create,

has in my own case been largely due to the prison of gender roles, to making these little boxes and then squashing people into them.

Notice that neither of these definitions is about men versus women, or women against men. That's not what feminism is about. There may be a time in one's feminist development when you go through that phase, but feminism fundamentally is about more equitable, more sane, more enlightened relationships for all of us. In fact, when you look at the prison of gender roles, there are a lot of ways in which men are in a prison of gender, too.

In terms of Buddhism, what is important is the emphasis on practice. I didn't come to Buddhism as a religion by the way of belief or theory, but by practice, and especially the practice of the bodhisattva path, the practice of compassion in engaged, worldly ways. For



*Sky Dancer (courtesy of Yvonne Rand)*

Susan Moon

critiquing the prison of gender is part of the practice of compassion.

### Buddhism In Feminist Perspective

There are two views about women in Buddhism, and these views run throughout the history of the tradition, from the Pali canon all the way up to the present. The more common view is that women just don't have the right stuff, and that the best hope for women is that they'll get to be reborn as men in their next lives. In fact, the first paper I ever gave on Buddhism and feminism was at a Buddhist-Christian conference in 1980. The Japanese Buddhist delegates' reactions were typical. They argued that maybe there was a need for a feminist movement in Christianity, but there was no problem in Buddhism. Buddhists had already taken care of that problem, because worthy women will be reborn as men in their next lives.

The other view that is found in the Buddhist tradition is that gender is irrelevant, gender is empty, gender is a convenient designation, a label. It doesn't tell us anything about what a person can do. This view is manifested in a famous traditional story about a woman who has been studying Buddhism for 12 years and is confronted by a very conservative male: If she has such great understanding, he asks, why doesn't she change into a man? (In fact, there are lots of stories about how very advanced women suddenly change anatomically into men.) But she says to him, "What are you talking about? What is this thing you call a man? What is this thing you call a woman?" And then she changes *him* into a woman, and he suddenly understands that this is a label, nothing more.

It strikes me that the view that gender is irrelevant is more normative, more in accord with the basic teachings of Buddhism. It's easy to see that taking pride in gender identity is an aspect of ego. Buddhism is very keen in its analysis of ego, or self-centeredness. But unfortunately, Buddhists have not always noticed the extent to which pride in gender can be a form of ego. After all, how can you become egoless, or enlightened, if you're still clinging to your human form in that very crude way?

Simply put, I contend that gender hierarchy cannot be justified through any of the basic concepts of Buddhism. It simply cannot be done, and it never has been done. If you look at the basic concepts—the practice of non-harming, ego and egolessness, emptiness, Buddha nature, and all the rest—they all are antithetical to gender hierarchy. Historically, practices of gender hierarchy in the Buddhist world have usually been justified by social custom—it's what everybody else is

doing—which is simply a good argument for Buddhists to be more involved in social change.

Unfortunately, there's a contradiction in traditional Buddhism between the teaching, which is gender-free, and the practice, which is not. The practice of Buddhism that we've inherited is largely male-dominated, male-centered. Most of the positions of leadership, most of the teachers, and the best educations, have been mainly for men. Traditionally, women who wanted to do serious study and practice had a much harder time, and in many parts of the world they still do.

### Women As Teachers

So the question is, what are we going to do about it? I've had a lot to say about this question over the years, but the point I keep coming back to is that we need to find, train, empower, and trust women teachers the way we have always found, trained, empowered, and trusted men teachers. Because without a deity to turn to, the teacher is especially important in Buddhism.

We need to empower and trust well-trained, well-practiced, articulate women teachers who are not male-identified. All of those qualifications are important. Women must not be empowered as teachers just because they're women.

They have to be well-trained and well-practiced, and they have to have a sense of Buddhist practice and Buddhist transformation deep in their bones, and they have to be able to teach that.

Why do I emphasize the word "articulate"? Because in Buddhist history, and I'm most familiar with this in the Tibetan tradition, there were a lot of women who did a lot of practice, but not much in the way of study. The academic curricula tended to be in the monasteries, and women didn't do so well in the monasteries. Many women became very highly respected as meditators, but they usually didn't teach, and so they didn't influence the translation of the tradition. For the most part, their lives weren't even recorded, and they've been forgotten. So if we're to effect change in the practice of Buddhism, we need to have women who are willing to be articulate, to speak out effectively.

By not being male-identified, I mean we need women teachers who are willing to focus on the specifics of gender and not blur everything into a generic masculine. When you have very male-dominated institutions, women who do make it through the ranks usually end up sounding like men, and that isn't what we need. We also need men to start talking about the specifics of masculinity, so that women aren't the only ones talking about what gender means, while men are just generic humans. That's the essence of androcentrism—that men

*We need to empower and trust well-trained, well-practiced, articulate women teachers who are not male-identified.*

are regarded as normal and women are regarded as a different species. If we're to ever get out of this prison of gender roles we have to be able to talk about the specifics of being women, and of being men, and the kinds of conditioning we've gone through. We need women teachers who will talk about the actual obstacles, problems, and possibilities that women encounter as a result of their social and cultural imprinting.

**Sangha as Dharma**

In fact, it is in the realm of just this cultural imprinting that we can look for ideas about what articulate women teachers might talk about. A lot of people say, "What's the big deal about women teachers? Dharma is Dharma. It doesn't matter whether it's a man or a woman who says it—it's all the same." Yes, Dharma is Dharma in the absolute realm, but there isn't much speech in the absolute realm. As soon as we start to talk, we're talking in acculturated, social terms. That being the case, one of the things women teachers may well talk about is the importance of friendship, community, and relationships as spiritual practice.

It often seems to me that of the three refuges the sangha comes in as kind of a poor third. There's a lot of emphasis on Buddha—a lot of art work, liturgies, devotion. And certainly there's a lot of emphasis on Dharma. And then there's the sangha. What do we do with that? I think that, especially in our society, where there's so much alienation and loneliness, the issue of community—of sangha—is absolutely essential. This is just one of the possibilities I see as likely to come out of the teachings of women gurus who are not male-identified.

As you see, when we take a pitcher of water called feminism and pour it into Buddhism, a lot changes. Buddhism doesn't get debased or degraded in the process. If anything, the opposite. We're going to have a Buddhism that is a more adequate Buddhism.

**Feminism From a Buddhist Perspective**

Is the opposite also true? I would say, very definitely, yes.

It strikes me, for instance, that feminists are prone to adopting habits and attitudes that don't actually work very well. And I'm observing this from my own experience. One of those things is anger, the hot rage that you feel when you begin to realize how much your life is diminished by somebody else's ideas of the little boxes you should fit into. If that isn't worth getting angry about, what is? Before I started to practice, I had a very short fuse. I loved to be really sarcastic and cutting with my rhetoric and to put people down in a very aggressive way. I liked to rant and rave some, too.

But after a while I noticed that I couldn't sustain that kind of sarcastic anger anymore. And that was scary, because I had spent so long defining myself as an "angry-feminist." I thought, "Uh-oh, maybe my



**PROGRESSIVE ASSET MANAGEMENT**

**Socially and Environmentally Responsible Investing**

**Balance your investments with your values.**

We are a full service investment firm, offering mutual funds, stocks, tax-deferred mutual funds and retirement plans for individuals and companies.

*Ten percent of all net fees received from members of the Buddhist community will be contributed to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship.*

Eric Packer  
70 Walnut Street  
Wellesley, MA 02181  
800-327-7003 • 781-239-8213

**THE SPIRIT OF TIBET**  
**Portrait of a Culture in Exile**

*Photographs and text by Alison Wright*  
*Foreword by H.H. the Dalai Lama*

200 pages, 180 color photos, 9.5" x 10", \$34.95

One stunning photograph after another, *The Spirit of Tibet* reveals the mystery and magic of the Tibetan people. It shows skilled Tibetan artists creating their thangka paintings, statues and wood carvings, Tibetan doctors with their herbal remedies and pulse diagnosis, the opera singers and dancers of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, and the daily lives, rituals and training of the monks of many different monasteries.

For a FREE Newsletter and catalog on Tibetan Buddhism and culture, contact:

**SNOW LION**  
PUBLICATIONS

PO Box 6483  
Ithaca, NY 14851  
800-950-0313  
607-273-8519  
tibet@snowlionpub.com



Buddhist friends are right. Maybe I'm not going to care about feminism anymore." But what I discovered was that I could still talk about feminist issues, and instead of talking with sarcastic anger, I was talking with a dispassionate tone and some actual clarity, and much more gentleness. And interestingly enough, I found that people listened a lot better. People could actually hear what I was saying in a way that they never had been able to before, when I ranted and raved.

It was at about that time that I read one of Chögyam Trungpa's books about how the *kleshas*, the conflicting emotions, transmute through practice. So anger transmutes into clarity. The energy is not a problem; it's how we work with it, how we manifest it. If it comes out all sarcastic and aggressive, it's like murky water. Nobody can see anything. If it comes out in a clear, calm way, then people can actually see it. For me, that was a very important lesson about the Buddhist transformation of feminism.

Similarly, one of the most common expressions of anger is ideology—having a very strong ideological fix on the world. You know what's right, and you know what's wrong, and you're very certain about it. But ideology doesn't work very well, either, and when anger starts to transmute into clarity, ideology begins to melt. It seems to me completely clear that the middle path of Buddhist practice is the clarity of being able to talk about what we're experiencing without turning other people away from us, and that that's what we need a lot more of.

I really believe that one of the reasons I've been able to maintain an active feminist stance for over 30 years is because I discovered Buddhist practice. Without the kind of equanimity that comes through Buddhist practice my own anger would have burned me up a long time ago, and who knows what I would have become. That happens to a lot of people who become very involved in causes with a lot of ideology and a lot of self-righteousness. They just burn up. I think Buddhist practice is key to maintaining our commitment, our passion.

### Gender and Engaged Buddhism

Having poured the water into the water, I want to conclude with an observation about feminism and engaged Buddhism, and in fact all liberation movements. One can't help being somewhat disappointed with how little attention the issue of gender oppression has received from the engaged Buddhist movement, including the program at Naropa and most of the books that have come out over recent years. There has been very little appreciation for how much the issue of gender oppression underlies a lot of the other things that the engaged Buddhism movement pays attention to.

This negligence doesn't apply only to engaged Buddhism. Feminist theologians have commented that liberation theologies across the board rarely take gender very seriously. Liberation movements tend to regard the

issue as divisive—you are being disloyal to our movement if you talk about it. You should give your energy to our fight against capitalism, or whatever, and later on we'll take care of gender. Basically, women are told, "Don't look at the issues you face as women, look at the issues you face as poor people, as homeless people," or whatever the movement is.

Why is that? Why is it that gender issues are so seldom confronted by liberation movements, whether Christian or Buddhist? The thesis I want to put forward is that it's easier to identify problems outside our communities than to look within them and say: *here's* a problem. But it's not very Buddhist to say that our problems are all "out there." Buddhism always says we need to look within.

I do not believe that our problems are solely within, as you may find in some traditional Buddhist literature. But I think as Buddhists we certainly need to look within—within our communities, within our psyches—and take up the internalized notions of gender that we carry around very comfortably, that we don't want to examine, that we don't want to change. We need to regard them as just as important as all the other issues we're involved in as an agenda for engaged Buddhism. ❖

[Based on a talk given as a benefit for BPF in the summer of 1988.]

*Rita Gross is a Buddhist feminist theologian, scholar, and author, and a long-time Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and student of the late Chögyam Trungpa. Her most recent book, Soaring and Settling, is reviewed on page 46.*

---

Free, I am free.  
I am free  
by means of the three  
crooked things,  
mortar, pestle, and  
my crooked husband.

I am free  
from birth and death  
and all that dragged me back

*by Mutta, one of the first Buddhist nuns*

(from *The First Buddhist Women*,  
by Susan Murcott, Parallax, 1991)

# TIME FOR US ALL TO COME OUT

Joanna Macy and Susan Moon interview Caitriona Reed

*Caitriona (formerly Christopher) Reed is a Dharma teacher in Thich Nhat Hanh's Order of Interbeing, and a long-time BPF member. She and her partner Michele Benzamin-Masuda are the founders and directors of Manzanita Village, a Buddhist retreat center in Southern California.*

*Joanna Macy is a BPF mentor and guide, a teacher, author, and activist doing anti-nuclear and deep ecology work worldwide. Her most recent book, *Coming Back to Life*, is reviewed on page 45 of this issue.*

*Together with Susan Moon, editor of TW, they talked in Joanna Macy's Berkeley living room, in June, 1998.*

MACY: Caitriona, would you like to tell us a little bit about your life story?

REED: Just over a year ago I made it known that I am transsexual, and I started living as a woman. I have been practicing the dharma for over 20 years, and teaching since the early '80s. At the time I was convinced that I would be out of a job and out of a sangha, and that my teachers would really no longer have anything to say to me. But far from being defiled and rejected, I—so far, touch wood—seem to be accepted and acknowledged.

MACY: Before you came out, I knew that she—Caitriona—was there, and I asked you when I would meet her. I felt grief coming up that I might never know her. And you said not to worry; she'd come visit me sometime. But when you called to say you had actually done it, I shook with joy, but also felt profoundly challenged. I said to you, "Now we're all going to need to come out." I remember walking to my study that day, stopping in my tracks, and thinking, "How dare I do anything that doesn't answer my deepest joy."

REED: It's as if the fruits of 28 years of practice have fallen upon me all at once. I've known since childhood that there was some gender dissonance, but for years I

also felt that there was probably nothing I could do about it and still maintain my credibility. Then, when I took that risk, what fell into place—or what fell away, I should say—was years of shame and conflict.

MOON: How did your practice help you to come out?

REED: My practice helped me to let go of my fear of anticipated consequences, and most importantly, it helped me reach out to people in my own community, to friends and teachers, like Joanna. I found more than support; I found joyful celebration—because they trusted something which I was only just coming to trust, which is the manifestation of truth.

MACY: In other words, you did not rely on some reified concepts of what the Dharma was; you relied instead on your own experience—your experience of shame and your experience of joy, your experience of your nature.

The Buddha told us never to trust somebody who takes us away from our own experience. You had the courage to take life seriously. This is awesome!

REED: Everyone is afraid. Everyone has secrets, shameful secrets that have to do with our dreams and our sexuality, with our aging and dying. And to pretend that Buddhism somehow exempts us

from addressing those, because there is some transcendent realm we can enter in meditation, seems to be an insult to the Buddha, an insult to the planet, an insult to our friends and to our teachers and to everything.

MOON: In changing your gender identity, you have changed something that not many people have changed. You've crossed a line that seems like a very big line to most people. So people are fascinated by your experience because of that. I don't think it's just an obsession with sexuality. I think it's that you have crossed a boundary that seems so uncrossable. Even while we say there's no fixed self, there's nothing more fixed in our minds than people's gender identity.



*Caitriona puts lipstick on Joanna.*

Susan Moon

*Even while we say there's no fixed self,  
there's nothing more fixed in our minds  
than people's gender identity.*

MACY: It's the first thing we want to know when a baby is born.

MOON: It's the first thing we want to know. So by pushing that edge for people, you help us think about what, if anything, *is* fixed. What does it actually mean to say that somebody is a man or a woman?

MACY: Or how have I limited my own understanding by assuming I have a fixed definition as male or female?

REED: Although I now live as a woman, I don't have the experience of having been born a girl-child and having grown up as a woman. I am not-man, not-woman. And now many people of many genders confide in me, saying that they, too, have had a discrepancy within their own identity. It turns out that instead of a rigid polarity of two genders, there's a spectrum which we're all a part of, and yet it's been unspoken because the taboo is so great. So now we're opening up that conversation.

However, in becoming a woman, I am in the process of changing my physiology through hormones. I find myself moving from a static state of endocrinological existence to a cyclical state. I see how chemically conditioned my mind and emotions are. It has been like moving from a monochromatic world into a very technical-or and sometimes shocking world.

MACY: With the hormonal change, what has shifted in the boundary between you and the world?

REED: I am happy to make a fool of myself now, because at least it's myself as I embody it. Perhaps as a man one tends to be a little more guarded. But I have nothing to lose now.

MACY: That's a beautiful definition of the Dharma: We have nothing to lose.

MOON: But Caitriona, I don't think your understanding of that truth comes from the fact that you're living as a woman. It comes from the fact that you have made a huge transition. Because as a person who has always lived as a woman, I feel like I would lose a lot by losing that identity. I'm not talking about status or advantage; I'm talking about basic identity.

MACY: Well, I think our second-class citizenship, the fact that we are viewed as the other, that we are dismissed so consistently, all this changes our perspective. I cut out from *The New York Times* yesterday an extraordinary front page article by Barbara Crossette on the

rise of the systematic use of rape as a weapon of war in the last decade. There is such vulnerability in being a woman.

REED: And an added marginalization in being a transsexual.

MOON: You already know what it's like to live as a man, and now you are living as a woman. I wonder myself, as a feminist, whether you notice that you have less credibility with people now. But you don't just come to people as an ordinary woman, so maybe that's an unfair question.

REED: The feminist movement, in America especially, has created a uniformity of expression for women—for example, the makeup that may or may not be worn. There's also a clear bias within the traditional monastic Buddhist framework that decoration is not necessary; it's a ruse, a deception. Women have come to me and thanked me for giving them permission to adorn themselves in a way that they enjoy doing, but which their feminism or their Buddhism has prevented them from doing.

MOON: That may be true of Buddhism, yes, but I wouldn't want to blame feminism. The kind of feminism I feel connected to doesn't say anything bad about makeup.

REED: But the culture discriminates between women who are to be taken seriously and women who are not, according to how they adorn themselves. It's because of our obsession with sexuality. Adornment is seen as merely putting out sexual signals. I think that's a hopeless reduction of what is a celebration of our life.

I think the puritanical impositions on Buddhism are culturally based—and especially in America—on puritanical traditions, on the denial of Eros, rather than on an authentic understanding of the teachings of emptiness. The Buddha did not, as I understand it, suggest that we get rid of desire, but said rather that desire unacknowledged leads to craving and obsessive, addictive behavior. If we deny the desire to begin with, we move into that obsessive, addictive behavior, even though it may be disguised as worthy and spiritual.

MACY: Our fear of the erotic has tinged every single religious tradition, not just Buddhism. This hierarchical view of Spirit over Matter, Mind over Flesh, Light over Dark, Male over Female has produced biopathic behavior. So the liberation of the erotic is crucially important at this point in our history. I see tremendous political relevance in what you've done, Caitriona. And I know you haven't done it for that.

REED: You can't do it for that.

MACY: I believe we're not going to save our world until we fall in love with it. And you've dared to do that.

The Dharma path strikes me as profoundly erotic. Buddhism teaches us to pay attention, and if you put your attention mindfully on anything, you find love arising for whatever it is. A piece of shit. Anything. You put your attention on it and it reveals itself to you.

REED: It's also important to pay attention to the taboos of our society, the unspoken boundaries that we set for ourselves.

MOON: Speaking of boundaries, how did the boundary dissolve for you? You must have a picked a day when the pronoun changed from "he" to "she."

REED: Well, the day picked itself. I came out verbally while on retreat at a community in Santa Monica. I said, "I need to say that I am transsexual, and I am changing my life expression to manifest myself in a way that is not acceptable for a man to do. It's not that I am a woman in a man's body, because I don't buy the simplicity of that. It's very complex."

The response I had from my community was, "Don't worry—it's fine." People said things like, "Thank you, I feel unaccountably light and free for you having said that." All this came as a surprise to me.

About a year ago I was leading a retreat in Phoenix, and I was manifesting in a manner that was, to say the least, ambiguous. And I didn't say anything. I didn't excuse myself. I just led the retreat. In a discussion on the first day someone said, "I have to thank you. I expected to see someone with a shaved head and a robe, and I found you instead, and it undermined a lot of my expectations. Then I realized that's probably your job as a teacher."

MOON: Your refusal to accept a set definition seems important to me. To say, "This does not define me," is brave. Sometimes people do not have such a happy experience when they dare to come out and express who they really are. You took a risk. Sometimes when people take the risk of expressing themselves truthfully—in more political situations perhaps—it doesn't work out so well.

REED: A teacher I have great regard for, Ruth Denison, said to me recently, "But darling, of course it would be fine for you. The Dharma is protecting you."

MACY: I would interpret her to be saying that the Dharma will protect you even if people reject you.

