



TURNING WHEEL

Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Summer 1999 \$4.00

After the execution... what then?



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

Buddhist Views on:
❖ *Yugoslavia* ❖ *Dharma Transmission*
❖ *Diversity in Our Sanghas*

FROM THE EDITOR

Question Authority

This issue of *TW* does not have one central theme, as it usually does. Instead, it's a basket of mixed produce. And things come up, like *war*, which we can't ignore.

A mini-theme takes up the idea of the Buddhist teaching lineage, and the transmission of spiritual authority. A couple of Zen teachers here respond to a piece by Lew Richmond on the subject, a few issues back. Lest this seem at first to have not much to do with engaged Buddhism, I want to say that the discussion raises important questions about authority and leadership, questions that are relevant not only to practitioners in other Buddhist traditions, but to people working for social change. How do we recognize authority? What does it mean to be authentic? What traditions do we keep? What do we modify? What do we overturn?

In the United States, we celebrate the memory of the Boston Tea Party, where wild men threw the king's precious tea overboard into the cold water, to liberate themselves from the tyranny of the British crown. (I expect there are people in China who believe that the burning of ancient Buddhist sutras in Tibet was a step toward liberating the Tibetan people from despotism. Let's study the difference.)

At the same time, we in the U.S. rarely question the authority of the police, the IRS, the courts. In my own life, I grew up respecting my parents' and grandparents' authority. I was not a rebellious child; in fact the possibility never occurred to me. There wasn't much to rebel against. The rules of the house were reasonable: Don't tip you chair. Don't play with the candle.

But I believe we need to question authority, partly to make sure it's honest. That's why we look for the doctor's diploma on the wall. Is he or she properly trained? So, in Buddhist teaching, it's not rude to question authority. Where did you get your training? On whose authority do you tell me to be quiet? To move rocks? Why do you wear that brown thing? The teacher is the teacher because we have agreed to be her students. It is *on our authority* that she is the authority. Or he.

So, too, we put ourselves in a lineage. We can't choose our blood ancestors, but we can choose a lineage for ourselves.

My family tree happens to be "American" for many generations back. Does that give me authority? No, obviously not. It gives me a lineage I could identify with if I wanted to—but really, my lineage starts right now, with me. And so does my authenticity. I have to decide for myself what I owe to people, how much obedience I choose to give.

So, I have withheld taxes. I have committed civil disobedience. Twenty-five years ago I changed my last name. Some people in my blood lineage were upset by this. I invented my own lineage, took the moon as my mother, along with my real mother. Artemis is my great-great-grandmother. I look at the waxing moon and feel myself getting stronger. But it could be a redwood tree, a bird, or an animal. We find our way to our own lineage. We need ancestors of the heart and mind as well as of the body and blood. Who are your ancestors?

For years, Denise Caignon has been the assistant editor of *Turning Wheel*. She also guest-edited three issues, one on intentional communities, one on "engaged lives," and one on fundamentalism. When she moved from Berkeley to Santa Cruz, she continued to work with me, but her life changed, as lives do. Almost two years ago she had a baby. She has gradually and gracefully withdrawn from her role as assistant editor of *TW*. This is my chance to thank her for the years of support and collaboration. *TW* has benefited from her smart down-to-earth-ness, her nose for authenticity, her Manjusri-like ability to cut through what's extra. I hope she'll continue to consult and give her sage advice. ❖ —Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Winter, '00: **Time**. Deadline: Oct. 1, '99. The issue on **Class** has been put off to Spring '00. Deadline: Feb. 1, '00. Please send SASE with manuscripts.



