



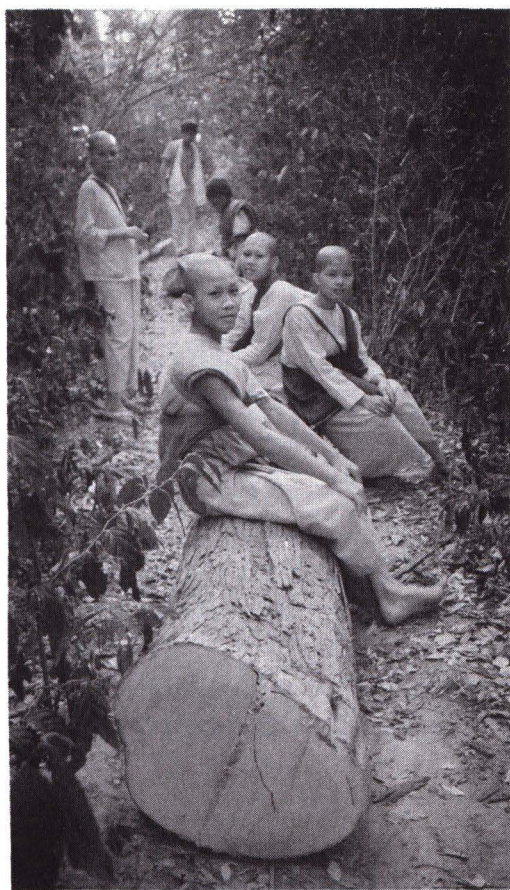
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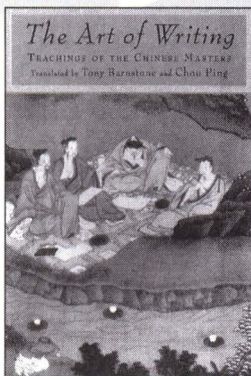
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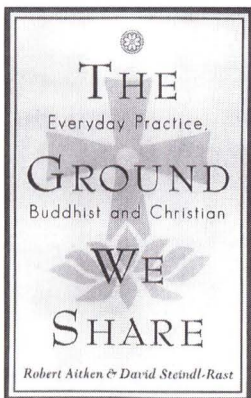
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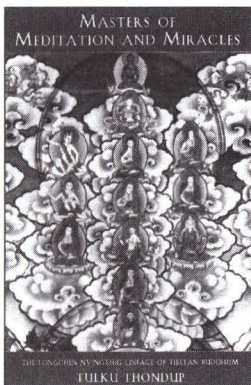
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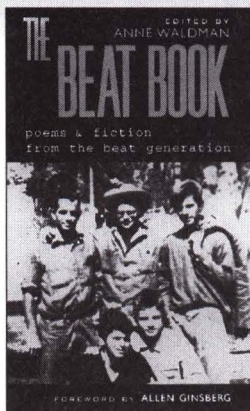


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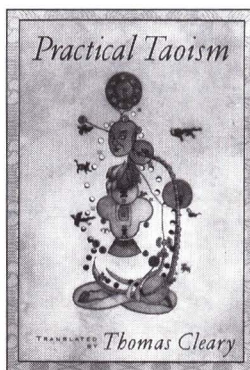
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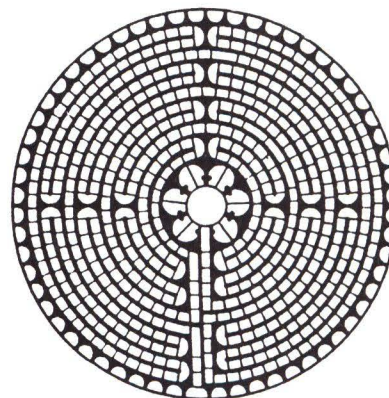
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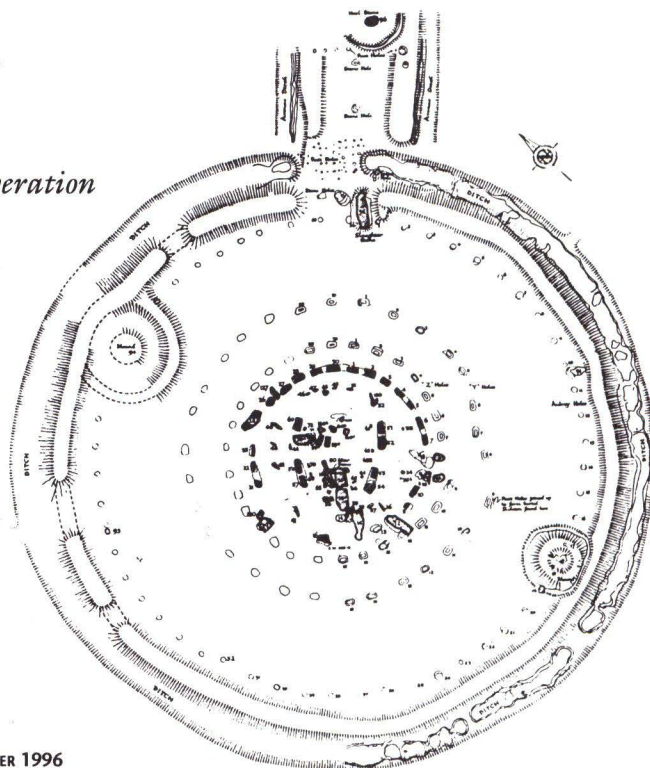
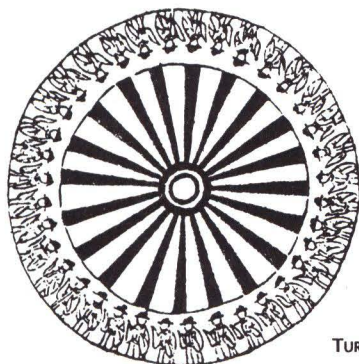
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FROM THE EDITOR

I love to feel close to people in other parts of the world, so that we become part of each other's family and learn each other's family style. How lucky I am to have a daughter in Germany, two nephews in Senegal, a sister in Cambodia.

We are told we live in a "global village" nowadays, and at first this makes us feel warm and cosy. We like to think of ourselves as connected, but what the global village is coming to mean is that we're all under the thumb of the same few multinationals. The multinationals have bought the global village concept and are selling it back to us. We are all being dressed in the same clothing, and watching the same T.V. programs, eating Big Macs and wearing blue jeans. It reminds me of that ride at Disneyland called "It's A Small World," where you take a boat through a tunnel and little mechanical dolls pop out of the wall dressed in the native dress of foreign lands and sing to you about what a small world it is and how happy we all are together. And they all look exactly the same, although they are painted different colors, and some wear dirndls and some wear saris. They all sing the same song and it's in English. Even if it's well-meaning, the only culture it says anything about is the culture of Disneyland.

The trick is to get that family feeling about people all over the world without becoming the same—to share our humanness and celebrate our diversity at the same time.

The other night I went to an event in Berkeley sponsored by BPF. U.S. Army Capt. Lawrence Rockwood spoke about his situation: he went to Haiti with U.S. troops when Aristide was reinstated as President. Believing he was there to protect human rights, Rockwood went into a Haitian jail to witness the terrible conditions for political prisoners, and for this he was court martialed and removed from active duty. His case is now on appeal. He's a Buddhist, and he speaks of his understanding that the other is no different from himself. The other speaker at the event was Maclaine Lumas, a Haitian woman who has been a courageous activist for democracy. She was beaten and arrested several times and was herself a political prisoner in Haiti. She spoke in French with an interpreter. Activism for human rights in Haiti has made these two apparently very different people friends and fellow speakers on the same platform: man and woman, "white" and "black," soldier and teacher, Buddhist and Christian, English-speaking and French-speaking. This is what I mean by feeling connected and respecting diversity.

And speaking of Disneyland, I learned that evening that the Disney Corporation has moved into Haiti for cheap labor, and garment workers are being paid 11 cents an hour to make Pocahontas pajamas. (*Pocahontas!* Is this cultural diversity or an extra twist of the knife?) The pajamas cost Disney seven cents a pair, and they retail for \$12/pair. At this rate, it would take a Haitian worker 1040 years to earn what Disney CEO Michael Eisner earns in one week. At the end of the evening people were asked to send letters of protest to Disney: another opportunity for international activism.

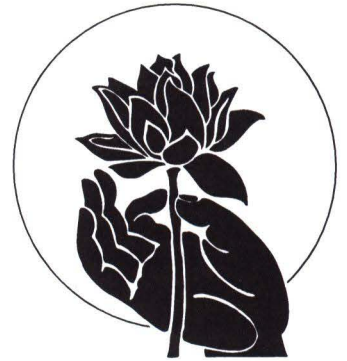
This issue of *Turning Wheel* brings news from all over the world, about people working for justice in many places. The world may be small, but it's also enormous, and—the internet notwithstanding—there are a lot of things going on that you and I will never hear about. After you read this issue of *Turning Wheel* you'll know about a few more of them, but let's not forget that there are infinite other acts of courage and solidarity and love happening all the time, that unsung bodhisattvas are at this very moment working to liberate each other (and us, too) in ways we can't imagine. ♦ —Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Fall '96: Home and Homelessness — Deadline: July 8, '96.

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LETTERS

The Missing Survivor's Story

In her editorial in the Spring '96 issue, Susan Moon said that a survivor's story was missing from the issue, but not because the editors didn't try. After reading the different perspectives in the issue, I was reminded why this is "the hardest story to tell."

As a lesbian feminist, under normal circumstances I would have readily embraced the diversity of perspectives in the responses to Aitken Roshi's original article "Shunning and Intervention" (*Turning Wheel*, Summer '95). But as a survivor, what I was looking for was anything but people's *perspectives*. What I sought was relief from the shame and betrayal I am feeling about what happened to me.

It has been quite a journey for me to accept that I was sexually abused, that I was, in other words, a *victim*. In the spiritual practice I was involved in, being a victim was seen as an ego distortion. All of my conditioning (spiritual and political) told me to take on what happened to me as my responsibility. However, in order to move from the deep state of shame I was in which prevented me from pursuing the healing I needed, I have had to see that I was a victim of abuse and that my trust had been deeply betrayed.

Peter Rutter's book, *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, and my own psychotherapy have helped me understand how a woman can find herself so disempowered that she doesn't have the ability to say "no." In a relationship such as that between a healer and client, there is a clear imbalance of power (and for good reason). I believe (as do most healing arts professionals) that for transformation to take place, the client must drop all her defenses, and it is the healer's responsibility to make sure that he acts in her best interest.

About a year ago, I started seeing a Native American medicine man whom I'll call "P." His work is based on the use of hallucinogenic mushrooms in day-long "medicine journeys." These journeys have taken me to extremely deep places, many of which have been absolutely terrifying. P. establishes early on that in order to experience spiritual breakthroughs and integration of those experiences, one has to fully trust him as a guide. Here I found an older man who was giving me unconditional love, was offering the promise of healing from my deepest feelings of self loathing, and was leading me on a path that I believed would bring me the peace of knowing who I am. I quickly came to trust P. and rely on him in my journeys.

I now remember the exact moment when he knew he could pursue me sexually. I was telling him how he appeared in one of my journeys as my guide. Without pursuing my story, he started telling me about his

experience of a spiritual visitation by me a few days earlier and how we had a profound connection—that it was like making love, but as spirits, without bodies. I rationalized to myself that this was not sexual, only a profound spiritual connection that made our relationship "special." From then on, he escalated his expressions of falling in love with me and encouraged me not to tell the other folks in his circle or my partner.

Pretty soon, he started talking about how he wanted us to be naked and lie together and how he wanted to be vulnerable with me. He could sense my resistance and would say that if I felt any fear at all, then we wouldn't do it—because his love was unconditional. The implication underlying all his words, however, was that the more freedom I experienced from the blocks created by my ego, the more open I would be to his advances, which were part of the healing process.

This went on for many months. For a couple of those months I was pregnant (my partner of ten years and I are involved with a gay man in a co-parenting situation) and then I had a miscarriage. Shortly after that, I had a serious bicycling accident and went on disability for a few months. During this time, he made further advances, and finally, when I was dependent on him for what I considered my entire well being, I gave in, partly thinking it was in my best interest and partly for fear of losing his guidance.

In the meantime, P. very subtly worked to undermine my relationship with my partner, and eventually, with my close community of friends. In his circle, any dissension was seen as a person's fear or ego; anything that P. did was part of the healing process. The women who were his assistants perpetuated the deception. There were many times when I felt thrown off guard with him and asked some of the helpers about the sexual stuff. I was assured that P. was only interested in my "sexual healing," or that he was enlisting his ally the "Coyote Spirit" (a trickster figure) to help me on my journey.

Several months ago, I learned that he has sexual relationships with virtually all the women with whom he works. And he tells them all that the relationship is private, and not to tell their mates or other people in the group. At that time, I was on the verge of leaving my partner, my job, and my friends to go live near him.

My relationship is now in a crisis. I am only now awakening to my grief concerning the miscarriage, the horror of his abuse, and the way he tried to undermine my relationship and my lesbian identity.

I would love to do something to shut him down, but he is not licensed and I do not want to go after him for his use of "medicine"—which when used in its traditional sacred ways should be protected against criminalization. He is also not part of a larger spiritual community that could "shun" him.

The responses by Shannon Hickey, Denise Caignon, and AJ Kutchins to Robert Aitken and Melinda Vadas

ENGAGED BUDDHISM

**Buddhist Liberation
Movements in Asia**

*Christopher S. Queen and
Sallie B. King, editors*

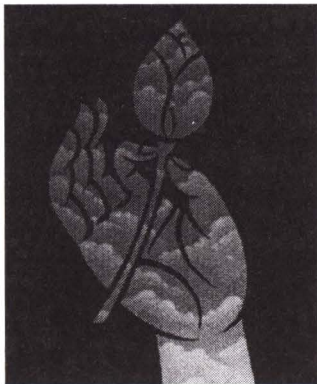
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were extremely disturbing to me. Not because I thought there was anything “disagreeable” in what they said. Only that I immediately felt unsafe and like a bad lesbian feminist, and if not to blame, then potentially perceived as a victim who would falsely “feel morally superior and self-righteous.” Caignon even says, “If the guy’s a jerk, get out of there.” At first, my reaction to this statement was shame again. Then self-protection. I suddenly felt like my story should remain a secret because I am in no shape to be subjected to critique. On the contrary, I wish only to be held and comforted by a spiritual community with which I feel an affinity. Should I risk what feels like more betrayal? No thanks.

So this must be why it is the “the hardest story to tell.” Maybe some think a survivor has no place in an ideological dialogue. Or that she may be too wounded. Or that she just needs to find other survivors in an anonymous setting for her healing. I don’t know. It could just be too soon for me to know.

On the other hand, a dialogue without a survivor’s perspective (or at least a psychological understanding) seems dangerously incomplete. No matter how good a feminist or Buddhist, if you haven’t been through it (or haven’t really listened to a survivor’s experience) you can’t fully understand it.

—Name withheld by request

More Responses to Sexual Misconduct

Thanks very much for the Sexual Misconduct issue of *Turning Wheel*. Congratulations on your initiative. If only we in the Network of Engaged Buddhists were doing something similar here in England. I particularly appreciated “Suing the Buddha.” I hope too much fury doesn’t land on your heads.

—Alex White, Network of Engaged Buddhists, England

In my limited experience, Buddhists seem to be kinder and more compassionate than similarly-situated non-Buddhists. Given this kindness, what, I wonder, is wrong with Buddhism at the level of theory? Why is it that Buddhists produce *precisely* the same self-satisfied, victim-blaming, and functionally-misogynistic responses to the feminist call for undoing women’s sexual subordination as do non-Buddhists? As I read the responses in *Turning Wheel*’s issue on sexual harassment, I saw the same conceptual mistakes of individualism, naturalism, voluntarism, idealism, and moralism that Catherine MacKinnon identifies as the mistakes of liberalism.

Undoing women’s subordination requires a radical understanding of the *socially-constructed, and complexly-determined* nature of that subordination. Understanding women’s subordination in order to dismantle it cannot be accomplished by liberalism, in whatever dress. Thus, to the degree that Buddhism is a form of liberalism, Buddhism cannot end the suffering of women as such. It is women’s collective struggle to

end sexual subordination that is needed. As far as I can determine, a collective struggle by women to end sexual subordination finds no conceptual resting place within the Buddhist theory expressed thus far in the pages of *Turning Wheel*.

I would, however, like to add one positive note. Although Robert Aitken apparently remains as unacquainted with the specifics of feminist political analysis as I am unacquainted with most of the details of Buddhist thought, his compassion seems to run deep enough to enable him to see at least part of what feminist analysis reveals—i.e., the suffering and diminishment of women caused by male power, and the subsequent need for redress. Aitken Roshi’s response led me to wonder if a deep enough compassion can *sometimes* suffice in lieu of accurate political analysis. If that were ever true—and I hope it is—I think it would count as a miracle.

—Melinda Vadas, Oak Ridge, North Carolina

As the old blues song goes, “When things go wrong, go wrong with you, it hurts me too.” That’s why when I saw the bold letters proclaiming “Sexual Misconduct” as the subject of the Spring issue, I moaned.

These cases of sexual abuse are not small matters. The abuse of women has been going on for too long. Shunning does not work. It’s been tried. Hundreds, maybe thousands, have shunned the Buddhist community because of the abuse of women and yet it still goes on. Buddhist communities have expelled the abusing teachers only to have them go elsewhere and set up camp. Something else has to be tried.

The arguments Denise Caignon uses to point out that the women involved should share the responsibility are all well and good, but many students of Buddhism are beginners and are suffering. They haven’t yet been empowered by practice because they haven’t done enough of it. They see people bowing down to the teacher, taking his word as truth, and they understandably fall victim.

The issue is not about sharing the blame. The issue is about Buddhist teachers in positions of power and, more importantly, trust, abusing this sacred trust for selfish gain with no regard for their students.

Hickey quotes Thich Nhat Hanh when he points out that he might have turned out to be a rapist if the circumstances of his life had been different. I suppose this is to instill compassion for the abusive teacher in all the women who have been abused. But Buddhism also teaches that we are all responsible for our actions. The teacher knows this very well. It is, therefore, our duty to help him stop creating more bad karma for himself. Must the cycle go on forever?

AJ Kutchins, in his article, equates litigation in cases of sexual misconduct to a baseball bat to the head in order to get the attention of the community. It appears that, after 2,500 years of abuse, that is just what is needed. I don’t think anyone expects healing to take

place in the courtroom, but before healing can take place the abuse has to stop. If these false teachers are not made responsible for their actions then we should expect them to do it again.

If a woman has a case she should sue. Going to court is a very legitimate form of self defense. While the legal system isn't pretty and often both parties get hurt, it's better than violence—both the violence that has already been perpetrated and the violence that could come if nothing is done about it.

The only alternative to a lawsuit that I can see is a public (in the media, TV, etc.) admission of guilt, a plea for forgiveness, and a convincing argument as to why it is wrong for the said abuser to have sexually taken advantage of his student—and last, a promise not to do anything like it again.

—*Matthew Coleman, SaltSpring Is., British Columbia*

I read with interest the issue on sexual misconduct and would like to express my gratitude to Aitken Roshi for shining some light on a matter that has been left in the dark for too long.