I'm thinking of Warren Beatty's movie, "Bullworth," about a senator who, when he expected to die, started to tell the truth. It *did* cost him his life, and yet it was enlivening for him to tell the truth.

REED: A crucial part of this has to do with my partner, with whom I've lived for 17 years. We're married.

MOON: How long have you been married?

*I just put on a bit of lipstick, and there you have it. What could be easier? A couple of dollars at the drugstore and it's done!*

REED: We've been living together since 1981. We were married by Thich Nhat Hanh in 1989. We are now in a same-sex marriage. As a fellow Dharma teacher, she is as comfortable, if not more comfortable, with ambiguity than I am, but as a heterosexual woman, she has had to redefine our relationship, not so much for herself as for others. People ask her, "Are you okay?" She gets exasperated with the assumption that she's unwilling to dance with ambiguity.

MOON: That's interesting. Are people saying to Michele, "Oh, so are you a lesbian now?"

REED: Yes—"Are you a lesbian?" or "I'm so sorry," or "We'll have to find a guy for you," or "When are you leaving?" It's tedious for her to have to explain what is unexplainable. But I've noticed that many people in their twenties, Buddhist or not, see this as a non-issue.

MACY: Young people are much more comfortable with androgyny, I think.

MOON: Just as your becoming transgendered shows us that these gender definitions are not so rigid after all, and that there's a continuum, so also your relationship with Michele helps us see that relationships aren't about the meeting of genitals; they're about the meeting of hearts.

MACY: And relationships *are* about change. The change in your relationship looks like a particularly big one, but all relationships are constantly changing.

REED: And in that regard, I see it as very easy. I feel lucky that my truth-telling is so easy!

MACY: I don't see it as easy!

REED: I just put on a bit of lipstick, and there you have it. What could be easier? A couple of dollars at the drugstore and it's done! Would that all our liberations were so easy.

I should qualify what I mean by "liberation." I'm not speaking of an absolute liberation of any kind. I'm not speaking of enlightenment. I'm talking about what's in front of my nose. I'm talking about authenticity. Wholeness.

MOON: This brings us back to Joanna's comment to you, Caitriona: "Now we'll all have to come out."

MACY: Liberation involves coming-out. Not hiding-in. That's the great coming-forth. ❖

# BENDING THE GENDER LINES

by Sandy Boucher

*The following piece is based on a panel talk given by Sandy Boucher at the North American Conference on Buddhist Women, in Claremont, California on June 6, 1998. The title of the panel was: "Transgressing Conventional Sexual/Gender Norms and Buddhist Practice."*

It's wonderful that this conference includes a panel on alternative lifestyles, but sometime I'd like to see a panel examining the role of heterosexuality in determining the experience of women in Buddhist contexts. That would be a rich inquiry, wouldn't it? The fact that women are expected to look to men for approval, material support, tenderness, and love, which is the foundation of traditional heterosexuality, determines a great deal of what happens in Buddhist male-supremacist environments, I imagine. How interesting it would be to see the institution of heterosexuality addressed frontally instead of being merely taken for granted. The assumption that the whole world is heterosexual means we don't even discuss that dimension of experience, but because homosexuals and transsexuals are marginal, we have to address their situation.

Some of the sample questions for a panel on heterosexuality might be:

- Are you comfortable being heterosexual in your Buddhist center?
- Do you find your heterosexuality to be a problem in your relationships with teachers and sangha members?
- Do heterosexuals meditate differently than people of other persuasions?
- Do you think heterosexuals make good Buddhist teachers? Or are there problems inherent in this orientation where students are concerned?
- The institution of heterosexuality is an ancient one. Do you find it still viable at the millennium?

And someone could report on what the Dalai Lama has to say about heterosexual sex, which he presumably approves of, though I doubt that anyone has asked him about it as yet.

The panelists would also need to address the dilemma of the women who do not fit society's model of the heterosexual woman. These women are often persecuted or isolated in more or less subtle ways for their noncompliance with the norm. Sometimes these are our bravest and brightest—strong, autonomous women with a great deal to offer, who find themselves marginalized or discounted.

And there is the dilemma of the women who *do* fit the norm, or appear to. We are all trained to submit to an idealized other in order to feel safe, connected, and

whole. We have seen the havoc wreaked in our Buddhist centers by this tendency when it meets the power drive of an unscrupulous leader.

The panel on heterosexuality could open lots of doors, turn over rocks to expose the fetid underside of some behaviors that we tend to take for granted, spark investigation and discovery, and allow fresh air to circulate in some rather stuffy environs. I look forward to it.

I've been asked to speak about my strategies of resistance or transcendence as a Lesbian Buddhist practitioner. It was my Lesbian lover, Treelight Green—one of those country Lesbians with the great names—who introduced me to Buddhism. She took me to Tassajara Zen Monastery where they first sat me on a pillow, turned me to the wall, and made me hold still. Again it was Treelight who found a woman Buddhist teacher, Ruth Denison, and took me down to the Mojave Desert to sit with Ruth.

Ruth Denison was the first Buddhist teacher to lead a women's retreat. Ruth is a heterosexual, married woman who was in her early fifties when I met her in 1980. She had no particular awareness of homosexuality or Lesbianism, but miraculously she was completely open to us as people living a particular lifestyle, and she was supportive of our relationships.

She seemed to have no homophobia at all. Some of the teachers we know well today studied with Ruth Denison—I think of Arinna Weisman, who leads Lesbian and gay retreats, and Carol Newhouse, who leads the East Bay Lesbian Sangha,

and Julie Wester, a heterosexual woman with husband and child, who leads family retreats at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. There are also male students of Ruth Denison who have gone on to become teachers in their own right. This illustrates the breadth of Ruth's sympathies, and gives a sense of why it was so comfortable for us as Lesbian women to come to her women's retreats and also to sit with her at her year-end retreats, which included both men and women.

I am telling you about Ruth Denison and this milieu of the early '80s in order to address the question of strategies. Even in 1980, if one wanted to practice Buddhism, it didn't have to be in a center run by men and dominated by men, where homosexuality was either invisible or secretly viewed as an unfortunate aberration. There were liberal women teachers, even then. And my strategy was to go study with these women.

How does one find out about them? Well, I read somewhere, in 1981, that there would be a conference

*The institution of heterosexuality is an ancient one. Do you find it still viable at the millennium?*



on women and Buddhism at Vajradhatu in Boulder,

*We have to keep speaking our queer truth.*

Colorado. So Treelight and I went there. The next year, there was a conference at Providence Zen Center in Rhode Island. There I met Maurine Stuart Roshi, Prabhava Dharma Roshi, Jacqueline Mandell, Pema Chödrön, and other major teachers in the three traditions of Zen, Tibetan and Theravada (although Jacqueline Mandell had just resigned from the Theravada tradition because she found it so sexist and male-supremacist).

So there *were* women teachers. And a network was beginning to be built that would allow women in isolated Buddhist centers to communicate with each other. I hope that my book *Turning the Wheel* helped to build that network and to introduce many of the women teachers to readers looking for them.

Here on the West Coast a group of Lesbian and heterosexual women decided to organize our own conference. We put together three conferences, three years in a row, the last one in 1990. But when we were working on that third conference, I guess we Lesbians had become too visible, or too powerful in our own little way. One of the organizers who happened to be heterosexual began to be uneasy. She thought there were too many Lesbians involved in the planning. She was afraid the conference would be perceived as a Lesbian conference, and she resigned from the planning committee. So, working with women is no guard against homophobia. Luckily the women who came to the conference saw it for what it was, a conference for all women interested in Buddhism, including Lesbians.

As a feminist and a Lesbian, I have never been a separatist. That is, I have never rejected men categorically, but I naturally found myself living in a women-and-children centered world. As a Buddhist I have sat in and stayed in and studied in many male-run institutions like Zen centers and Tibetan Buddhist retreats and Vipassana centers, for short periods of time, or to experience particular teachings—but I have always chosen, for more prolonged meditation practice, to study with women teachers in a sangha where women are as valued as men.

This is my strategy. As for transcendence, the longer I live, the more I understand how little I have transcended. The more I feel stuck in the mire of difficult daily life, slogging slowly along, falling often, getting up, wiping myself off, learning something, slogging along, falling again.

And the world changes. I am happy to note that now there are some Buddhist teachers in very public situations who are out Lesbians (for example, Karen Sunna, Arinna Weisman, and Robina Courtin). This was not true back in 1980.

I don't want to paint too rosy a picture. The distrust of and fear of and repulsion for gay people is deeply

grounded in the various cultures in America. So it is present in Buddhist

settings as well. And the ignoring of and marginalizing of queers goes on all the time.

Earlier this year I saw a brochure for a conference called "Buddhism in America," in San Diego. Well, I thought, this is very interesting. Let's see who's going to be there and what they're discussing. Noticing a conspicuous absence of people of color and gay people, I sent an e-mail to the organizer of that conference, asking about this gap. And here is part of his e-mailed reply: "One. Regarding practitioners of color—you're right, I'm becoming more aware of some I could have invited, but there's not much I can do at this point...Two. Again, up until recently I wasn't very aware of the gay Buddhist movement. I've read some about it just in the last few months. However, I think most of the issues presented at this event are also relevant to gays."

I wonder what makes him think so, since he knows so little about the concerns of gay Buddhists? On the one hand there is ignorance, on the other hand there is the assumption that what is important to heterosexuals in a Buddhist context is also important to gays. Most of all, there is no impulse to ask Lesbians and gay men what we might like to see discussed at a conference called Buddhism in America.

At *this* conference, on the other hand, here we are, with a presence, and a voice.

I remember when we began to organize, as Buddhist women, someone asked, "Aren't you just making opposites, creating conflict?" And we answered, "There is nothing anti-Buddhist in the search for justice for each human being." We have been given this human rebirth, which we understand to be precious beyond compare. To protect and nurture that gift in each individual is a crucial Buddhist endeavor.

We have to keep speaking our queer truth. Keep being visible as the beautiful, sincere, queer Buddhist practitioners that we are. And keep insisting that our presence be acknowledged, our input welcomed, our perspective given the respect that it is due.

Most of all, we don't want to go on perpetuating structures and assumptions that cause anyone to suffer.

To paraphrase Pema Chödrön: Hoping to be honest and kind, in our work for justice, we assume responsibility for being here in this unpredictable world, in this unique moment, in this precious human body.

That's my strategy, in private and in public, as a Buddhist, a Lesbian, a lover, an activist, a writer, a human being. ❖

*Sandy Boucher is the author of "Turning the Wheel, Opening the Lotus, and the new Discovering Kwan Yin: Buddhist Goddess of Compassion, reviewed on page 48. She teaches writing classes in the East Bay and does individual consultation with authors.*

# MY BIG SELF

by Susan Moon

In North America, Buddhism and feminism met over 25 years ago. I know because one of the places they met was in me. Twenty-five years ago I was a new and passionate convert to what I then spoke of as “women’s liberation,” and I was more slowly and less passionately becoming converted to Buddhism. I still call myself both a feminist and a Buddhist, and I’m proud to say both those words. For years after the two traditions (and feminism *is* a tradition, too) were introduced to each other in the freshman mixer of my brain, they didn’t get along very well. They seemed for a long time like two opposing belief systems, the one declaring that we must change our social structures, the other, that change must come from within.

But bit by bit, thanks to many women practitioners and our male friends, Buddhism and feminism have been getting to know each other, and feminism has been changing Buddhism in this country, and making the forms of practice more equal.

I’m speaking from my own experience, and that experience is chiefly, though not exclusively, of Zen in California, in convert sanghas of Westerners who are overwhelmingly white and middle class. I know only a piece of the larger fabric of Buddhism in the West, and yet I know that the threads of feminism that are woven into the practice at Berkeley Zen Center, for example, are woven into the practice in other places and other traditions as well.

I’m sorting the feminist changes I’ve seen, somewhat arbitrarily, into seven areas.

## Women teachers

First of all, and most obviously, many wonderful women teachers have come forward, and are continuing to come forward, in all the different traditions of Buddhism. I want to stress the importance of this. In the best of all possible worlds, it wouldn’t matter whether a teacher was a woman or a man. One could safely say, “Oh, I don’t know whether my teacher is a female or a male. I didn’t notice, because my teacher’s skill and understanding is all that matters. After all, the dharma is from the realm beyond the opposites.” But we can’t say that yet. It *does* still matter. We still have catching up to do, and we need to see women’s bodies sitting at the front of the room in the Buddha seat. Young women stumbling into practice places for the first time need to know that there is room for them to grow and develop as teachers if they choose to stick around.

Perhaps women have been able to step forward into positions of leadership in American sanghas—as teachers, priests, abbesses—without as many institutional impediments as present themselves to women in traditionally Buddhist countries, because Buddhism is relatively new to the West, without a long history of institutionalized power relations. In the Zen communities I’m familiar with, women are putting on the brown robes that signify that they have received dharma transmission, and they are taking their places on the ancient lineage chart. They are taking other leadership positions as well. Now, at San Francisco Zen Center, for example, of the ten people who have the most visible leadership roles—the president, abbots, senior dharma teacher, directors and *tantos* (practice leaders) of the various centers—eight are women.

*When I am lost, afraid, or feeling lonely, I don't want to hear about no-self. I want to hear that I have big self.*

## Structural change

In the realm of structure, change is coming more slowly. If we were to replace all the male teachers in our sanghas with women, this in itself would not change the mostly hierarchical, patriarchal structures of the traditions in which we practice. Our Buddhism is enlivened by the challenge of balancing respect for ancient traditions and the guidance a teacher can give with our belief in democracy, equality, and individual freedom. The voice of caution says: “We mustn’t water down our tradition until it’s diluted beyond recognition.” A question I ask myself is: In choosing to be a Zen Buddhist, how much authority should I surrender to my teachers?

Structural changes *are* happening. Secular decisions about running the temple—whether to build a new dining room, where to buy eggs—are now made more consensually than they used to be, while religious decisions—who should be the next abbot, or how monks should prepare for priest ordination—still tend to be made by a few people in positions of authority. And maybe this is for the best. An interesting aspect of traditional Zen that mitigates against entrenchment of authority and abuse of power is the understanding that the power goes with the position, not the person; different people have the opportunity to rotate through positions of authority. The idea is that one is *servicing*, and is therefore expected to put oneself aside, whether one is the abbot or one of the kitchen crew. Even in a position of authority, one is in effect “channeling” the dharma. And at Zen Center, every resident is on a regular dish crew, abbots and new students alike.

Again, to use San Francisco Zen Center as an example, the Board is elected, and the people who run the place

are appointed. But I wouldn't really want the abbot to be elected by new students, and these appointments are made within a context of interwoven consultation. Also, there are more safeguards than there used to be. The abbots are answerable to a council of elders as well as to the entire community. There are two abbots instead of one, and they are appointed to a four-year term, renewable for another three years maximum. There used to be no end to the abbot's term. These days, abuse of authority seems less of a problem than finding people who are willing to take on these difficult jobs.

### Ethical guidelines

An important area of concern has been sexual misconduct. Starting in the 1980s, a number of American Buddhist centers were torn apart by scandals in which male teachers abused their authority over their students, most often with behavior that included illicit sexual relationships with female students, and occasionally with males. The abuses that came to light were painful and shocking, and different communities responded in different ways. But the fact that the abuses *did* come to light was a great step forward. Many of them had been going on secretly for years. *Turning Wheel* published a couple of issues focusing on the problem of sexual misconduct in the context of teacher-student relations. Working out guidelines for ethical conduct and procedures for dealing with abuse has been an ongoing process. Many centers have now created their own sets of guidelines. The Buddhist Peace Fellowship has just published a book, *Safe Harbor*, bringing together suggestions for ethical guidelines.

Booklets on ethical guidelines don't stop people from following the red thread of passion into dangerous territory. We have more useful tools than we used to, and more consciousness, and that's good. We still have to keep on trying not to hurt each other (knowing that we still will), without retreating into a terrified puritanism that doesn't even leave room for us to love each other. As women are taken more seriously in our sanghas, and as we take ourselves more seriously, I believe our relationships will be more wholesome and loving. This is already happening.

### Changes in forms and symbols

Another realm of practice that has been affected by feminism is the realm of symbolism—our language and liturgy, imagery and iconography. The zendos I am

most familiar with, the Berkeley Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm Zen Center, have made significant changes in this area. The first change I remember was in the language of the Heart Sutra, which we chant at every service. We used to say, "The Bodhisattva depends on prajna paramita, and *his* mind is no hindrance." Years ago, after many meetings of the Berkeley Zen Center practice committee, we changed it to, "*the* mind is no hindrance." A little pronoun makes a big difference, at least to the women in the zendo.

Another regular part of our service is chanting the lineage of our tradition—the list of names of those who transmitted the teaching, from Buddha on down to our temple's founder, Shunryu Suzuki—and every name on the list is a man's. I have respect for the teachers of old, but one reason I find this lineage list grating is that it is somewhat arbitrary. There were holes in the early generations that had to be plugged with conjecture rather than history. And some of the people whose names are next to each other in the succession of ancestors lived too many years apart for one to be the dharma heir of the other. So I appreciated it when, a couple of

years ago, we added the following words to our regular service at the Berkeley Zen Center:

*Homage to the first woman ancestor, Maha Pajapati Daiosho, and the succession of women teachers. Homage to all the female ancestors, whose names have been forgotten, or left unsung through history.*

Some people feel it's petty to fuss over pronouns, or that it's taking political correctness to an extreme to change the language of the traditional chants. These chants have been good enough for practitioners for the last couple thousand years. Why shouldn't they be good enough for us? Well, as Buddha was fond of saying, things change. Just because a chant is old it doesn't mean it must never be changed, or even that it has never been changed before. The practitioners who recited this lineage chant in the past were mostly men. (Even if it *was* good enough for them, it might have been even better for them if there had been some women's names on the list.) And exactly how ancient does something have to be for us to consider that it's sacrosanct? 500 years old? 250 years old? What if it's 50 years old? These forms are constructed by practitioners. As long as we bring our questions with us to the practice, and ask of our collective practice that it be responsive to our deepest questions, the practice is alive. If we unques-



Mayumi Oda, *Hariti*

tioningly accept the forms, without even seeing that they are forms, they become dead. They are no longer live music, being played by living musicians, but old bones. Buddha said: Trust your own experience. Don't do something just because I say so.

The visual imagery is also changing. I used to just pretend to myself that some of the Buddha statues around the place were women—they are often androgynous enough to make this possible. But this is no longer necessary. In many practice places, more female images are being put on altars; there are more Kuan Yins—female bodhisattvas of compassion, and and more Taras—Tibetan female Buddhas. A statue of Prajna Paramita, the mother of all Buddhas, sits on the altar at Berkeley Zen Center. It was made by Rebecca Mayeno, an artist and one of our sangha members. After we got the statue, we incorporated into our service an excerpt from *The Hymn to Prajna Paramita*, which comes from *The Prajna Paramita Sutra in 8000 Lines*. In this chant we praise the mother of all Buddhas, saying,

*Homage to the Perfection of Wisdom, the lovely, the holy.  
The Perfection of Wisdom gives light.  
Unstained, the entire world cannot stain her.  
She is a source of light, and from everyone in the triple world she  
removes darkness.  
Most excellent are her works.  
She brings light so that all fear and distress may be forsaken, and  
disperses the gloom and darkness of delusion.  
She herself is an organ of vision.  
She has a clear knowledge of the own being of all dharmas  
For she does not stray from it.  
The perfection of wisdom of the Buddhas  
Sets in motion the wheel of the dharma.*

### Feminist Buddhist studies and scholarship

Many Buddhist centers now offer classes in Buddhist women's history. To mention just two examples, Linda Cutts at Green Gulch has been teaching classes on Buddhism and feminism. Joan Sutherland, of the Diamond Sangha in Santa Rosa, has been teaching koans about women, and is collecting them into a book.

By now there are a number of excellent books in English about feminism and Buddhism, about Buddhist women teachers, and the history of women in Buddhism, by scholars and writers such as Rita Gross, Sandy Boucher, and Anne Klein, to name just a few. See the bibliography on page 49 for further reading.

### Attitude toward our bodies

I believe it is thanks to women, in large part, that we are beginning to cultivate a more forgiving attitude toward our bodies in Zen practice. Just by being in the room we women seem to remind everybody that we all *do* have bodies.