TURNING WHEEL

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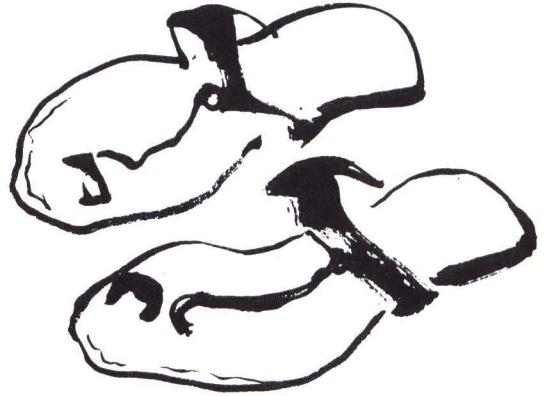
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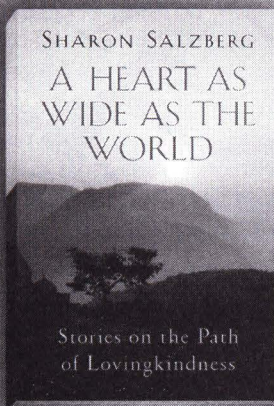
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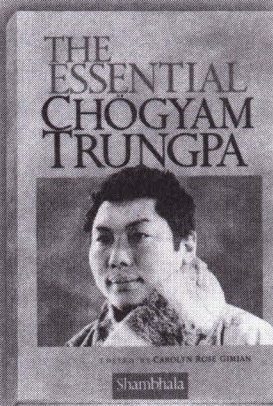


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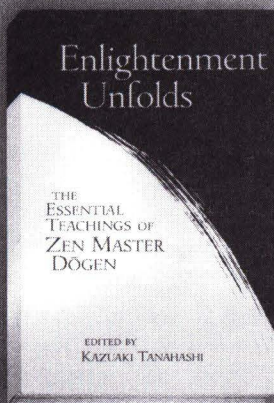
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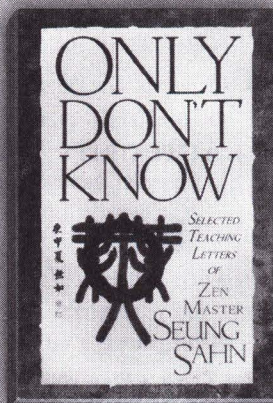
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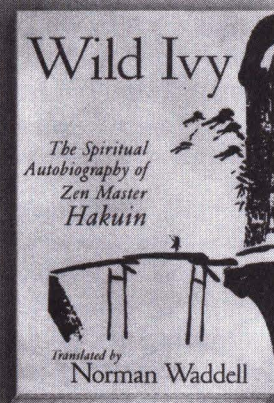


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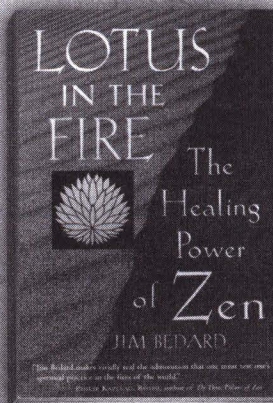
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LETTERS

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

Letters may be edited for space and clarity.]

Prisoners Respond

• The Winter issue of *TW* was forwarded to me and will be shared with other human beings in this Supermax prison I'm in. It may be my last, as a new prison policy bans such information from being sent in via correspondence, including newsletters, publications, and printed matter.

I write not to bemoan draconian prison policies or conditions, but to encourage BPF and individual Buddhists to continue in your efforts to share the Way with those of us in prison. You may not always be thanked for it, but you do make a difference to many human beings.

I have been incarcerated for 20 years, my first 13 under sentence of death, and I have been in Zen practice for almost 15 years. In 1991, shortly before I was scheduled to die, I was granted a conditional pardon with a strong recommendation for a new trial by the governor of Virginia—based on newly discovered evidence of my innocence. As of yet, the recommended new trial has not materialized.

Since the early 1980s I have worked closely with virtually all of the organizations you listed in the Winter issue as working to abolish the death penalty. I am alive today—not executed—thanks to their efforts, especially thanks to Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation. Like brother Mumia Abu Jamal, I have been a thorn in the side/butt of the state Department of Corrections (DOC). I have chosen not to be silent, and over the years I have been a successful prison litigator, vocal abolitionist, and practitioner of nonviolence.

In 1992 I founded an organization called Peace Studies/Alternatives to Violence that was grounded in the restorative justice model. It was very uplifting for prisoners, but in 1995, it was arbitrarily closed by a new DOC director. In 1996, in an effort to silence me and render me inactive, I was chained head to toe, smuggled involuntarily out of the state in the wee hours of the morning on the governor's state jet, and moved to Supermax confinement in Utah. This leg of my journey was very much a learning experience for me, and my practice in the Way deepened.