How can so-called enlightened teachers exploit their students? The answer is: easily! When students attribute God-like qualities to Buddhist teachers, who, after all, are only human beings who have been given authority to teach by other human beings, they open themselves to exploitation.

There is nothing new in the fact that people placed in positions of power tend to use that power to further their own self-centered agendas. When we treat someone like a God long enough we should not be surprised when they begin to believe they are one.

Enlightenment does not cure sexual irresponsibility any more than it cures diabetes or alcoholism. When you enlighten a horse thief, all you have is an enlightened horse thief.

The first step to dealing with any problem is to admit that you have one. If a teacher is saying or doing things that are inappropriate we need to get it out in the open. It is one thing to remain silent about koan work outside the interview room and quite another to remain silent about suspected or blatant misconduct. You don't need to be an enlightened master to know the difference.

—*Ted Biringer, Sedro Woolley, Washington*

Like most Buddhist Peace Fellowship discussions, the recent obsession with sexuality in the form of sexual harassment has overlooked the main point of Buddhist practice—meditation. Yes, someone has asserted that all practice boils down to compassion. But without some mental stability, compassion melts into idiotic pity, or hardens into animosity such as the doctrine of "tough love" promulgated by Aitken Roshi.

Yes, "tough love" is validated in some sutras. But it's reserved for those who can literally, and with certainty,



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know the thoughts of someone else. It's not for a baby who indulges his own lustful thoughts as a call of nature.

Before even beginning the study and practice of Buddhist ideas (including compassion), one must attenuate the coarse manifestations of emotionality. Probably the most complete and accessible source in English on how to proceed is *The Path of Purification* by Buddhaghosa. In it, beginners who are imbued with a preponderance of lust are taught to contemplate the decomposition of corpses, and to apply those perceptions to potential lust-objects—with no excuses such as “family ties.” Beginners who are imbued with animosity are taught to contemplate love and compassion—with no excuses such as “tough love.” By these allopathic remedies, they calm themselves down and strike a rudimentary emotional balance.

To get rid of these emotional defilements it is not—in theory—necessary to take vows of celibacy and renunciation. But most people will not get far without them. Few of us do it. So we should begin by giving respect and support in the first place to those who take and keep the vow of celibacy. “What vows do you hold?” should be the first question we ask of a would-be teacher. If someone objects to this question or ducks it, keep far away.

—Mark Tatz, Berkeley, California

Shame and Compassion ... “Bad Dog”

Lin Jensen's article “Bad Dog” (Winter '96) has remained in my heart ever since I read it. It took me several attempts to read it in its entirety, not only because of its graphic content and its ability to stir powerful emotions, but also because of my own abusive childhood.

Reading the article immediately transported me back to my childhood in England, where my brother and I survived as best we could with a raging father. Like Laddie the dog, my brother and I were punished for being ourselves: innocent children. This didn't make sense to us. We were punished for being noisy and then for being quiet when, for fear of further punishment, we wouldn't answer a question. Eventually we became ashamed of who we were.

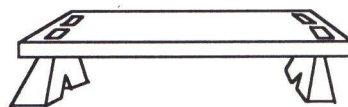
Like a sponge I soaked up all my father's guilt, shame, and rage, personalizing it, believing that it was all my fault. My world became as dark and as limited as the crawl space under the house to which Laddie retreated. In this environment, shame was the only thing to blossom; it grew by leaps and bounds until I no longer needed an incident to elicit feelings of shame. It was already there disfiguring me as much as the rotten chicken around laddie's neck. Shame stripped me of my vitality and self worth, and it clouded my perception of myself and others.

As much as the article was about shame, it was also about the redeeming quality of compassion—how it can transform our lives, change behavior and minds. I feel



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connected to Lin Jensen not only because of a past as horrendous as his, but also because of a compassion that frees me to treat all sentient beings with dignity.

As a result of reading the article, I have felt more compassion for myself, and, for the first time, some compassion for my father. I thank Lin for clearly demonstrating the interrelatedness of shame and compassion.

—S. Dolliver, Chico, California

The Bodhisattva as Social Activist...?

The BASE literature speaks of being modern-day bodhisattvas and of exploring the path of the bodhisattva. Isn't this arrogant and unnecessary? Who has the self-knowledge to claim the title of bodhisattva? For many traditional Buddhists, a bodhisattva is an exalted celestial being like Kwan Yin. Claiming this title sets us up as patrons to the poor: wiser and more compassionate. I cannot claim such wisdom and goodness for myself, and I'm not sure I trust anyone who does.

But I don't need to be a bodhisattva to exercise practical compassion. The Buddha asked us to be compassionate, and as simple Buddhists, we can and should respond straightforwardly to the suffering of others.

Besides, though the bodhisattva ideal means different things in different traditions, I don't think it has ever meant a social-political activist. Perhaps it should mean that, or come to include that. But rather than rewrite the

bodhisattva ideal, I'd revive the practical social compassion already present in ordinary Buddhism.

—Santipala Stephen Evans, Denver, Colorado

While I appreciate Santipala Stephen Evans' letter, I don't believe it is arrogant to make the claim of trying to be a modern-day bodhisattva. I am actually quite interested in using the term to mean a modern-day activist. I have tremendous respect for the extraordinary beings who were traditional bodhisattvas in Buddhist history, and I in no way mean to compare a 30-hours-per-week volunteer to a Kwan Yin.

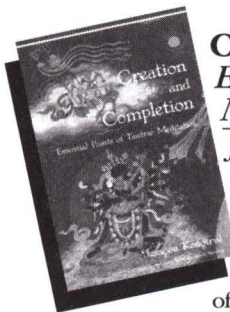
I do believe, however, that it is important in contemporary Buddhism to enliven the tradition by infusing ancient Buddhist words with new connotations. It is particularly important that our language reflect our concern for the current situation of suffering on the planet.

Bodhisattvas aren't only extraordinary creatures far removed from the mundane life of us ordinary folk. Anyone can be a bodhisattva and it is important to reclaim the word and make relevant the actions it implies. The bodhisattva ideal actively nourishes the resolve to work continuously and arduously for the benefit and liberation of all beings, in whatever form that takes.

I would like to add that I agree that it is very important to continuously cultivate ordinary compassion and to beware of arrogance and self-importance.

—Diana Winston, BASE Coordinator ♦

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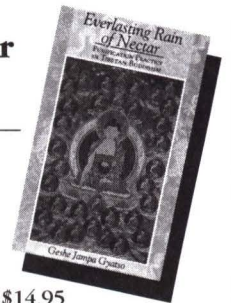


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READINGS

Dhammayietra around Songkhla Lake

Following the example of the annual Dhammayietra (peace walk) in Cambodia, Thailand's first Dhammayietra took place in March. The walk was a three-week circumambulation of Songkhla Lake, the nation's largest, whose ecosystem has been seriously damaged by pollution and development. The walk was planned by members of *Phra Sekhiyadhamma*, a small but growing network of grassroots Thai monks. They received support from non-governmental organizations, village leaders, and some government officials, and the walk was blessed with the presence and advice of Maha Ghosananda, leader of Cambodia's Dhammayietra.

BPF's friend Ven. Santikaro Bhikku, one of the walk's organizers, reports, "We believe that Sangha is more than yellow-robed shavelings chanting for meals, and ought to be a Sangha of the People, fully engaged in solving their communal, ecological, and economic problems. Some of us see ever more violent clashes over natural resources in Siam's future, and we wanted to establish a middle way between protest marches and apathetic silence." [See Santikaro's article on page 16.]

The walk successfully brought international attention to the dilemma of the lake (no fish to eat, bad water, and less of it, theft of water, loss of land, and breakdown of community), and helped build up the people's network around the lake in order to give them a greater voice in working out policies and projects.

A second walk is being planned for next April. Santikaro writes, "It was clear that the presence of foreigners—American, Bangladeshi, Chakma, Australian, Haitian, Canadian—helped to spark interest among local residents and to spread the word to other countries. Thus, we invite you all to join us next year."

Burma

At the conclusion of the First National Congress of the National League of Democracy (NLD) held May 26-29 in Burma (Myanmar), Aung San Suu Kyi announced her party's renewed determination to bring democracy to Burma. The ruling military junta, SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), had tried but failed to prevent the convening of the Congress. (See Coordinator's report, page 43.)

Aung San again appealed to other countries to suspend economic relations with Burma. Referring to investments by the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) member nations, Suu Kyi said, "The investment that is made does not help the ordinary people. It only makes a small elite richer." As for foreign aid from Japan, she said, "*SLORC has yet to prove that the humanitarian aid is actually getting to the people of Burma.*"

San Francisco has joined the growing number of communities supporting the movement to boycott investments, trade, and tourism in Burma. On April 15, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to pass Burma selective-purchasing legislation. This legislation seeks to discontinue support of the SLORC government, through discouraging investment in Burma. The two major targets of the San Francisco legislation are UNOCAL and UPS. Texaco and Pepsi have been targeted in legislation in other communities.

On the national level, readers can show support for the Burma Freedom and Democracy Act (Senate version S1511, House version HR2892) by writing to your U.S. Senators and Representatives.

For more information, contact Simon Billenness, Nat'l Coalition for Corporate Withdrawal from Burma, at 617/423-6655x225, Fax: 617/482-6179, or E-mail: simon_billenness@cybercom.net.

Monks Imprisoned in Vietnam

Ven. Thich Huyen Quang, Executive Director of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), remains in detention despite the Vietnamese government's announcement earlier this year that it will not prosecute him for public dissent. After twelve years of house arrest he was imprisoned in December 1994, for his protests against state control of religion and his demand for religious freedom and human rights. The cold, damp, one-room brick hut he is being detained in, as well as massive spraying of insecticides in the surrounding fields, have been cited as the causes of the chronic lung disorders he now suffers from.

Another Buddhist monk, Thich Hai Tang, suffers from painful stomach ulcers. In response to his father's allegations of prison authorities' inhumane treatment of political prisoners, Tang has been denied visits by his family. In a letter to Communist Party leaders, Tang's father requests immediate medical treatment for his son. He says he will commit suicide unless his request is granted within the next two months. His letter ends by calling on all Buddhist followers everywhere to unite together and pray for his son.

For information on the letter-writing campaign on behalf of monks in detention please contact the Community of Mindful Living at PO Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707, Tel: 510/527-3751.

Landmines

Every fifteen minutes—of every hour, of every day, of every week, of every year—somewhere in the world, landmines claim another victim. Angola alone has over nine million buried landmines. Cambodia is thought to have more mines than people.

At the recent Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW) held in Geneva in April, a new Landmines Protocol was agreed on which permits the

use of "smart" mines that can be set to self-destruct after a given period of time and that meet certain detectability requirements. The International Campaign to Ban Land Mines calls the protocol a complete failure, full of loopholes, which "actually encourages the production and use of a new generation of landmines."

On the positive side, there is a growing sense that there is no "technical" solution to the landmines problem, and more and more countries are calling for a total ban. Weighing the military utility of these weapons against the humanitarian costs associated with their use, many nations have placed moratoriums on the production, operational use and export of anti-personnel landmines. The recent addition of eight more nations makes a total of 30 nations calling for an immediate ban of landmines.

The United States is not one of them. In January 1996 President Clinton signed a law imposing a one-year moratorium (to begin three years after enactment) on the use of antipersonnel landmines except under certain strict conditions. The law also provides for sanctions against foreign governments that export antipersonnel landmines. At the CCW, the United States endorsed the "smart" mine policy and the setting of new restrictions on use and transfer, as opposed to a total ban. But even the U.S. military now acknowl-

edges the terrible human and social devastation caused by landmines, and General John Shalikashvili of the Pentagon has called for a review of their use. Supporters of a total ban welcome General Shalikashvili's position, and they ask that we support a U.S. policy calling for a total ban on the use, production, stockpiling, and transfer of antipersonnel landmines by writing or telephoning President Clinton and your congressional representatives. Your voice makes a difference. The growing movement by governments to ban landmines is largely the result of public outcry.

For more information on the U.S. Campaign to Ban Land Mines, contact Mary Wareham, U.S. Campaign to Ban Land Mines, c/o Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation, 2001 S St. NW, Suite 740, Washington, DC 20009. Tel: 800/853-9292, Fax: 202/483-9312, E-mail: mary@vi.org.

Tibet

Ngawang Choephel, a Tibetan Fulbright scholar, was arrested in Tibet in the summer of 1995 while trying to make a video about the traditional music of the Himalayan region. Amnesty International has issued an appeal on his behalf. An eyewitness report verifies that Choephel was detained in Shigatse at the time of the Panchen Lama controversy. Up to 50 persons are believed to have been arrested in connection with this controversy. Protests continue to condemn the Chinese government's interference in the Panchen Lama incarnation issue.

Known as a scholar who is genuinely concerned about preserving all forms of Tibetan music, Choephel stated in his funding proposal, "Being born Tibetan, I feel I am responsible for preserving the history and diversity of Tibetan oral tradition." Choephel's students and fellow teachers at Middlebury College are organizing a publicity campaign on his behalf.

The controversy over the selection of the Panchen Lama has recently escalated to the shooting and beating of about 80 Buddhist nuns, monks, and other Tibetans opposing the Chinese government's ban on photographs of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa. The ban has been enforced in government offices, hotels, restaurants, shops, and recently even in monasteries and schools. At Gamden, one of Tibet's most important monasteries, police opened fire on stone-throwing monks, wounding at least three monks and severely beating another. As part of a high-profile campaign against Tibetan separatists, the Chinese government has launched mobilization meetings and house-to-house searches for possession of photographs of the Dalai Lama. China's latest attempt to wipe out support for Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama includes warnings to countries that have demonstrated concern over the situation in Tibet (e.g., Australia, Denmark, Sweden) not to interfere.



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BPF is endorsing the June 1996 Boycott for Human Rights in Tibet and China. Protest the actions of the Chinese government in Tibet and elsewhere, as well as in China itself, by not purchasing Chinese goods. This is the beginning of a concerted campaign to let China know that continued human rights violations will not be ignored and will adversely affect any future economic relationships with the United States.

Haiti

In 1990, the Haitian people voted for a democracy headed by Father Jean Bertrand Aristide. In 1991, Aristide, Haiti's first democratically-elected president, was ousted in a military coup that killed over 4000 people and forced tens of thousands more to flee the country. The Haitian people lived in constant fear of the death squads of the Front Revolutionnaire pour le Avancement et Progres d'Haiti (FRAPH) who persecuted anyone suspected of supporting the ideals of the Aristide government. In September of 1994, U.S. troops were sent to Haiti to provide a safe and secure environment for the return of democracy. In October, President Aristide returned. The repressive armed forces were dismantled and a new civilian police force was trained.

With renewed hope Haitian grassroots organizations began the long process of reclaiming their right to a decent life. The military dictatorship had followed a policy of deforestation which left only 50% of the land arable. Peasant organizations are planting thousands of fruit trees and repairing the water supply system in the countryside as part of the Trees for Haiti Project.

For more information on how you can support the people of Haiti, call the Ecology Center at 510/548-2220 or write to the Haiti Tree Project, Ecology Center, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Additionally, donations of school supplies, medical supplies, and tools are being shipped to schools, churches, clinics, and community organizations in Haiti. For more information, contact the East Bay Sanctuary Covenant Office, Trinity United Methodist Church, 2362 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, CA 94704, Tel: 510/540-5296.

Earth Charter

Buddhists have been invited to help draft an Earth Charter, a worldwide effort to set forth a vision of ethical principles for the 21st century. The Earth Charter project was discussed at a first-of-its-kind conference on Buddhism and ecology held at Harvard University, May 2-5, 1996. Over fifty Buddhist scholars, practitioners, and activists participated. By highlighting the actual and potential contributions of "eco-Buddhism," the event also validated Buddhist-inspired environmentalism as an emerging field of study.

Presentations ranged from the practical ("The Role of Water and Wastewater Treatment in Human/Ecological

Well-Being") to the theoretical ("The Issue of Anthropocentrism: On Emptiness and the Concept of Nature"). William LaFleur read an open letter to Pope John Paul II, challenging the Pope's views on abortion and contraception, while Jeffrey Hopkins drew attention to some anti-environmental practices found in Tibetan Buddhism. Stephanie Kaza, former chair of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, discussed "American Buddhist Responses to the Land," and Kenneth Kraft, a former BPF board member, spoke on "Nuclear Ecology and Engaged Buddhism."

Other presenters included Ruben Habito, Joan Halifax, Lewis Lancaster, John Daido Looi, Masatoshi Nagatomi, Steven Rockefeller, and Donald Swearer. The conference organizer, Mary Evelyn Tucker, will edit a book based on the proceedings. ❖

We are worried that you Americans are not human. You don't do most of what makes humans human. Do all your people sing? Does your community dance together? Do you incorporate your young into the tribe? Do you have laws of stranger hospitality?

—A Namibian delegate at the Women's Conference in Beijing, 1995

BPF Web Site and Internet Discussion Group

BPF is now on the World Wide Web! Visit our site at <http://www.bpf.com/bpf> for late-breaking news, reports on the BASE program, information about INEB (International Network of Engaged Buddhists), sample Turning Wheel articles, a history of BPF, and much more). Like most Web sites, ours is a work in progress, so visit often to see what's new.

Besides our Web site, we have a BPF discussion group on the Internet. Each subscriber to the news-group receives all the e-mail addressed to the list. It's a little different from a public conference, because the discussion is not directly moderated—although BPF does act as administrator for the list. There is no fee for joining or belonging.

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We look forward to a lively and useful exchange!

THE DAILY COMMUTE

by Stephanie Kaza

On November 10, 1995, Ken Saro-Wiwa was executed by the Nigerian military regime because of his environmental activism. Only just that spring Sara-Wiwa had received the prestigious Goldman Environmental Award. For several years he had led the protest against environmental abuses stemming from Shell Oil's development projects in Southeast Nigeria on tribal lands of the Ogoni people. This small region (1000 square kilometers) supplies half of Nigeria's crude oil, a significant piece of the country's trade income. Under the reign of environmental terror enforced by the military police occupation, the Ogoni people have watched their rivers run black, their once-lush fields turn slick with oil. Peaceful protests have not stopped the air and water pollution, the acid rain, or harassment of Ogoni leaders.

In Ecuador, Maxus Energy Corporation's oil project has had a similar impact on the Huaorani people. Four years ago they bulldozed a 100-mile-long road through the Huaorani Ethnic Reserve, subsequently clearing 52,000 acres of rainforest, polluting or diverting over 500 streams and rivers, geographically isolating Huaorani protesters, and repressing them with the support of the military. In Brazil, the new Decree 1775 opens the way for similar degradation of Yanomami tribal lands.

What do these stomach-wrenching situations hold in common? One, they are rife with human rights abuses. Two, the suffering of the affected indigenous peoples and lands is caused directly by oil companies. I could go on about the role of Northern consumers in perpetuating petroleum-product addiction. Instead, I want to focus on the global powers who are making billions of dollars in profits by fueling that addiction—the multinational corporations, or MNCs. Of the top 20 MNCs (ranked by foreign assets in 1993) four are oil companies (Shell, Exxon, Mobil, and British Petroleum) and another four are car manufacturers (Toyota, Ford, Mitsubishi, and Nissan). At the top of the list, Shell's assets total over \$100 billion, with almost 70% of that invested outside its home country. From an MNC perspective, selective sacrifice of oil-rich areas and peoples is a small price to pay for generating massive profits.