Zazen is a bodily practice, a yoga posture, and it's physically demanding. I'm not familiar with other Buddhist traditions, but I know that in some Zen

schools there is a tough attitude toward the practice of zazen, and a great emphasis on keeping the posture, full or half lotus, without moving, for long stretches. Zazen as martial art. There are stories from when Zen practice first came to the West, of people injuring their knees through immobile sitting. And we women bring competitive mind with us into the zendo, too, just as men do. This is a tricky area, because Zen practice *is* a physical discipline, and it needs to be practiced with a sense of discipline. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. It's beneficial to push oneself, to grow in confidence as one meets a challenge, not to give up too quickly. It takes courage to train oneself in stillness in this way, and as one does so, courage itself grows. But we are each responsible for our own practice. We sign up for retreats voluntarily, we choose to study with teachers whom we respect, and ultimately, whatever our teachers tell us, whatever the retreat schedule may be, we are responsible for our own knees.

In any case, I think we are less inclined than we used to be to see zazen as a battle in which the spirit struggles to overcome the weakness of the body. Body and spirit are one and the same. I'm happy to see that more people are sitting in chairs in the places where I practice, although this *could* indicate not that the attitude is changing but simply that we are getting older. All of these changes I have mentioned I connect with feminism.

### The self

A woman teacher said to me once that in Buddhist practice the task of a man is to forget the self, and the task of a woman is to find the self. This is not a lesser task; at the deepest level it must be the same task. But it is not spoken about in this way.

The dharma tells us that self and other are not separate. But women often err on the side of identifying with other, whether it's mate, children, clients, teachers or whomever, while men may need to be reminded not to get lost in self. I apologize for these sweeping generalizations; there are so many exceptions on both sides that you can't even call them exceptions, but I do believe I'm pointing to something that is a difficulty for many women (and some men) besides myself. (My what?)

We are always being encouraged in our practice to forget the self, but I believe that there can be times when this isn't the most useful thing, especially for women. We may have been forgetting the self too much already. We may need to remember our self, take care of our self en route to the discovery that there is no other.

It may be helpful to make the distinction between small self and big self. Small self is related to ego, big self to oneness with all beings. So all of us, men and women, are practicing to manifest as big self, and the only way we get to big self is from small self. As long as we live in this conditioned world, we have our small

*(Continued on page 30)*

# FUDO MEETS CERREWIN \*

by Kuya Minogue

The meditation bell rang to end the last sitting of Jukai, the Soto Zen *Keeping of the Precepts* retreat. Five women had participated in an intensive meditation retreat and in the traditional Jukai ceremonies. During the retreat, they had listened to dharma talks based on the precepts, and had met with me in formal *sanzen* to examine the precepts in relationship to their daily lives. In the final ceremony, each had committed herself to focusing on one or more of the ten precepts during the coming year. It had been a very deep sesshin.

As the sound of the bell died down, each woman leaned over and picked up a rattle or a hand drum from a basket that contained a variety of rhythm instruments. One woman began to drum. Another woman provided counterpoint to the rhythm of the drum with the hiss of a rattle. Yet another intoned a low droning chant. Soon every woman was drumming, chanting syllables, and dancing in a circle around the bowing mat. The more experienced chanters improvised poetry to replace the syllables. The energy built to a peak and the women—in one mind—simultaneously stopped chanting. They had made the transition from a very traditional Zen retreat to a Candlemas ceremony designed by themselves, and by my partner, Kiwani, who is Amazenji's teacher of women's ritual.

In the women's ritual calendar, Candlemas is the midway point between Winter Solstice and Spring Equinox. (The patriarchal transformation of Candlemas is Groundhog Day on February 2.) The light is returning, as the daylight time grows longer. It is a time of renewal and of calling on the life force to empower the early buds which are beginning to burst from their casings. It is a time for seeds planted in the wombs of the foxes and wolves to quicken into form. At Candlemas, women commit themselves to the women's way, just as during Jukai, they commit themselves to keeping the precepts in lay ordination ceremonies.

During the Jukai sesshin, the women had been sitting silently on zafus in the rectangular shape of the zendo. As they began the Candlemas ceremony, they sat in a circle around an altar containing the candle from the Zen altar, pussy willows, garden seeds, the skull of a beaver's head, and various objects that the women wanted to empower with their spiritual training such as a new bridle.

Five unlit candles were also on the altar. The oldest woman picked up the talking stick and began to describe what she wanted to manifest between this ritual and the next women's high holiday celebration at

Spring Equinox. These are rural women, so they spoke of preparing their garden plots, beginning their seedlings, birthing their calves, and putting out hay bales for the hungry moose and deer. Five days of sitting had created a still point in their hearts and had added immediacy to their visions.

When the talking stick had passed around the circle three times, each woman chose one of the unlit candles, lit it from the main candle, and joined a procession into the dark winter night to place her candle in a circle of candles in the snow. The chanting and drumming began again. Words that unite Buddhism and Candlemas filled the valley. "*Within all light is darkness. In darkness there is light.*" The volume and energy rose to a pitch and the women raised their hands into the air, dropped down on their knees and put their heads on the ground in front of their candles. They were returning their energy to the earth and offering themselves to her healing.

Amazenji is a women's Zen training temple that embraces the practices and rituals of the earth-based spirituality movement. Ama means nurture/union/love. Zen means Zen. Ji means temple. The conditions on Amazenji's acreage in Northern British Columbia are rustic, and women who travel to the temple must bring their own tents and campers. Amazenji's Buddhist practice is based in Soto Zen, and the women's spirituality practice is based in what Kiwani, I and the women involved are remembering from the matriarchal earth religions. During the summer, seven local women maintain a Soto Zen-style monastic schedule. Traveling women can join a daily Soto Zen practice. Amazenji offers all the traditional retreats of the Soto Zen sect in conjunction with high holidays of the women's earth-based religions.

The teachers at Amazenji are Kiwani and myself. My teacher is a certified Zen roshi and Kiwani's is an Iroquois woman based in Ohio. Kiwani and I met on Cortes Island in British Columbia in 1994 after I broke with my teacher because I could no longer tolerate the erasure of the women's lineage in my Zen sangha. When we first met, it seemed as though our separate spiritual practices were very far apart. Kiwani's was wild, magical, noisy with drum and song, and brilliant with color and dance. My practice was clothed in black and all of my energy was focused by mindfulness into one silent spot of awareness that tenderly interwove the present moment with wisdom, compassion and discipline. I taught Kiwani how to sit zazen and Kiwani taught me how to let my spirit fly on the back of a drum. We soon discovered that each tradition enhances the other.

*Each woman joined a procession into the dark winter night to place her candle in a circle in the snow.*

*I taught Kiwani how to sit zazen and  
Kiwani taught me how to let my spirit  
fly on the back of a drum.*

Feminism had always deeply affected my spiritual practice and informed my vision of what spirituality *must* include. Consequently, I had been extremely frustrated with a Zen sangha that would admit only tokenism for the feminine divine. By the time I met Kiwani, chanting the male ancestral line every morning had become intolerable to me. By incorporating Kiwani's teachings into my practice, I allowed radical feminist spirituality to transform my Buddhist view. My Buddhism has become earth-based. I have revised my Buddhist lineage by revisioning traditional Buddhist stories so that they put the experience of women in the forefront. In my dharma talks I refer to anthropological evidence of prepatriarchal tantric women potters; Maya, Buddha's mother; Pajapati, the first Buddhist woman practitioner; the Taoist women shamans who took refuge in Ch'an temples after the fall of the Han Dynasty; and the Japanese women who have left us a collection of women's koans.

Zen practice has brought discipline to Kiwani's spiritual practice. She says, "In the retreats, I've had to come up against myself in a new way. The hierarchical form of the retreat has forced me to let go of a deep-seated orneriness that initially expressed itself as immature rebellion against the retreat leader. When I do ritual after a five-day sesshin, I am a better tool, can fine-tune visualizations and perceive multidimensional realities more vividly. But most of all, Zen has taught me the profound value of silence—and in that silence, a rhythm of movement between order and chaos, structured activity and organic creativity. The silence has allowed me to hope for the survival of the planet. In silence I see that there are choices, and that everything contains an ongoing drive to survive."

It took some experimentation before we found a combined form that compromised neither tradition. The first combined retreat that we did was Rohatsu/Winter Solstice. After hours of discussion and planning, we designed a retreat that began with an intensive sesshin and ended with a rousing Solstice ritual and feast. Three women sat the sesshin and another eleven women joined us for the ritual. Each woman expressed gratitude for the work that Kiwani and I had done. Convinced that we had created a unique integration of the two traditions, Kiwani and I agreed to develop Amazenji, and we purchased 76.5 acres of land in rural BC in 1996.

Since that time, many women have discovered us. Buddhist women, who have been searching for a feminist spirituality that does not contradict their practice, have joined the sesshins and rituals. Radical feminist

women who have wanted to experience meditation but have been unable to find a Buddhist center free of patriarchal trappings have brought their tents, water jugs, and mosquito repellent to attend a summer retreat or stay for a period of monastic training.

But it is the local rural women who are the heart of the sangha. Amazenji has become a spiritual home for these women. Because the pagan religious calendar is based on the rhythms of the earth, Amazenji has special meaning for the local women who are farmers and ranchers. Each retreat mirrors their seasonal activities. They attend a May Day/Vesak Ritual to empower both the seeds that they plant in their gardens and their own seeds of Buddhahood. They recite the names of people who have died in the past year at a Segaki/All Hallows ceremony while the bawling of cows whose calves are being rounded up for slaughter fills the valley. When the retreats and rituals are over, the local women drive home to their ranches and farms with a renewed sense of the sacred. This is the work of Amazenji. This is a true synthesis of feminism and Buddhism. ❖

[\* Fudo is a Zen Bodhisattva who empowers trainees' efforts to "grasp the will," and Cerrewin is the Goddess of inspiration and creativity.]

*For more information about Amazenji's retreat and ritual schedule, contact Kuya at <onzafu@hotmail.com>.*

## Big Self, continued

selves with us, and we need them to get through the day, to get through the line at the checkout counter.

We hear a lot about no fixed self, and about emptiness. But when I am lost, afraid, or feeling lonely, I don't want to hear about no-self. I don't want to hear about emptiness. You may say it isn't Buddhism's job to tell me what I want to hear. But still...I want to hear that I have big self. I want to hear that there is support, there is a Net of Indra, there is ground, earth, something holding me that is bigger than me. Buddha nature, suchness. Thich Nhat Hanh speaks of interbeing. This is a more positive way of putting it than emptiness. Reb Anderson, senior Dharma teacher at S.F. Zen Center, told me once during a painful time, "You should remember that the universe is already taking care of you." The chant to Prajana Paramita that I mentioned is helpful, too. The Mother of all Buddhas—she's my mom too.

I heard Layla Smith, a teacher from Green Gulch Farm, giving zazen instruction to beginners. She said, "Sit like a baby in the lap of Buddha." I loved this. So Buddha *is* my mother! Also, from the Metta Sutta, "Even as a mother at the risk of her life watches over and protects her only child, so with a boundless mind should one cherish all living things." Yes, I want to learn to cherish others like that. That is also how I'd like to be cherished. ❖

# THE DEPENDENCE OF LIFE ON WOMEN AND WATER

by Susan Murcott

A poem from the *Therigatha*, spoken by the slave woman Punnika and translated in my book *The First Buddhist Women*, begins:

*I am a water carrier. Even in the cold I have always gone down to the water.*

Punnika lived 2,500 years ago, but her water-carrying descendants are seen wherever one travels in Asia. Not just in Asia, but in many other developing countries, women are the carriers of water, as well as the caretakers of water. In this sense, women are the caretakers of life.

I translated that *Therigatha* poem from Pali into English some 20 years ago. But recent experiences have made Punnika's life more real to me. I have had the chance to meet and know some of the women who carry the water.

In August 1998, I traveled to Kathmandu, Nepal and to Varanasi, India to attend the "Second International Conference on Women and Water." It was the first time I had ever been to either Nepal or India,

and the invitation to attend this conference was an unexpected opportunity to integrate my Buddhist past with my water-engineering present.

The conference was organized and supported by several small Asian and American NGOs. About 300 people, mostly women, attended the first day of the event—the day the Queen of Nepal presided. About 100 women and several men attended the next five days. In addition to Nepali and American participants, we came from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Germany, and Australia. Of about 75 Nepali women, perhaps half were peasants. Some of them had walked a long distance to attend. This wasn't a typical conference of the rich and well-educated, those of us who obtain our water by turning on a faucet and who rarely give water another thought. It was a meeting of women from one world—the water-faucet world—with women from another world—where heavy burdens of water are carried daily and where children die on account of water-borne diseases. The Nepali peasant women who walked to this conference did so because water is a life-and-death matter.

As I was packing my bags and preparing my



WHAT WOMEN AND WATER HAVE IN COMMON IS BOTH ARE THE SOURCE OF LIFE.

thoughts, I, a feminist practically since birth, asked myself: "Why are we holding an event devoted to women and water?" Common sense as well as my work around the world as a water and sanitation engineer had taught me that water is for everyone—women and men. Indeed, water is for all life, not just human life. So why *women* and water?

I could think of three reasons why we might be interested in women and water, two of which were practical, the third, philosophical. First, women have a big responsibility for the family water supply, and they suffer on account of scarce and polluted water, particularly in developing countries. We have learned from United Nations statistics that in 1990 1.23 billion people did not have adequate access to clean drinking water and 2.1 billion people did not have access to adequate sanitation (bathing and toilet facilities). Those numbers are increasing. In such circumstances, women suffer because they must carry water long distances from remote water sources. And, when family members become sick on account of water-borne diseases, diseases which are preventable and which have largely been eradicated from the developed world in the past 100 years, women are burdened with the responsibility of caring for those who are ill.

Second, women are not often empowered to make important decisions about water. Women are a minority in the water engineering and management professions. Therefore, decisions about water are often made by men. Sometimes these decisions by the male-dominated engineering profession are in the best interests of all. But other times, there are serious oversights that are the result of women's non-participation. These decisions might be as simple as the design of a latrine or the repair of a pump handle, or as major as a decision to build a multi-million-dollar hydroelectric dam or water-treatment plant. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, India, tribal women have trained as hand-pump mechanics. The reason? In this land of low water tables and absent irrigation facilities, the only sources of water are shallow wells. But the male-dominated agency responsible for fixing the pumps had only two mechanics to cover 930 wells. "It is better that we learn to fix the pumps ourselves instead of waiting for days for the government to fix our pumps," explains Chamela, one of the illiterate Banda women who challenged caste, chauvinism, and even prejudice within her own family to learn hand-pump mechanics.

The third reason we might be interested in women and water is because we recognize our interdependence

---

*Mari, whose art appears on the previous page and on pages 40-43, lives with her husband, five border collies, an Indian antelope, two sheep, a goat, a llama, some chickens and ducks in Southern Medford, Oregon, on Ffoshelyg Parc Farm, where they raise certified organic culinary herbs. She teaches both yoga and Vipassana meditation. Her book The Buddha Smiles, drawings and Dharma quotes, is forthcoming from White Cloud Press.*

and are interested in promoting the health and well-being of all life on earth. What women and water have in common is that both are the source of life. Women are, among our myriad other roles, mothers and healers and caretakers of life. And rivers, such as the Bagmati in Nepal or the Ganges in India, are thought of as goddesses, because with them there is life; without them, there is no life.

I knew these things theoretically and professionally. In my years as a water engineer, I had traveled and worked in many developing countries: Mexico, Brazil, Eastern Europe, China, Russia. But I had worked with the engineers and technical elite in the world's megacities. I had not known the people, the women who suffer on account of water pollution and water scarcity.

\* \* \*

Before the conference began, I had the opportunity to travel around Kathmandu Valley, and at a Hindu temple I met a very special young boy, Shanker Bhatta, who acted as my informal guide. I guessed he was about eight years old. Then I found out that he was actually 14 years old. "Why is he so small?" I wondered. Later I learned the shocking statistic—60 percent of Nepali children are stunted because their young bodies have not retained essential nutrients, on account of diarrhoeal and other water-borne diseases. Here was one small casualty of water pollution.

On the first day of the conference, we divided into groups to discuss what we hoped to gain from this event. My group included an uneducated Nepali girl-wife who had come to this conference hoping to learn how to clean up dirty water. She told me she carries 30 pounds of water for three or four hours each day and that such hard work is the everyday job of most rural Nepali women (and 80 percent of Nepal's population is rural). This responsibility prevents her from devoting time to other essential activities, such as education (only 23 percent of Nepali women are literate) or economic development. As the days unfolded, I came to see that her story was typical. Here was a second casualty of water pollution and water scarcity.

On the second day of the conference, I met the delegation of women from Bangladesh. They showed me pictures of their loved ones suffering from arsenic-induced diseases as they told their horrific tale. Bangladesh is the most densely populated country in the world, and also one of the poorest countries in the world. The region has three sources of water—surface water, rain water and ground water. Although there are many rivers, surface water is highly contaminated. Therefore, in the past several decades, as many as a million deep wells, called "tube wells," have been drilled in the area to provide clean drinking water. However, in the last few years it has been discovered that this ground water is contaminated with arsenic of natural origin. The international aid agencies and governments that drilled these deep wells had never



tested for arsenic! Consumption of this water has led to widespread disease and death. As many as 77 million people may be affected. Of course, it is the women who are caring for the sick, deformed, and dying. And it was Taiyeba Islam and her delegation of Bangladeshi women who asked to organize the next international conference on women and water in the year 2000, in order to carry the work forward.

On the third day, it was my turn to speak. I was uncertain how to address this group—my work at the village level has been limited, and the needs seemed so overwhelming. Yet I was invited to this conference because I was a professional woman engineer from an internationally renowned engineering university, and presumably I should have some solutions to offer. But what to say? I wanted somehow to meet these women where they lived, and it occurred to me that the best way to do that was to begin by telling the story of my work last winter in neighboring Myanmar (Burma).

I had gone to North Burma to evaluate the potential construction of a new reservoir for Wachat Village (population: 3000) and Kyaswa Hospital, as part of a project of MettaDana, a U.S.-based, non-profit foundation. Previous investigations had determined that two-thirds to three-quarters of the hospi-

tal patients are ill on account of waterborne diseases, including dysentery, hepatic amoebiasis, ascariasis, pin worm infestation, giardiasis or related illnesses.

The ultimate objective of my work in Myanmar was identical to an objective I was to hear over and over at our Women and Water Conference—to obtain a safe and potable drinking water free from pathogenic organisms. To that end, I set up a lab in Myanmar and measured the quality of water samples from various sources.

Key findings included the following: 1) The only water I tested that was free from bacterial contamination was from a neighboring water treatment plant. Thus, water treatment works. 2) High turbidity is associated with bacterial contamination. 3) The age-old rural method of letting highly turbid water settle in large jugs is a very effective example of local water wisdom. 4) Coagulation experiments indicated that some turbidity can be removed using local Burmese aluminum sulfate, a metal salt.

So now, in Nepal, I demonstrated to the assembled

women at the Women and Water conference one of the simplest processes of water purification—coagulation. I collected a sample of polluted water from the Bagmati River in Kathmandu. It was a characteristic dirty brown, and full of particles. I got some locally available raw aluminum sulfate, identical to the compound I had used in Myanmar, ground it into a powder, and made a one percent solution. Then I showed them that when a small amount of this solution is added as a “coagulant” to the jug of dirty water and mixed vigorously, large particles called flocs are formed and settle out quickly by gravity. Through this coagulation process, standard in most drinking water treatment plants around the world, the water becomes much cleaner. In a demonstration like the one I was performing, the effect is visually striking.

A personal challenge arose from the response to my “water cleaning” demonstration. The Nepali peasant women had come to the conference to learn how to

clean up their water supplies, and now, using the everyday tools I had shown them, they felt they knew what to do! I hadn't realized that they would take my demonstration as the prescribed route to clean water in local Nepali villages. I had to explain that it was a step—only a step.

I saw two core problems in the region: water scarcity, hence the need for women

to carry heavy loads of water three to six hours per day; and water quality, hence the need for women to spend another large portion of their lives and hearts caring for the sick, especially their sick and dying children. (One in three children in Nepal die of waterborne diseases before the age of three.) The water quality issue is a simple engineering problem. The greater challenge is how to give women, especially rural women, direct control over their water quality. Just as we in the West want our personal computers and private automobiles, the Nepali peasant women want to have control of water quality in their own hands, instead of being controlled by outside forces—upstream villages, local, state or national government agencies.