My presence in Utah generated a great deal of unwanted attention on the Supermax unit. After six months, I began a hunger strike in an effort to be sent back to Virginia, in the hope of getting a new trial. After 62 days of fasting, I was once again put on the governor's

jet, only to land in an Illinois maximum security prison. In September of 1998, after I had fasted for 63 days (and lost 75 pounds), Illinois demanded that Virginia retake custody. I'm now buried within a new Supermax prison; in fact I've been supermaxed in Supermax.

I have been determined to be, by Virginia's current DOC director, one of the state's most dangerous prisoners. Odd, isn't it, how smiling, sitting, breathing, speaking, sharing the Way, and choosing to walk the Eightfold Path can make one so very dangerous!?! I truly can be shot or shocked for sharing *TW* with those around me.

Please, dear friends, continue to be dangerous; continue to share the Way.

—Prisoner, Virginia

• Thank you for the Winter edition of *Turning Wheel*; I enjoyed Jarvis Master's perspective. These death-bed eyes of mine have rested upon a great deal of material related to the issue of capital punishment, and I am certain there will be more as long as (we) continue to fashion institutions built with the bodies of the dead. I can only hope there will continue to be scribes like Masters to present the truth. For the death penalty isn't about statistics, deterrence, or the numerous other stale arguments for or against...it's about the waiting. There's nothing worse than waiting to be systematically murdered, with the horrible grinding on the brain that never, EVER, ceases.

—Anonymous, Death Row, Arkansas

• As a prisoner, I live in a sterile environment where Buddhism in all of its myriad forms is a breath of true freedom for many of us. For some, the Dharma is the only true freedom they will ever know.

Buddhist practice at this facility has taken on new meaning because our practice represents the only rehabilitation program many of us are able to enter. With staff shortages and budget cuts, rehabilitation is rapidly becoming a dreamy memory. We are hopeful that we can introduce a program of meditation and mental discipline into the system through lay Buddhist teachers from a nearby center in Bloomington.

The Spring 1999 issue of *TW* contained letters of great interest to me. The Buddhist view on the death penalty seems pretty universal. Even if a person behaves in a criminal manner or acts out violently, life is the most valuable possession they have. That life, like all life, is not unique to that person, but has an effect on all other lives. For this reason Buddhism consistently recommends rehabilitation or imprisonment rather than execution.

The purpose of imprisonment is simply to protect those outside from being harmed by the prisoner, and to keep the prisoner from creating more negative karma that will only bring future misery. Vindictive punishment is in opposition to the kind heart the Buddha invites us to develop.

Thich Nhat Hanh's

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SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

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SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

SEPTEMBER 14-17

Monastic Retreat

WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

"The Path of Peace"

A Day of Mindfulness
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19

Vietnamese Day of Mindfulness

WATSONVILLE, CALIFORNIA

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21

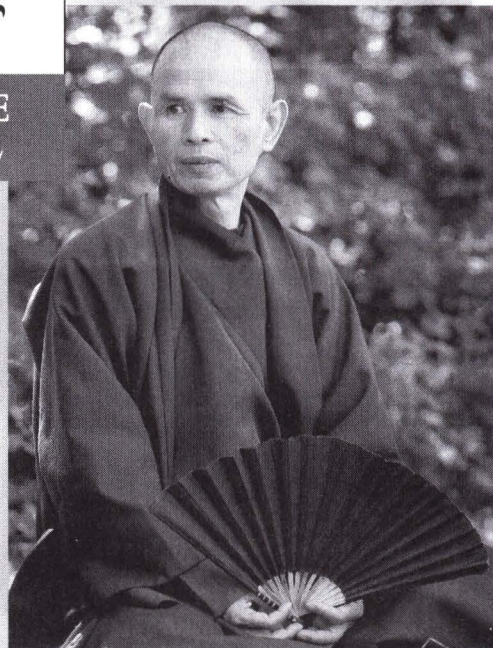
*"Transforming Suffering into
Joy, Peace & Freedom"*

Public Lecture, Berkeley Community Theater
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

"Peace, Harmony & Happiness"

Public Lecture, U of Vermont, Patrick Gym
BURLINGTON, VERMONT



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RHINEBECK, NEW YORK

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For LIVM lecture tickets, call (802) 656-3085 or (802) 863-5966. For information about VERMONT retreat, fax Green Mountain Dharma Center at (802) 436-1101, or send SASE to Vermont Retreat, P.O. Box 182, Hartland-Four-Corners, VT 05049. Retreat includes a visit to Thây's nearby practice center. Special group rates available at Ascutney Mountain Resort in Brownsville.