To understand the scale of the global impact of MNCs, consider that each one of the top 50 MNCs by itself carries more economic weight than many small nations. Two-thirds of the world's trade takes place among MNCs and their branch subsidiaries. These corporations carry tremendous power, and because they cannot be held accountable to any single nation state,

they get away with unconscionable acts such as abuses of indigenous lands and peoples.

Compassion and wisdom—two pillars of practice. Compassion for the suffering of the land and its people, Vajra sword-like wisdom to cut through the maze of global complexity and find the agents responsible for causing the suffering. It is not even so simple as naming the big oil companies and calling them to task (as Rainforest Action Network and others are doing with steady pressure). Why are the governments of Nigeria, Ecuador, and Brazil under pressure to develop their oil resources? Because of the tremendous debts they carry from previous development loans. The most recent round of World Bank loans are Structural Adjustment Programs, funds not tied to specific projects but designed to help countries out of the debt crisis of the 1980s. Most of these SAP loans include requirements designed to increase global trade: reduction of tariffs, privatization of banks and industry, and elimination of subsidies for domestic industry, among other things. Thus the Southern countries cannot invest their earnings in their own economies, due to the North's relentless pressure to globalize trade. Who benefits the most? The biggest traders—the MNCs.

Before you sink down into helplessness—STOP! Pull out that Vajra sword. Knowledge is power. It is true that people in the industrial world, though only 21% of the world's population, do consume 75% of the global energy (produced primarily by MNCs). But feeling guilty about that or any of the other North-South imbalances leads to useless paralysis. So take this one on—try to see the power-laden connections between consumer patterns and MNC profit-making. Consider the precepts in terms of global structural relations, examine the roots of environmental injustice upon which your daily commute depends.

It's a big task to hold the responsible agents accountable for their actions. But as people benefiting from the many privileges of good education, adequate food and shelter, and relative freedom of speech, assembly and religion, we can use these privileges to relieve the suffering of others and to reduce our collusion with the addictive cycles of environmental destruction. ❖

Contact Rainforest Action Network for more information about supporting indigenous peoples in their struggle against MNCs. Their national office is at 450 Sansome St., Suite 700, San Francisco, CA 94111; Tel. 415/398-4404. They can steer you to a local group in your area. For more on human rights and environmental justice worldwide, see *State of the World 1996*, Chapter 8, ed. Lester Brown *et al.* For more on MNCs, see the *Multinational Monitor*, a magazine devoted to watchdogging their activities.

SHINOBU MATSUURA

by Diane Patenaude Ames

When Japanese immigrant families began raising vegetables in remote parts of Santa Barbara County, California, around 1910, they found that rural distances could make even the local one-room schoolhouse inaccessible. As late as World War I, few farmers owned cars, school buses were unknown, and little children could only walk so many miles to school before the opening bell. Many rural children grew up illiterate. Finding that unacceptable, isolated Japanese farmers felt they had no choice but to send their children to live with relatives in Japan. But that meant that the children might not see their parents again for decades, if ever.

To make matters worse, the 1918 influenza epidemic hit the county's Japanese immigrant community hard, killing a number of young mothers. As always, that community turned to its Shin Buddhist priests. In 1919, the Rev. Issei Matsuura of the Guadalupe temple agreed to set up a Buddhist children's home so that little *nisei* could live there, go to school in town, and go home during vacations. And almost overnight, his young bride Shinobu (1896-1984) found herself caring for 16, then 36, then more than 50 children.

Although the community provided everything from building materials and labor to money and fresh vegetables in a characteristically well-organized fashion, it was Shinobu, aided only by an elderly cook and the children themselves, who continued to provide food, laundry, supervision, and love to everybody for the next nine years. She also taught Japanese language classes to these and other *nisei* children every afternoon, did endless unpaid work for the temple, and ran her own household, which was itself no small task: she bore five children between 1919 and 1928, when she collapsed from exhaustion and had to return to Japan for a rest cure. However, the Children's Home remained open until 1935.

In later years, the children from the Guadalupe Children's Home, now grandparents, testified that besides being a second mother to them, Mrs. Matsuura made them "aware of the blessings of the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha," both by teaching and by example. One recalled how, when he was about seven, a drunk chased him into the temple in what seemed to be a racially motivated attack. But when the man came upon Mrs. Matsuura, he fell down on his knees, asked forgiveness, and said that he had a God, too. It was typical of her that she said some kind words to him and helped him out the door.

After she recovered her health, Shinobu Matsuura, like many other priests' wives, continued to work alongside her husband to help the often beleaguered Japanese-American community and to bring the light

of the Buddha's compassion to a strange and not always friendly land. ♦

Sources: Matsuura, Shinobu. *Higan Compassionate Vow, Selected Writings of Shinobu Matsuura*. Translated by Matsuura Family; *Memories of Children's Home: 1919-1928, Guadalupe, California, Articles by Former Members*. Both books printed by the Matsuura Family, Berkeley, California, 1986.

Diane Ames has been a member of the Buddhist Churches of America, a Shin Buddhist organization, for 16 years, and edits a small Shin Buddhist newsletter called Sangha. She's an active BPF member.



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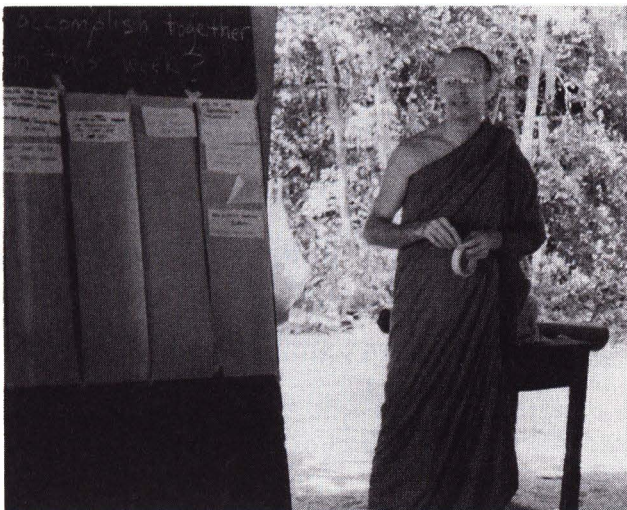
PLANTING RICE TOGETHER

Socially Engaged Monks in Thailand

by Santikaro Bhikkhu

Ven. Santikaro Bhikkhu came to Thailand as an American Peace Corps volunteer. He gradually became drawn to the dhamma, and began to work with Ajahn Buddhadasa, living at his temple Suan Mokh in southern Thailand. Santikaro developed a close relationship with Buddhadasa as translator and student, and he is now abbot of his own temple. He also continues to teach and practice at Suan Mokh, where Western and Thai monks, as well as lay people, are practicing together and trying to build community—an innovative experiment for Thailand.

This article is based on a talk Santikaro Bhikkhu gave at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, California on November 6, 1995.



Santikaro Bhikkhu leading a workshop at the INEB conference.

A lot is changing in Thailand these days. For centuries, it was a completely agrarian society, where 90 percent of the people were farmers, with a peasant-based Buddhism. But for over 10 years, Thailand has had 8-10 percent GNP growth. It's now one of the superstars in the so-called development game. There are a lot of people who are drooling over this. And Thailand plays the game very well. The World Bank is very happy with the Thai technocrats.

The traditional, peasant-based Thai Buddhism is a whole lot different than the kind of Buddhism taking root in the West. Thai Buddhism was very much tied with nature, the forest, the rice fields, the seasons, and the spirits. And the life of a peasant is very hard. You

never know when there is going to be a drought or a flood. You never know when you are going to be dragged off into some army.

So, a Buddhism that was centered around the life of peasant farmers now finds itself in a new Thai society that's trying to join up with things like "IT": information technology. The government's really big on this; they're putting satellite dishes in every school. Fewer and fewer people make their living off agriculture. Thanks to the advice of U.S. experts, the World Bank, the IMF (International Monetary Fund), and the government "development" strategy, the farmers have been exploited to prop up industry. The result is incredible indebtedness. Most of the debt is to the new government bank for cooperatives in agriculture, a bank set up by one of the originators of the Non-Government Organization movement in Thailand. It's quite sad—a bank created to help the farmers is now one of their worst oppressors. Just about all Thai farmers are over their heads in debt, to the point that there is no hope of them paying it off in this lifetime. That's a tremendous burden to pass on to your children.

But it doesn't matter, your children aren't interested in going into agriculture, because the mass media and the education system tell them that farming is dirty work, it's work for stupid people. If you want to be "with it" in modern society, then get a factory job, wear a nice Toshiba or Toyota uniform, and spend your money drinking or whoring or going to a disco on Saturday night. What's left in the villages is old people and children. The fabric of rural society is being destroyed by out-of-control modernization, industrialization, and consumerism.

By the way, Thailand has the worst gap in Asia between the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent, and it gets worse year by year. It's up there with Brazil in international rankings. So some people are getting filthy rich. There are more Mercedes on the streets of Bangkok than you'll see in the Bay Area. And then there are a lot of people who can't even afford bus fare to Bangkok, which from many places in Thailand is only about \$3.

Buddhism, like most cultural forms, does not change nearly as quickly as technology. There are efforts to catch up, or to keep pace: teachers like Ajahn Buddhadasa were ahead of their time. They warned Thai society what the country was getting into, but they were not heeded, partly because the education system prejudices people against believing in Buddhism. Science or pseudo-science is what is taught.

Buddhism has not yet adapted very well to modern realities, where increasing numbers are living in cities, and where capitalism and consumerism are very powerful. It was a lot easier to talk about simplicity and a quiet peaceful lifestyle when there weren't TVs, and you didn't have modern roads to bring in Colgate toothpaste.

Thirty or forty years ago, monks were the most educated group in Thai society. If you needed a letter written, often it would be a monk or an ex-monk who would do that. They were mediators in disputes, and between the village and the outside government. But the monastic education system has not changed much in 90 years. In contrast, Thailand now has universal education; just about everybody goes to six years of school, and now they are increasing it to nine. Universities are popping up all over the place. So now monks are some of the *least* educated people in society, especially in the villages. It used to be if you were from a poor family, having one of your sons become a monk was a good way to help the family economically and in terms of status. This is no longer the case. The monkhood is increasingly a place for rejects: delinquents, young men with emotional problems or who just are lazy.

The Thai monastic sangha is in tremendous disarray and undergoing a crisis. Some of you may have heard of a series of scandals which have played in the front pages of the Thai newspapers. There is nothing more fascinating than a famous monk—supposedly pure, holy and maybe even with supernatural powers—who has been seduced by a woman and fallen from grace. This is very sexy and people just eat it up. The papers churn it out over and over again.

The scandals aren't all about sex. For instance, about five years ago, one of the monks at the most politically powerful monastery in the country—where the Supreme Patriarch is now, and which is closely associated with the military and the Royal Family—was accused of selling false certificates stating that people had donated money to charity.

The monastic sangha doesn't deal well with these scandals. They just stick their heads in the sand. A number of very senior, very charismatic monks have been caught in scandals, so the credibility of the sangha has decreased quite a bit. The vast majority of publicity is now bad, even though only a very small minority of monks are actually doing these things.

This kind of journalism has been going on in the United States for a long time, so I'm sure you understand what sells newspapers. Nice, hard-working, humble monks, nuns, lay women, lay men, doing things for the good of society, do not sell millions of newspapers. One newspaper went from number seven in circulation to number one, just by pushing the scandals.

There's another aspect of the crisis in Thai Buddhism, one that isn't talked about very often. Ever

since Thailand tried to create a modern bureaucracy at the beginning of this century, the Thai sangha has been very closely controlled by the government. Many observers do not see this; there is a lot of blaming of the monks for not doing this and not doing that. But since the passage of the First Sangha Act in 1903, monks have been directly under the control of the government. This was really tightened before World War II. When Thailand set up a dictatorship for the state, they also stipulated that the sangha should be run as a dictatorship. The abbot in a monastery is like a little dictator.

Along with this, there has been very strong conditioning that monks must be apolitical. But of course, for the government, apolitical means that you *agree* with the government. A monk is only accused of being political when he disagrees with the government. So monks are very afraid of being labeled political. This is a major obstacle now for monks who are trying to be socially relevant.

One reason monks can't cope with scandals in the sangha is they don't have the power to do so. When

The monkhood is increasingly a place for rejects: delinquents, young men with emotional problems or who are just lazy.

the Supreme Council, or the Council of Elders meets, the agenda is set by the Department of Religious Affairs, under the Ministry of Education.

Here's one last statistic to illustrate the crisis in the Thai sangha. When my current abbot was a young man, there were around 300,000 monks in Thailand. And today there are still about the same number of monks in Thailand. But when he was a young man, there were only 14 million Thais. There are now about 60 million. Proportionately, the number is one-quarter of what it used to be. It's about the same for the nuns; there are about 30,000 nuns in Thailand.

Now I'd like to say something about *Phra Sekiya Dhamma*. "Phra" is what monks are called in Thailand, and "Sekiya" is from the word for training. This is a new network of so-called "development monks," that I'm involved with. The idea was begun by Sulak Sivaraksa—or Sa Sivalak as he is known in Thailand. The point was to bring modern lay Buddhists together, people who wanted to bring their Buddhism into the modern world, to adapt their practice to modern realities. Originally, it was a group of lay people, but Sulak soon had the idea of calling together a number of development monks.

Some development monks are very progressive, even leftist, while others are more centrist. All are involved in

trying to improve the life of the poor farmers and fisher-folk, as well as factory workers. So Sulak invited a group of active monks to just meet and hang out and talk to each other, exchange war stories, and relax, because many of them were working very hard. This group enjoyed the meeting, so they decided to meet regularly. For a few years, monks were doing their own projects in their own villages, or some in a wider area in their districts, or even provinces. Eventually, the lay group disappeared altogether, so *Sekiya Dhamma* became this group of monks. It's more and more a network, where there is exchange and cooperation between monks in different provinces and even different parts of the country. There's also beginning to be a network of monks and nuns, working on projects together.

These monks and nuns feel that basic Buddhist teachings like *dana* (generosity) and *metta* (lovingkindness) must be practiced in real life. The typical *dana* of giving money to the temples or feeding the monks is not what society really needs. And it's nice to sit in your hut or your meditation hall doing *metta* meditation, that's a very healthy and useful practice, but it needs to go outside the meditation hall.

These monks don't have a sophisticated liberation theology...but they have something in their hearts that they want to express.

The monks don't have a sophisticated liberation theology. Thais in general are not very interested in theory, but they have something in their hearts that they want to express. They see people in poverty, in debt, they see families falling apart, they see children who no longer treat their parents with respect, they see glue sniffing and use of drugs in the villages, they see the tremendous prostitution, they see the forests being destroyed, the rivers being polluted, and they see people drifting away from the *wat*, the temple, and they feel something in their heart; they need to respond to this. It is expressed generally in terms of *metta*, kindness.

One well known development monk is Luong Paw Nan. He's one of the monks who was slowly awakened by the increasing poverty in the villages; he's been involved in some rice bank projects. In Thailand—as in many countries where people have been sold a bill of goods by government and chemical and oil companies—the farmers have been convinced that they need the “Green Revolution.” The Green Revolution means that you buy special seed that you cannot grow yourself, so you have to buy it every year, unlike the traditional varieties. You have to buy a lot of fertilizer, which at first is dirt cheap, until you're hooked on it. Once you're hooked the price goes up. The subsidies

are removed. This has happened repeatedly around the world. And then you need pesticides, which are not only expensive, they kill you.

So one of the ideas that has caught on among progressive development workers to solve these problems is rice banks. People donate rice to a collective source, and when it comes time to plant, if a farmer doesn't have enough rice, he can borrow rice, at minimal interest. The alternative is borrowing from a money lender at 15 percent interest a month, which over a year comes out to 120 percent. Now, Luong Paw Nan's plan was innovative compared to similar schemes by secular development workers; he integrated the rice bank idea with traditional Buddhist practice. The traditional ceremonies for giving rice to the temple were used, but now the rice wasn't given to the monks to eat; the monks accepted the rice donations for the rice bank. This was the first time that the richer farmers would donate to a rice bank.

Many attempts at cooperatives in Thailand have failed because those who have something don't bother to join; they see it as a losing deal. Now there is something for them to gain, which is *punya*, goodness, sometimes translated as “merit.” It gives them some status in the eyes of their peers in the village. So these rice banks are stocked with rice donated by both poor farmers *and* richer ones, as well as traditional fundraising events. Monetary donations are used to fill up these rice banks, instead of building a nice shiny new temple.

In another project, Luong Paw Nan and the monks went out and planted a rice field. He got a richer farmer to allow them to use a few acres, and the monks planted it. Traditionally, monks don't plant rice in Thailand, but this particular group of monks isn't so worried about following rules. When the lay people see the monks out there working in the fields, it's hard for them to swallow, so they have to help; it's an indirect way to get them involved. So all of a sudden the whole village is out there planting rice together. There's a communal rice plot which is not just for money; you're getting merit, you're getting goodness, and you're having fun doing it.

So some of the old values are being brought into play in so-called development work. Generally, secular development efforts, whether from the government or NGOs, are not in tune with the values of the village. But this project is much more indigenous, because almost all these monks are working in the village they were born in. They have relatives there; it's their home. Such projects have helped lighten the debt burden in the villages, and have generated other things—village cooperatives, for instance—which have been moderately successful. But the downside of it is, as farmers' economic situation improves, they have more money to spend in town on consumer goods. So it is only a partial success.

Another important area the development monks and nuns are involved in is nature conservation. Thai cul-

ture is very close to nature, not just because it's agrarian, but until recently there was forest around most villages. You got your rice from the fields, you got your fish from the water, and you got vegetables and herbal medicines from the forest. The Theravada scriptures are full of monks living in the forest. And there are still monks who live in the forest. I think of myself as one of them, although it's a degraded forest that we're trying to bring back to life.

There are some very honest forestry people in Thailand, but they don't have the resources to protect the forest. So it turns out that sticking some monks in the forest, especially monks who meditate, is a much better approach; the monks *live* there. The forestry workers don't like living in the forest, they like living in town. Our local forestry official never goes into the forest. I don't think he knows what a forest *is*. So, thanks to the monks, pieces of forest are being protected, pieces of rivers and streams are being protected, which means at least for a stretch of the river there is no fishing. There is a place where the fish can breed. That means there's fish year round for the people to eat, which is a very important source of protein.

One other project I'd like to mention is herbal medicine. This is a skill that monks have been involved in for a long, long time. In the 60's and 70's there was a very strong propaganda effort to wipe out herbal medicine. For a while it was even illegal to practice herbal medicine in Thailand; you could be arrested for it. Some of the old herbal doctors even burned their books. This crackdown was financed by guess who: all your favorite big pharmaceutical companies, who give shares to the senior bureaucrats in related ministries. Fortunately, there have been some senior people in the Ministry of Public Health who, although highly trained modern doctors, recognized that there is no way that Western-style medicine can serve all of Thailand. It is way too expensive, even though there is a hospital in every district in Thailand. Preventative medicine is needed. Some of the monks started to see this, and encouraged the herbal doctors, who are mainly lay people, to bring back their knowledge.