In the final day's session, we broke into groups. In mine, the international group, we were not to say “what should be done” but “what we personally would do.” First, I committed myself to collaborating with several of the Nepali women who have technical backgrounds

*(Continued on following page)*



*Girl at hand pump well, Wachat Village, Burma*

# WHAT WRONG IS THERE IN A WOMAN?

[Excerpts from Shobogenzo, "Raikai-tokuzui," by Eihei Dogen, 1240 C.E.]

Nowadays, extremely stupid people look at women without having corrected the prejudice that women are objects of sexual greed. Disciples of the Buddha must not be like this. If whatever may become the object of greed is to be hated, do not all men deserve to be hated too? As regards the causes and conditions of becoming tainted, a man can be the object, a woman can be the object, what is neither man nor woman can be the object, and dreams and fantasies, flowers in space, can also be the object. There have been impure acts done with a reflection on water as an object, and there have been impure acts done with the sky as an object. A god can be the object, and a demon can be the object. It is impossible to count all the possible objects; they say there are eighty-four thousand objects. Should we discard all of them? Should we not look at them?...If we hate whatever might become the object of sexual greed, all men and women will hate each other and we will never have any chance to attain salvation...There are disciples of the Buddha who have a husband or a wife: even though they have a husband or a wife, they are disciples of the Buddha, and so there are no other beings equal to them in the human world or in heaven above.

Even in China, there was a stupid monk who made the following vow: "Through every life, in every age, I shall never look at a woman." Upon what morality is this vow based? Is it based on secular morality? Is it based on Buddha-Dharma?...What wrong is there in woman? What virtue is there in man? Among bad people there are men who are bad people. Among good people there are women who are good people. Wanting to hear the Dharma, and wanting to get liberation, never depend on whether we are a man or a woman. When they have yet to cut delusion, men and women alike have yet to cut delusion....Moreover, if [a man] has vowed never to look at a woman, must he discard women even when vowing to save limitlessly many living beings? If he discards them, he is not a bodhisattva. ...Words like those [of the monk's vow] are the deranged speech of a stupid man who does not know the Buddha-Dharma. We should feel sorry for him. If that monk's vow is true, did Sakyamuni and the bodhisattvas of his time all commit wrongs by looking at women? And was their bodhi-mind less profound than

the will of that monk?...If the vow of that monk were true not only would we fail to save women, but also, when a woman who had got the Dharma manifested herself in the world and preached the Dharma for human beings and gods, we would be forbidden to come and listen to her, would we not?...

There are monks who seem to have been in training for a long time, [but] who have only been vainly counting the sands of the ocean and rolling like surf over the ocean of life and death. There are also those who although women, have visited [good] counselors, made effort in pursuit of the truth, and thus become the guiding teachers of human beings and gods...

In general, we should learn to understand clearly whatever circumstances we meet...When we abandon the east and try to hide away in the west, the west is also not without its circumstances. Even if we think that we have escaped circumstances, unless we understand them clearly, though

they may be distant, they are still circumstances, we are still not in the state of liberation, and the distant circumstances will [disturb us] more and more deeply. ❖

[Reprinted by permission from *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo*, Nishijima & Cross, trans., Windbell, Woking, U.K., 1994.]

## Women and Water, continued

to come up with a simple and inexpensive water treatment solution for Nepali peasant women, perhaps some kind of filtration and chlorination scheme, which might already exist, but which, because I typically work in big projects, I hadn't heard about before. That's the "simple" challenge. Second, I committed to help organize and attend the Year 2000 Third International Women and Water Conference in Bangladesh. The big challenge that remains as I write this article is the 77 million people of Bangladesh who drink water from deep wells contaminated with arsenic—wells funded by the Western engineering elite of which I am a part. How do we help the people of Bangladesh?

Two weeks later, attending a meeting at the United Nations Development Program headquarters in New York with some Japanese colleagues, I passed the UNICEF gift shop en route to the meeting and saw some striking posters of rural children from developing countries. Above each child the poster said: "What do you want to be when you grow up?" and below each child was the answer, "ALIVE!" This, I thought, is the short story of women and water. ❖

*Susan Murcott is a water engineer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in Cambridge, MA. She was a Buddhist practitioner for many years, and is the author of the pioneering book, The First Buddhist Women (Parallax Press, 1991).*

# LOVE OF THE LAW, LOVE OF THE DHARMA

by Yifa

I remember wondering what the purpose of life was as early as my junior high school years. I noticed that many people feel that the most important aspect of life is to work hard in order to earn money for living, but then they are living to work and working to live. So life appeared to me to be a fairly pointless circle.

Still, I, too, was inclined to see career as the one thing above all else that would determine my level of happiness. I was very ambitious when I first entered college. It was my goal to be a politician, and my first year of higher education was spent studying political science. I discovered during this year that I had more interest in law than political science, and that studying law could also lead to a career as a politician. My interest in law did not simply come from a desire to legislate, but from a deep-rooted interest in the natural laws that govern the way the world works. In a manner of speaking, I felt that the law, both natural and societal, was what kept the world in balance.

But there was soon to be a turning point in my life. In 1979, a friend brought me to Fo Guan Shan monastery, a Chan Buddhist center in South Taiwan, for a retreat. I took it as an opportunity to vacation for the summer and get away, and I never thought it would be anything more. In my quest to learn about justice and balance, I had never been drawn to any temples or churches. To me, religion was for older people, a superstition that helped them cope with life. I never imagined that Buddhist teachings could have a profound impact on my own life.

I was wrong. At the monastery retreat, I was taught meditation and chanting, and I attended many lectures on the Dharma. During this period, I realized that Buddhism was centered around wisdom and not superstition. I realized that the teachings were every bit as applicable to my life situation as they were to my grandmother's. The teachings were designed to liberate *all* sentient beings from suffering, and that included me. I felt regret that I had not investigated this path earlier,



and I vowed to become a supporter of Buddhism in my secular life.

Shortly after I made this vow, I remembered a Confucian saying that I had heard long ago. "The propagation of the teaching is dependent upon people." It seemed to me that the most efficient way to help spread the Buddhist message was to renounce the secular world and become a nun. Because I was young and had a secular education from a very respected university in Taiwan, I felt that I could be an asset to this religion. If I waited to become a nun until after I retired, I would only reinforce the false belief that Buddhism was just for older people, who have already lived their lives in the secular world. I felt that I had the strength within me to renounce the fame and power I had been seeking. My whole family was shocked by this change, but it felt very natural to me. At first my parents tried to dissuade me, but later they came to accept it.

My quest for justice was transformed, and I began to recognize that the Buddhist teaching was exactly in line with what I had always longed for—justice and balance revealed through the law.

When I joined the Fo Guan Shan order, I was surprised to find that the majority of people who had become monastics within the order were young women like myself. Venerable Master Hsing Yun, the founder of the order, who was about 50 years old at the time, was young at heart and liberal in his views, and he stressed the importance of equality throughout the order. His

*Religion was for older people, a superstition that helped them cope with life. I never imagined that Buddhist teachings could have a profound impact on my life.*

dynamic leadership and openness to total equality were important factors in why I chose to become a nun of this particular Buddhist order. His style was never condescending or patriarchal in a limiting way.

I was able to complete my law degree in Taiwan, and I brought my love of the law with me into a study of the laws governing monastic society. I was sent by my teacher, Master Hsing Yun, to America to continue my formal education. I went first to Hawaii, where I received a masters degree in comparative philosophy, and then to Yale, where I received my Ph.D. in religion. My dissertation was a study of the earliest and most comprehensive laws governing Buddhist monastic soci-

ety in China. The regulations, which come from the text called “Rules for Purity in the Chan Monastery,” were partially derived from the Indian vinaya and partially reflective of Chinese society at the time they were written, in 1103 CE. In looking at these rules, I saw that the *spirit* of the Indian *vinaya* (rules for monastics) was kept intact when they were brought to China, but they were adapted to the culture in such a way as to benefit and protect those who were following them. So now, in our Chan practice, we still follow the Dharmaguptaka tradition, according to which monks take 250 precepts, and nuns take 348.

The Buddha himself, when he attained enlightenment, did not walk out from under the Bodhi tree and declare “Rule Number One...Rule Number Two...” and so on as a prescription for how to attain enlightenment. Rather, he looked at the way the society was operating and gave the rules of the vinaya as a way to maintain social harmony, and a way to protect the nuns and monks from criticism by the lay community. The Buddha was both flexible and reasonable. And while one can view the rules that are only for nuns and do not apply to monks as being very patriarchal, these rules were conditioned by the cultural situation at the time. They were not and are not universal and eternal truths in the same sense that the truths of cause and effect, karma, interdependent origination, and the Four Noble Truths are. Instead, the vinaya were rules for a specific point in space and time. They are completely dependent on the environment in which they exist. For example, the rule that nuns must not bathe naked in the river was really a social prohibition. Some teachers don’t even believe these rules are actually precepts; Ven. Dharmananda, a respected senior monk in Malaysia, says the rules are probably not the teachings of the Buddha but rather the rules of Brahmin society imposed upon the religion.

So, in my opinion, the spirit of the rules must be kept while the

letter of the rules may have to be reconstructed to fit our modern times. If the rules no longer fit the situation of the community, but people venerate the rules themselves, they do no good. While I would not advocate an abandonment of the rules, I would advocate an investigation into *the rules governing the rules*—into the spirit that informed the creation of the rules in the first place.

In Taiwan at the present time, there are four nuns for every monk. As a result, most of the temples are run by women. Buddhist nuns are also leaders in education in Taiwanese society, and many other opportunities are open for women that were not open in the time that the vinaya was written. Therefore, because the situation for women in society has changed so dramatically, a new look at the rules could only increase the harmony of the sangha.

In the West, the “women’s liberation” movement needs to be careful not to divide people even while it brings equality and harmony to everyone. While I fully support equality for all people, I would not wish to be called a feminist. It is my opinion that this type of labeling creates division and ultimately leads to confrontation. The equality that we seek as women already exists. It exists in the natural world, where all genders, all races, and indeed all species are already equal, but we do not always see that equality. Both women and men simply have to be aware of this natural equality that exists for all sentient beings.

I will continue to speak out for women in any place or time that they are mistreated, but I would do the same for any creature that is mistreated, so to call me a feminist may be too narrow. Instead, I would like to be called a person who strives for the liberation of all beings. ❖

*Ven. Yifa, Ph.D. is currently a visiting scholar at the University of California in Berkeley. Before coming to Berkeley, she was provost of Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles.*



Kannon  
(courtesy of Rochester Zen Center)

# UNITY AND DIVERSITY:

## A Personal Narrative

### on The North American Conference on Buddhist Women

by Phelps Feeley

*The cafeteria was full of women (and a few men) having lively conversations, getting to know one another, making connections. After the morning panel I wanted to discuss some points the panelists had brought up, so I put shyness aside, and approached the table where several of them sat. After the normal round of introductions, the conversation turned to the panel's topics of inclusion and exclusion. One of the women (not a panelist) commented that she did not identify with general perceptions of women, asserting that she considered herself "dangerous." She then turned to me and asked in a tone which mixed accusation and interest, "How 'bout you, do you consider yourself dangerous?"*

*Dangerous. Dangerous. Do I consider myself dangerous? It was a good question and one that demanded my attention. I made a vague response to her, and soon after, I got up from the table with an off-yonder look on my face and went back to my room to think and be alone.*

*The word "dangerous" can have multiple meanings. In my academic and personal work, I have been exploring alternative ways to talk about the revolutionary, searching out ways to discuss the political in language that's representative of people's lives and courage. This is not new. For centuries we women and other oppressed peoples have used our own language, including gossip and slang, in order to name the implicitly political experiences we live through. Yet such uses of the vernacular have rarely been recognized by power-holders: politicians, academics, dictionaries.*

*"Dangerous" is having the ability and willingness to break through. It is having the courage to see things and then claim them for what they are. Dangerous is the dance we do when we learn to love not-knowing as much as we love our knowings. We live in a world that inflicts danger on women every day, yet dangerous, too, are those who refuse to lie down underneath this weight. The status quo trembles when we—women, feminists, anti-racists, those who fight together and alone—gather with each other, to speak in our own languages, to stand up and be strong. Dangerous is the voice that speaks when silence is mislabeled as safe.*

\* \* \*

Throughout my growing up, my spiritual path has always been strongly connected to a political one. My

parents, inspired by the Church's role in the Civil Rights era and the use of Liberation Theology in Central America during the 1980s, taught me to be a firm believer in the activist role of spiritual practitioners. It is not surprising, then, that when I look deeply into my Buddhist practice, I find my watering hole of political nourishment. This nourishment guides my practice as a feminist, an anti-racist, and an activist.

When I received the brochure for "Unity & Diversity," a conference on Buddhist women sponsored by Sakyadhita (International Association of Buddhist Women) and The Claremont Colleges, I was immediately impressed with the conference's presentation. I was excited about attending a conference that appeared unafraid to make the connection between the politics of inclusivity and Buddhism, offering workshops on "Buddhism and Human Rights," "Feminism and Buddhism," and "Asian and Asian American Women in Buddhism."

I was also interested in going to the conference because one of the organizers was Ven. Karma Lekshe Tsomo. Lekshe had been one of my teachers in the Antioch Buddhist Studies in India Semester Abroad program. She inspired my commitment to Buddhist practice; she offered me a strong, intelligent, *female* role model, and encouraged me to explore questions of gender politics in the context of Buddhism.

Our full conference days began and ended with meditation, led by teachers from different traditions. Each morning a plenary talk was followed by a panel presentation and discussion; in the afternoon, there were a number of smaller workshops and discussion groups to choose from; and in the evening, a performance. After which, we crawled into bed for a much needed rest.

\* \* \*

On the first day, I was drawn immediately to a workshop given by Tova Green and Alan Senauke, of the BPF, on "Being Allies: Using Dharma to Recognize and Transcend Difference," a terrific introduction to an idea and vocabulary I use frequently now. The whole idea of being an ally, of using a privileged position to advocate for a person who does not share that privilege and faces oppressive forces, came across powerfully in the small group. We squeezed ourselves into the chair-desk units that the small classroom was filled with, and

*Do I consider myself dangerous?  
It was a good question and one  
that demanded my attention.*

explored situations in which we had been an ally. Questions were posed: "What was being an ally like? What parts were difficult or felt uncomfortable? What felt positive? What was the risk involved?" Hearing from other Buddhist women about their experiences of being an ally allowed me to see models of behavior that were compassion-oriented, but action-based.

By the middle of that first day, I knew the conference was going to be as draining as it was invigorating. Inspiring as it was to listen to panelists from a variety of centers and schools, it was also a hell of a lot of information to process. Additionally, my mind was troubled by some of the things that came up, particularly at the "Speak Out," and then more intensely at a discussion of "Process Issues of Inclusion and Exclusion."

The "Speak Out" had four parts: a panel discussion of race, class, and gender issues, commentary by the two facilitators, an interactive exercise, and a chance for conference participants to speak out. Melody Ermachild Chavis began by making a connection between the "Unity and Diversity" theme of the conference and the same idea in her gardening work: a diversity of plants creates a harmonious sense of unity in the garden. She went on to discuss the community gardening movement's own difficulties when faced with questions of race, class, and gender diversity. She got a warm laugh when she joked that some middle class, white, organic gardeners think they invented vegetables!

Of course, Melody was quick to point out how much easier it is to see blindness in others than it is to see it in ourselves. How often do we—as North American Buddhists—carry on our practice without addressing the lack of diversity in many of our sanghas? She also noted that we converted Buddhists too often regard other religions as inferior, and we tend to forget the traditional Asian roots of Buddhism, imagining that we invented silence and compassion, as well as vegetables.

The "Power Witness" exercise called our attention to how diverse our group of conference participants was in some areas, and how homogeneous in others. We were first directed to remain silent, refrain from laughter, and not interrupt with questions. "Easy enough," I thought. "Sounds like meditation practice." Tova and Melody began, "Please stand up if you are a woman."

Almost everyone stood. "Look around. Who is in this group with you? Who is not? How do you feel to be in this group, in this setting?" I looked around and saw the faces of a room full of Buddhist women, young and old, nuns and laywomen. I felt inspired and bounteous. There was a sense of community and purpose. This was why I came to the conference—to stand with other women and discuss the subjects that mattered to us. "Please sit down Please stand up if you are twenty-four or younger." Only a handful of us stood. "Who is in this group with you? Who is not?" I wanted to freeze-frame that moment, to ask these other young dharma students what their paths and struggles were about. Too quickly we were told to sit down and the faces were lost in the

crowd again. The categories continued with varying amounts of people standing up. I was surprised by the variation in my own feelings of safety when I stood. Many of these identities were ones I strongly advocated in other settings, yet did not feel quite as comfortable claiming in this one. "Please stand if you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered." I noticed myself and a couple of women around me pause before getting up, taking deep breaths or looking around anxiously at who else was standing, and—perhaps more anxiously—who was witnessing us stand. It was the categories in which no one stood that were the most haunting: was there really not one Native American present, for example?

Or more frighteningly, did those who identify as Native American not feel safe enough to stand up?

I spoke with a Latina friend of mine after the activity was done. Though only four people stood when the category "Latino/a, Chicano/a or mestizo/a" were asked to stand, she was delighted to have had the opportunity to identify herself publicly in that way and make eye-contact with the other Latinas there. I felt similarly, realizing how easy it would have been to go through the conference without knowing who else shared certain identities with me.

During the "Process Issues" conversation, Joe Parker, one of the organizers of the event, remarked that simply by looking around the room we could see just how far we were from being truly inclusive. Specifically, he spoke of the unrepresented communities of Asian immigrant Buddhists from the surrounding area. Others voiced concerns over how speakers, pan-



Martha Wax, *Prajna Paramita*

elists, and topics were chosen by the organizational committee. Questions were raised as to whether those choices were biased towards academic, white, and/or middle-class perspectives. Though the conference did present itself as politically front-line in terms of addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion due to race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc., it became apparent that the reality of the organizing behind the scenes was a bit different. As a participant, I was not aware of these concerns until I heard them spoken at the conference, nor am I clear about how they were resolved. What I can say though, is that the concerns that I did hear voiced, and concerns I formulated myself based on what I heard, became a significant part of my experience of the conference.

\* \* \*

There was not nearly enough time to process these internal issues of inclusion and exclusion, but the unstructured meetings of small "dharma discussion groups" did allow for some group process work with other participants. These groups met twice for a couple of hours, and were encouraged to prepare a short presentation for the whole group on the last day. This was quite a mission.

My group of a dozen went through a variety of topics: Should we talk about the sexist language in Buddhist texts? Should we examine how our place in Buddhism is affected by our femaleness? What about the issue of sexual misconduct between teachers and students? Surely all of these are important enough to focus on. We tossed the facilitator's hat back and forth before deciding what to do.

On the last day of the conference, during the closing ceremonies, a line of us stood shoulder to shoulder facing the rest of our conference community. We handed out copies of the names of Women Ancestors, a list that is now recited, we had just learned, in the San Francisco Zen Center. These are the names of the first Buddhist women who practiced with Shakyamuni. (See Susan Murcott, *The First Buddhist Women*.) We asked that everyone join us in the chanting of these ancestors' names. Next, we used a call and response format to highlight the female teachers in our lives. One by one, each of us in our small group chanted the name of one of our female teachers—for example: "Ruth Denison teaches me"—and then it was repeated back by the larger crowd in the same way. After each woman in our small group had done this, we invited people in the audience to call out the names of their female teachers. From corner to corner people stood up and named the women who had influenced their lives and practice. From well known teachers like Pema Chödrön to our mothers, the names were called out and repeated. Again

*We invited people in the audience to call out the names of their female teachers. From corner to corner people stood up and named the women who had influenced their lives.*

I looked around at who stood in the room with me, feeling full and inspired. We were creating a new ritual, a new language of recognition.

\* \* \*

While in India I did a report on "The Political Activity of Tibetan Buddhist Nuns." I examined stacks of case history files and media clippings, and transcribed interviews from the files of the Tibetan Nuns Project and the Tibetan Government-in-Exile's Information Office, particularly their Human Rights Desk. I read stories of incredible courage and activism, along with horrific tales of prison abuse and torture. In one report, the nuns were described as shouting pro-freedom slogans and "raising their fists on occasion."

I treasured this line, as a quirky morsel of energy and power about women who were both religious and activist. I shared the phrase with a friend, and it became a kind of mantra for us. We would whisper "raising their fists on occasion" to ourselves and each other whenever we encountered something sexist or otherwise repressive. This secret mantra of resistance

became very important to me.