For information about NEW YORK retreat, call Omega Institute at (800) 944-1001.

For information about VIETNAMESE events, call Hoang Quoc Trung at (714) 556-2683. See Thich Nhat Hanh's schedule on our website at www.plumvillage.org for up-to-date information on tour and registration materials.

While we prisoners crave aloneness, loneliness is a demon ever lurking in the shadowy parts of our mind. Like others, we Buddhist prisoners also desire communication and companionship with like-minded people. Because we are not allowed to correspond with other prisoners, each transfer of a friend has the same impact as a death in the family. We moan, we grieve, we finally forget. Buddhism is the only faith system I've seen that actually provides a means of dealing with these moments of "catastrophic crisis."

—Prisoner, Indiana

Lesbianism and Diversity

• Sandy Boucher states in the Spring 1999 issue, "We have to keep speaking our queer truth. Keep being visible as the beautiful, sincere, queer Buddhist practitioners that we are, and keep insisting that our presence be acknowledged, our input welcomed, our perspective given the respect it's due."

Forgive me—I fail to see the need for emphasis on homosexuality. We all have our issues. What about single-parent Buddhists? Buddhists of color? Housebound Buddhists? There are many reasons people encounter difficulty while trying to practice Buddhism.

Should we not spend our energy on insisting that everyone's presence be acknowledged, everyone's input be welcomed, and everyone's perspective given the respect that it's due? In emphasizing lesbianism, Boucher comes across as waving the lesbian flag, placing the emphasis on our differences. I propose that it might be more helpful to place the emphasis on acceptance for all, and on ways of recognizing where some of us might be having difficulty because of our wonderful vibrant diversity.

—L. Hill

On Dharma Transmission

• Lewis Richmond's "Dharma Transmission in the West" (*Turning Wheel*, Fall 1998) is a most thoughtful and balanced article on the issues of enlightenment and transmission, especially as they relate to dharma practitioners in the West. The central psychological fact of identity-formation process is that individuals become prisoners of the *history* of the group to which they belong. Richmond hits the nail on the head when he [speaks of] transmission issues as expressions of Sino-Japanese cultures. Transmission issues are largely absent in Indian Buddhism, perhaps because it never became a religion of the masses or of the imperial court, as did Buddhism in China, Korea, and Japan. At the height of its glory, Indian Buddhism was a religion of scholar-monks cloistered in their university-*viharas* [abodes], supported by local or imperial rulers, but not engaged in the political or social processes around them.

A minor footnote on the transmission issue: in every generation of Buddhist practitioners in China, Korea,

and Japan, there have been individuals, both monks and lay people, who chose not to be part of institutionalized Buddhism. Their stories indicate that they may have consulted a recognized master a few times in the early years of their search but then largely practiced on their own, had some realization, but never collected a group of students around them. In this modality, they were continuing the age-old pre-Buddhist *shramana* [novice monk] tradition of wandering ascetics, of which the Buddha himself was a part when he left home. When the *shramana* met the Taoist hermit in China, this produced a way of being that could be embraced by those Buddhists who chose not to engage in the psychodramas of transmission, successors, ancestors, centers, followers. Richmond seems to be embracing this modality in a healthy way.

—Mu Soeng, Barre, Massachusetts ❖



HEALING RACISM IN OUR SANGHAS

Monthly gatherings are being held in Berkeley, CA, called "Healing Racism in Our Sanghas." These Friday evening meetings, for Buddhist practitioners of color and of European-American origin, continue the explorations begun at an event of the same name, co-sponsored by BPF, which took place in November, 1998. The purpose of these gatherings is to discover and implement what's needed to make our Western sanghas more open to people of all ethnic and racial groups. This effort includes both exploring racial conditioning and planning practical ways to bring about sanghas which are truly welcoming to diverse peoples.