One monk, Phra Phu Supa Jarawat, formed a club of local traditional doctors, and there was also support from one of Thailand's best NGOs, the Project for

Herbal Medicine. The people in this NGO are all dhamma practitioners. Also there was a doctor from the local hospital involved, from the beginning, which meant that there weren't conflicts between the local hospital and the project. The group began to recover the herbal knowledge (and by the way it is now legal to practice herbal medicine, thanks to some far-sighted people in the Ministry of Public Health). Herbal medicine is making a comeback in Thailand, including among the middle class.

When I visited this part of Thailand in January, I saw that there's now an herbal clinic on the hospital grounds; there's a nice symbiotic relationship between the two. If you are in the Third World and you get sick—also if you're in the First World and you get sick and you don't have insurance—you're heavy into debt. If you're in debt to start with, you may have to sell your buffalo, you may have to pull one of your children out of school, or sometimes a daughter goes on to Bangkok to work as a prostitute, and other unpleasant things happen. So the more people can stay healthy, the more chance they have of maintaining a decent economic level.

Let me mention a few of the weaknesses in what we're doing, which are

now being recognized; we're trying to address them. The biggest weakness is the trap of charismatic leaders. Thai society is still very hierarchical, and the system is based on patronage. It's a democracy only on the surface. All the political parties are formed around an individual. In government agencies, the personality of the leader is so important. This happens in other Southeast Asian countries as well. So a number of monks in our movement get trapped into being the leaders, and this easily turns into a one-man or one-monk show. They get lots of attention, which can then start to pull them away from their base in the village. And if the leader gets too big, the people reject him, because they no longer feel connected. The problem is exacerbated by many NGOs and foreign do-gooders. If you are working for a non-profit, or if you are a funding agency in Europe, you want your project to be successful, so you are very happy to work with people who have a proven track record. These monks get a lot of attention, they're invited to big seminars, they go to meetings, they get on TV, and they get overloaded with projects. Sometimes they lose track of their dhamma practice;



Thai monks on begging rounds

the ego gets big, the dhamma is overlooked.

The second main problem is the lack of structural awareness. There is nothing in the education of monks, or of Thais in general, that leads to a recognition of social structures. Their awareness is very local, very immediate. Which is a strength, in a way. But many of our problems are national and global. To really understand what is happening, you need to know how capitalism works. It's amazing how some of these monks are figuring these things out, with no theory at all, but by very direct tangible experience.

So to help rectify this lack of structural awareness, a group of 25 of us are going to the Philippines to do a three-week study exchange with engaged Philippino Catholics. In the Philippines they have a much more sophisticated structural analysis in the progressive part of the church. We'll be going to see how they do that.

Then there are the strengths. First, these monks have really good hearts. I'm sometimes embarrassed when I compare myself with them. They really aren't asking for much, and they just want to help. That motivation is very, very important. Nothing fancy, no guilt trips, like a lot of Western activists have. They are free of the complications engaged Buddhists have in the West. Secondly, they're close to the people. Their lifestyle doesn't separate them. They're not driving around in air-conditioned cars, at least not until they get too much foreign assistance—then somebody buys them a truck. But before that they're hitching rides on the back of motorcycles.

Third, I've been amazed at how eager they are to learn. If there is a seminar, these monks all want to participate. I get a lot of respect from monks who are very much senior to me, monks who are much more selfless than I am. But because of my experience in education, I have knowledge they're interested in. The traditional monastic system does not help them with that, or even the more modern education system.

Finally, let me mention a few long-term hopes. Those of us who are the thinkers in this network feel that the current monastic sangha is more likely to fall apart than to solve its crisis. I don't think the sangha is capable of solving its problems and reforming itself according to the current structure, a structure forced on them by dictatorial governments. What we're hoping is that lots of scattered, small, local initiatives will continue to become more aware of each other. Right now, monks from different parts of the country and some lay people are going to visit other projects. This is part of the reason for the visit to the Philippines as

well. I have some ideas about getting some exchanges going between farmers in the States and farmers in Thailand. For example, I have a friend in southeast Minnesota who visited Thailand and saw the chemical-free farming there. He thought it was much more advanced than what's going on in Minnesota.

We're starting to do environmental walks. In March and April of next year, we're going to walk around Thailand's largest lake, which is being destroyed by a number of forces: industrial, agricultural, tourist, and political. [See "Readings," page 11.] If we can meet and learn how to work together, we hope that will provide a sangha grounded in the people's reality.

Another area we will be getting into is conflict resolution. As the gap between poor and rich widens, the competition for increasingly scarce resources is creating more and

more conflicts. Thai farmers and labor movements are more militant. There is going to be violence in the next 10 to 20 years. Up front, Thais are not violent, yet Thailand has a very high murder rate. There's a lot of suppressed anger that eventually explodes. So an important role for monks is to be competent at conflict resolution. A number of conflict resolution workshops have been going on, with trainers largely from the West.

There's a huge problem with AIDS in Thailand. The numbers are very big. There are 800,000 to a million or more HIV-positive people, out of 60 million. That's 1.6 percent of the population. The government is rapidly running out of beds and money for AIDS patients. The government has been asking monks to go out there and preach against AIDS. Unfortunately, it is very moralistic. The senior monk in my province comes to me with these pithy little sayings and asks me to translate them for him, but it's really ugly stuff, simplistic moralizing. However, there are a few good hospice projects started by monks, and I have heard of some started by nuns as well.

I think the most important strength we development monks have to offer is, in the words of the Buddha: "*Tama away raka ti tama jarling*—the dhamma itself protects those who practice dhamma." When it comes down to it, when things get nasty, or when things simply aren't going well, if what you're doing is grounded in your own practice to get free of greed, anger and delusion, then you can keep going. ❖

Biographical information about Santikaro Bhikku is at the beginning of this article.

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JOURNEY TO ZAIRE

Studying Nonviolence with Hutu Refugees

by David Grant

In February 1996 I spent two weeks in the Rwandan refugee camps of eastern Zaire, where thousands of people live in crowded conditions, perched on hard black lava flow under plastic sheeting. BPF Board member Paula Green and I presented three workshops in active nonviolence, each lasting several days: two introductory sessions and one session for those already familiar with the basic concepts. This visit was a follow-up to similar workshops presented the year before by Paula and Marie-Pierre Bovy, President of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR). This time I represented IFOR and Paula, the Karuna Center. The participants were selected by the leaders of the several nonviolent associations that have formed since the initial trainings.

On the first day of each session we listened to the participants' concerns. Some of their questions and requests were: "Since Rwandans are naturally violent, how can nonviolence work?" "How can we return to Rwanda?" "What is your personal opinion of the tragedy in Rwanda?" "How do you initiate dialogue with those who do not want to talk?" "How should we respond to negative stereotyping of us Hutu?" "Why didn't you come to Rwanda with this teaching *before* the massacres?" "Tell us about U.S. democracy!" "Give us specific examples of nonviolent actions taken by others in similar situations."

By building our presentations upon those concerns we hoped to demonstrate a pedagogical approach that was, in their context, radically democratic. We began by asking small groups to discuss the question: "How does nonviolence look?" In the course of those discussions they discovered for themselves the different aspects of nonviolence: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic.

They also greatly valued the stories that Paula and I could bring from our own lives—our separate experiences of resistance to war, of working in the American civil rights movement, of growing up as a "first black," of having mixed genetic and cultural heritage, of teaching nonviolence to refugees elsewhere, of facilitating reconciliation between families of both victims and per-

petrators of the Nazi Holocaust (during the Convocation at Auschwitz which Paula created and led). Stories that came from the participants included the horrors that they had recently lived through and the dreams that they still were working towards.

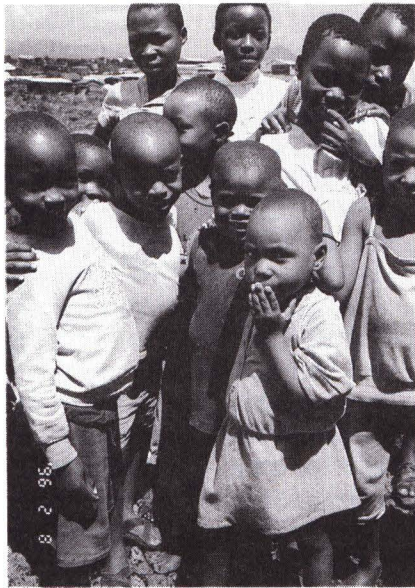
We presented exercises, lectures, and role plays designed to empower them to make their dreams real. We taught the "Six Steps for Nonviolent Action" developed by the Martin Luther King Center: 1.) information gathering; 2.) education; 3.) personal commitment; 4.) negotiation; 5.) direct action; 6.) reconciliation. Since there is a tendency to go prematurely to direct action, we emphasized the other steps which are, of themselves, often sufficient to effect change. One of the central issues was the impossibility of peace without justice.

We also used the "Four Steps of Listening" developed by Jean and Hildegard Goss-Mayr: 1.) discover and listen to the truth of others; 2.) recognize errors in the conflict; 3.) expose injustice with truth and love; 4.) propose constructive solutions to all parties. One of our most welcomed presentations was about examples of nonviolent action taken by refugees in other parts of the world: e.g., in Palestine and Guatemala. We also presented details about nonviolence as used in South Africa, India, the United States and the Philippines. We spoke of unsuccessful (as yet) examples in China and in Burma.

The participants felt that the opportunity to analyze all of these situations and to reflect upon them was a great benefit. These examples provided a glimmer of hope towards a new way of struggle. Unfortunately they face a huge stumbling block, unlike any of the examples we provided—namely, "the Hutu" are guilty of genocide.

I put quotation marks there because it was the Hutu extremist leadership that manipulated most of the Hutu population into considering itself "militarized" and thus to undertake the "patriotic work" of, first, mass murdering the Hutu political opposition and then perpetrating genocide upon the Tutsi minority: 800,000 dead in all.

When the Hutu seemed to be losing the civil war that ensued, and 100,000 more were dead, the leaders



*Hutu Refugee Children
Mugunga Camp, Goma, Zaire*

took the calculated risk of ordering a mass migration of Hutu out of Rwanda. By declaring themselves and the two million Hutu who left under their orders to be "refugees," the leadership cynically and accurately gambled upon "the international community" to provide "humanitarian aid" and thus to provide time and space to reorganize, re-equip and return to Rwanda by force, perhaps to resume their genocide.

This was the story I knew when called upon to provide "training in active nonviolence" to "the Hutu" in the camps of eastern Zaire. I chose to go there because I believe that the practice of nonviolent struggle inherently engenders, and ultimately depends upon, egalitarian and democratic principles. The extremist proponents of Hutu Power depended upon deeply ingrained social habits within the citizenry of unquestioningly obeying official orders. We were there planting the seeds of new ideas, not in that leadership, but in that citizenry.

The workshop participants were accountants, teachers, university students, small-business people, civil servants. Some may have been manipulated into murder and mayhem. I don't know. Where do excuses end? Where does responsibility begin?

Examples of their self-chosen role plays: a peasant robbed by rogue soldiers; the horrible moment of realization that the genocide had begun; attempts to escape the invading rebel army; trying to talk one's way through a roadblock of murderous militia; and from the most recent past, facing the brutality of Zairian soldiers evicting an entire refugee camp to forcibly dump them across the border into the hands of waiting Rwandan soldiers. (During that forcible eviction, some of the refugees are said to have escaped by suicide, likely afraid of being judged in Rwanda for their crimes.)

They come up with alternatives to what actually happened. They see what it feels like if the women stay and the men flee. They have the women sit with the children, relying on respect for their womanhood to get them past soldiers' rapacity. They pray and sing and give the soldiers flowers. I find this naive, until I remember that we've told them about the Philippines where the people befriended the soldiers and some put flowers in the rifles. Hopefully, they are trying out something they never thought of before. They probably can't believe it themselves, but at least they can try it out here in safety. That's what we are here for, to make it easier for them to explore, to set up a practice ground. Truth is, there were "reasons" for the genocide, just as there are reasons why all peoples everywhere must learn how to engage in conflict without killing each other.

I made friends with a man who was a technician at the radio station that pummeled the people with government messages for years, priming them for the call to genocide. I liked him a lot. We spoke German, his better than mine. He protests, truthfully, I believe, that

he "never killed a bird." True in the particular, but what about the knobs he turned to send out the message? Where does responsibility end and guilt begin?

The conditions in which the radio technician lived are unknown to me. He was feeding his kids, doing his duty, using what he learned in Germany studying electrical engineering for three years. It is likely that, had he attempted to quit the radio work because of disagreement with the content, he would have been killed as a moderate early on. At our workshop there were several like him, caught in the crossfire.

At the end of the last day of the advanced workshop we were asked to teach "We Shall Overcome." We briefly discussed the suggested line, "Hutu and Tutsi Together," but because the line omitted the third Rwandan ethnic group, the Twa, we sang instead "All Shall Live Together." It was nonetheless an emotional and uplifting moment, followed immediately by special songs of welcome and thanks energetically performed by a camp youth group. Paula and I took part in the dancing, to everyone's amusement.

Throughout the workshops we used translators. Though less than an ideal way to teach, one benefit is that interchange is slowed, and so responses are more considered. The flow was hardly hampered due to language problems because translators were fluent; we broke often into small groups; some exercises were non-verbal; and, above all, the participants were hungry for the information—life-and-death stuff for them.

At the third and last workshop some of the participants used the techniques we'd been teaching to consider ways they might resist forced repatriation to Rwanda. Although our intention was to help them return without violence to their homes in Rwanda, we didn't try to control the way in which they practiced the tools of nonviolence and reconciliation. Perhaps because we were perceived to be teaching "passive resistance against repatriation," the Zairian authorities detained us and we were unable to proceed to Kigali, the Rwandan capital, where we had planned to present the same work and to learn the views of the people and of the government. This failure was the greatest disappointment of our trip.

At IFOR we are planning further presentations in the Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania). IFOR Honorary President Hildegard Goss-Mayr and others have also established working relationships with Africans who are seeking solutions to problems which are not, as too many reports have insinuated, intractable and "age-old." These are brave-hearted people taking great risks for the sake of forging a new society from the horrors of the old. We have much to learn from each other. ❖

See page 36 for biographical notes on David Green.

DETENTION IN ZAIRE

A Rare Opportunity for Practice

by Paula Green

BPF was well represented in a recent bizarre experience, where two out of three people detained on espionage charges in Zaire were BPF board members. David Grant and I were facilitating workshops in active nonviolence and conflict resolution for Hutu refugees in two refugee camps on the Zaire-Rwanda border. After ten days of teaching, we were apprehended by SNIP, the acronym of the Zaire intelligence agency, as we were about to fly to Kigali in Rwanda. Detained for several days in a convent, with very little control over our immediate destiny, we could choose either heightened anxiety and fear, or breathing and practice. Fortunately we selected the latter, at least most of the time.

Our breathing may not have actually brought about our release, but we were certainly helped by the dharma. I embraced the teaching of impermanence like a mantra, repeating to myself, "Everything changes; this difficult situation also will change." I was aided by the peculiar circumstances of our detention: a private retreat-sized convent room, kind African nuns remembering us in their devotions, our custodian Father Desiree appearing each day dressed in his immaculate long white robes, and the deep silence of a spiritual sanctuary. Under detention, a convent is a lucky draw. And of course what we were experiencing was only a hint of the terror and suffering undergone by the Hutu refugees we had just been working with.

David and I may never know exactly why we were charged with espionage. Our work in the Zairian border cities of Goma and Bukavu had proceeded smoothly. We were preparing to leave for Kigali, the capital of Rwanda, to dialogue with Tutsi religious leaders, hopeful that an opening for Hutu-Tutsi communication might emerge from our encounters.

We were detained at Goma airport on a Sunday morning. As we stepped off the tiny plane that had brought us back from Bukavu, plainclothes officers apprehended David, our host/translator Jean Pierre, and myself, and escorted us into an airport security office. We were asked to relinquish our passports and wait for further instructions.

We spent the first day of detention being photographed and questioned in the ramshackle villa that passed for SNIP headquarters. I watched my mind slide between disbelief and fear. Who wrote this movie,

and why was I in it? Furthermore, how would it end?

Surely SNIP knew we were not spies, but espionage is a serious charge, and I feared the possibility of violence. We were not harmed physically, but we were frequently in the presence of SNIP staff armed with pistols, and adolescent soldiers toting machine guns. For me that was sufficient motivation to behave calmly, not adding any agitation to an already tense scene.

The appearance of Father Desiree somewhat allayed my fears. A local priest familiar with SNIP, he became our guardian. David and I had facilitated a day-long workshop for his seminarians, and Father Desiree had sponsored my work in Zaire the year before, so we enjoyed a collegial relationship and counted on him to negotiate our safe passage and eventual release.

Three days passed without crisis, with our time split between waiting under armed guard for the chief at SNIP headquarters and trying to appreciate the tranquillity and relative safety of the convent. I was also worried about my commitment to facilitate a two-week workshop for Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim participants in Sri Lanka, which was to begin on the fifth day after our detention. It had been hard to arrange the three flights that would take me from Zaire to Sri Lanka. I wanted to be on board and to keep my promise to the Sri Lankan organizers. On the fourth day I implored Father Desiree to intervene with the SNIP chief, and he managed to secure an appointment for us.

The chief ceremoniously opened his dossier on our case, the collection of which had been the reason for daily postponements of a hearing. The file contained no new information. We were then soundly reprimanded by the chief, but the charge of espionage was not mentioned again. The chief ordered us outside and informed us that we would be immediately transported to the Rwandan border and deported. This was not good news. The Zaire-Rwanda border is a remote jungle outpost staffed by heavily armed, impoverished marauding soldiers. Images of death on the border raced through my mind, with a subtext of worrying about those precious flights to Sri Lanka that would be lost even if we miraculously survived the night.

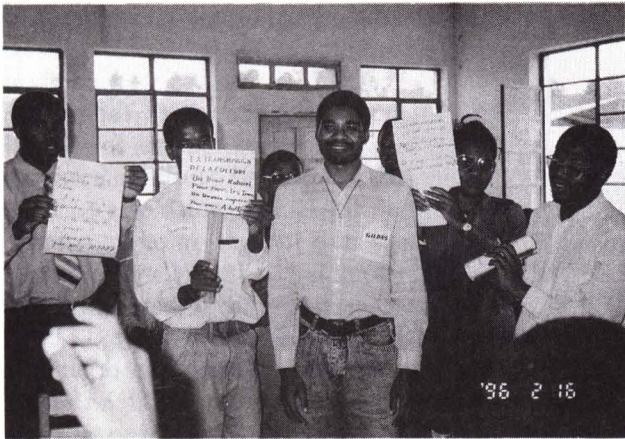
At that moment my four days of external composure abandoned me, and I burst into tears. Begging the chief not to throw us over the border, I pleaded for a departure by plane the following morning. Apparently

Detained for several days in a convent, we could choose either heightened anxiety and fear, or breathing and practice.

the sight of a grown woman weeping was too much for the chief; he jumped into his car and sped out of the driveway. We were astounded. Jean Pierre turned to me and remarked on my brilliant piece of strategy, but strategy it had not been. Still, it had a salubrious effect, for Father Desiree was then able to negotiate with the remaining SNIP staff to escort us back to the convent once more and to deliver David and myself to the airport the following day. Jean Pierre remained in Zaire, where he has resumed work with the Hutus.