I think back on this now as I again reflect on the question "Do you consider yourself dangerous?" Within my heart and head, the answer is a resounding "YES!" It has to be. To be otherwise is to be complacent, silenced and inactive. I consider myself dangerous in the same ways that the "Unity and Diversity" conference was dangerous. We are dangerous as we speak what has not been spoken. We are dangerous as we break apart and destabilize structures that appear to be rock hard, but are actually crying out for us to cut through. The conference was not perfect; neither are we. Although there were bound to be pockets of silence and marginalization, many voices were heard bringing us out of the darkness of division. We used our voices and we heard each other's voices: Asian voices, Asian-American voices, Black voices, Chicana voices, Jewish-Buddhist voices, queer voices, differently abled voices, transgendered voices, monastic voices, young voices, old voices, voices of female teachers, voices of human rights advocates, engaged Buddhist voices, spiritually committed voices, voices of survivors, and many other women's voices, and some voices of feminist men. These voices do not speak in unison, but they include varying experiences of Buddhism in our diverse lives. And that, to me, is dangerous in all the right sort of ways. ❖

*Phelps Feeley practices with the Mindfulness, Diversity, and Social Change Sangha and the Buddhism and Racism Working Group. She wishes to thank those who helped her write this article through their contributions of input and support.*

# COLLIDING IMAGES:

## Western Buddhists and Nepali Nuns

by Yolanda van Ede

(From a plenary talk at the North American conference on Women and Buddhism, June 6, 1998.)

During my anthropological fieldwork in a Tibetan Buddhist nunnery in Nepal between 1992 and 1995, I observed several Western Buddhist practitioners and numerous tourists visiting the nunnery. While the tourists stayed for only one or two nights, the Western Buddhists (American and European) usually planned to stay for several weeks. One American couple came, expecting to do a particular meditation practice for three months. This couple attempted to do the retreat not in complete seclusion as the nuns would do in their private rooms but by withdrawing from the daily bustle of the community only for as long as it would take to enact the 500 prostrations, say the mantras, and so on.

When Susan and Peter arrived on a spring evening, they were very excited, despite the three days' hiking and climbing it had taken them to reach the nunnery. They were excited partly *because* of the long climb, for the nunnery's site was exactly what they had expected it to be, high up in the mystical Himalayas. On their trip up, they had been joyfully singing Bob Dylan's song "Knock, knock, knocking on Heaven's door." They could not find enough superlatives to express the beauty and peacefulness of the site, the compassion and wisdom these "sisters in the dharma" radiated, the perfectness of the spot for dharma practice. The lack of toilets was giggled away with talk of "going back to nature" and "detachment." The lack of bathing facilities was overcome with a bowl of hot water from "those lovely, serene creatures, who must have a won-

derful karma to be born as Tibetans." The daily meal of rice and a kind of wild spinach were joked away with, "Let me guess: high-mountain vegetables?" With fervor they dedicated themselves to their meditation practice in a tiny house a nun had kindly left to them for the occasion, and they proudly reported to the inquiring nuns the number of prostrations they had managed that day—with sweating bodies, and towels around their shoulders and wrists (to protect their hands during the prostrations) as if they just had left the gym. Content and satisfied, they laughed with the nuns about the pain in their hands, knees, and backs.

A week passed, and I waited for the inevitable to occur. They were not the first Western practitioners I had observed at the nunnery, although their stamina lasted longer than the usual couple of days. During the second week, the first careful complaints were uttered: The site was unhygienic—filthy, actually. The beds were too hard. The "high mountain vegetable" lost its pure, natural, and "spiritual" taste. When they noticed a young nun making faces after a retreat session, they

started to complain to me that the nuns were not taking them seriously as Buddhists. Their dissatisfaction with the nuns and the nunnery grew. One day their outburst of anger and frustration resounded through the compound: they called the nuns names, and accused them of ignorance: "Stupid cows—you laugh at us, but you don't even know the deities



in your shrine by their names. You chant and chant, but you don't understand a bloody thing."

At sunrise on their 17th day at the nunnery, my assistant Dawa woke me up to tell me they were packing. Susan and Peter were dragging their rucksacks out of



the guest house onto the temple square. "Are you leaving?" I asked innocently.

"Yes, the silence here is getting on my nerves," Susan replied. "And the food makes me sick. How am I going to do my practices properly, when my body is getting weaker and weaker? This green stuff comes out as it goes in. And then, these nuns don't speak a word of English. And they don't know a thing about the dharma. They don't practice! When do they practice? How could the lama say they would guide us?" She hurried back into the guest house for a last check.

I noticed shy eyes peeping around the corner of the temple hall, from behind the kitchen windows, and from the little porch leading to the nuns' quarters. They watched their foreign guests hurry down the path towards Kathmandu, still struggling with their backpacks. Only when the couple was out of sight did they dare to appear from their hiding places. "Why did they leave? Why were they so angry? Why didn't they tell us? It's no good to go away like this. We couldn't even offer them a *kata!*" [a white scarf given as an offering].

"I guess they were disappointed," I answered.

"Yes, this place is a poor place," a young nun sighed. "We have no toilets, and no proper food to offer. It must have been hard for them."

My assistant must have given them more details of what Susan and Peter had been saying, for the same young nun sat at our fire a few days later, pondering. "It's true, isn't it? We don't know much. We chant, but we don't know what we are reciting. Speaking the Dharma out loud gives us merit, but it would be better if we also understood everything we read. But the lama has no time to teach us, and the Rinpoche says there is no money to have another lama staying here to teach us. You know, you foreigners, you have good karma. You are born in the West. You have money and good education. So when you become a Buddhist, you can learn Tibetan and read the chants. You can read all kinds of books, including those the Dalai Lama wrote. And you can travel all over the world, and meet all the high Rinpoches and go to every *Kalachakra*, if you want. In my next life I want to be reborn in the West too. I want to be reborn as a Western woman."

\*\*\*

### West Meets East

Susan and Peter expected a place that would fulfill their fantasy of Tibet, a land where the mystical, the spiritual, filled the air. They are part of a long Western tradition of attributing to Tibet all kinds of mythic qualities. Buddhism has had a certain popularity among Westerners since

The young nun said,  
 "In my next life I want to be reborn  
 as a Western woman."

the middle of the 19th century, when missionaries, British administrators, and other agents in service of colonial governments roamed the Asian continent and returned home with religious texts and stories of Eastern religions. Scholars, individuals on spiritual quests, and other adventurers followed in their tracks, but the number in this elite group, so rich in time and means, remained small. Tibet was only accessible to the most daring travelers. As a result, *actual* knowledge about Tibet and its spiritual culture was quite limited, although academic knowledge based on its religious texts was growing. The fragmented, romantic accounts of this isolated land and its people fueled fantasies and myths in the West. (For more on the history of Western contact with Tibet, see Frank Korom's essay "Old Age Tibet in New Age America," in *Constructing Tibetan Culture*, edited by F.J. Korom, World Heritage Press, 1997, p.78.)

The myth of Tibet survived the Chinese occupation and the resulting Tibetan diaspora. For some years, people in the West ignored what was actually going on in the Land of Snows. And when their eyes were opened to Tibet's political situation, they merely deplored a Lost Paradise. The myth of Tibet also survived the renewed popularity of Eastern religions in the West from the late 1960s onwards, that brought about a flow of young people traveling to Asian countries to gain first-hand knowledge of their spiritual traditions. Many of these seekers were interested in Tibetans purely as religious





"THE FOOD IS DISGUSTING-I FEEL POSITIVELY WEAK WITH MALNUTRITION,, THE LIVING CONDITIONS ARE FILTHY-TOTALLY UNHYGIENIC,, THE BEDS ARE TOO HARD-I'M COMPLETELY EXHAUSTED, NOT TO MENTION SORE ALL OVER FROM THOSE BLOODY PROSTRATIONS.. BESIDES, THEY DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A CLUE ABOUT THE DHARMA,, I THINK IT'S ALL JUST A BIG CON JOB."

Those things belong merely to *samsara*, after all; the true practitioner is detached from material circumstances. What did they think of the nuns having to work in the fields, planting potatoes, harvesting millet? In the books, it says that nuns vow to refrain from any agricultural labor, since this entails the killing of thousands of insects! Presumably, they never thought about the reality of everyday life in the rural mountain areas of Nepal; the nuns were just "stupid cows."

Initially, Susan and Peter may have felt inferior to the nuns—or to their *image* of the nuns. But when this image was shattered by the realities of life at the nunnery, they didn't rethink their illusions about Tibetan Buddhists; instead, the "Tibetans" had simply failed to live up to their expectations. Because Susan and Peter had read the religious

people, as transmitters of ideas and philosophies. (See the book review following this article, on page 44.)

A lot has changed, particularly during the last decade. The Tibetan people's situation, both in Tibet and in exile, is receiving more and more attention. But when it comes to actual encounters with Tibetan people on their home grounds—within the vicinity of the imagined Shangri-La or Shambhala on earth—myths and fantasies persist.

Let me return to Susan and Peter. What did they expect the nuns to be? From their remarks on, for instance, the nuns' "wonderful karma to be born as Tibetans," it's clear that they ascribed to the nuns those "innate" qualities Tibetans should have according to Western fantasy: that is, they should have a natural ability to meditate, and be embodiments of the dharma. This expectation made them blind to the very fact that these nuns did not consider themselves to be Tibetan in the first place. They are Sherpa, an ethnic group of Tibetan origin but with such a long history of residence in Nepal that they feel more like a Nepalese ethnic minority than Tibetans. To Susan and Peter, however, the nuns *had* to represent prototypical Tibetans, undisturbed by history, living preservations of pure Buddhists.

This fantasy also blinded Susan and Peter to gender issues within Tibetan Buddhism. Perhaps they thought it unimportant that the nuns had neither access to education, nor means to improve their living conditions.

texts, they knew how the nuns *should* have been. Towards the end of their stay, they even seemed to consider themselves to be better Buddhists than the nuns.

### East Meets West

The young nun's pondering only exemplifies how the self-image of Western practitioners coincides with the view many of her sisters hold on Western Buddhists. The nuns are time and again impressed by the knowledge these foreigners seem to have of the Dharma. This stimulates them to address all Western Buddhist men who come to their nunnery as "Lama-la," and all Western Buddhist women as either "Ani-la," or by their Tibetan name with the suffix of respect "la." For, in comparison to them, the nuns *did* feel uneducated, stupid, and, above all, poor. To them, poverty was not merely the cause of their lack of knowledge and their lack of time to practice as much as they would have liked to. Their poverty also gave them less merit, compared to Westerners, because they could not participate in large ceremonies all over the world, could not seek the blessings and teachings of many Rinpoches. They could not donate the amounts of money Americans and Europeans could, to finance the upkeep of existing gompas, and to build new, bigger and more prestigious monasteries. With such donations you can be sure of attaining great merit! No wonder the nuns were hoping to be reborn in the West. It would be a real step forward on the path to Enlightenment.

A new, big monastery is being built near Swayambunath, Kathmandu. It is a seven-million dollar project, paid for by a Swiss and an American Tibetan center. Its purpose, according to the nunnery's abbot—who will also be in charge of this new gumpa—is to receive and house Western practitioners, to offer them “a nice place for doing *puja*, studying, and receiving teachings and initiations.” But what about the nunnery?

The nunnery is becoming a retreat center for Westerners. The donations given by visiting practitioners like Susan and Peter are used to build separate retreat houses, each with its own toilet and bathroom. The kitchen building now has a dining room especially for foreign Buddhists. But what about the nuns' education and their material conditions?

That has to wait. It seems that until this nunnery has become a flourishing Western retreat center, the nuns will have to accept their role as retreat assistants, servants, cooks. They will not only be subordinate to the lamas and monks, but also to their Western brothers and sisters.

A side-effect of this contact with Western Buddhists is that the nuns' encounters with Westerners and Western “civilization,” with practitioners and tourists who pass by, are on the increase. More of the nuns are traveling to Kathmandu and Pokhara, and even to India. As the nuns have more contact with the world outside the nunnery, they notice that they are different not only from foreigners. They can also see how, as nuns from a rural, hillside gumpa, they are different from the monks and nuns from big centers and monasteries in the cities. This only serves to emphasize their own backwardness, and has led them to internalize the view of themselves as “stupid cows.” The few who have the guts to resist this negative self-image leave, not to marry, mind you, but sometimes to move to Tibetan centers in India, leaving their nunnery, their lama, and often their particular lineage. Or they may try to find a Western individual willing to sponsor them to fulfill their own desires and fantasies. Who knows, they might even get invited to go to the West, to live comfortably, to meet Rinpoches at large ceremonies.

The stereotypes are further strengthened. From the East comes the spirit, from the West the money.

\* \* \*

I conclude with another anecdote about the cannibalization of traditional culture. A group of 18

Dutch people came up to the nunnery. They had hoped to celebrate the first day of Losar (Tibetan New Year) in the nunnery, but they didn't arrive until the third day; the climb up had been harder than they had expected. They complained about the thin air, which had caused them trouble despite their years of breathing exercises. The afternoon of their arrival, their leader wanted to have Amitaba *puja* in the gumpa. So he went to the kitchen nun to ask where the rest of the nuns were. She pointed to the meadow, next to the gumpa compound. It was Losar, the three days out of the whole year when the nuns were allowed to enjoy themselves, to play games and to join together in dancing and singing. The group leader found the head nun and asked her to lead the Amitaba chanting, and to have all the other nuns in attendance also.

The head nun looked at him for many moments, in silence. Then she said: “We don't know Amitaba *puja*,” and turned back to the game the nuns were playing. It wasn't true, but she had learned to profess ignorance in order to protect the nuns' time of celebration.

When the nuns came back from the meadow at sunset, the Dutch group was sitting in the temple hall, on the nuns' seats, using the nuns' bells and *dorjes*. They clearly felt at home.

The nuns went in, made prostrations and retreated to their own private rooms. ❖

*Yolanda van Ede lives in The Netherlands. She did anthropological fieldwork for her master's and doctoral degrees in Nepal. Her doctoral dissertation is titled House of Birds: a Historical Ethnography of a Tibetan Buddhist Nunnery in Nepal.*



***Prisoners of Shangri-La:  
Tibetan Buddhism and the West***

by Donald S. Lopez, Jr.

University of Chicago Press, 1998, 283 pages, \$25, hardcover

**Reviewed by Alan Senauke**

The author writes in his introduction: "On September 6, 1995, the Raleigh, North Carolina, *News & Observer* carried on the front page a color photograph of the Dalai Lama being embraced by Senator Jesse Helms, under the headline, "Buddhist Captivates Hero of the Religious Right." The next day the photograph appeared on T-shirts in Chapel Hill. But by then, the words below the pictures seemed redundant. They read 'Anything Is Possible.' This book is an attempt to understand how it is possible."

Most Buddhist best-sellers are "how-to" books—how to meditate, how to love oneself and others, how to be happy, how to be healthy, and so on. But underneath prescriptions for "how to," is the spirit of Dharma inquiry: "How is it?" With *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, Donald Lopez, professor of Buddhist and Tibetan Studies at the University of Michigan, offers a different approach to awareness of Tibet, and, just as much, of ourselves.

Lopez asks "whether it [is] possible to make the case

for Tibetan independence...without invoking the romantic view of Tibet as Shangri-La." But there is another, darker side to the myth of Tibet whose documentation goes as far back as the 13th-century journeys of William of Rubruck. This myth confounds Tibetan religion—often called Lamaism—with Christianity, either as Christianity turned inside out into a kind of devil worship, or as a metaphor for Catholicism, itself demonized in much of Europe after the Protestant Reformation. Alas, I am making this sound like dull stuff, but far from it. Lopez is a wonderful writer, a spiritual detective, whose own interests are infectious. Closing his chapter "The Eye," which zeros in on the ersatz Tibetan Lobsang Rampa, Lopez writes:

"At Borders Bookstore in Ann Arbor, Michigan, books on Asian religions are back to back with books on astrology, the tarot, and the New Age. The books face away from each other, making it impossible to peruse both at the same time, yet they support each other; one would fall without the other behind it. The ghost of Rampa continues to haunt us, sometimes looming behind, sometimes shimmering at the periphery. For not all bookstores have such an extensive inventory, and we will always be startled, in an uncanny moment, to find his books next to ours on the shelf marked 'Occult.'"

*Prisoners of Shangri-La* offers sketches towards a vast canvas where Tibet and Tibetan studies merge. In seven chapters (Is this mystical number a hint or an accident?) he sheds light on "The Name"—Lamaism, "The Book"—The Tibetan Book of the Dead, "The Eye"—T. Lobsang Rampa's strange works, "The Spell"—*om mani padme hum*, "The Art"—Tibet's misunderstood graphic practices, "The Field"—Tibetan studies come to the West, and "The Prison"—the sometimes violent tensions between the present Dalai Lama and followers of protective deity Dorje Shugden. Each chapter unpacks the mysteries that simultaneously create and distort the image of Tibetan religion. In each case, too, Lopez shows us how Tibet and the West are intricately entwined, how projections on both sides—though mainly from the West—affect religion and social realities.

The striking photographic cover of *Prisoners of Shangri-La* depicts a Tibetan monk in Lhasa wearing flashy mirrored sunglasses and an astonished look on his face. Shadowy figures in a square are reflected in his lenses. What is he seeing through those dark glasses? And what are we seeing in him? Astonishment is an appropriate response to Tibet as religio/cultural narrative, seen from the angles that Lopez shows us. But for the sake of Tibet's political and spiritual liberation (and, really, our own), we all need to see things as they are. Gently, intriguingly, but firmly, *Prisoners of Shangri-La* urges us neither to romanticize nor demonize Tibet. And, as Donald Lopez reminds us, given the subtleties of self-interested mind, this may not be so easy. ❖

## What is the Mind that Writes?

Find out at a writing and meditation retreat  
with **Susan Moon** (editor of TW),  
April 30-May 2, at **Manzanita Village**,  
in the chaparral hill country of southern California.

For Information:  
P.O. Box 67, Warner Springs, CA 92086  
Telephone: 760.782.9223

PAUL GOBLE from "LOVE FLUTE"



# Love Flutes



1 800 4 FLUTES

www.135.com/loveflutes

MAKERS OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SOUNDING  
NATIVE AMERICAN FLUTES.  
& VERY EASY FOR BEGINNERS.



## *Coming Back to Life: Practices to Reconnect Our Lives, Our World*

by Joanna Macy and Molly Young Brown,  
with a foreword by Matthew Fox

New Society Publishers, 1998, 240 pages. \$16.95

### Reviewed by Barbara Hazard

Back in the early 1980s a number of us became agitated, with good reason, at the nuclear arms build-up and the warlike rhetoric coming out of Washington. Groups in the anti-nuclear movement, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the like, were scaring us to death with threats that, if we didn't act immediately and whole-heartedly, we were doomed. We went home from these presentations numb with fear and guilt.

Many of us were moving in the same direction, realizing that there was a need to do psychological work on the fate of the world, to help ourselves and others move beyond our apprehensions for the future and take constructive, non-abusive, steps towards peace. It was Joanna Macy who pulled us all together and articulated in her own passionate way the issues we were dealing with. Her book, *Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age*, became the reference point for our collaboration, in an organization called Interhelp.

Now, Macy and Molly Young Brown have collaborated on a broader approach to the question of whether we as a species can survive our own predations. Few of us come away from the morning paper without a sense of impending catastrophe: eruptions of new viruses, chemical weapons developed here and there; nuclear storage leakages, rainforest devastation, widening gap between the rich and the poor—you name it. The vastness of the problems can lead us into denial and apathy.

The authors remind us that this apathy is not truly a lack of caring, but a self-protective stratagem, perhaps misguided, against caring so deeply. The alarms of well-meaning activists often simply strengthen our defenses. Rather than running from the pain, the authors say, we can face it and even welcome it. We must do the grieving we have been suppressing as a part of freeing ourselves to act. But better not alone. In a group, one can not only receive support for facing the pain our caring occasions, but recognize that it is universally shared. If you dig a little, tenderly, you will likely find that your super-consumer brother-in-law has the same concerns.

*Coming Back to Life* is more than an update on Macy's earlier book. She and Young Brown have broadened and deepened the reach, incorporating systems theory and deep ecology. They challenge us to face straight-on the problems of today, and, together and alone, to take meaningful action to heal the world. The human race is in the throes of the Great Turning, the authors say.