An exciting thing that is unfolding in connection with these meetings is the "allies project." A group has been exploring what kinds of experiences, awareness, and skills would be necessary in order for a person to be an informed, helpful ally for Buddhists of color in the sanghas. Plans are in the works to create a booklet which could help guide those who would like to become an ally.

A sangha for Buddhists of color also grew out of last fall's "Healing Racism" event. This sangha, which is open and welcomes new members, is composed of Buddhists of color who bring with them a variety of cultures and Buddhist practices. They meet monthly to meditate, participate in dharma talks, share challenges, socialize, and support each other.

We think that these are significant developments, and we encourage Buddhists in other areas to engage in similar explorations. Or, let us know about your ideas and the activities you are already doing to enrich the diversity of your community.

(For more information about the meetings of the particular groups mentioned above, please see announcements, page 45.) ❖

SHORT REPORTS

On the Death of Michael Aris

On March 27, 1999, Dr. Michael Aris, an Oxford scholar of Tibetan studies, died from prostate cancer on his 53rd birthday. Dr. Aris was the husband of Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Burma's popular National League for Democracy, who has been under house arrest in her home in Rangoon, or otherwise restricted by the ruling junta, since 1989.

Dr. Aris had not seen his wife since 1996. On learning that he was terminally ill, he had repeatedly petitioned the Burmese government for a visa to see his wife one last time. The authorities refused to allow him to enter the country, and instead urged Suu Kyi to visit him in Britain. But she feared that if she left Burma, the government would not allow her back. Her presence in Burma is crucial to the movement for democracy there.

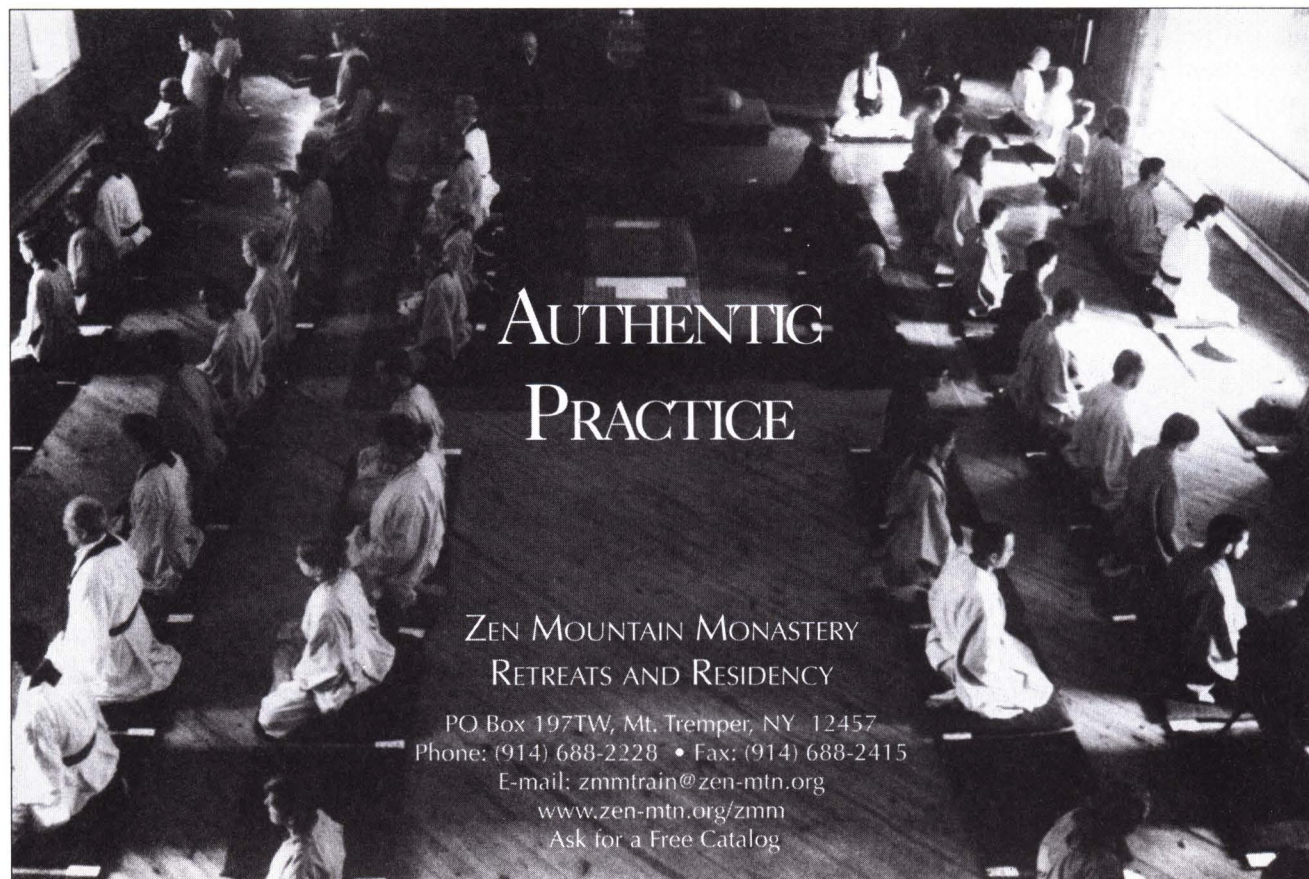
The couple met as students in Britain in the 1960s and married in 1972. Their two sons, Alexander and Kim, live in England.