Retrospectively, Jean Pierre reflected on the cultural implications of my behavior vis-a-vis the chief. Status is an important part of relationship in Zaire, and the fact that I, with more education and seniority, lost my dignity, confounded the chief and left him unable to respond.

David and I parted in Nairobi, he to return to his family and IFOR work in the Netherlands and I to fly to Sri Lanka. My colleagues there were so consumed with their own tragedies that little room existed for sharing my story, so I repaired rapidly and plunged into facilitating dialogue between representatives of the warring ethnic groups on the island.



Bukavu Camp—Workshop participants role-play the creation of a “University in Exile.”

Sri Lanka

At our workshop, Sinhalese heard first-hand about the torture, threats of death, and loss of family and property endured by the Tamils; Christians, Buddhists and Hindus heard the feelings of Muslims; Tamils listened to the shame of Sinhalese whose government kills in their name; Sinhalese met Tamils opposed to the violence of their guerrilla groups. As a BPF member, I felt special consternation over the role of the ordained Sangha, many of whom uphold a nationalistic Buddhist state religion, and therefore support the continuing war against the Tamil minority.

As government and separatist forces battle for control in Sri Lanka, divisiveness increases and the death toll mounts. Our participants, generally educators and community or religious leaders, are taking responsibility

for conflict mediation and peace building while the war still rages. They do this as Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists, in the name of a unifying spirit and an inclusive vision.

In addition to the heartbreaking personal sharing, we studied active nonviolence and alternative responses to conflict, and practiced the facilitation skills that will enable these participants to lead groups of their own.

Israel

My final assignment on this journey was Israel. While working in Sri Lanka, I caught glimpses of the English language newspaper reporting the bombings of busses and shopping centers in Israel. Having survived SNIP, and having arrived in Sri Lanka shortly after a major bomb explosion in a Colombo bank, I wondered about the karma that would take me next to Israel at this moment. Finding no answer to that koan, I bowed deeply to my Sri Lankan friends and departed for another unknown drama.

In Israel, I was to facilitate mixed groups of Israelis and Palestinians engaged in a dialogue project. Our plan included bringing Israelis to Nablus, where each Israeli would live with a Palestinian family and all would participate together, attempting to heal some of the wounds of war and enmity through inter-group exploration and the sharing of suffering. Interestingly, dharma teacher and BPF Advisory Board member Christopher Titmuss had begun that process the year before; my task was to expand the work and train future facilitators.

However, with the borders between Israel and Palestine sealed shut by the recent terrorist attacks, the Israelis could not travel to Palestine. Since the two groups could not talk face to face, we decided to use a video camera to record each session, with me shuttling between Nablus and Ramat Gan as a facilitator, and with each group hearing and responding to each other via video technology. This appropriate technology solution enabled the dialogue to take place despite the closed borders, and provided me with yet another challenge as the taxi driver careened over sheep pastures and through olive groves to avoid roadblocks.

These Israelis and Palestinians are people of enormous courage and fortitude. All the Palestinians in our training group had been jailed during the occupation, many repeatedly. Our organizer, translator and hostess spent eight years in Israeli jails and her husband spent seventeen years. An engineer in the group was jailed as a teenager in Israel, then deported and jailed in Jordan, then deported to Libya before he finally secured an educational scholarship in Cuba. Now he is home to help build the new Palestine state. Another participant went to Macedonia, learned Serbo-Croatian, became a dentist and has returned to his small village to serve. An Israeli

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WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO KNOW?

by Ken MacLean

As a Buddhist, I try to face the world with a “don’t know” mind, to accept that I can never know anything for sure, especially what will happen next. As a human rights organizer for Peace Brigades International, I am confronted with this sometimes dangerous uncertainty on a regular basis.

Last week, my e-mail told me of another anonymous note left at Debra Guzman’s door: “Remember we’ll kill you if you don’t follow what we said!” Debra lives in Amatitlan, a small city in Guatemala, where she works in a factory that makes clothing for export to the United States. This latest threat, while routine, was another reminder that Debra was approaching the one-year anniversary of her kidnapping when she was drugged and beaten for organizing a union to demand better pay, hours, and working conditions.

Debra’s husband, Felix Gonzalez, is also a labor activist and has been camped outside the gate of the Lunafil thread plant for almost two years. He says the owners closed the plant illegally to break the union. To prevent Lunafil from removing machinery and relocating the plant to another community, Felix and 58 other union members began a round-the-clock blockade, and they have been there ever since, despite frequent harassment and the occasional sounds of shotgun blasts nearby.

A couple of days ago, my e-mail contained a disturbing update. The latest round of threats against Debra, intended to coerce her husband into ending the blockade, had changed dramatically. This time they were detailed and graphic, clearly targeting Debra and her infant son for her refusal to cooperate. Since Guatemalans take anniversaries very seriously, she is currently in hiding at a safe house and receiving 24-hour accompaniment from members of the Peace Brigades International (PBI) team.

At the end of this e-mail was news that another activist, Vilma Gonzalez, has not been so lucky. Her brother, Reynaldo Gonzalez, is a major player in the

Gran Union Sindical, which is bravely struggling to unite the entire Guatemalan labor movement. Because of her brother’s work, Vilma has been kidnapped, raped, and tortured twice in the last month. The second time, she was found dumped outside a fire station in the capital with 108 cigarette burns on her body. Reynaldo has gone into temporary exile with his wife and children, while Vilma is now receiving 24-hour accompaniment from PBI and speaking out publicly against the attacks.

The news was, of course, horrible and depressing. But I have developed an odd sort of perspective after several years of human rights work. I remind myself that

they are all still alive and speaking out against the violence. That alone is a significant step forward. Just a few years ago it would have been far more likely that they would have been “disappeared” and never seen again.

These kinds of urgent action alerts from around the world cross my desk on a shockingly regular basis. Many are so overwhelming it’s hard to resist the urge to put them out



PBI volunteer Stephen Dudley accompanies a march by the Mutual Support Group for the Families of the Disappeared in Guatemala.

of my mind and into the recycling bin.

But I always come back to the basic question: What does it really mean to know? What difference does it make to know that there are more than 600,000 internally displaced civilians in Colombia or that one out of every 250 Cambodians has lost an arm or a leg to a land mine?

I still somehow believe, despite daily evidence to the contrary, that if people knew about a problem or could see what was “really” going on, they would wake up and do something about it. So why, when there are more human rights organizations and better documentation than ever, do we seem so ineffective in so many places, including at home?

Some possible reasons: We have not thought systematically about how human rights information should be distributed and what effect we want it to have on the general public. We have too often abandoned human rights discourse to the jargon of experts

and lawyers, allowing them to transform "Thou shalt not kill" to "Thou shalt not violate the right to life protected by Article 6, Paragraph 1 of the Covenant" in the process.

It's also difficult to point to success stories, times when our intervention has made a crucial difference, like the appointment of a special commission on human rights or the release of a prominent prisoner of

*I know that I need to move beyond
the horror of those 108 cigarette
burns and act with all the wisdom
and compassion I have right now.*

conscience. Such events do occur, but not as often as we would like. And systematic abuses continue to be carried out by governments around the world.

So, why should I struggle so hard to stay on top of trouble spots around the world? Why should anyone? Despite the size and scope of the human rights crisis, my answer is simple. Ordinary people can and do make an extraordinary difference. I have seen it again and again. Whether it comes in the form of volunteer and financial support, human rights delegations, or thoughtful, well-coordinated letter-writing campaigns, we sometimes succeed in nudging politicians and inter-governmental agencies in the right direction.

That's why I feel it's so important to share the stories of Debra Guzman and Vilma Gonzalez. Their stories take us past the incomprehensible numbers and abstractions to the reality of ordinary people leading heroic lives. These stories erode my cynicism and help me take the bodhisattva vow seriously as a guideline for living my life. I know that I need to move beyond the horror of those 108 cigarette burns and act with all the wisdom and compassion I have right now.

People often ask what exactly it is I do. And depending on how much time I have, I give the thirty-second, five-minute, or hour-and-a-half explanation. The easiest answer is that I am a national organizer for Peace Brigades International. PBI sends unarmed, trained volunteers to areas of conflict, at the invitation of local peace groups. By physically accompanying activists, our volunteers deter political violence and help create the space for them to organize nonviolently for peace and social justice.

Over the past 15 years, PBI has amassed a remarkable track record in wide variety of violent conflicts. Our volunteers watch over nonviolent barricades in the frozen wilderness of Labrador, monitor elections in the isolated villages of southern Sri Lanka, walk beside threatened Colombian human rights workers, and

attend exhumations of mass grave sites scattered across Guatemala.

Calculating the level of risk constantly challenges our working definitions of nonviolence, nonpartisanship, and noninterference. We ask ourselves questions like: Does Jennifer Harbury need our presence in the Plaza Nacional in Guatemala, or is the international media providing sufficient coverage of her hunger strike to ensure her safety? Does our presence as representatives of the international community unwittingly encourage protest marchers to take foolish risks when they are confronted by a police blockade?

We never know for sure. But it is precisely this tension between the known and the unknown that is critical to making unarmed protective accompaniment effective for people like Debra Guzman and Vilma Gonzalez. Accompaniment changes the equation and creates a little space, demonstrating that political violence is not inevitable or intractable. Our work empowers people to act boldly as peacemakers even when governments cannot or will not. Even if we don't have all the answers. ♦

For more information about PBI and its projects contact its office at: 2642 College Ave., Berkeley CA, 94704. Tel: 510-540-0749. Email: pbiusa@gic.apc.org

Ken MacLean, a vipassana practitioner and former INEB staffperson, currently serves as the Co-director for PBI/USA.

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psychologist who works with Holocaust survivors and victims of terrorism was himself a victim. While he was sipping coffee at an outdoor Jerusalem cafe, a terrorist opened fire, killing many and leaving our friend with two non-removable bullets in his stomach. Like the Palestinians, he maintains his commitment to dialogue across the borders. It was an honor to be working with these people for healing and reconciliation.

Additionally, I was privileged to facilitate exploration for Israeli peace activists in Jerusalem, a dialogue between Israeli Jewish and Israeli Arab women in Acco, and an attempt at right-wing/left-wing dialogue with Israelis in a settlement in Gaza. In Israel, as in our own country, the split between left and right is a chasm of bitterness and misunderstanding, and the dialogue was difficult. Nonetheless, at the end of the meeting, the rabbi and chief spokesperson for the right wing settlers approached me and said, "Like Aaron, you are a peacemaker trying to bring peace among the nations. This is righteous work and you are a good Jew." What a splendid ending to two months of engaged spirituality, which I undertake as a Buddhist, a Jew, and a seeker of peace. ♦

Paula Green is a BPF and IFOR Board member, international consultant, and the Director of the Karuna Center in Leverett, Massachusetts.

CONNECTING WALES AND ME

by Meredith Stout

Neither Ken Jones nor I was entirely clear why I was so determined to visit him in Wales. In fact, after I arrived in England on a vacation trip in early March and had called him one evening from the numbing chill of a London phone booth, it occurred to me that he was probably trying to talk me out of it.

The telephone call was a followup to my introductory letter from California in which I had explained that I was a member of BPF, that because *Turning Wheel* was doing its next issue on Internationalism, and because I would be traveling in England in March, I had thought it would be "fun to visit someone connected with BPF in the UK." I had found Ken's name listed in the back of *Turning Wheel*: Ken Jones, Plas Plwca, Cwmrheidol,

Ken must have been taken aback when he heard my voice from London, but he never missed a beat. He thought from my letter I was a man. "Meredith is a man's name in Wales," he said, pronouncing it *Mar-ID-ith*. I didn't tell him I'd been pronouncing his home town *A-BER-ist-with*, instead of *A-ber-IST-with*.

"You don't exactly drop by for a cup of tea when you come to Aberystwyth," Ken said on the phone, laughing out loud at my naiveté. "You can come out here if you like," he continued, "and if you're going to come this far, we'll put you up. That's just hospitality tradition here. But it's a one-way railroad track after you get along a ways, and even if nothing breaks down it'll take you at least seven hours. There was a train wreck just last week," he added, perhaps a little hopefully. "You're welcome of course, but you know Wales isn't shiny like California."

A queue of teenagers was waiting on the sidewalk to use the phone. "I'm not the shiny type," I persisted, looking down at my jeans and scuffy boots. The *Examiner* Travel Section dies hard.

* * *

The train left London's Euston Station under leaden skies, and as I watched the industrial factories and monotonous row houses march by, I wondered with a feeling of panic how on earth I could have imposed on Ken's goodwill. What would he and his wife be like? What would we talk about? Ken had told me on the phone he had already sent information about the Network of Engaged Buddhists to BPF in Berkeley. So why was I going?

Finally the train crossed into Wales and direction signs became

illegible with *w*'s, *h*'s and *y*'s. Gradually dreary scenery gave way to sloping fields with myriad shades of greens, silvers and browns broken by brushy fences and sprinkled with clusters of sheep. I watched new lambs scamper away from the train like miniature Easter toys next to their sedately galumphing "mums." At last the tracks curved out of steeper, forested hills onto a flat sandy plain, and came to a stop in the station of a town on the edge of the quiet, grey sea. Aberystwyth. *A-ber-ist-with*, I practiced aloud. The end of the line.

"I'm Ken," said a craggy man with dark hair, bristly brows and a firm handshake. "We have some errands to do," and together we set off briskly to spend the after-



Ken and Noragh Jones. Photo by Meredith Stout

Aberystwyth—wherever *that* was. I wrote that I would call him when I arrived in London. I hadn't left him time to write me back.

When I looked on a map before I left, I was delighted to find Aberystwyth perched on the west coast of Wales, on the edge of the sea. The more remote the better! I imagined that after a pastoral train ride, I would drop by Ken Jones' house for a cup of tea and a cozy chat about the Network of Engaged Buddhists, and then I'd tuck into a comfy little B&B that had a view of pounding surf. It would be right out of the *San Francisco Examiner's* Sunday Travel Section. I'd even be served crumpets with berries and cream.

noon stopping in small shops and seeing the sights of the town with its population of 12,000 people. "Usually we come in on a Tuesday. Folks expect to see us then. If you want to see someone you know, you come to town the day they do their shopping." Aberystwyth seemed cheerfully bustling in spite of Ken's description of the dismal impact of chainstores on local commerce, just as in the United States. The streets were narrow, with light-colored houses, brightly painted trim, and protruding casement windows that reminded me of San Francisco. We stopped at a "New Age" shop that could have been in Berkeley to buy a special kind of incense "to keep midges out of my cave," Ken said. As we walked with ice-cream cones on the ocean boardwalk, we talked about engaged spiritualism as a kind of personal liberation, about how he had begun his meditation practice twenty years ago because he wanted to reconcile personal salvation with social salvation so, as he said, his "life would make some sense." He told me about his remote hide-out where he goes for solitary retreats for many days at a time. "I'm known as the hermit around here," he said, mentioning his article last year in *Turning Wheel*. ("Hermit at Stallion's Rock," Summer, 1995.)

After tea at the impressive national library which overlooks the town, we started on the ten-mile drive to Ken's home. He took the "high road" to show me the view, but in the lowering, misting dusk I could barely make out the fields and walls of brush that vanished into darkness off the edges of the road. "I hope you don't have vertigo," he commented as we swerved abruptly to the left, plunging into a maze of narrow, tunneling roads with high hedges on either side. "It's alright as long as you don't meet a tourist who doesn't know how to drive these roads." Negotiating seemingly endless sharp corners at a pace, he gestured into the gloom on the right. "There's a lot of pagan religion around here. A real witch lives up there." I peered, laughing a little nervously. "This is serious here," he said.

At last we shot out into a steep narrow valley, *cwm* (pronounced *koom*), and drew up to a white, thick-walled, semi-isolated farmhouse next to the Rheidol River. Out of the car, I looked around. Almost more astonishing than the fact of being there at all, were the giant wood sculptures that loomed out of the darkness around the house. "Noragh's Wood People," Ken said. "I have to say, my wife is an extraordinary woman." And she was, greeting me there in the lighted doorway with a hug, and the next day showing me the wonderful larger-than-life-sized figures that people the land around their house: harp players, jazz musicians, hunters, clowns, jugglers, ordinary people, families, animals—all with con-

nections to Welsh culture, tradition, and myth. Noragh makes them out of natural tree limbs thinned to protect the forest. "Sometimes a figure begins when I find a head or a leg on one of my walks," she said.

Rambling and low-ceilinged, the two floors of the house were connected by two different stairways, and Noragh showed me to a cozy upstairs room at the top of one. After a dinner of vegetarian lasagne and raisin mince pie in front of the fire ("we live green, no furnace here"), instead of talking about NEB and BPF and social action, we talked about California, about Ken's coming trip to Japan, about his new book, *Beyond Optimism* (reviewed in this issue of *Turning Wheel*), about Noragh's book on Celtic myth and women's spirituality, *Power of Raven, Wisdom of Serpent*, and about her second book in progress. It seemed enough just to be.

Later, the darkness and the silence, except for the whisper of the river, were profound. Almost as profound as Ken's silence in the morning when I came down to find him meditating in front of what he calls his "smells and bells" altar in a nook tucked underneath the stairs.

"Join me if you like," he murmured, motionless, and after grabbing a cup of coffee (no ascetic, I), I settled onto the cushion that he had fixed for me. After first wondering at finding myself in front of an altar under a staircase in a house in a *cwm* on the coast of Wales, and then worrying that I might disturb my motionless companion with a fit of sneezing, I settled into the meditation. It was as tranquil as I have known. I could have stayed all morning there, as complete and at peace in that community as if there had been a sangha of 100 silent people sitting with us underneath that stair.

On the afternoon train from Aberystwyth up the coast of Wales, I read over the material Ken had given me, including an NEB publication with a quote by Stephen Batchelor:

"Engagement...is not an option, but a matter of degree and needs to be measured along a spectrum. At one end are simple acts of kindness, in the middle organizations providing social services, and at the far end visions of another kind of society altogether."

I thought about Ken and Noragh's engaged Buddhism those last two days, their simple acts of kindness, large and small: welcoming me into their home, sharing their meals, giving of their time to show me their work, guiding me on hiking paths through the meadows and forest behind their house and helping me pronounce unfamiliar words—in short, giving freely of their love for their life and their land before sending me on my way with a firm sense of the connection between their world and mine,

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One of Noragh's woodcuts

Beyond Optimism: A Buddhist Political Ecology

by Ken Jones

Jon Carpenter Publishing, Oxford, 1993, \$17.95

Reviewed by Diana Winston

If I were to take on a crusade these days, it would be to make Ken Jones required reading for any activist wanting to make change in the world. I'd remind all of us socially engaged Buddhists that within our midst is one of the greatest spiritually-based political thinkers of our time. He has been overlooked too long, by too many.

It was Jones' first book, *The Social Face of Buddhism*, that inspired me to work for the creation of the BASE program. His latest book, *Beyond Optimism: A Buddhist Political Ecology*, is the book I've been waiting for. Here he combines astute political, social, economic, and ecological analysis with a wisdom that's grounded in spiritual practice. Finally, a political tract with a heart! Here in one place is a discussion of the turmoil on the planet, a spiritual explanation of what's behind it, and a sophisticated vision of change.