This is a time of choice when, if we can break free from the arrogance of our species that threatens not only ourselves but all complex life-forms, we can make common cause on behalf of the Earth community and build a life-sustaining society. Our weapons are compassion and insight.

#### The Great Turning

Let us borrow the perspective of future generations and, in that larger context of time, look at how this Great Turning is gaining momentum today, through the choices of countless individuals and groups. We can see that it is happening simultaneously in three areas or dimensions that are mutually reinforcing. These are: 1) actions to slow the damage to Earth and its beings; 2) analysis of structural causes and creation of structural alternatives; and 3) a fundamental shift in world view and values. Many of us are engaged in all three, each of which is necessary to the creation of a sustainable civilization.

The second half of the book is a how-to for those who would like to lead groups, although many of the exercises could be done on one's own or with a friend. One exercise presents open sentences, for example: "What concerns me most about the world today is..." "When I think about what we will leave our children, it looks like..."

In another exercise, "Reporting to Chief Seattle," you read his speech ("How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land?") and report back to him.

The most moving exercises, however, are best done in a group. "The Cradling," for instance, in which you take the hand and then the head of another, perhaps a stranger, and envision the long journey through time this being has traveled. And then there is "The Council of All Beings," in which each participant is a spokesperson for another species and speaks to the "council" about their concerns.

The book's text sometimes becomes a bit repetitive, but perhaps this is necessary for those who will use different sections in workshops. I confess that some of the terms—The Great Turning, The Work That Reconnects, The Great Ball of Merit—strike me as a bit silly, but that quibble aside, the excellent workshop guidelines testify to the wealth of experience of Macy and Young Brown. *Coming Back to Life* is a useful, courageous, and elegant book. I plan to send it to my granddaughter, who is worrying a lot about the future of the world. ❖

*Barbara Hazard is an artist and writer with a background in art therapy and re-evaluation co-counseling. She lives in Berkeley and spends a part of the year working with artists in St. Petersburg, Russia, and part with her children and grandchildren on the St. Lawrence River. She is on the board of Resourceful Women in San Francisco.*

# BEYOND BUDDHISM AFTER PATRIARCHY

## *Soaring and Settling, Buddhist Perspectives on Contemporary Social and Religious Issues*

by Rita M. Gross

Continuum, 1998, 256 pages, \$19.95

### Reviewed by Tova Green

*Soaring and Settling* is a thought-provoking collection of essays developing some of the ideas Rita Gross introduced in her stirring work *Buddhism After Patriarchy, a Feminist History, Analysis and Reconstruction of Buddhism* (State University of New York Press, 1993). Gross brings her particular perspective as a feminist scholar and Buddhist practitioner to a wide range of social and religious issues. She is not afraid of taking controversial stances, and she supports them with relevant Buddhist concepts, which she explains in her lucid style. She also weaves into all the essays her own life experience and how it has shaped her thinking.

In Gross's essay "Why Me? Reflections of a Wisconsin Farm Girl Who Became a Buddhist Theologian When She Grew Up" she describes her early interest in the history of religion as her "route out of the provincialism and extreme religious dogmatism" that she experienced in her early life. Her feminism arose in response to the difficulties of being a woman in her field (she entered graduate school in 1965). And her interest in Buddhist practice arose from a direct experience that the Four Noble Truths are true (p.142).

Gross addresses issues vital to engaged Buddhism, including consumerism, overpopulation, environmental degradation, and sexual misconduct in sanghas, bringing to each a feminist perspective and insights gained from over 20 years of committed practice in the Vajrayana tradition. She also focuses on practice issues of great importance to both women and men, such as the need for more feminist women teachers and gurus, greater emphasis on community in sanghas, and icons that convey the equal importance of masculine and feminine energies. A concept underlying all of Gross's work is that "the world cannot be repaired until patriarchy has lost its hold on people's psyches and social realities."

A chapter I found particularly challenging is "Helping the Iron Bird Fly: Western Buddhism and Issues of Authority." In this essay Gross deals with the issue of sexual misconduct, viewing it in the broader context of authority in spiritual communities. She is

troubled by the hold the issue of sexual misconduct of teachers has on Buddhist practitioners and communities, and suggests, since we can't fight every battle and must choose our causes, that our energy would be better spent addressing the wider issues of community and authority. She promotes an organizational structure that is neither completely authoritarian nor completely democratic but is a "natural hierarchy"—a structure that looks more like a circle or mandala than a pyramid. "Natural hierarchy has much to do with recognizing that not everyone is equally good at everything and communities flourish when people can find the niche in which they are most comfortable, most productive, and most able to contribute to society (p. 69)." In such a context, women flourish and more women hold authority and become teachers. This is happening in my own Zen community, and is evolving more slowly in Gross's Shambala Meditation Center community.

Another provocative essay, "Finding Renunciation and Balance in Western Buddhist Practice: Work, Family, Community and Friendship," elaborates on Gross's view that, at least in American society, "people spend too much time and energy on work and family and far too little time and energy on friendship and community (p. 96)." A corollary of this view is that it is essential for practitioners in nuclear families to limit reproduction and for sanghas to support those lay meditators who choose not to form nuclear families.

Gross develops her concern about excessive reproduction in several essays that deal with environmental issues, including over-consumption and overpopulation. In order for all people to have their basic needs met (this is a necessary precondition for developing a meditation practice), both over-consumption and overpopulation need to be addressed. She suggests that behavior change can be supported by the Buddhist teachings on interdependence, detachment as an antidote to addictive desire, and the first two paramitas, generosity and discipline.

Since this book is a compilation of essays written at different times, some of them overlap and some points are repeated. While this detracts from a cover-to-cover reading of the book, it enables the reader to read any chapter and have a complete experience.

The lovely title comes from Gross's essay "Soaring and Settling: Riding the Winds of Change," a discussion of the importance of meditation practice. Practice brings us in touch with impermanence, which allows us to meet fully the challenges of living in our changing world. Gross offers an irresistible invitation: "Come, let us dance on the razor's edge of nowness, ceasing our war with impermanence, and celebrating, rather than decrying, our increasingly diverse communities in motion, both locally and globally." ♦

*Tova Green is a Zen student and a feminist. She coordinates the BASE program for BPE.*

## *At the Root of this Longing: Reconciling a Spiritual Hunger and a Feminist Thirst*

by Carol Lee Flinders

HarperSan Francisco, 1998, 369 pages, hard cover, \$21

Reviewed by Joan Starr Ward

Every now and then I feel so enthusiastic about a book I've read I want to buy up armloads and distribute them to all sorts of people. This is one of those books. I want to give it to my women friends, feminist or not, and to my men friends, feminist or not. I want to give it to every single meditation teacher I've known and all those I've not known. I want every teacher of young people to read it. I want every social activist to read it. The list is long.

At the same time, I feel a bit nervous to embrace a book so wholeheartedly—even this one. It's not, in my estimation, an "easy" read, especially if you have a preference for linear thought tied up in the end with a grand logic easily quotable. Flinders herself admits to elaborate digressions, but each digression weaves its way back to enrich the whole.

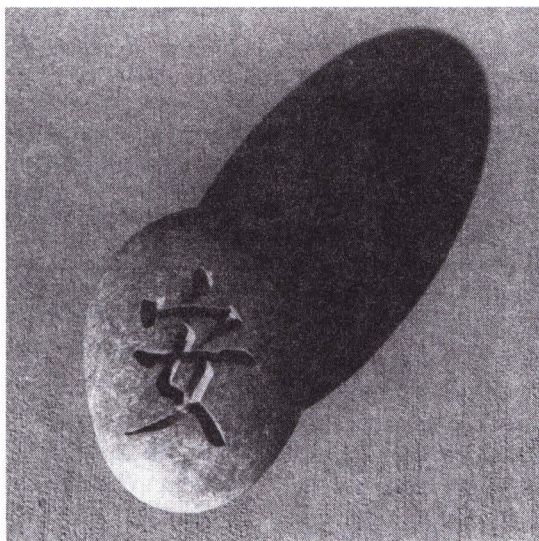
She begins with a personal focus on spirituality and feminism but keeps finding other threads that want to be included. It's the sort of thing that could easily get out of hand. But if you read through, front to back, I think you will agree that she has pulled off a coherent, important, and timely reflection on...well, on lots of things. The background of her exploration is in the subtitle: spiritual hunger, feminist thirst, reconciling. I worry that the word "feminist" in the subtitle may put some possible readers off the book. Even I, forever grateful for the modern wave of feminism, have uncomfortable associations with the word: strident, shrill, demanding, us-and-them, male bashing, and so on.

Like Flinders, I was profoundly influenced in my twenties by feminist theory, and then set aside this concern for a while in order to dedicate myself to a committed spiritual practice. I wanted very much to develop compassion and empathy and fearlessness and non-violence in the face of systematic harm. Flinders states, "My feminism and my spirituality have always been closely connected, laying claims on me at the same level. I'd taken up meditation out of a driving and, yes, aching need for self-knowledge and meaning. My feminism had arisen out of the same well of feelings, and in

many regards the life I'd chosen had satisfied it. Part of me, though—the part that never lost awareness of the attitudes that demean women and girls so universally and systematically—was like a muscle that was sore from continual strain and misuse. It was hot to the touch. If after all these years it was still flaring up, then surely it was time I attended to it."

And attend to it she does. She successfully weaves in current feminist theory, the legacy of patriarchy (another one of those tricky words), Christian female mystics, *satyagraha* [Ghandian nonviolence], the *Mahabharata's* Draupadi, her teacher Eknath Easwaran's granny, the sacred feminine, the girls' movement, and the murder of Polly Klaas, an event that took place in her community while she was writing this book. Each page is rich with provocative notions. I have so many torn paper bookmarks stuck in the book that the top looks like fringe.

And herein lies my frustration with trying to write a coherent review. I want to say, for example, that it's not a book for dipping-in, but that's not accurate. You can dip in, to just about any page, and come up with something worthy of a long conversation or a dharma talk or motivation for change. Reading through, from beginning to end, is, in my estimation, most satisfying, but, if you must choose only a short bit, I recommend Chapters 5 ("Four Tracks into a Wilderness") and 6 ("Sacred Precepts, or the Terms of Our Subordination?"). Flinders beautifully articulates an apparent conflict between spiritual practice and feminism (or any other analysis of oppression, for that matter). I say "apparent" because one of



Stone carved with Japanese character for "peace":  
character for "woman" under character for "roof"  
(courtesy Yvonne Rand)

the things Flinders manages to do so well is to avoid an us-and-them mentality. In these chapters, she discusses four universal disciplines she sees as common to all mystical teachings, and certainly familiar to students of Buddhism, which seem to conflict with feminism. They are: Silence (be silent, curb speech); Self-naughting (unseat the ego); Redirecting desires (disidentify with your body); Enclosure (retreat, disengage from private and public). She reminds us that each concept has great value for the spiritual path, but "I realized that however ancient and universal these disciplines may be, they are not gender neutral at all. Formulated for the most part within monastic contexts, they cancel the basic freedoms—to say what one wants, go where one likes, enjoy whatever pleasures one can afford, and most of all, to *be* somebody—that have normally defined male privilege.

(Continued on following page)

Susan Moon

## *Discovering Kwan Yin, Buddhist Goddess of Compassion*

by Sandy Boucher

Beacon, 1999, 132 pp, \$18, hardcover

### Reviewed by Marianne Dresser

What is it that draws so many, especially women, to Kwan Yin? In her new book Sandy Boucher sets out to explore the appeal and mystical power of this popular figure of devotion, inspiration, and mercy, revered as "She who hears the cries of the world." The author traces Kwan Yin's origins in Chinese Mahayana Buddhist syncretism through her presence in other Asian Buddhist cultures, including Korea, Vietnam, and even (Theravadin) Burma, and finally her adoption by devotees on these shores.

Describing her own "initiation" into the mysterious presence of Kwan Yin, through an encounter with a Sung Chinese statue in a Kansas City art museum, Boucher then delves into the mythic and legendary origins and the various forms of the goddess/bodhisattva in Asian culture and Buddhist belief. Some of Kwan Yin's best-known manifestations are illustrated, including a thousand-armed, multiple-headed Guan Shih Yin altarpiece, and the familiar image of the goddess amid sea waves, supported by a dragon, holding a vessel of life-giving elixir. There is a printed cloth image from a stele on Pu To Island in China, the legendary home of Kwan Yin and a popular pilgrimage site, which Boucher and a friend visited. And there are contemporary images: a serigraph by artist Mayumi Oda, a photograph of a stunning Japanese Kabuki-style tattoo covering the back of a California devotee. (Unfortunately the sublime twelfth-century woodcarved figure that first inspired Boucher is not reproduced here.)

*Discovering Kwan Yin* is something of a hybrid—in part a study, like John Blofeld's 1977 classic, *Bodhisattva of Compassion*, though from a distinctly feminist/spiritual perspective. And, like Boucher's earlier *Turning the Wheel*, this book is also part oral history, based on per-

sonal interviews and discussions with various Asian, Asian American, and Euro-American women for whom Kwan Yin holds special meaning. Their inspiring stories recount how reverence for the goddess of compassion flows naturally from spiritual practice, service, creative work, and parenting, and aids them in struggles with cancer and physical disability.

Finally, *Discovering Kwan Yin* is also part workbook, with the inclusion of songs, chants, "channeled" texts, meditations, and rituals, which readers are invited to use or adapt for their own devotional practice. For this reader the "new age" aspects of some devotees' approach to and understanding of Kwan Yin (and of Eastern religious forms in general) are less interesting than her historical, mythical, religious, and cultural origins and transmigrations. But many will find in this slim volume a friendly and useful guide to the ways in which contemporary women adapt and craft new relationships with such archetypal religious forms. After all, Kwan Yin is the Buddhist Mary, a direct, intimate and, not coincidentally, feminine link to spiritual power and grace. ❖

*Marianne Dresser is the editor of Buddhist Women on the Edge and Essential Teachings by the Dalai Lama, and co-editor with Peter Cunningham of a forthcoming book on the Zen Peacemaker Order's Bearing Witness retreat at Auschwitz-Birkenau, Beginning with a Broken Heart.*

### Longing, continued

That is, men in any given social class have always possessed these liberties to a far greater degree than women of the same class."

At the same time, contemporary feminists are urging women to "find your voice...know who you are...reclaim your body...move about freely and fearlessly." These are of great value in pursuing a demanding path. How, then, are we to reconcile the apparent conflict?

Space doesn't allow for me to describe some of the remarkable ways Flinders does just that, or some of the deep, deep, painful memories and connections that came up for me (I wept often reading these pages), or specific ways I felt restored when I finished.

"Feminism catches fire when it draws upon its inherent spirituality," states Flinders in the final chapter titled "Two Halves of One Reality." We need both. Flinders makes it abundantly clear that she relies on her decades-long habit of meditation and spiritual inquiry. To undertake political change without a spiritual base is unlikely to produce effective long-term shifts. The other half, which I suspect is a harder sell, is that we have an equal need for the political to inform our spiritual practice. Flinders, in this fine book, has brought us a long way toward doing exactly what she proposes in the subtitle: reconciling. ❖

*Joan Starr Ward lives and writes in Marin County, California.*

In the Tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh  
and The Order of Interbeing

## Manzanita Village

In the Chaparral hill country of Southern California,  
East of the Coastal Ranges, West of the Anza-Borrego,  
2½ hours from Los Angeles, 1½ hours from San Diego.

Retreats, Long & Short-term stays, Aikido, Work-study  
Catriona Reed and Michele Benzamin-Masuda

Write or call for full schedule or more information:  
PO Box 67, Warner Springs CA 92086. 760-782-9223



## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Feminism isn't really something you *do* something about. It's a way of thinking, a perspective that one brings to issues such as gender and language, how we set up our institutions to be inclusive, how women's practice is different than men's. How, too, do Buddhism and feminism interact *outside* of our sanghas, as we address ourselves to the ills of the world?

### Practice and Action

1. Notice your reactions when someone brings up questions about hierarchy and gender.
2. Notice how your sangha or group addresses gender and inclusivity issues. Speak up when you see non-inclusive language or practices, or unskillful use of hierarchy, sneaking up in your sangha or social-change group.
3. Start a women's sitting group or women's caucus in your sangha.
4. Begin dialogue within your sangha about diversity, and "women's issues" such as poverty, welfare, childcare, abortion.
5. Bring to light the female ancestors and holders of your lineage and ask to have them honored in your sangha, if this is not already happening.

### Resources & Books

We only have space to mention a few of the many books and journals on Buddhism and feminism that have been published recently in English. (Some of these contain more complete bibliographies.) Others are reviewed in this issue, or noted at the end of essays.

- *1999 May 24 International Women's Day for Peace and Disarmament Action Pack*. Includes profiles of women's groups, suggestions for action, and a directory of women's peace groups in more than 60 countries. Available from IFOR \$7.50. (see address below)
- *Lotus Realm, A New Voice for Buddhist Women*. In this bi-annual magazine from Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, women share their experience of contemporary Buddhist practice. In the U.S. make inquiry to Susan Michael, 39 Bartlett St., San Francisco, CA 94110.
- *Yasodhara, Newsletter on International Buddhist Women's Activities*. Gives information on women's activities around the world, and helps bhikkhunis in as many countries as possible. c/o Dr. Chatsumarn Kabilsingh, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Thammasat University, Bangkok, 102000, Thailand.
- Allione, Tsultrim. *Women of Wisdom*. Routledge, 1984. Biographies of six Tibetan women mystics.
- Batchelor, Martine. *Walking on Lotus Flowers: Buddhist Women Working, Loving, and Meditating*. Harper Collins, 1996.
- Boucher, Sandy. *Turning the Wheel: American Women Creating the New Buddhism*. Beacon, 1994.

- *Opening the Lotus; What Women Want to Know About Buddhism*. Beacon, 1997.
- Dresser, Marianne, ed. *Buddhist Women on the Edge*. North Atlantic Books, 1996. A collection of essays exploring issues of gender, race, class, and sexuality.
- Friedman, Lenore. *Meetings with Remarkable Women*. Shambhala, 1987. An updated edition is forthcoming.
- Friedman, Lenore and Moon, Susan, eds. *Being Bodies: Buddhist Women on the Paradox of Enlightenment*. Shambhala, 1997.
- Galland, China. *The Bond Between Women: A Journey to Fierce Compassion*. Riverhead Books, 1998. Explores women's work for peace, with a number of beautifully retold stories of women Buddhas and goddesses.
- Gross, Rita. *Buddhism After Patriarchy: A Feminist History, Analysis, and Reconstruction of Buddhism*. State University of New York Press, 1992.
- Hopkinson, Deborah et al, eds. *Not Mixing Up Buddhism*. White Pine Press, 1986. Groundbreaking collection of essays, from the *Kahawai Journal*.
- Klein, Anne C. *Meeting the Great Bliss Queen*. Beacon, 1995.
- Macy, Joanna. *World as Lover, World as Self*. Parallax Press, 1991. A radical Buddhist feminist analysis of the interconnectedness of all beings, and a call to action.
- Murcott, Susan. *The First Buddhist Women: Translations and Commentaries on the Therigatha*. Parallax Press, 1991. Our first Buddhist women teachers!
- Paul, Diana. *Women in Buddhism: Images of the Feminine in Mahayana Tradition*. Asian Humanities, 1979. Classic research on the subject.
- Senauke, Alan, ed. *Safe Harbor: Guidelines, Process and Resources for Ethics & Right Conduct in Buddhist Communities*. 1998. Available from BPF.
- Tsomo, Karma Lekshe., ed. *Buddhism Through American Women's Eyes*. Snow Lion, 1995. Essays by practitioners from different Buddhist traditions.
- Willis, Janice D., ed. *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*. Snow Lion, 1995.

### Organizations

- The Women Peacemakers Program (WPP) of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation helps organize and link women working for peace around the world, through training in leadership and active non-violence, holding regional conferences, and documenting women's peace work. *Cross the Line* is the WPP newsletter, available for \$10/year. IFOR, Spoorstraat 38, BK, Alkmaar, Holland <office@ifor.org>.
- *Sakyadhita, International Association of Buddhist Women*, 400 Hebron Lane #2615, Honolulu, HI 96815, <<http://www2.hawaii.edu/~tsomo>>. This great organization seeks to unite Buddhist women worldwide, encourage women teachers, support Buddhist nuns, and foster world peace, among other things. Their newsletter and membership cost \$20/year.