Dr Aris's family in Britain said that he had died "in great peace and without pain. He bore his suffering with his usual quiet, stubborn love and compassion and saw it as small by comparison with the continuing problems facing his wife."

John Casey, a friend of Michael Aris' wrote, "Aung San Suu Kyi is an historian and Japanese scholar. Before she met Michael Aris she had never taken part in Burmese politics, but when they married, she is said to have asked him to promise that if ever she felt that destiny called her back to her homeland he would accept her decision." (*The Daily Telegraph*, London, 3/29/'99.) It was 15 years later, as demonstrations for democracy mounted, that Suu Kyi returned to Burma and entered politics.

Commenting on the Burmese government's refusal to allow Michael Aris to visit his wife of 27 years, Casey asks, "Why did they refuse to make this humane gesture? They would have lost nothing, and would even have gained some kudos had they allowed a dying man to visit his wife.... Outsiders can have little idea of the atmosphere of xenophobia and paranoia in which the Burmese regime lives and breathes. They are firm believers in a ramshackle conspiracy theory, in which ex-colonialists (especially the British) and their 'treasonous minions'—the United Nations, *The New York Times*, George Soros, etc.—are all involved. Aung San Suu Kyi is seen as their main agent. The fact that she was married to a British citizen was seen as final proof."

From *The Washington Post* (3/29/'99): "Through their corruption and repressiveness, Burma's rulers have isolated themselves from the world. Only a few profit-seekers—Unocal of the United States, Total of France,



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arms merchants of China and Singapore, drug dealers throughout the world—engage in commerce with them. This latest act of inhumanity [refusing Michael Aris permission to visit his wife before he died] will reinforce the dictators' pariah status and, one can hope, hasten their demise."

Inter-religious Seminar on HIV/AIDS in Thailand

From May 2-11, 1999, the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) organized an inter-religious seminar on "A Holistic Approach to Healthcare for People living with HIV/AIDS" in Thailand. Buddhist and Christian social workers, medical doctors, and monks and nuns from 10 Asian countries visited various projects in Northeast and Central Thailand. The project coordinator, Martin H. Petrich (outgoing director of INEB), said, "Thailand is an excellent example of how Buddhist monks and nuns as well as Christians can help in the struggle against AIDS. They have started hospices, and they provide traditional medical treatment, spiritual care, counseling, and other services. Neighboring countries like Cambodia and Burma, where HIV is spreading rapidly, can learn from Thailand."

Assassination of Rain Forest Activists

On March, 5, 1999, three U.S. environmental activists were found murdered in Colombia. The three, Terry Freitas, Ingrid Washinawatok, and Lahe'ena'e Gay, were there to support the indigenous U'wa people in defending their ancestral lands in the rain forest from oil drilling.

After the murders, Andrea Thach, Bay Area doctor and BPF BASE member, sent out an open letter, excerpts of which follow:

"The youngest of the three, Terry Frietas, 24, was the dearly beloved nephew of my late close friend, Mark Fefferman. Although I never met Terry, I knew him well from Mark's many stories of their camping trips. These outings were Terry's initiation to the wilderness...