Beyond Optimism weaves together an analysis of many contemporary issues, including Deep Ecology, the New Age, nationalism, green consumerism, the Green Party, Matthew Fox, Teilhard de Chardin, eco-feminism, goddess spirituality, and even unrest in Africa, the Balkans, Russia. In this short 200-page book Jones even manages to design an ecotopia and offer meditation instruction. He covers many topics without short-changing any of them. Everything he says is smart!

The book starts with an examination of contemporary culture, looking at the political, economic, and social forces that have resulted in the mess we're in today. He points out the "cornucopian" assumption that planetary wealth is boundless and the resulting belief in "exclusively techno-social remedies for almost all human ills, whether war, social injustice, old age, ignorance, or even existential insecurity."

Jones' alternative to this shallow thinking is a Buddhist-based examination of the underlying personal dis-ease that compels us to solidify a sense of self through beliefs, acquisitions, relationships. He looks at the way "the frightened need to affirm, affirm, and affirm our sense of self" manifests itself in oppressive social and political forces around the world.

In the second section of the book Jones critiques a range of responses to the world's distress—green consumerism, appropriate technology, the Green Party—and proposes his own vision: a radical green libertarianism that is grounded in both political theory and compassion.

Jones ends with a no-nonsense discussion of spirituality, managing to make Buddhist philosophy accessible to a non-Buddhist audience. And he insists that spirituality cannot be separated from politics.

As *Beyond Optimism* is so packed, it's difficult to summarize, but I'll mention some of my favorite bits. In a section on the "new poverty," Jones says that the poor no longer form a recognizable social class with a potentially significant political solidarity, but are "relatively powerless...stigmatized as failures who have proved unable to claim their share in this affluent society." On the New Age he says, "New Agers typically show little concern about eco-socially exploitative and oppressive institutions and structures. They claim we make our own reality and if we are unaware of the boundless love and well-being inherent in it then we are stuck in 'negativity.'"

In his chapter critiquing ideology, Jones reminds us to have a sense of humor and always to recognize the personal history that our cherished opinions are grounded in. "Be on guard against sliding into seductive mind-states... Your truth will be more acceptable if you don't rub people's noses in it!" I have xeroxed this section and handed it out to several of my activist friends.

Jones speaks simply and directly to the role of spirituality in activism: "A well-tuned awareness is particularly important for activists, subjected to a wide range of highs and lows, time

hassles, burning obsessions that can pull us off center and fog compassionate and skillful response. Awareness training is necessary if we want to...undertake the work of ideological self-disarmament."

If anything concerns me about this book, it is the question of who its audience will be. Honestly, it's dense, sometimes wordy, and invokes a multitude of references. There's a lot one has to be on top of when reading this book. I worry that it may be construed as too heady and unapproachable by more practice-minded Buddhists, and too "spiritual" by "secular-minded progressives" (as Jones calls them).

In spite of this I encourage everyone to wade in. Open the book to a section that seems interesting. You don't have to read it cover to cover. There are gems everywhere.

Beyond Optimism is a book that is desperately needed. We socially-engaged Buddhists would do well to study and internalize Jones' thinking—to let it become a common, familiar language. This language can be the starting point to inspire us to action. ❖

Diana Winston is the coordinator of BPF's BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) program, and is a vipassana practitioner.

*Dead lamb
the wind
flickers its ears*

—Ken Jones

WOMEN AND WATER

by Tova Green

In January a group of about 50 women from India, Nepal, and the United States gathered on the banks of the Ganges River for five days. We came together to share our concerns about the waters in our regions, to teach and learn skills and information, and to celebrate the centrality of water in all life. Participants included water activists, environmental educators, scientists, artists, and water enthusiasts.

The conference was co-convened by Women for Water, a group Fran Peavey and I organized in the U.S., and by a group of Varanasi women called *Jeevan Snayu Sanrakshan* (a Tagore phrase which means "nerve of life"). The two groups worked together for a year to plan the program, invite participants, and work out the many details including food, lodging, and transportation.

The thirst for such a conference was evident in the opening ceremony, when women brought water from their watersheds to pour into a common brass vessel. Two young girls first poured in water from the Ganges, a holy river for the Hindus. Then women brought water from many rivers in the United States, from the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and from Beijing, where several participants had attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in September 1996. Two women from Madras came with empty pots, symbolizing the scarcity of water in their part of India, and a delegate from New Delhi came with an apology—the water in the Yamuna river, which flows through Delhi, was so polluted she could not bear to add it to the other waters.

During the conference we heard about water-borne diseases, a major cause of infant mortality in India. We learned that in some parts of India, women spend much of their day walking to haul water for their fami-

lies, and even after all this labor the water may not be potable. We learned that 1.5 billion rural poor women lack access to *any* water. We saw slides and heard stories about the sinking level of the Bhagmati River and how the water has turned black with effluent from the carpet factories, built so that Nepal can repay its loan to the World Bank. We also heard the inspiring story of the defeat of a major dam, Arun III, that, had it been built, would have flooded precious forests and farm land in Nepal.

We piled onto boats twice during the conference. We saw people taking their holy dips in the Ganges, we saw pilgrims visiting sacred sites, we saw boat *dhobhis* (professional clothes-washers) washing clothing and water buffalo being bathed; and we visited the Assi Nalla, once a clear river feeding the Ganges, now poisoned by the sewage that flows directly into it, upstream from all the bathing places.

In a workshop on environmental education, we designed strategies for speaking with *dhobhis*, boatmen, village women, and government officials about the condition of the river. We didn't have time to carry out these strategies, and suggested that in future conferences there be a time scheduled for an action.

In addition to the time spent sharing knowledge and skills in workshops, there were many opportunities for participants to talk informally, to develop friendships as we went on outings, ate together, shared rooms in hotels, celebrated a birthday American style, and listened to Indian drumming and chanting.

The conference ended with the annual festival in honor of Saraswati, the goddess of learning and music. All over Varanasi women wear yellow saris. Schools and other community groups do performances and rituals with statues of the goddess. We went to the place where the statues are made and

Death on the Ganges

1.
*White bloated corpse of cow
floated on the river's surface.
A dog cowered
on the cow's back.
Five vultures
flew in for their flesh
and flew off again.
The river carried the cow
downstream. I wondered
how the dog
would find its way home.*
2.
*A small white body bobbed
as our boat went by,
close enough that we could see
it was a dead baby girl. Still
the scientist on the boat argued
that it was a dead dog.
It was too hard to admit
that a dead baby girl
had been left to float away
on the river and no one knew
who she was.*

Tova Green

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INSTANT KARMA IS GONNA GETCHA

by Steve Epstein

Karma is subtle. It sneaks up on you in the strangest places in the strangest ways, hiding around a corner waiting to pounce.

I work in Laos. I had been posted for a few weeks in the isolated, regal city of Luang Prabang, a Hollywood dream of rural Southeast Asia. Hills capped with temples look down on impossibly green rice fields, 19th century red-tiled rooftops, and the Mekong River as it makes a few languorous turns. The clock slows in Luang Prabang, there is nothing to hurry for, and a nap always seems like a good idea. The city is loosely populated and after a few days I began to recognize faces.

I was eating raw papaya salad when a town beggar came by on his daily rounds.

I was at my favorite lunch hangout, the Younkhoun Restaurant. I was eating raw papaya salad when a town beggar came by on his daily rounds. He was an old man with blind eyes closed tight. A thin straggly rope was tied around his waist. The other end was held by an anxious young girl clad in a much-washed sarong and blouse. Laos has few beggars, but each city seems to have its allotted share. The beggars go from house to house and from shop to shop gathering *kip*, the Lao currency.

I always give to beggars. I may only give a little, but I always give. Here in Laos, a little means a Little Green One—fifty *kip*, worth about seven cents. But on this day I only had Big Red Ones—the biggest Lao bank note worth 70 cents.

But, I thought, *I can't give him a Big Red One*. Seventy cents is a day's wage for a laborer. This would upset the economic apple cart. After all, if you could make as much money begging as you could working, why should you work? But I could not very well ask the beggar for change. *So what the hell*, I thought, *this is just his good fortune*, and I handed him a Big Red One. He couldn't see it, but he could feel its size and knew its worth. He burst into a big smile and chanted practiced blessings.

A few hours later I walked down to the market. I needed to pick up some Tiger Balm and stock up on Band-Aids. I walked to the local Chinese pharmacy. The wares spilled out onto the sidewalk. Pills were displayed in transparent Tupperware tubs, white and red

ones, yellow and blue ones, red and blue ones—an astonishing eye-pleasing assortment that looked more like the makings of costume jewelry than pills. The owner wore short khaki pants and a white T-shirt, standard Chinese shopkeeper uniform. He and a friend squatted on low wooden stools playing checkers with bottle caps. This was his way of minding the store. His grandmother sat nearby, wrapped in a white shawl that matched her white hair. I gave the man my order and he piled the goods on the counter. I picked out two Big Red Ones to cover the bill.

His grandmother spoke to him in Chinese and he nodded. He stuffed the order into a plastic bag and plopped it down on the counter.

"My grandmother says it's free for you."

"No, no," I protested, embarrassed. "That's OK—thank you very much."

"No," he replied. "My grandmother says it's free. I can't take your money. Here—" And he handed me the package, refusing to take any money.

Here in Laos, 99.7 percent of the people are poorer, far poorer than me.

I try to pass this karma along, slipping in small doses of both money and time. ❖

Steve Epstein lives in Vientiane, Laos, where he teaches English at the School of Law. He is the author of Xieng Mieng: The Cleverest Man in the Kingdom, a collection of Lao trickster folktales.

Women & Water (continued from page 30)

brought back to our meeting place a beautiful four-foot high goddess with wavy long black hair and a yellow sari, seated on a conch shell, with a swan by her side. She was placed on an altar, and offerings of flowers, rice, fruits, and other special foods were brought to her. All of us were offered sweets, and the drumming and dancing began. It was a joyous moment.

In addition to setting individual goals for work we will do in our own regions, we agreed to put together a newsletter twice a year. We plan to hold another conference in two years, possibly in Kathmandu, Nepal. We drafted a conference resolution, which we gave to the many Indian newspapers that covered the conference. The resolution concludes: "It is a woman's right as a human being to have access to enough clean water."

If you would like to receive news about the 1998 conference, write to Women and Water, c/o Crabgrass, 3181 Mission Street, No. 30, San Francisco, CA 94110. ❖

Tova Green is President of the Board of BPF. She and Fran Peavey have just returned from their fourth trip to the former Yugoslavia, where they met with women peaceworkers and refugees from different ethnic groups.

LANDMINES OF THE HEART

by Bob Maat

When asked by someone who comes into the Dhammayietra Center, "Besides peace walks, do you people do anything else?" I answer frankly. "No, that's about all I do. But I walk a lot!" Venerable Maha Ghosananda, the spiritual patron of the Center, preaches that the *Dhammayietra* (Dhamma peace walk) is not a once-a-year event but indeed a daily, step-by-step process. "Our journey for peace begins today and every day. Each step is a prayer, each step is a meditation, each step will build a bridge." I *do* walk a lot.

A recent pilgrimage took me to a western province along the Thai-Cambodian border. Several international Dhammayietras have traversed this countryside, where the people have yet to taste the fruit of the Paris Peace Accords of October, 1991. It's a province of contested territories, of violent skirmishes and sporadic shellings, of ground ongoingly seeded with more landmines than there are feet to walk upon them, of a people displaced so often it seems normal.

Inspired by Maha Ghosananda's teaching to find the courage to leave our temples and enter the temples of human experience, temples that are filled with suffering, I set off. My striped plastic sack, identified as a smugglers' bag by the border region's local people, was filled to the brim with stories of last year's Dhammayietra, as well as copies of a recent talk given by Maha Ghosananda on International Peace Day. In that homily he stresses the need to remove the "landmines of the heart."

"A crazy foreigner has come, Mom," a young child called out, announcing my arrival to the whole village as she hid behind her mother's sarong. Unable to dispute the diagnosis, I smiled at the woman, who had another babe at the breast.

A young boy, encouraged by his grandmother, came forward with palms held together and respectfully begged for a little money. The elderly woman with betel-nut teeth whispered loudly to her grandson, and he promptly upped his request to 500 riels (20 U.S. cents). "We have no food," the old woman explained.

"Nowadays we are eating *babah*," another volunteered. *Babah* is a kind of soup which serves as a "rice stretcher." I noticed a number of children with yellow streaks in their hair—a sign of malnutrition.

"Why are you walking to Bang Tha Kuon?" asked the woman with the baby.

"I work with the Dhammayietra and Somdech Song Maha Ghosananda. I walk and pass out stories from the Dhammayietra." I pulled out ten flyers and distributed them to the now small crowd.

"I don't know French," the mother exclaimed.

"It's in Khmer," said a teenage boy, eager to show off his reading ability. "The suffering of Cambodia has been deep," he read. "From this suffering comes great compassion..."

"Tell Somdech we waited and waited for the Dhammayietra to come here last year, but it never came," said a new voice. "We have never had peace. They say even the Dhammayietra was afraid to come here. Tell Somdech we're still waiting."

"I will," I answered humbly. Indeed, at the last minute, in a moment of fear, Dhammayietra III had rerouted itself away from these people's suffering. I bid *adieu*, while the voice of our teenage preacher read on, "...a peaceful country makes a peaceful world..." and I continued westward.

"Chop! Chop! Barang! Barang Chop!" An unseen voice screamed at me to stop as I started to walk around a closed checkpoint.

"Come here! Where are you going? What's in your bag?" the young soldier demanded, approaching me with his AK-47. This was one of the multiple illegal checkpoints set up near road bridges. ("The soldiers are supposed to guard the bridges," an old woman had once taught me. "But they're really here to 'guard' our money!" She winked.) "Okay, where's the money?" the soldier asked, rifling through my bag. He was young enough to be my son.

I told him I was a monk who walked with the Dhammayietra.

"If you're really a monk, then why do you have hair?"

"I'm a Christian monk. Jesus had hair."

The soldier offered me a bowl of water to drink, and I learned of his hard life story. No family, no salary in months, knowing only war since he was born. He asked me if I really believed Cambodia would ever have peace. "That's why I walk," I answered. He asked me to wait and ran into his hut. He slipped 4 baht into my hand, and wished me good luck as I walked away.

Friendly country banter went on all day: *Why don't you ride?—Cuz if I was riding I wouldn't have this opportunity to meet you!*

What's this paper?—A gift from the Dhammayietra.—That's all, eh? How about a dollar?

Are you Bob Maat's younger brother, who used to work

*"A crazy foreigner has come,
Mom," a young child called out,
announcing my arrival to the
whole village.*

in Site 2?—Yes, much younger. Only kidding. It's me, Bob.—Instead of walking why don't you fix this road?

When will we have peace?—Somdech Song says peace will come, step by step.—Yes, but how many more steps?

Are you afraid of the Khmer Rouge?—Somdech Song says if we are fearful, we will never have peace. Fear is death itself.

Old men on oxcarts, young children on bicycles, middle-aged women waiting along the road in front of their huts, all took flyers. Drivers of motorcycle taxis stopped to pick up a flyer. A young man in a wheelchair, a recent double amputee from a landmine, propelling himself with two poles like a dry-season cross-country skier, stopped to ask if the Red Cross in Battambang still offered free prostheses, and took two flyers. Walking past a slow-moving oxcart, I heard a young father reading to his son beside him, "Peace-making begins with us," as the water buffaloes moseyed along on automatic pilot.

The shadows of the day were growing long. Nearly out of flyers, I arrived at the outskirts of a border town at dusk. Both sides of the road were marked with red skull-and-crossbones danger signs, evidence of a de-mining

team's surveyance. I could hear the sounds of a market village coming to the end of another day, and see the smoke of the evening meals' fires curling. Suddenly the horizon erupted with tracer bullets flying in all directions, followed by a series of loud explosions.

Afraid of running into a minefield, I squatted in the road. Women and children screamed in the distance. Three men came running in my direction. "Can I go with you?" I called to the lead man.

"Are you a journalist?" he asked.

"No, no. I'm with the Dhammayietra."

"Come! The Khmer Rouge are attacking." Indeed, just a week before, a village 15 kilometers south had been attacked by the Khmer Rouge. The villagers had been evacuated to Thailand, only to be repatriated by the Thai military a few days ago.

Running in a crouch, our leader took us eastward. The whistling sound of a shell overhead encouraged a "closer-to-the-earth" position. He jumped into a shallow ditch alongside the road; the rest of us followed suit. He said, "I don't think it's the Khmer Rouge. I don't hear any B40 rockets. It sounds like the Thais."

"That would be better," his friend responded. "At least they won't overrun us."

While the two were assessing the situation, the fellow next to me asked, "You wouldn't happen to have any more of those flyers I saw you passing out on the road earlier today, would you?" I handed him a torn copy of Maha Ghosananda's Peace Day talk.

As the four of us lay on our backs in the ditch, this man read out loud: "To make peace we must remove the landmines from our hearts which keep us from making peace: greed, hatred, and delusion." Oblivious of the red streaks zipping overhead, he carried on a running commentary with the text. "This is true. This is really very good." Meanwhile, we could hear the sounds of women and children in flight. The fighting increased in intensity before burning out 30 minutes later.

I got directions from my ditch companions and joined the procession of people, many pushing bicycles loaded down with all their carryable possessions, moving towards the temple. It was on the eastern edge of the village and was considered a "safe area," geographically if not spiritually. The widespread rumor was that this latest peace violation wasn't initiated by the Khmer Rouge after all, but by a failed business deal. "They were trying to get a stolen vehicle across the border." People were told to stay put as the transaction would be attempted again that night. The man who had read to us in the ditch reminded us that one of the landmines of the heart which needs to be removed before peace comes is greed. "Do you

really think Cambodia will ever have peace?" the boy soldier had asked earlier that day. As I talked with villagers late into the night, the question was repeated.

Dhammayietra are never easy. Sore feet, blistered lips, sunburned face, constipation (or worse), the uncertainty of where one will lay one's head at night, drunken soldiers (and sometimes sober ones) can be a challenge. The danger of landmines (in the heart as well as in the earth) is a constant reality on these country roads.

At the same time it is pure privilege to walk among these folks. Once they realize that you are one who walks with the Dhammayietra, they open up their hearts as well as their huts, and the gospel of the Dhammayietra comes alive on the back roads of Cambodia. We talked about everything from Buddha to Jesus to Mohammed, from landmines to AIDS to birth control, about poor rice harvests due to floods caused by deforestation, about the deep desire for peace while preparing for another season of war. On this solo Dhammayietra, the main realities people told me about were war and lack of food. Their vision of a better world is nearly blinded by the immediate needs of today. Hard to dream the dream when one sleeps in fear and hunger. ❖

Bob Maat is spokesperson for the The Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR) in Cambodia. Based at the Dhammayietra Center for Peace and Nonviolence in Phnom Penh, CPR works on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. Thanks for whatever donation you can give. Mailing address is: CPR, P.O. Box 60, Bung Thong Lane Post Office, Bangkok 10242, Thailand.