(Continued on page 51)

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The old Zen stories recount that after a challenging exchange between Chinese Emperor Wu and Bodhidharma, who brought Zen from India to China, the Emperor, perhaps somewhat affronted, asked old man Bodhidharma, "Who is facing me?" Bodhidharma replied, "I don't know."

For me, the most difficult and humbling lesson of these last months is to be reminded again and again that I don't know. Korean Zen Master Seung Sahn encourages us: "Only don't know." I use this as a mindfulness tool, watching the arising of judgment, opinion, and ego, remembering that I don't know. In zazen it is a naturally occurring koan for me, breathing in "don't," breathing out "know."

Jaturun Siripongs was put to death by lethal injection at California's San Quentin prison in the early morning, Tuesday, February 9 at 12:04 AM. Outside the prison gates hundreds of people—almost all opposed to the death penalty—held a rally and vigil in the wild wind and rain of our worst storm this winter. Forty or fifty Buddhists and other friends sat in silence for hours until after the sentence was served, enduring the storm like old rocks.

I wrote about the Siripongs case and an earlier vigil in

the last issue of *Turning Wheel*. I have been drawn even deeper into the case over the last three months. I testified on behalf of Jay Siripongs at his second clemency hearing in Sacramento on February 2, requesting that his sentence be commuted to life without possibility of parole. At the podium, with my notes before me, it was very hard to speak. My throat felt dry and narrow. Later in the proceedings I was stunned to hear one of the victims' sons, Vitoon Harusadanal, make a compelling, emotional plea for the execution to go ahead. Even as we felt Jay's life in jeopardy, Vitoon's pain was hard to bear. After the hearing I approached him to say I was sorry for the terrible way his mother had died and for all the sorrow and torment his whole family has endured for sixteen years. He thanked me, and we left it at that.

Did Jay Siripongs participate in the murders? I don't know. But we remember the suffering of the victims; we grieve for them, their family, and friends. Was Jay Siripongs "rehabilitated"? I don't know. But that is not the point. The case against capital punishment is not about guilt or innocence, but about whether anyone—an individual or the state—has the right to take a life. At a clemency hearing, at the prison gates, in the executioner's shadow, it is very hard to stay in "don't know" mind, but the task of practice is to see how what we do know about suffering and what we don't know do not hinder each other.

Jay Siripongs unintentionally gave us a gift. Perhaps this is the working out of positive karma, carefully gathered over his 16 years on Death Row. In the crucible of this execution, Buddhists came to the prison gates in larger numbers than ever before, and with commitment. In 1963 Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." This week, even though there is no justice or righteousness here, we have been in the storm and seen the rising waters. Together we have found a way to sit upright and bear witness in the midst of sorrow, anger, doubt, winter wind and rain, and to find a place of surprising, challenging peace.

Along with several other friends from the International Network of Engaged Buddhists' Think Sangha (see the "Think Sangha" link on BPF's website—[www.bpf.org](http://www.bpf.org)), I have begun to participate in the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), which brings religious activists together with representatives of the World Bank. In December I joined a small WFDD working group in Rome for two days of discussion with Bank representatives about religious perspectives on poverty and the Bank's very mixed history of development work. The long-term goal, as I see it, is to open a deeper dialogue on poverty, suffering, and social and spiritual values. The short-term goal is to help shape the World Development Report 2000/2001, a critical document describing the Bank's direction and current policies. We are not likely to get very far into this process

### The Monastery Store

#### New Dharma Communications Catalog

Support for Your Spiritual Practice at Home

- *Echoless Valley*, Book of Taizan Maezumai Roshi's Discourses
- Quality Line of Meditation Cushions and Mats
- *Mountain Record: The Zen Practitioner's Journal*
- *Live Words* Audio Tape Subscription Program
- Original Hand-crafted Incense Bowls
- Unique Statues and Altar Supplies
- Informative and Inspiring Videos
- Wide Selection of Books on Zen
- Dharma Discourses from Zen Mountain Monastery



**Dharma Communications**

P.O. Box 197 Mt. Tremper, NY 12457 • (914) 688-7993 • [zen-mtn.org/dc](http://zen-mtn.org/dc)

before the writing of the WDR begins. So we must be patient and persistent. Will we religious activists be able to speak to the Bank in terms that are useful? And, more to the point, can we help people in poverty around the world find the economic and political power to control their own destinies? I don't know. But all of us in the Think Sangha and in WFDD are willing to keep at it.

BPF is pleased that Diana Lion has joined our staff as Prison Program Coordinator. We know Diana well from her good work as a researcher while we were establishing the program last year. After considering applications for the Coordinator's position, we came back to Diana, recognizing her commitment to Dharma practice, and her already wide experience teaching nonviolence in prisons and jail. She is the right person at the right moment. The board and staff welcome her.

Other comings and goings on the staff: TW editor Sue Moon went on pilgrimage to Buddhist sites in India over the holidays, and attended a Buddhist/Christian conference with H.H. The Dalai Lama. BASE and Chapter Coordinator Tova Green recently returned from a refreshing three weeks of retreat at Green Gulch Farm Zen Center. Assistant Director Lewis Woods is just back from a three-week Vipassana retreat at IMS in Barre, Massachusetts. As you read this, I am traveling again in South Asia, for meetings and research in Bangladesh, and for the 10th anniversary conference of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, this year at Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka. I expect to see former BASE coordinator Diana Winston there, and all of us at the BPF office look forward to her return to the States and to our staff in April. She'll be sharing new responsibilities as Assistant Director with Tova Green.

Hearing about all this travel, you might wonder when we have time to work, but I can assure you that everyone works very hard here. We are deeply involved in the countless tasks of engaged Buddhism. But we also want to have a workplace that doesn't just blindly accept conventional models of work in the U.S., models that include overwork built into job descriptions, rigid hierarchy, regimentation, and competitiveness. Instead we try to encourage mindfulness, Dharma practice, and democracy. The work needs to get done, but the work is not different from our life, so the way we work is the way

### What You Can Do, continued—

- *Global Fund for Women*, 425 Sherman Ave., Suite 300, Palo Alto, CA 94306-1823, USA. (650)853-8305; fax (415)328-0384; email: <gfw@igc.apc.org>. Funds women's projects around the world.

### Action Suggestion:

The women of the Burmese Women's Union are asking that women around the world show solidarity by joining them in wearing yellow—clothes, ribbon, hairpins, flowers—until democracy is restored in Burma. ❖

—Margaret Howe

## BPF ACTIVIST NEWS

we live. This is not always possible, but we try.

### BASE News

We will offer a new BASE program designed for people actively engaged in education, the Bay Area Educator's BASE, beginning in August. As with other BASE programs, the goals are to deepen our understanding of our social engagement through study, Dharma practice, and community building. The Educator's BASE will meet for nine months (a school year) and will be coordinated by Beth Levine, BASE alumna. If you have questions or want an application, please call the BPF office.

The Bay Area Prison BASE, coordinated by Terry Stein, BASE graduate, began in mid-January with 11 participants. The group is very cohesive, due to the focus on prison work and the activist backgrounds of most participants.

### Chapter and Activist News

I enjoy receiving news of chapter activities because of the diversity of issues chapters are exploring, using many approaches: study, discussion, talks, video viewings, actions, days of mindfulness.

We hear about an increasing number of chapters involved in **prison correspondence**: Eugene, OR, Seattle and Spokane, WA, Tassajara, East Bay, and San Francisco, CA, Boston, MA, and Twin Cities, MN.

"Walking to Heal the History of Racism" was the theme of the January meeting of the **New York** Chapter. Louise Dunlap, who walked for 2 1/2 months with the Interfaith Pilgrimage of the Middle Passage, told stories and showed slides of the walk.

The **Texas Hill Country** Chapter discussed the article "Asking to Awaken" by Joanna Macy and Donald Rothberg in December and used the process of inquiry to ask the question: "What is our work together?" By looking deeply together, they sought to "arrive at right action while building community."

The **Colorado** Chapter gathered at the Boulder County Shelter for the Homeless in November to move trash, weeds, and old construction materials from the back lot area to create space for a sanctuary. This project, which is co-sponsored by BPF and the Shelter, involves creating an open-air sacred space behind the Shelter. The non-sectarian space will be for use by the Shelter community for group events like memorial services and other ceremonies, and will be available for individuals seeking a quiet place for reflection, prayer, and meditation. The project of creating the sanctuary will take several months and will include Shelter residents on the work groups.

The community outreach committee of the **Denver**

**Zen Center** is beginning circles of support for homeless people. This involves five to ten people who make themselves available for companionship and support of a homeless person in order to help overcome the lack of neighborhood or community connections that people who are jobless, homeless, and/or differently-abled often experience. Claude An Shin Thomas will visit Colorado in March and plans a street sesshin for five days in Denver.

The **East Bay** (Berkeley, CA) Chapter did a Day of Mindfulness in December and viewed the video "Doing Time, Doing Vipassana" in January. Individual members are working on a multimedia production about homelessness, supporting asylum work for refugees, and raising money for Tibetans in exile.

The **Spokane** Chapter is bringing Jason Siff to lead a three-day residential Vipassana retreat April 30—May 2. Coordinator Merry Armstrong writes, "We are here and struggling and still small and thinking about donating time to a new homeless women's shelter that is opening here. We plan, in the next year, to increase our retreats to three a year instead of two."

The **Prairie Buddha** Chapter has a new coordinator, Karuna Maddava. Prairie Buddha Sangha has been practicing (loosely) in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh for the last 10 years. Karuna says: "Our group likes to call itself 'small, but mighty!' We have a core at any given time of 6-8 people, with a total mailing list of around

40. We meet the first and third Sundays of each month at different places, mostly at members' homes. We are also fond of calling ourselves the Traveling Prairie Buddha Sangha, as we will go wherever we are invited. We have met outdoors in a field, as well as in over a dozen other locations throughout the years. We are leaderless, unincorporated and wholly joyful! Four times a year we join with our sister sanghas of the region for days or weekends of mindfulness. Our group hosts the winter retreat each year. Although all of our members read *Turning Wheel* and we discuss items therein, we have rarely pursued engaged activities together."

BPF's new contact person in **Oklahoma**, Katherine Williams, writes that Buddhism is growing in this predominantly Christian state. There is a Buddhist Association at Oklahoma State University and two Vietnamese temples that welcome English speakers. The more liberal Christian organizations are asking for Buddhist input into their programs. "Those who turn to Buddhism in the heart of the 'Bible Belt,'" writes Katherine, "have rejected sectarianism...Many are trying to merge Buddhism with Christianity."

In December, 1998, the Buddhist Social Action Network in **Vancouver, B.C.**, took part in their first action. They sent written support to front-line workers in Toronto, Ontario, who were calling on the federal government to declare homelessness a national disaster. In March they held their first public event, an educational fund-raiser for the Metta Dana Project. Launched by Steven Smith and Vipassana Hawaii, Metta Dana has established links with a monastery in Sagaing Hills in Upper Burma to funnel much-needed aid to a local hospital and elementary school, as well as to work with local people to develop a community water system.

Joanna Macy visited **Australia** in December. The **Melbourne** BPF Chapter sponsored her workshop in Melbourne. Coordinator Jill Jameson writes: "This has been very good for BPF, not only with new members but lots of possibilities for the future in furthering the healing of the planet in the various manifestations!" Bombing of Iraq occurred as Joanna and Fran Macy were leading a 10-day training of trainers near Sydney. Some participants went into Sydney to demonstrate peacefully outside the American Embassy. "To be in a supportive environment at that time, and to take time for despair ritual before heading off into the crowded streets of Christmas shoppers was important for us all," says Jill. "Some of the **Sydney** BPF members and I sat in silent vigil, and at some stage we did the 'elm dance,' used in much of Joanna's work, a significant and powerful expression of love and concern." —*Tova Green*

*Let me not thirst with this Hock [wine] at my Lip.  
Nor beg, with Domains in my Pocket—*

—*Emily Dickinson*



**Vajrapani**  
INSTITUTE

May 10-30  
Extraordinary Tibetan Master  
**Kirti Tsenshab Rinpoche**  
Public Teachings and Secret Vajrapani  
Empowerment and Commentary

June  
Residential Work-Practice Program

June 12  
Meditation Instruction and  
Practice Day

July 30-August 1  
Family Camp

August 28-29  
Meditation Retreat with  
**Geshe Michael Roach**

Vajrapani Institute  
PO Box 2130, Boulder Creek, CA 95006  
Tel: (831) 338-6654 Fax:  
(831) 338-3666  
Email: Vajrapani@compuserve.com  
Web: www.geocities.com/Athens/2094

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

**HOMELESS AND HOUSED** people meet weekly in Berkeley, CA, for meditation and discussion. Volunteers from Berkeley Zen Center and East Bay Insight Meditation facilitate sessions oriented toward stress reduction. Tea and cookies. Mondays, 7:30-9 PM, off the courtyard on the west side of Dana between Durant and Channing. For more info, call 510/548-0551.

**HELPING HOMELESS WOMEN AND CHILDREN:** You can help by donating personal care items that are greatly needed—toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hair brushes, combs, and hand lotion—to the Women's Daytime Drop-in Center in Berkeley. Volunteers are also needed to work with the women and children. For more information call: 510/548-6933.

**SUPPORT HOMELESS PEOPLE:** The Chaplaincy to the Homeless is seeking supporters for its "Community of Compassion," a group of people underwriting monthly rent for Grace House, which seeks to empower adults in their efforts to change their lives. This interfaith program involves homeless people in counseling, volunteer work, job development and community living. For information, write to: 2345 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704, or call 510/548-0551.

**SOCIAL CHANGE SANGHA.** A sangha for those interested in blending mindfulness practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh with social change work meets weekly in Oakland. If interested, contact Rosa at 510/534-6302.

**BPF VOLUNTEERS NEEDED, WANTED, LOVED.** In particular, we need help organizing our library of books and tapes—Come have a biblio-blast! Also, *Turning Wheel* can use your help. Call the office: 510/655-6169.

**THE UNTRAINING** is designed to help you "untrain" the subtle programming of white liberal racism. Put your meditative awareness to work for all beings. Ongoing groups: 510/235-6134.

**BUDDHIST PRISONER IN TEXAS** needs pro-bono legal advice to bring suit against the state of Texas in order to be able to practice Buddhism in prison. He'll

do all the research, but he needs guidance. Contact Jimmy Brooks, #715108, 9601 Spur 591, Amarillo, TX 79107.

**PRISON SANGHA.** Zen group in Ohio needs books, tapes, robes, incense, candles, malas. Please send to: Lotus Prison Sangha, c/o Ven. Shih Ying-Fa, Cloudwater Zendo, 21562 Lorain Rd., Fairview Park, OH 44126.

**BISEXUAL BUDDHIST ASSOC.** affirming unity, positive self-image, and bisexual identity for those committed to meditation and mindfulness practice. P.O. Box 858, Amherst, MA 01004.

**GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP:** sittings, speakers, and discussions every Thursday evening and every other Sunday morning in San Francisco. Classes, workshops, retreats, monthly potluck dinners, and work in Buddhist AIDS projects. Newsletter, with information and articles on topics of concern to gay Buddhists, available for \$15/8 issues. (See inside back cover for address).

**PLANET DRUM FOUNDATION'S GREEN CITY PROJECT JOB LISTING.** The Green City Project is offering an Environmental Job Listing Service. Every two weeks, we publish a compilation of great internships and job announcements that pass through our office. Free to businesses and organizations. Fax your job announcements to 415/285-6563 and we'll list them until your position is filled. Subscription for those seeking employment is \$15 for 3 months. To subscribe, call our office at 415/285-6556 and request an application form. Get a chance at that dream job!

**THE CONCH-US TIMES,** the Journal of the Dead Buddhists of America, for those appreciating both Grateful Dead and Buddhist cultures: \$8/yr. Payable to: Ken Sun-Downer, Box 769, Idyllwild, CA 92549.

**CAMBODIAN VIDEO.** "An Army of Peace," 52-minute video in English, about Ven. Maha Ghosanda and the annual Dhammayietra (peace walk) across Cambodia. Send \$25 check payable to "CPR" to: CPR, P.O. Box 60, Bungthong Lang Post Office, Bangkok 10242, Thailand. Proceeds support CPR—the Committee for Peace and Reconciliation.

**THICH NHAT HANH'S 1999 U.S. VISIT.** Dates to save:  
Aug. 23-28, retreat in Vermont.  
Sept. 6-11, retreat at U.C. Santa Barbara, CA.  
Sept. 26-Oct. 1, retreat with practice program for young people, Omega Institute, Rhinebeck, NY.  
Sept. 18—Day of Mindfulness in Oakland, CA.  
Sept. 21—Lecture in Berkeley, CA.  
Sept. 24—Lecture in Burlington, VT.  
Call 800/736-1330 for information on all events.

**LIVING OUR FAITH.** Organizing the Religious Community Against the Death Penalty. National conference, April 8-11, 1999, San Antonio, TX. For info: 215/241-7127, Email: <pclark@afsc.org>.

**THE MIND THAT WRITES**  
Weekend writing and meditation retreat with Susan Moon (editor of *TW*), April 30-May 2, at Manzanita Village, in the chaparral hill country of Southern California. For info: P.O. Box 67, Warner Springs, CA 92086. Tel: 760/782-9223.

**BUDDHISM IN THE BODY.**  
Energy Awareness and Traditional Tibetan Practice. Workshops with Anne Klein and Phyllis Pay. For Esalen retreat, April 11-16, call 831/667-3000. For one-day Berkeley workshop, April 10, 10-5, call 510/486-0329.

Inflate your zafu, deflate your ego! Our **INFLATABLE ZAFU**, at only six ounces, is great for travel! Black, navy, royal purple, burgundy, green. \$27 Postpaid! Also: traditional ZAFUS and ZABUTONS, BENCHES, YOGA VIDEOS, BELLS, BOOKS & more! Satisfaction guaranteed. Credit cards accepted. Free brochure. Carolina Morning Designs, Dept. TW, Rte. 67, Box 61, Cullowhee, NC 28723. 704/293-5906.

**MEDITATE** in the Caribbean on a wooded estate situated at 2,000 feet on the island of Saba. Private pool, trail, gardens, mountain views, and **SILENCE.** Fully furnished private hoyuse. 212/929-4243.