"Terry first went to work with the U'wa when he was barely 22...In a remarkably short time, he gained the trust of U'wa leaders, and was considered a son by their spokesman...He continued his work as coordinator for the U'wa Defense Working Group, a coalition of organizations supporting the U'wa people in their struggle to prevent Occidental Petroleum Company from drilling on their ancestral lands, despite clear threats to his safety...

"The hopes of the world blossom in the vision of young people such as Terry...The consistent call from a grieving community of young environmental and peace activists, and from his family and friends, has been for the full truth of the circumstances of the deaths of Terry Frietas, Ingrid Washinawatok and Lahe'ena'e Gay. They have called for nonviolent action for peaceful resolution of the disputes between Occidental Petroleum, the Colombian Ministry, and the FARC (Colombian

Revolutionary Armed Forces).

"In respectful memory of Terry, Ingrid and Lahe'ena'e, —*Andrea Thach*"

For more information about the work being done with the U'wa, contact the Rainforest Action Network website: <www.ran.org>.

Ten Talking Points on Kosovo

(From a packet on Yugoslavia from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. See page 41 for how to get the full packet.)

- 1) Slobodan Milosevic and Serbian soldiers are killing and driving out ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. This genocide must be publicly condemned and the perpetrators prosecuted at the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague.
2. There was a prominent nonviolence movement in Kosovo led by Ibrahim Rugova, as well as large student peace organizations. Both had prevented Serb forces from carrying out ethnic cleansing in the past. The West and NATO failed to support these movements.
3. NATO military actions strengthen Milosevic's grip on power in Serbia and throughout the Balkans, reinforcing the myth of the Serbs as an oppressed people. The bombing has marginalized peace movements in Kosovo and Serbia and eliminated the independent press.
4. The NATO bombing forced the exodus of the OSCE monitors, human rights observers, and the Western press, thereby increasing the violence and ethnic cleansing by Serb forces while making it difficult to hold anyone accountable for crimes against humanity.
5. NATO is violating international law by bombing Serbia without the authorization of the United Nations. How can the West expect Milosevic to uphold international law if NATO does not?
6. NATO's actions have undermined the moral authority of the United Nations, the only institution with the legal and moral weight to intercede in this conflict.
7. The billions of dollars spent on the war in Kosovo could be better used to fund U.S. jobs, health care, and education, or to strengthen the civil society and promote pluralism within Yugoslavia.
8. NATO bombs target federal buildings, welfare offices, roads, train tracks, oil refineries, bridges, communication centers, institutions of higher learning, and medical facilities. The Serb infrastructure is being systematically destroyed, in violation of Geneva conventions and international law. Many Serbs have died.
9. The media is controlled on one side by Serbia and on the other by the Pentagon. Independent assessments and reports are practically nonexistent. As with every war, truth is the first casualty.
10. Children in the United States are growing up in a culture that teaches by example that difficult conflicts must be resolved by force. Is this really the lesson that we want our children to learn? ♦

ECOLOGY COLUMN

Gautama's Eyeball

by Stephanie Kaza

Lilacs! Profusion of purple amidst the green explosion. Dancing, light-filled lilacs. Spring has arrived; it's official now...the lilacs have so proclaimed. Lilacs by the sidewalks, lilacs in the park, lilacs on my table—the intoxicating aromas drift by, penetrating the spring air in all directions. “Turning body and mind inside the ceaseless murmuring of just one branch, clouds and moon are one, valleys and mountain are distinct.”*

Dogen takes up the study of spring through observing plum blossoms; Vermonters (and others) take up the study of spring through observing lilacs. When the lilacs bloom, there is no turning back. Fawn lilies, crocus, and daffodils have come and gone under chilly winds, when snow was still possible. But lilacs wait until the green arrives, when the whole canopy swells into leaf practically overnight. This year they came early, spurred on by the first tank-top weather on the first of May. Sunbathers, frisbee players, bike riders, and bladders exposed their bare skin to the warm promises of spring.