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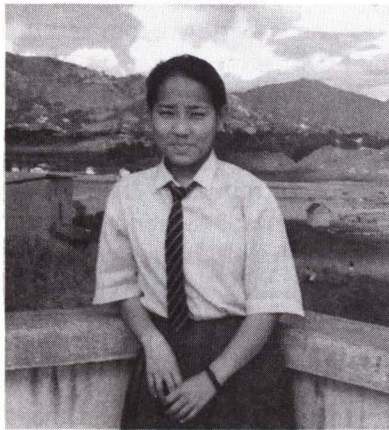
TIBETAN REFUGEE PROJECTS

OF THE BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP

Reported by Margo and Gordon Tyndall

THE CHILDREN'S PROJECT

Our regular correspondent Thinley Dolma, age 12, writes us from her high school in Kathmandu, "I do my study regularly, I don't waste my time, I am very happy in my school." Thinley is one of the children the Tibetan Refugee Children's Project sponsors to go to school. Her home is in a Tibetan refugee camp a few miles from Pokhara, where she lives in a small hut with her mother, two sisters, and two other small children who are orphans.



Thinley Dolma

Life in the camp is difficult. Thinley and others write of leaking roofs, which the families have no means to repair, in the bitter cold of a Nepalese winter. They tell of a stream of orphans taken in by aunts and uncles after the untimely deaths of their parents due to poor nutrition and cold. But both children and adults have hope that if the children can get an education, their futures will hold the promise of jobs and basic comforts.

Thinley Dolma is one of the children sponsored at the high-school level. These children must go to boarding schools outside the camps, where the yearly fees are \$180. Many more children are sponsored to attend the local grade schools: \$60 a year provides school fees, books, and clothes for an elementary school child. In some of the camps our project also provides schoolchildren with supplementary nutrition with their mid-day meal. The child care program in one camp receives milk for the toddlers from funds provided by the project.

THE TIBETAN REFUGEE REVOLVING FUND

The purpose of the Revolving Fund is to assist the Tibetan refugee settlements in providing productive jobs for the refugees. It is a joint project of BPF and his Holiness the Dalai Lama's Central Tibetan Relief Committee (hereafter CTRC) in Dharamsala.

For small projects, BPF may provide all the funding

through a low-interest loan to the settlement's co-op. For larger projects, the settlement may raise part of the funds internally; the CTRC may be able to obtain grants from European governments or foundations, and BPF supplies the balance.

The first project was approved in December 1991. It provided \$5000 to the Cholsom Settlement for the purchase of equipment and supplies for a shoulder bag weaving project that has turned out to be very successful.

The second project, approved in July 1992, and also for \$5000, was for corn-grinding equipment and a water pump, which permitted the expansion of the poultry-raising operation at the Bylakuppe Settlement.

The third project, approved in September 1992, was a large one involving the essential rebuilding of the water supply system for the Bylakuppe Settlement. The total cost was about \$65,000. Most of this was covered by grants and assessments against those who would benefit from the improved water supply, but our \$16,000 low-interest loan was essential to the overall financing and completion of the project.

In October 1993, two more projects were funded. In both of these, the CTRC provided funds for the required buildings while our loans paid for the required equipment and supplies. A \$4000 loan was made to the Rabgyeling Settlement for the production of detergent and cleaning powder, and a \$16,000 loan was made to the Dhondenling Settlement for noodle-making machinery.

Our most recent loan was \$13,000 for a bakery project at the Hunsur Settlement. This project was developed with the help of Peter Overton, a member of the San Francisco Zen Center who had worked at the



Weavers at Cholsom Settlement

Tassajara Bakery for many years and went to India to help with its planning and initiation.

So over these past five years we have made loans totaling \$59,000 and have opened up employment opportunities for a substantial number of refugees.

To aid the survival of the Tibetan people and their

(continued on page 39)

LISTENING BEYOND LISTENING

by David Grant

[Adapted from a talk presented at the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Summer Institute on "Transforming Violence," at Land of Medicine Buddha, Soquel, California, July 1995.]

The Buddhist tenet of universal mutability most often guides me: "Change Is The Way." In my current genetic manifestation as one predominantly African-American, significantly European-American, and importantly Native-American—in other words, as one more suffering, sentient being—I sing that tenet with political lyrics: "Freedom is a Constant Struggle."

When I ran into Buddhism a couple of decades ago I heard it said that one way to break down walls was to sit zazen and wait until they crumbled. That was a fundamental challenge to my jump-up-and-down mode of protest. I was of course suspicious that "Eastern wisdom" might be merely an exotic palliative. It took a while to realize that "freedom" applies in the singular as well as in the plural, to the individual as well as to the group. Listening-to-sentient-beings begins with one pair of ears. "Change Is The Way" is not an abstraction. It's more than a philosophy; it's a liberation struggle. One joins by stopping to listen.

"Listening for a change" is the motto of the Listening Project. It's a simple idea, accessible and basic, but no less profound for being so. Listening leads to response leads to action leads to listening. Thus, the Listening Project is a facilitated dialogue for the purpose of community organizing, public education, and personal change. It often contains elements of conflict resolution. It is an avenue for advocacy as well as a platform for compromise.

The way the Listening Project works, the nuts-and-bolts of it, goes like this. A group wants to address an issue, such as the closing of a factory in the community. We ask the group: 1) What are your goals? Are they feasible, specific and measurable? 2) What is your ability to field the listeners adequate to the task? 3) What is your commitment to follow up with concrete action based on what you have learned? So...three questions: 1) Goals? 2) Wherewithal? 3) Follow-up? Assuming the answers to these questions are mutually agreeable, we arrange a planning session with the group. The basic idea is that people trained to listen go out into the community to hear people express their concerns about the matter at hand. We refine the goals and begin work on logistics. We brainstorm questions for an open-ended survey. Then

over several weeks we develop that brainstorm session into a coherent set of questions. Once the survey instrument is complete we bring together everyone who is to take part in the interviewing and we spend half a day learning listening skills and the whys-and-wherefores of the particular survey questions. Then we go out into the community, listen, reconvene, and debrief.

The survey itself serves two functions. It is an "excuse for a dialogue" and it is a "lifeboat." If a person wants to go on a tangent from any particular question, she is encouraged to do so. Those tangents deepen rapport and often lead to new lines of inquiry. On the other hand, should the dialogue stray into angry, divisive, unproductive, and dangerous territory, the interviewer can jump back in the lifeboat: "Thank you, m'am, next question is..."

In communities as disparate as Elkhart, Indiana, and inner city Washington, D.C., groups have used the Listening Project. In both communities, black and white neighbors faced the scourge of crack houses owned by unscrupulous absentee landlords. By taking the time to listen to each other, neighbors were able to accomplish substantive tasks, such as: closing a crack

house that had withstood a decade of legal challenges; convincing a landlord to bring rental property up to code; establishing community policing, as well as nonviolent citizen patrols; connecting with like-minded neighbors to respond with public mourning and protest for acts of violence.

When it works in a community—and the community might include pre-selected opinion leaders as well as door-to-door random sampling—what happens is that the community finds its voice, or voices. The people find out what needs to be known and isn't. And they find out what is already known—which turns out almost always to be considerably more than imagined. In other words, the community validates itself as a community, a "being," and thereby empowers itself, by its own authority, to act.

This is not a simple endeavor, nor is it without drawbacks. Like coalition-building, consensus process, and participatory democracy, the Listening Project is slow, sometimes tedious, and rarely unambiguous. If care is not taken, the Listening Project can deplete a group's energy without providing adequate compensatory return. When we encourage listeners to "walk in the shoes" of those they listen to, we encourage appreciation for complexity. Black becomes gray and so does white. Those who like simple solutions are often unsatisfied.

*To listen means to feel the
earth pulling upon us,
pulling us back to its dust,
back to the common ground.*

Not that there are no good guys and no bad guys. Not that “win-win” is everybody-with-a-smiley-face. Not that the community-listening-to-itself always makes for an infallible litany of “proactive,” “progressive,” “decentralized,” “community-based” decisions. There does come a time when the surveys are evaluated and tallied, you’ve done what you can do, and it’s time for a stand. You can be sure that not everyone will be on that stand, since sentient beings are numberless! Besides, every stand, even one based on thorough listening, is necessarily limited to filtered and compromised information. The only guarantee is that, even if the chosen course of action is flawed, those face-to-face interviews will have connected people in new ways.

What can we ask of each other that will bring out the best in each of us?

Nothing beats face-to-face dialogue, technology notwithstanding. Those interviews are the community equivalent of weaving the Jeweled Net of Indra.

The basic question to ask—the question that underlies every carefully-chosen survey item—is: What can we ask of each other that will bring out the best in each of us? At its most sublime, this asking-and-listening can be like koan study, or like the intimacy of dokusan, or like a self-referential meditation on the body. Listening on a community level can be a way of asking the body politic to pay attention to its own heartbeat. The Listening Project can be an enabling mirror, an “outside force” of a sort, even though self-generated, that creates a space where discovery happens. Not only is it information gathering, not only is it community organizing, not only is it public education, it is that which creates the possibility of personal change, the kind that makes for strange bedfellows! And it is these unforeseen connections that are the softening heart of our multicultural, multi-ideological, multi-species life-together-on-this-earth. Most fundamentally, to listen means to physically feel the earth pulling upon us, pulling us back to its dust, pulling us back to the common ground. What can we say to each other that will open up that space where we can hear, with more than our ears, the song of the thrush as it really is? As practitioners of “Change Is The Way,” this is the Listening Project-Beyond-Listening to which we ultimately aspire. ❖

BPF Board member David Grant has just moved to the Netherlands to work as the coordinator of nonviolent education and training for the International Fellowship of Reconciliation. After working as organizer for the Listening Project at Rural Southern Voice for Peace, he founded Peace Troupe, which engages in “nonviolent struggle using the cultural arts,” an endeavor he continues to develop.

EVENING ON THE PRISON YARD

by Marco Ordney

It was evening, chill and overcast, and the yard was out. Five hundred guys in blue and white were lifting weights, playing basketball, handball, and soccer, walking counterclockwise around the track, talking bullshit, ventilating anger, hatred, and fear.

After my jogging I was cooling down, feeling the hardness of the asphalt under my feet, taking four steps for an in-breath, five for an out-breath, slowly calming down mind and body. One of my homeboys (friends) caught up with me and started talking the usual prison bullshit: “Hey man, do you remember So-and-so? I heard he got shanked in the neck on the other yard—seems like he owed something from the last prison. Man, I knew that motherfucker was no good.” Just chatting, you know. That’s how penitentiary talk goes: I had this and that, and I did this and that, and I was this and that—ego boasting; or the other major topic: fuck the cops, and the Department of Corrections, and California, and the world, and fuck you, too. That’s penitentiary talk.

Like in any conversation, one thing leads to another, and I found myself saying, “Fuck, man, I don’t like these gloomy cold days. Weather like this depresses the shit out of me.”

My homeboy just shrugged and said, “When it’s hot, it’s hot; when it’s cold, it’s cold. That’s all.”

Boom, it hit me like a 357 slug. All of a sudden, all that stuff I’ve been reading about made sense. I was too buried in desire and aversion to observe the true nature of things. Too attached to concepts and fixed ideas to just observe. Too busy with my likes and dislikes to just let things be. This was the suffering produced by my ignorant mind. The four noble truths were right in front of me, brought to light in a few words spoken by a guy who didn’t even know who the Buddha was.

I don’t quite get the dharma yet—there will be a few thousand lifetimes before I do—but that realization brought me some peace, some ease, a new way to see things. Now I just walk step by step, each *now* followed by another *now*. Sometimes confused, sometimes in wonder, but I’m here, walking just for the walking. Watching the dharma parade. ❖

Marco Ordney sent the above essay to us from Calipatria State Prison in California with the comment that “English is my second language, but I’m sending the enclosed because I’m encouraged by your publishing of articles from prisoners.”

THE DAKINI'S PERSPECTIVE

BOOKS ON TIBETAN WOMEN

Reviewed by Cassandra Purdy

Women of Wisdom, by Tsultrim Allione

Arkana, 1984, \$8.95

Traveler in Space, by June Campbell

Braziller, 1996, \$27.50 (hard cover)

Feminine Ground, Essays on Women and Tibet, edited by Janice Willis, Snow Lion, 1989, \$12.95

One Hundred Voices of Tara, by Canyon Sam

(Not yet published, but watch for it.)

What do you think of when you hear the words *Tibet* or *Tibetan Buddhism*? Many people imagine Himalayan landscapes, Shangri-La, magical rituals, lamas and monks with mysterious powers, the rooftop of the world. Tibet has been the subject of much fantastical conjecture in various writings by Westerners for a long time. This proliferation of hearsay and poorly researched information, coupled with Tibet's geographical isolation, created an unreal picture in the West. Very few Western people had actually traveled to Tibet until recently, and the early travelers, such as Alexandra David-Neal, could write as fancifully and creatively as they liked about what they saw, since there wasn't anyone to dispute their claims.

Luckily, we are now blessed with many informative, inspiring, and well researched books on the subject of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism. And we are not just being shown this world from the traditional male perspective; we are also seeing books about the complex part played by Tibetan women and the feminine in religious, social and cultural contexts. Three such books are: *Women of Wisdom*, *Traveler in Space*, and *Feminine Ground*.

The first two books are of particular interest to practitioners and/or scholars of Tibetan Buddhism. Tsultrim Allione's work, *Women of Wisdom*, is a fascinating collection of biographies of Tibetan Buddhism's most central female figures. Tsultrim herself is a longtime practitioner and former nun in the Kagyu tradition. She writes from three interesting perspectives: first, as a Westerner from New England (she is, needless to say, an outsider to the culture); second, as someone who has practiced both as a nun and a lay person; and last and perhaps most important, as a woman seeking the inspiration of other women's stories to help her on her own path. In her introduction Allione writes about her own experience of being drawn to Tibetan Buddhism, which pulls the reader into the book and also gives us a sense of who she is in relation to the material.

Allione quotes from Carol Christ in her introduction, "Women's stories have not been told. And without stories there is no articulation of experience. Without sto-

ries a woman is lost...closed in silence." Her book is an effort to share the life stories, unknown to us in the West, of Tibetan women who are dakinis, consorts, yoginis, mystics, and high practitioners. Some of these women's lives are favorite folk tales in Tibet. For example, Nangsa Obum's biography, which reads like a tragic fairy tale full of Buddhist teachings and allegories, is the basis for a popular folk drama. Allione also includes the story of Machig Lapdron, one of the most beloved of Tibetan women mystics. She is said to be an incarnation of Yeshe Tsogyel, the 18th-century consort of Guru Padma Sambhava, who brought Tantric Buddhism to Tibet. In the introduction to this central story Allione writes, "This biography was written by Machig herself, so there are no mistakes. Machig is the Wisdom Dakini, the heart mind Mother of the Buddhas..." *Women of Wisdom* celebrates these diverse Tibetan Buddhist women as the foremothers of today's practitioners.

The brand new *Traveler in Space*, by June Campbell, is far more scholarly in its approach, taking a psychoanalytic and historical perspective on the philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism. Campbell focuses on three points: the "archaic images of the female" such as the dakini, the role of the consort in Tantric practices, and the "issues of power and authority" within Buddhist women's practices. Like Allione, Campbell sees the dakini as an important Tibetan image of the feminine principle, "whose role is traditionally to clear obstacles on the religious path and provide insight into the nature of mind. Her name literally means sky or space-goer."

Campbell studied Tibetan Buddhism in monasteries for many years and now works internationally as a Tibetan interpreter. Furthermore, she was the sexual consort of the much revered Kalu Rinpoche, and writes, therefore, from remarkable personal experience. Using a feminist framework and analysis, she weaves theoretical concepts into her research (including such topics as Kristeva's Third Wave Feminism and Edward Said's warnings of "orientalism"). As a professor, Campbell realizes she is in the dangerous territory of both the anthropologist trying to write about a culture without "othering" it, and the feminist trying to contextualize feminism in a non-Western culture. She artfully addresses these issues to produce a complex yet easy-to-read treatment of the feminine in Tibetan Buddhism.

Feminine Ground, Essays on Women and Tibet is a "cooperative effort on the part of six western scholars to produce a volume of thoughtful, critical and provocative essays regarding women and Tibet." The essays are all very different, which is what makes the book interesting, so I will just mention a couple of them. The first essay by Rita Gross is an analysis of the biography of Yeshe Tsogyel as hagiography (biography of a saint). This chapter reminded me very much of Allione's section on Machig Lapdron (an incarnation of Yeshe Tsogyel) in that the intention of the essay is to offer inspiration to

modern-day women practitioners. Other essays are more academic, such as Janet Gyatso's "Down with the Demoness," which deals with some of the ways in which Tibetan culture has been misrepresented. She sets the record straight by describing an aspect of ancient (and to a certain extent modern) Tibetan society that has been largely ignored: its matrilineal and matriarchal structure. Gyatso also found descriptions in an ancient Chinese text of a female-dominated society that she believes to be Tibetan, in which the men were warriors and the ruler was the queen, and the women "do not esteem highly the men, and rich ones have always men servants who braid their hair." All the contributors to this diverse collection are experts in their field and despite the occasionally dry academic style, every reader should find several essays of particular interest.

As someone concerned about human rights violations in Tibet, I found it a bit disconcerting that none of these three books makes any significant mention of Tibet's tragic political situation. Having lived and studied in the Tibetan exile community in North India, I honestly feel that anyone who is doing research and building a career on the study of Tibet and its people has a responsibility to acknowledge (and make public as often as possible) the political situation. This is the least that Western scholarship can do for a community that has so graciously welcomed our curious minds. Over 1.2 million Tibetans

have been killed, and the torture and genocide continues. This cannot be irrelevant to anyone who is sincerely interested in Tibet, nor can it be separated from any other aspect of Tibet and its culture. In fact, soon there may not be any true Tibetan culture or religion for scholars to analyze if they don't politicize their scholarship.

I think the most revealing and important book on Tibetan women is yet to be published. I had the opportunity to read the manuscript of *One Hundred Voices of Tara: Tibetan Women Speak*, by San Francisco writer and activist Canyon Sam. In this book, Tibetan women tell their stories in their own voices, without the filter of a Western scholar's analysis and opinions. These diverse accounts speak of life before and since the Chinese occupation, and include descriptions of raising animals, being part of Lhasa nobility, organizing and staging active resistance to the Chinese, being political prisoners, artists, nuns, and mothers. Keep your eyes open for it.

These books provide engaged Buddhists with a new perspective on our practice by giving us inspiring models of the feminine. Tibetan women have undergone great suffering with dignity and grace, and they have much to offer us both as Buddhists and as women. These four books all increase our understanding of Tibetan Buddhism and culture and women's part in it. ♦

Cassandra Purdy is a recent graduate of Vassar College. She is a freelance writer and human rights activist who lives in Connecticut.

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Read the SHAMBHALA SUN, too

**Engaged Buddhism:
Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia**

edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King
State University of New York Press, 1996

Reviewed by Alan Senauke

Engaged Buddhism sometimes feels like an exclusive club, steadily growing here in the West, but still limited in number and impact. Traveling and meeting socially active practitioners in Asia has been corrective for my own narrow views. But I still have much to learn about what is happening around the world. Chris Queen and Sallie King's important new anthology, *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, provides an overview of the modern transformation of monastic traditions into largely lay movements that touch the lives of millions.