# HELPING TURN THE WHEEL

*BPF gratefully acknowledges contributions above membership received between October 1 & December 31, 1998.*

Beverly Ahlsedt ♦ Selene Aitken ♦ Susan Alexander ♦ Bruce Anderson ♦ Joni Anderson ♦ Katherine Anderson ♦ Elsie Archer ♦ Fred Babbitt ♦ Ikuko Bacon ♦ Ralph Bailey ♦ Susan Baldwin ♦ Linda Bamber ♦ Elinor Bannwart ♦ Josh Baran ♦ Dinah Barlow ♦ Hathaway Barry ♦ Jerry Bass ♦ Leah Bass ♦ Roy C. Bath ♦ Rick Bauer ♦ Mark Bauman ♦ Margaret Beal ♦ Mark Bell ♦ Chris Benedict ♦ Frank Benson ♦ Erika Bera ♦ Steve Bergman ♦ Patricia Bevan ♦ Peter Blaustein ♦ Dena Bliss ♦ Susan Blumenberg ♦ Paul Boumbuliam ♦ Susan Braddy ♦ Elizabeth Brandon ♦ Jasper Brinton ♦ Donald Brokenshire ♦ Brookrod ♦ Amzie Brown ♦ Kent Bunting ♦ Susan Butler ♦ Larry Cannon ♦ Ralph Cantor ♦ David Chadwick ♦ Ben Chappelle ♦ Melody Ermachild Chavis & Stan Dewey ♦ Robert Chender ♦ David Chura ♦ David Chura ♦ Marilyn Clements ♦ Marilyn Clements ♦ Doug Codiga ♦ Sue Cole ♦ Jean Coleman ♦ Liz Collins ♦ John Cooper ♦ Margo Cooper ♦ Susan Copeland ♦ Tona Cornette ♦ Kirkham Cornwell ♦ Terry Cox ♦ Patrick Crawford ♦ Dave Crowley ♦ Robert Curran ♦ Linda Ruth Cutts ♦ Karen D'Orazio ♦ Fe de los Santos ♦ Armand Diaz ♦ Steven Dillon ♦ Chris Dodge ♦ Christa Donaldson ♦ Rosemary Donnell ♦ Daniel Dover ♦ Jeanne Dritz ♦ Paul Duckworth ♦ David Dupuy ♦ Mitch Durell ♦ Thomas Durocher ♦ Otto Eckhardt ♦ Ronald Elson ♦ Doug Engel ♦ Alina Ever ♦ J. Exley ♦ Helen & Henry Finney ♦ Dot Fisher-Smith ♦ Edward Fitzpatrick ♦ Karen Fletcher ♦ L.R. Frazin ♦ Margaret Garcia ♦ William Gardner ♦ Katherine Garnett ♦ Barbara Gates ♦ Chester Gates ♦ Michael George ♦ Charles Gibbs ♦ Susan Gidwitz ♦ Mary Gilliland ♦ David Glaser ♦ Maggie Gluek ♦ Anita Goldfried ♦ Renate Gollin ♦ Georgia Gomez-Ibanez ♦ Trudy & George Goodman ♦ Regina Gordon ♦ Nancy Gore ♦ Rubell Grad ♦ Marc Graham ♦ Joan B. Granger ♦ Lynn & Scott Grannan ♦ Barbara Green ♦ Virginia & Arthur Greeno ♦ Gary Grimm ♦ M. Winston Grizzard, Jr. ♦ Louise Hagihara ♦ Stewart Haight ♦ Marilyn Handel ♦ Bob Hanson ♦ Fred Hanson ♦ Lynn Hays ♦ Mark Hemenway ♦ Werner Hertz ♦ Helen Hickey ♦ Joann Hickey ♦ Daniel Hill ♦ Lynne Hofmann ♦ Dennis Hohman ♦ Nita Hon ♦ Katherine Hover ♦ Monica Hoyt ♦ Sarah Hsia ♦ Gary Hughes ♦ William Hulley ♦ Marlene Hunau-Herman ♦ Sara Hunsaker ♦ Mushim Ikeda-Nash ♦ Lori Lynn Imbler ♦ Larry Ingraham ♦ Rhea Irvine ♦ Clifford Isberg ♦ Caren Jackson ♦ Deborah Jang ♦ K.T. Janney ♦ W. Paul Jeffery ♦ M. Anne Jennings ♦ Tim Jensen ♦ Patricia Jimenez ♦ Peter J. Johnson ♦ Michelle Johnson-Weider ♦ Larry Kaiser ♦ Phyllis Kanarkowski ♦ John Kane ♦ Michael Kieran ♦ Jonathan Klate ♦ John Kneip ♦ Susan Kowalczyk ♦ Kenneth Kraft ♦ Cathy Kriss ♦ Larry Kuechler ♦ Kevin Kuich ♦ Linda Kuttis ♦ Donna Kwilosz ♦ Bernice La Mar ♦ Brian Lapp ♦ Mary Grace Lentz ♦ Stella Levy ♦ David Lewis & Deborah Rozelle ♦ Charlotte Linde ♦ Claire Ludlow ♦ Sarah Jane Lynch ♦ Barry Magid ♦ Judith Marcus ♦ Howard Margolis ♦ Mary Porter-Chase & Sam Masser ♦ Rebecca Mayeno ♦ Steven Mayer ♦ Adrienne McCoy ♦ Rev. Ed McDonnell ♦ Bonney McDowell ♦ Gwyn McVay ♦ William Menza ♦ Carole Meredith ♦ Linda Millington ♦ Susan Millman ♦ Ellen Mintzer ♦ William Minaryard ♦ Richard Miot ♦ Mordecai Mitnick ♦ Helga Moor ♦ Jeff Moore ♦ Gary Morgret ♦ Carol Moser ♦ Betty Lynn Moulton ♦ Victoria Mudd ♦ Donna Mumma ♦ Joseph Murphy ♦ Nancy Napier ♦ Tanya Neiman ♦ Cheryl Newbern ♦ Rex Anthony Norris ♦ Gerard & Mary O'Halloran ♦ Robert O'Malley ♦ Linda Lou Oster ♦ Michele Papen-Daniel ♦ Lon Parsons ♦ Karen Payne ♦ Lewis Pell ♦ John Perks ♦ Beverly Petiet ♦ Ruby Phillips ♦ William Pick ♦ Richard Plzak ♦ Susan Postal ♦ Renee Potik & Kay Taus ♦ Linda Proulx ♦ Michael Quam ♦ Jennifer Rader ♦ Maia Ramsey ♦ Gloria Reed ♦ Ken Renwick ♦ Michael Reshetnik ♦ Don Reynolds ♦ Philip Richardson ♦ Karin Ringler ♦ Edwin Robbins ♦ Kathleen Roberts ♦ Russell Roberts ♦ Lee Robins ♦ Kathleen Rogers ♦ Lily Roselyn ♦ Carol Rounds ♦ Mitch Ryerson ♦ Irene Saikevych ♦ Barry Samuel ♦ Lotti Sanders ♦ David Sanford ♦ Susan Schechter ♦ Debra Schneider ♦ Prudence See ♦ Julie Sgarzi ♦ Sandra Shanaberger ♦ Judith Sharp ♦ Francie Shaw ♦ Charlotte Shoemaker ♦ Theodore Shoemaker ♦ Will Shonbrun ♦ Jerome Siegel ♦ Mark Silver ♦ Cyndi Smith ♦ David Ross Smith ♦ Therese Snyder ♦ Frederick Solomon ♦ Katy Sommers ♦ Elaine Spieler ♦ Susan Springborg ♦ Baird Standish ♦ Angela Stocker ♦ Donald Stoddard ♦ Ann Strauss ♦ J. Bradley Stroup ♦ Gerald Swafford ♦ Maureen Sweeney ♦ Michael Sweet ♦ Kurt Swenson ♦ Dr. R. Talreja ♦ Kazuaki Tanahashi ♦ David Tapper ♦ Clay Taylor ♦ Vince Taylor ♦ Michele Tellier ♦ Paul Tenorio ♦ Patrick Teverbaugh ♦ David Tharp ♦ Antony Thier ♦ John Thompson ♦ Te Toh Titus ♦ Mary Evelyn Tucker ♦ Kate Wagner ♦ Ross Walker ♦ Barratt Walton ♦ Stuart Webb ♦ Karen Wegela ♦ Sandra Weis-Freier ♦ Meiya S. Wender ♦ Barbara Wenger ♦ L.C. Wengrod & Barbara De Santi ♦ Toby Wheeler ♦ Donna White ♦ Edward White ♦ Paula Williams ♦ Michael Wilmore ♦ Gaye Wilson ♦ Daniel Winheld ♦ Mary Wolfe ♦ Thomas Wong ♦ Elizabeth Wood ♦ Ivan Woodhams ♦ Roseanna Woods ♦ Margaret Wotkins ♦ Thomas Wright ♦ Key Wu ♦ Eva Yarmo ♦ David Young ♦ Catherine Zaic ♦ Dana Zelenka ♦ Laura Zimmerman ♦ Lesbian Sangha ♦ Ordinary Dharma ♦

*For donations above and beyond the call of fundraising:*

Martha & Bob Abshear ♦ William & Diane Ames ♦ William Anderson ♦ Lourdes Arguelles ♦ Coral Mack & Bob Bowman ♦ Mark Caldwell ♦ Mary Carnell ♦ Mary & Ed Celnicker ♦ Laura Chasin ♦ Elizabeth Coe ♦ J. Grant Couch ♦ James Doyle ♦ Alan Fishman ♦ Sheila Glover ♦ Gus Hindenlang ♦ Harrison Hoblitzelle ♦ Jean Holroyd-Sills ♦ Sandy Hunter ♦ Sylvia Israel ♦ Pamela Jackson ♦ Elwyn Jordan ♦ Marjorie Kellogg ♦ Paul Larose ♦ Lucy Leu ♦ Elger Lorenzsonn ♦ David Loy ♦ Rafe Martin ♦ Martin McCarthy ♦ Susan McConnell ♦ Hannah Meara ♦ Jim & Sheila Molnar ♦ Karola Moore ♦ Lily Noon ♦ Carol Perkins ♦ Lore Anne Politzer ♦ Walter Powers ♦ Judith Ragir ♦ Jessie Ragsdale ♦ Judy Ramsey ♦ Kathleen Rogers ♦ Isabella Rosekrans ♦ Jonathan Rosenthal ♦ Robert Schaibly ♦ Jill & Peter Schireson ♦ Rob Scott ♦ Maylie Scott ♦ Charlotte Selver ♦ Robert Shea ♦ Michael Smith ♦ Wynelle Snow ♦ Jo Sopko ♦ Dave Sutton ♦ Nancy Taylor ♦ Gayle Thorsen ♦ Daniel Winheld ♦ Patricia Yenawine ♦ Paul Zmudzinski ♦ Berkeley Zen Center ♦ Berkeley Buddhist Monastery ♦ Dean Witter Reynolds, Inc. ♦ Empty Gate Zen Center ♦ The Luster Family Foundation ♦ OMS Medical Supplies, Inc. ♦ The PBH Charitable Trust ♦ Robert K. & Barbara J. Straus Family ♦ **Thank you!**

*Thanks to all our wonderful event and office volunteers, with special thanks to Isabella Rosekrans and Reuben Perelman.*

# BPF CHAPTERS & AFFILIATES

## CHAPTERS

### BOSTON, MA

Rob Weiland  
62 Three Pond Rd.  
Wayland, MA 01778  
Tel. 508/358-0145

### COLORADO

Bob Knott, 1930 Niagara St.  
Denver, CO 80220  
303/388-0808

### PRAIRIE BUDDHA

Karuna Maddava  
201 Forest Knoll Dr.  
Palatine IL 600745  
847/9341711

### EAST BAY, CA

Sandy Hunter  
1409 Oxford St. #3  
Berkeley, CA 94709  
510/548-7843

### EUGENE, OR

Steve "Faddah" Wolf  
POB 744  
Eugene, OR 97440  
541/341-1301

### GREEN GULCH, CA

Nancy Petrin, Jeremy Levie  
1601 Shoreline Highway  
Sausalito, CA 94965  
415/383-3134

### HONOLULU, HI

Karma Lekshe Tsomo  
400 Hobron Lane #2615  
Honolulu, HI 96815  
808/944-6294

### LOS ANGELES, CA

Kara Steiniger  
310/821-8564

### MILWAUKEE, WI

Paul Norton  
3238 N. Shepard Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53211  
414/961-9281

### NEW YORK, NY

Val DuBasky  
463 West Street #G111  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
212/691-2543

### SACRAMENTO, CA

Steve Walker  
c/o Mandala Institute  
3550 Watt Ave. #2  
Sacramento, CA 95821  
916/481-0424

### SAN DIEGO, CA

Ava Torre-Bueno  
POB.33110  
San Diego, CA 92163  
619/266-2442

### SAN FRANCISCO

Paul Haller, S. F. Zen Center  
300 Page St.,  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
415/863-3136

### SEATTLE, WA

Rick Harlan  
911 29th St. So.  
Seattle, WA 98144-3123  
206/324-4153

### SONOMA COUNTY, CA

Ella Rozett  
POB. 646  
Grayton, CA 95444  
707/874-3397

### SPOKANE, WA

Merry Armstrong  
P.O.B. 31124  
Spokane, WA 99223-3018  
509/455-3987

### TASSAJARA, CA

Cristina Cruz  
Zen Mountain Center  
39171 Tassajara Road  
Carmel Valley, CA 93924  
408/659-2229

### TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

Travis Donoho  
1006 Banister Lane,  
Apt. 1406  
Austin, TX 78704-6966  
512/440-1909

### TRIANGLE AREA, NC

Hans Henning  
558 East Road  
Pittsboro, NC 27312  
919/542-6060

### TWIN CITIES, MN

Lee Lewis  
1493 Lincoln Ave.  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
612/699-1330

### YELLOW SPRINGS, OH

Eric Lang  
743 West Sparrow Rd.  
Springfield, OH 45502  
937/327-9491

## CONTACTS

### ARCATA, CA

Mark Pringle, POB 2085  
Trinidad, CA 95570  
707/677-0429

### CORVALLIS, OR

Meghan Caughey  
25111 Webster Ave.  
Monroe, OR 97456  
541/424-2215

### MARIN COUNTY, CA

Ken Homer  
83B Clark St.  
San Rafael, CA 94901  
415/457-1360

### MID S.F. PENINSULA, CA

Lance Miller  
1020 Foster City Blvd.# 280  
Foster City, CA 94404-2345  
415/340-9698

### NEVADA CITY, CA

Daniel Flanigan  
16874 Jackass Flats Rd.  
Nevada City, CA 95959  
916/292-1801

### NORTHEAST OHIO

Matt Wascovich  
POB 252  
Elyria, OH 44035  
216/556-2847

### OKLAHOMA

Katherine Williams  
1021 Harding St.  
Seminole, OK 74868  
405/382-5723

### PHILADELPHIA, PA

Barbara Hirshkowitz  
4709 Windsor  
Philadelphia, PA 19143  
215/724-8131

### PORTLAND, OR

Bob Ryan  
1845 Southeast Ladd Ave.  
Portland, OR 97214  
503/234-7713

### RHODE ISLAND/SE MASS.

Rebecca Capolungo-  
Hartman  
Providence Zen Center  
99 Pound Rd.  
Cumberland, RI 02864  
401/658-2499

### SANTA FE, NM

Ann Dasburg  
50C LaBarbaria Trail  
Santa Fe, N.M. 87505  
505/982-8179

### VERMONT

Richard Dunworth  
45 Pleasant St. Ext.  
Ludlow, VT 05149  
802/228-2476

### YAKIMA, WA

Douglas C. Ray  
261 Rowberry Way  
Topenish, WA 98948  
509/865-6045

## AFFILIATES

### AUSTRALIA (MELBOURNE)

Jill Jameson  
50 Daveys Lane  
Hoddles Creek, VIC 3139  
61-3-596-74-372

### BPF AUSTRALIA(SYDNEY)

Gillian Coote  
31 Bonnefin St.  
Hunters Hill, NSW 2110

### BPF BANGLADESH

Brother Jarlath D'Souza  
St. Joseph's School  
Hsad Gate, Mohammedpur  
Dhaka, 1207 Bangladesh

### BUDDHIST SOCIAL ACTION NETWORK OF B.C.

Valerie Goodale  
#24-710 West 15th St.  
North Vancouver, B.C.  
Canada V7M3K6

### BPF LADAKH

Ven. Bhikkhu Sanghasena  
c/o Mahabodhi International  
Meditation Centre  
POB 22, Leh, Ladakh  
194101 Himalaya, India

### BUDDHIST AIDS PROJECT

555 John Muir Drive #803  
San Francisco, CA 94132  
415/522-7473

### GAY BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP

2261 Market St. #422  
San Francisco, CA 94114  
415/974-9878

### INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

P.O. Box 19  
Mahadthai Post Office  
Bangkok, 10206, Siam  
tel/fax: 662-433-7169

### INEB JAPAN

Suzuki Ryowa  
81 Honyashiki  
Minowa Anjo  
Aichi 446, Japan  
81-566-76-2486

### KARUNA CENTER

Paula Green  
49 Richardson Rd.  
Leverett, MA 01054  
413/367-9520

### LEEDS NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

91 Clarendon Rd.  
Leeds LS29LY  
West Yorkshire, U.K.  
0113/2444-289

### LESBIAN BUDDHIST SANGHA

Carol Osmer-Newhouse  
4084 Lambert Road  
El Sobrante, CA 94803  
510/222-7787

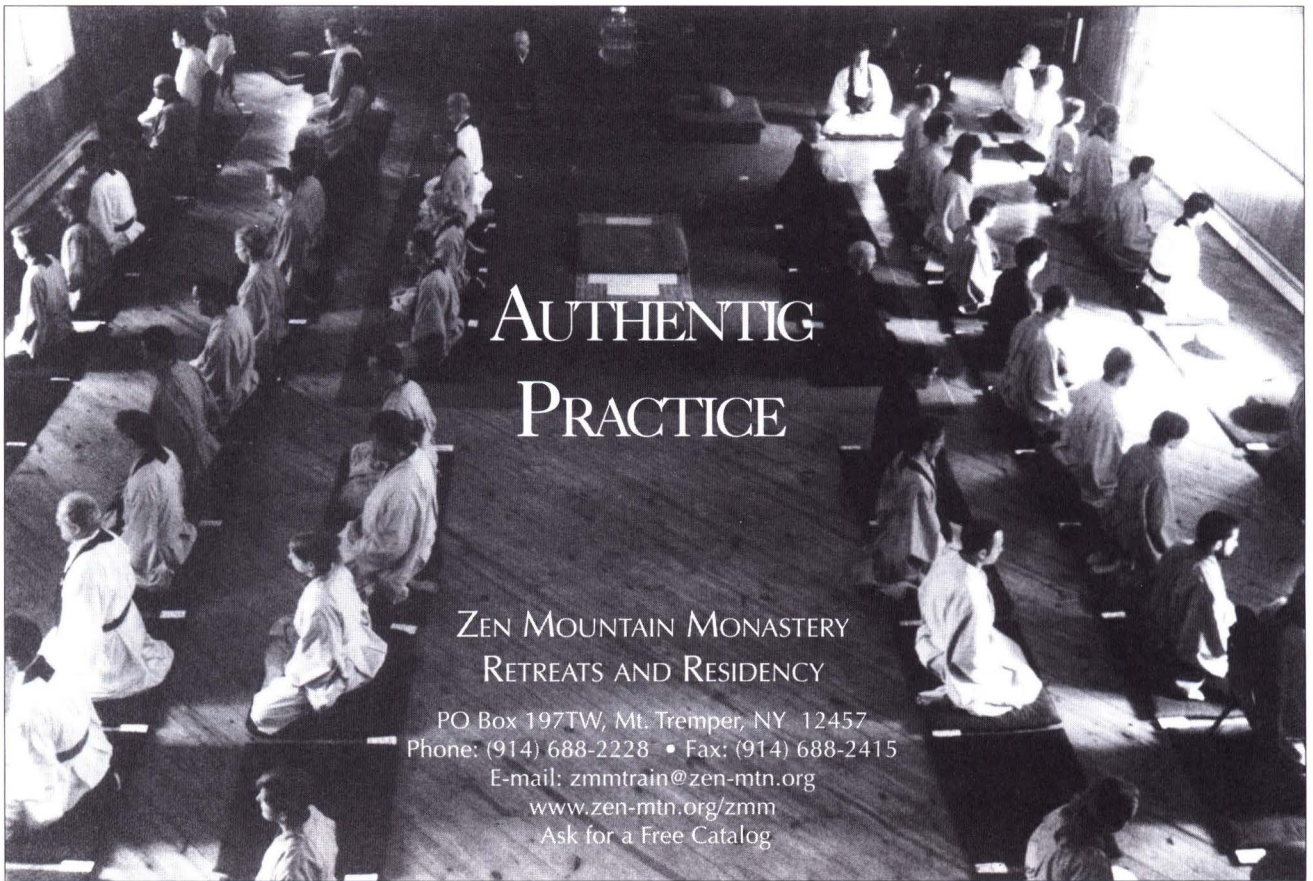
### NETWORK OF ENGAGED BUDDHISTS

Ken Jones, Plas Plwca,  
Cwmrheidol, Aberystwyth,  
Wales, U.K. SY23 3NB  
097/084-603

### PRISON DHARMA NETWORK

Fleet Maull  
POB 912  
Astor Station  
Boston, MA 02123-0912

BPF is an affiliate of the  
FELLOWSHIP OF  
RECONCILIATION,  
Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960



# AUTHENTIC PRACTICE

ZEN MOUNTAIN MONASTERY  
RETREATS AND RESIDENCY

PO Box 197TW, Mt. Tremper, NY 12457  
Phone: (914) 688-2228 • Fax: (914) 688-2415  
E-mail: [zmmtrain@zen-mtn.org](mailto:zmmtrain@zen-mtn.org)  
[www.zen-mtn.org/zmm](http://www.zen-mtn.org/zmm)  
Ask for a Free Catalog

## JOANNA MACY “Coming Back to Life”

This workshop will be a field day for your inner bodhisattva!

**SATURDAY, MAY 1, 9:30 AM TO 4:30 PM**

**Nile Hall, Preservation Park, Oakland**

A benefit for the Buddhist Peace Fellowship's BASE program. (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement)  
For tickets and information, contact the BPF office at 510.433.9128

### **Buddhist Peace Fellowship**

P.O. Box 4650  
Berkeley, CA 94704 USA

Address Correction Requested  
Forwarding & Return Postage  
Guaranteed

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
Paid

Permit No. 413  
Berkeley, CA