Nine central essays present many of the key figures of engaged Buddhism, teachers who are reinventing dhamma by going back to what they perceive as the compassionate root. These essays by scholar-practitioners focus on India's Dr. Ambedkar, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka, Sulak Sivaraksa and Buddhadasa in Thailand, Thich Nhat Hanh, The Dalai Lama and Tibetan liberation, Japan's Soka Gakkai sect, and the experience of Buddhist nuns throughout Asia. They include a personal feel for the teachers, but they go beyond the individual to consider ideology and organizations that have influence in ever-widening circles.

Some of these people—like Thich Nhat Hanh, Sulak, and the Dalai Lama—we know well from their talks and writings. But Donald Swearer's article on Sulak and Sallie King's on Thich Nhat Hanh offer a biographical and historical context that fills out the teaching. When we see these teachers' failures and successes over the years, we see how real effort, real morality, real dhamma goes beyond any particular outcome.

The essays by Queen and King that frame the collection are particularly useful, and ask some basic questions. Is engaged Buddhism "heritage or heresy," "reform or neotraditionalism?" What connection do these Asian teachers have to the West and Christian activism? What are the differences between a religious practice driven by love and one driven by prophetic voice? What is *nibbana* in social terms? These questions have real implications for the work we choose to do.

My criticisms of this book are small. I wish there could have been an essay on Aung San Suu Kyi, whose release from house arrest in Burma just preceded publication. The survey of Asian Buddhist nuns I found too broad to support the culturally specific inquiry that is needed. And, like the authors themselves, I have some question about including Soka Gakkai, although by

contrast this highly political and controversial sect helps me understand which of my own left-leaning biases I might project on the Buddha's teachings.

But despite these quibbles and this volume's academic orientation, I found it compelling to read, consider, and discuss with others. *Engaged Buddhism* is essential reading for those of us concerned about Buddhist Asia and about the direction of our own social engagement. This is where our practice comes from and might well be where the future belongs. As Sallie King says, quoting Buddhadasa: "The social and the spiritual are two interpenetrating aspects of the one reality (dhamma); 'Don't separate them, otherwise world peace is not possible.'" ❖

Tibetan refugees (continued from page 34)

culture, we ask you to pledge what you can or, if you are already a sponsor, to increase your donation. If you wish, you may mark your donation for either the Children's Project or the Revolving Fund.

Checks should be made payable to the Buddhist Peace Fellowship and sent c/o Margo and Gordon Tyndall, 88 Clarewood Lane, Oakland, CA 94618-2243. ❖

Gordon and Margo Tyndall are active members of the East Bay Chapter of BPF, and have been working on the Tibetan Project for the past five years. They are both vipassana practitioners.

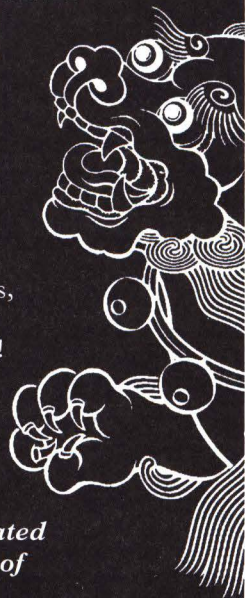
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BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

by Barbara Hirshkowitz

Women's Handbook on Safe Energy

Order from Plutonium Free Future Women's Network at P.O. Box 2589 Berkeley, CA 94702. Phone: 510/540-7645, fax: 510/540-6159. \$5.

"Women all over the world have raised questions about the safety of nuclear power and weapons for the past 50 years. We have found that women are often not given the straight, clear answers they seek."

This very handsome pamphlet was worked on by a group of women over a period of years beginning in 1992. It is well researched and footnoted and includes a handy resources list. Just over half the booklet describes the problems of our current reliance on nuclear energy and fossil fuels with the remaining pages taking up potential solutions. While there is a plethora of alternatives outlined, there is not much information about how we can get there (using safe renewable fuels) from here (expensive and toxic fuels). Nevertheless, it is very important to understand the problem, identify possible solutions, and find a role in working toward changing our and our society's use of energy. The easy design, clear language and charming illustrations by Mayumi Oda keep the reader engaged in this complex topic. Material that can be overwhelming is here made manageable, and there is room for hope. An excellent organizing tool!

Peace and Human Security: A Buddhist Perspective for the Twenty-First Century

by Daisaku Ikeda, with commentaries by Robert Thurman and Tu Weiming

Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, 396 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA 02138. \$2

This handsome booklet contains the text of a lecture given by Daisaku Ikeda, President of Soka Gakkai International, in Hawaii on January 26, 1995, and commentaries by Robert Thurman, Director of the Center for Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, and Tu Weiming, Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy at Harvard University.

These three essays are thoughtful and well worth consideration. Daisaku Ikeda has worked tirelessly over his lifetime for peace and security at every level, from within each human heart to the United Nations. He works and writes from a deeply rooted spirituality in the Nichiren tradition. It is clear from the commentaries that he is a respected scholar as well as an important voice for peace in our tumultuous times.

No Royal Road to Reconciliation

by Gene Knudsen-Hoffman

Order from Pendle Hill Publications, 338 Plush Mill Rd. Wallingford, PA 19086. Phone: 800/742-3150

This essay on reconciliation was first published by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and then as part of the Pendle Hill pamphlet series. (Pendle Hill is a Quaker Center.) It is Quakerly in outlook with Buddhist flavoring, reflecting the richness of the traditions that the author is steeped in. Gene Knudsen-Hoffman has a long history as a peace activist, and she shares her thoughts on the reasons for violence and possibilities for reconciliation. The range of topics is wide and deep: the Holocaust, sexual abuse, Soviet/American relations, and Vietnam Veterans, to mention a few. There is much food for thought here and perhaps a few ideas for each reader to try.

An Attack on the National Security State

by John Balkwill

Dreamstoker Press, 11712-C Jefferson Ave. #123, Newport News, VA 23606. \$10.

If you can pick your way around the somewhat strident political rhetoric, here is the story of the Good News Plowshare's action that took place on the morning of Good Friday, 1993 at the Newport News Shipyard. Kathy, Greg and Michele are peace activists in the Christian tradition who performed an act of nuclear disarmament. The book chronicles the Plowshares action from the planning stages through the jail sentences and places it in a larger political social context that the author calls the national security state.

I definitely agree with the author that this is a story worth knowing. Any time people act from the courage of their convictions in the face of risk and sacrifice it is inspiring. Additionally, it is interesting to read about the role their Christian faith plays in motivating and supporting these activists. ❖

Barbara Hirshkowitz lives in Philadelphia. She is the book review editor for Turning Wheel.

Ken Jones (continued from page 28)

and with the absolute feeling that we are all one.

Back in London, I called Ken from the phone booth with its queue of students before I left for home. "We didn't talk about the Network of Engaged Buddhists or the Buddhist Peace Fellowship," I said at the end.

"I know. I guess it sort of got washed over. Give my love to all the people out there who I don't know." He paused, then added. "Only I do." ❖

Meredith Stout is a photographer, writer, and active BPF member, living in Berkeley, California.

WHAT YOU CAN DO AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

In this column, we continue to offer suggestions to you, our community of readers, for study and action based on the theme of each issue of *Turning Wheel*—in this case “international activism.” We hope that individuals, groups, and chapters will engage in some of the suggestions below, knowing that you are joining with the larger BPF community as you do so.

1. Study and Inquiry:

We would like to suggest a few books from among the many that relate to Buddhist activism at the international level.

- *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, edited by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. Kin. Reviewed in this issue on page 39.
- *Beyond Optimism: A Buddhist Political Ecology*, by Ken Jones, Jon Carpenter Publishing, Oxford, \$17.95. Reviewed in this issue on page 29. Also by Ken Jones, *The Social Face of Buddhism*.
- *Ancient Futures, Learning from Ladakh*, by Helena Norberg-Hodge, Sierra Club Books, \$12.
- *Seeds of Peace*, by Sulak Sivaraksa, Parallax Press, \$12.
- *Freedom from Fear*, by Aung San Suu Kyi, Penguin Books.

2. Personal Practice:

Consider the ways in which you feel connected to people struggling in other parts of the world. Notice what strengthens those feelings of connection. Find newspapers, magazines, radio or TV news reports that you trust, and follow the international news. Correspond with friends overseas by mail or electronically. Support people in your own community when they travel to international conferences, and listen to their reports when they return. Host travelers from abroad. You might choose a particular trouble spot to which you feel a connection: Burma, Chiapas, Rwanda, Bosnia, Chechnya, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, etc.—there’s no shortage of places to choose from, unfortunately—and educate yourself about that place.

Be a conscious consumer. Pay attention to where your food and clothing come from, what they’re made out of, whether people and the environment had to be poisoned in the course of their production. Forgive yourself for not being able to research all the karmic effects of everything you touch.

If and when you travel, keep eco-tourism in mind. Notice to whom your tourist dollars go.

3. Community-Based Action:

Look into the ways your community is involved. Are there sister cities programs you can support? A local church project? Keep your eyes open for local film

showings, benefits, and events sponsored by nonprofits working for human rights around the world.

Host a gathering at your house to raise consciousness about a particular issue. Have a speaker come, show slides, show a video. The BPF office will be happy to send you a video on loan from our growing collection. We are compiling a complete list, but in the meantime, we recommend the following: “Ancient Futures—Learning from Ladakh;” “Three Women Speak Out,” about Sri Lanka; “Satya—A Prayer for the Enemy,” about Tibetan refugee nuns; and “Caught in the Crossfire,” about women in Burma. Or show one of these videos to a community group you’re already a part of: your sangha, a school group, a book group.

Have a letter-writing party. The “Readings” section of *TW* always lists several urgent issues that need your letters of support. (There are four matters to write about that are listed in this issue, relating to Vietnam, Tibet, Burma, and landmines.) ♦

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CHAPTER NEWS

Diane Ames writes, "On Monday March 25, the **East Bay Chapter** attended and thoroughly enjoyed a potluck dinner hosted by this year's BASE program. We were impressed by the work the BASE participants were engaged in and by the food, especially the yam pudding. Chapter members also discussed with BASE members their own special concerns, including the situation in Haiti, violence in our society, and the perennial question of converting Livermore Lab to peaceful use."

East Bay also co-sponsored with the national office an evening with Geshe Ngawang Jangchup, a scholar, teacher, and activist from Ladakh. He spoke about his program that gives small loans to the poverty-ridden and almost forgotten people in the isolated Lingshed area of Ladakh.

The new **Eugene Chapter** is holding monthly meetings, with small special interest groups meeting separately. They held an observance on June 3 to support the national "Stand up for Children Day," and will host an ecumenical meditation day later in June.

The **Los Angeles Chapter** will hold its first meeting in July. The chapter encourages participation by

Buddhists who are actively engaged with specific social projects in their "work-life communities." For information about time and place, please contact Tom Ramsay (See listing on page 47).

On June 23 the **San Diego Chapter** will host a lecture entitled "Stairway to Heaven according to the Buddha" given by the Venerable Aya Khema. What a wonderful opportunity! In May the chapter held a retreat at the Metta Forest Monastery. One of the chapter members has been tagging along with some Chinese Buddhist monks helping to teach meditation in a nearby desert prison. Other members may follow suit if a program gets under way.

The **Seattle Chapter** began a study of Tova Green's book, *Insight and Action*, which proved to be quite inspirational. As a result, the chapter's meetings took on an entirely new form, and responsibility was delegated more evenly. Mindfulness bells became an addition to agenda-filled meetings, encouraging times of silence and breathing, and also serving as a reminder to be mindful as we speak. Recently, Tova Green and Fran Peavey visited Seattle to give a one-day workshop on strategic questioning that over 40 people attended.

Chapter Briefs:

Exciting news!—three new chapters are forming—one in **Spokane**, Washington, another in **Milwaukee**, Wisconsin, and a third in Foster City, California (**Mid-Penninsula**). There is a lot of energy and enthusiasm behind them and we look forward to hearing news...


And on the international front:

Network of Engaged Buddhists in England has a steady membership of around 175 people. They publish a newsletter, *Indra's Network*, and are planning a mini-conference on Engaged Buddhism and Therapy for next spring. Other engaged Buddhist forms associated with NEB in the UK include Angulimala—a Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy, and the Buddhist Hospice Trust. (See profile of Ken Jones and review of his book in this issue of TW.)

Leeds

Welcome to our new affiliate, **Leeds Network of Engaged Buddhists**. This small organization is publishing the magazine *Interbeing* which "tries to demonstrate inner peace and active compassion ...in a home-spun but loving presentation..." *Interbeing* has also been distributed in prisons. The emphasis of LNEB is on interpersonal relations, breaking isolation, and bringing Buddhist principles like compassion to all facets of one's daily life.

We're now affiliated with **INEB Japan**. Our Asian links are expanding!



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COORDINATOR'S REPORT

This issue of *TW* focuses on international concerns. One of the focal points of BPF's international work over the years has been the struggle for democracy in Burma. At the end of May, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party held its first party conference since the 1990 election, in which the NLD won 82% of the parliament and found itself a target of the military junta SLORC's repression. Six years later the climate has not changed much. In the days before the NLD conference, 260 party representatives were arrested and held without charge or communications. Many of us have written SLORC, calling for their release. But even with these arrests the meetings continued, and at their conclusion, Aung San Suu Kyi addressed more than 8000 Burmese from the gates of her home in Rangoon, calling for restoration of democracy and a new constitution. She urged all nations to forego investment in Burma until democracy is established. As I write, SLORC has banned Suu's twice-weekly talks from her home, citing "traffic problems," and setting the stage for another confrontation which SLORC will ultimately lose. But at what cost to the Burmese people? I hope that our government and corporations will honor Aung San Suu Kyi's call above

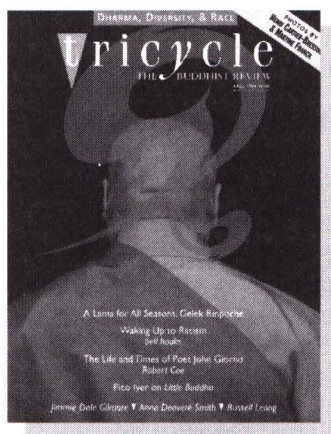
their narrow self-interest. All of us can help in the movement for corporate divestment as we did in South Africa. By the way, just the fact that there are news reports from Burma is proof of our collective efforts. In 1990, Burma's name and the bitter realities of life there were virtually unknown in the West.

Last week I got an e-mail letter from Sister Wendy Somana, a Buddhist nun, or *mae chii*, at Suan Mokh Temple in Southern Thailand. Over the last three years, through the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), we have become good friends. We were recently together at INEB's Ordained Sangha workshop last March. She wrote that five of the nuns who were with us at the workshop at Wat Bakhaokhongkha, in northeast Thailand, are preparing to go to study in Sri Lanka next month.

This may not presage a revolution for Buddhist women in Thailand, but it affirms the work we were trying to do at the Ordained Sangha meeting. About forty of us, from Thailand, Sri Lanka, Burma, and the West, came together for a week in the country. At the last Ordained Sangha meeting, two years ago, we had three nuns. This time there were nearly twenty, and a major focus of our work was to improve communication between monks and nuns.

For those of us from the West this seems a simple matter, but there are high cultural barriers between

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men and women in Thailand. It was a powerful experience to sit in small groups and hear each one talk about dhamma practice and work in the world, irrespective of culture and gender. There naturally arose a wish to extend help, and now friendship between the Thai and Sri Lankan sanghas has paved the way for these five nuns to study in Colombo. I'm sure more nuns will follow in their footsteps.

BPF's BASE Program is finishing its second year. We bow in gratitude to BASE Coordinator Diana Winston's steady work and to Maylie Scott who has served as mentor to the Bay Area and Arcata groups. This fall we have two new BASE groups, with Donald Rothberg as mentor, starting up in the Bay Area, through a collaboration between BPF and Spirit Rock Center. We hope that other BASE groups, rooted in collective practice, action, and commitment, will spring up around the country. Please think about taking on this work, and call us for help or information.

Those of you who will be in Chicago are invited to our first "Day of Mindfulness and Community Building," Sunday, August 4 at Wat Dhammaram. We are excited about this opportunity for practice and discussion with Sulak Sivaraksa of INEB, Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne of Sarvodaya, dharma teacher and board

member Jack Lawlor, and BASE Coordinator Diana Winston. See back cover for details.

We've been trying to renew our workplace practice at BPF—meeting weekly and checking with each other. When the pressure of deadlines is upon us, these intentions slip. So, just as we do in meditation, we remember our intention and simply begin again. Recently we received a humbling letter from a prisoner who said he has been joining our daily sitting at two o'clock. This brought us back to our own intention to sit together each afternoon. Once more I invite you to join us. Around two o'clock (Pacific Standard Time) you can turn off the computers or any other machines you work with. For ten minutes we can sit and breathe together, grateful for support in so many distant places.

I will be gone for much of the summer on a sabbatical in Hawai'i. Thanks to the generosity of BPF I will be joining the six-week work/training period at Palolo Zen Center, where our friend and elder Robert Aitken Roshi lives and teaches. This will be his last training period before retiring as the Diamond Sangha's head teacher next winter. I look forward to Roshi's teaching, and to long tropical days with dharma friends. I'm sure it will be refreshing in every way, and I'll tell you about it when I return. ❖
—Alan Senauke

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

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THE MEDICINAL VALUE of plants. Workshop in the rain forest of Peten, Guatemala. \$100 per week includes tuition, room, and vegetarian meals. Understanding of Spanish is helpful. Write: Ixchel-BP/ Peten, Guatemala, Central America.

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.

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LIVING EARTH MEDITATIONS: August 8-11, 1996, retreat in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. Walking meditation, sweat lodge and medicine wheel ceremonies, learning of earth skills. With Herb Walters, Ayal and Hawk Hurst. 910/385-1401.

PEN PALS WANTED. Male Buddhist inmates in various prisons around the U.S. are in search of Buddhist pen pals. If you have a P.O. Box and are interested, contact Lewis at the BPF office.

BUDDHIST AIDS PROJECT provides free information on Buddhist resources and events to anyone living with HIV, including, caregivers, friends, and people who are HIV negative. BAP is currently compiling an anthology for Parallax Press on Buddhist practice and living with HIV. Contributors include Thich Nhat Hanh, Robert Thurman, Joan Halifax, and Eric Kolvig. Contributions are welcome until September 1996. BAP: 555 John Muir Drive, #803, San Francisco, CA 94132; 415/522-7473.

ABOLITION 2000: Closing the Circle. August 6th Coalition to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. Action at Livermore Lab on Aug. 6. Nonviolence workshop on Aug. 3 in Berkeley. Also: Livermore Conversion Project Actions at the Lab on Aug. 6, 9, and Sept. 12. 510/832-4347.

GRATITUDES

BPF gratefully acknowledges contributions above membership received between February 1 & April 30, 1996.

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With Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, Jack Lawlor, Ven. Chuen Phangcham, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Diana Winston.
Sunday, August 4, 1996; 8 AM to 5 PM. Wat Dhammaram, 7059 West 75th Street, Burbank, Illinois.
For further information: Art Dahl (312) 772-6892.

A DHARMA TALK BY PEMA CHODRON TO BENEFIT THE BASE PROGRAM:

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