To paraphrase Dogen, “the [lilacs] are within the human world and the heavenly world. The old [lilac] manifests both human and heavenly worlds in its [lilac]ness. Therefore hundreds and thousands of blossoms are called both human and heavenly blossoms. Myriads and billions of blossoms are buddha-ancestor blossoms. In such a moment, ‘All the buddhas have appeared in the world’ is shouted; ‘The ancestor was originally in this land’ is shouted.”

This is the teaching of lilacs, this is the transmission of lilacs. Right here and now the entire world is filled with lilacs. How then do we study this teaching? How does the ancient animal body of a human being take up the transmission of lilacs? Dogen tells us: “Take them up and hold them as the eye at the top of the head, as the pupil of the eye.” See everything through the lens of lilac, see lilacs in everything, see everything in lilacs. “When we enter into [lilacs] and fully study them, there is no room for doubt to arise. They are already the eyeball of ‘Alone above and below the heavens, I am the honored one’ and again ‘most honored in the dharma world.’” See these lilacs as Gautama's eyeball, the eye of true teaching.

The transmission of lilacs is the transmission of all blossoms, going far back in the ancient time-stream of the buddha ancestors before Buddha. Intoxication in spring is intoxication with the great transmission of all that has come before. Lilacs are all of this, manifest right here and now. Taste this! There is no room for anything else; lilacs are the entire mindstream. Dinosaurs, glaciers, ginkgos, plum trees—the full transmission arrives in lilacs shouting.

“The entire world is mind-ground; the entire world is blossom heart.” Dogen says, “Study this place as everywhere and study everywhere as now.” Spring transmission penetrates the entire world—how can you avoid it?

*From Dogen's essay, “Plum Blossoms,” pp 114-122 from *Moon in a Dewdrop*, translated by Kaz Tanahashi (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1985). ❖



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FAMILY PRACTICE COLUMN

The Family Bath

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

*No eyes no ears no nose no tongue no body no mind...
Steam rises from our bodies.*

*No color no sound no smell no taste no touch no object
of mind...*

A leaf floats down in a slow spiral. The smell of garlic and beef, being wokked in the Chinese restaurant next door, tickles my nose. Joshua snorkels in the hot tub, and Chris lies on his back on the wooden deck, dozing. I dangle my feet in the water and gaze upward at drifting clouds.

No realm of eyes until no realm of mind-consciousness...

We've been coming to this Oakland hot-tub establishment since Josh was a baby; it's the closest thing I've found to the wonderful hot springs bathhouses in Korea. In Korean Buddhist monasteries, bath day is a leisurely holiday, a relief from the pressure of the strict monastic schedule, with its 3 AM wakeup. You soak as long as you like in a communal hot pool, then rub each part of your body with a small, rough mitt, removing dead skin. Friends vigorously scrub each other's backs.

No suffering, no origination, no stopping, no path...

Closing my eyes, I turn my face to the sun. I see the faces of refugee mothers and children from Kosovo. Of teenagers killed in the Littleton, Colorado, high-school shooting. Of the teacher murdered in the parking lot of the Walgreen's drugstore near our apartment. So many enormous, senseless sorrows, crowding close this spring. I can't bear to watch the television news: too painful, ultimately too numbing. Where, in this moment, is my tender heart?

Although we sometimes chat, our hour-long hot tub is usually quiet time, time for our family to be together in silence. Sometimes we massage each other's shoulders, or sit in meditation. Surfacing, Josh aims a water gun at an action figure on the edge of the tub, calculating the angle that will send Hot Lava Predator to an ocean tomb.

*O Shariputra, form does not differ from emptiness,
emptiness does not differ from form...*

Josh and I float lazily, two frogs in a warm pond, foreheads touching.

"I am mindful," Josh says.

"What are you mindful of?" I ask.

"I am mindful that I am in a liquidy environment," Josh says. "I am warm, and I love my parents. I am in my body, and my body came from your body."

At ten, Josh's Asian body is compact, skinny. Chris and I, 50 and 45, respectively, are graying, our bodies thickening. We will not always be together in health and ease. Chris sits up and slides into the water with a sigh of satisfaction, then grins.

No ignorance and also no extinction of it until no old age and death and also no extinction of them...

The artist friend I've known for 25 years is suddenly told he needs a triple bypass. The same day I get the news about Harley's heart, my cousin calls to say that our uncle has died in Indiana. I think of the Heart Sutra, which I've chanted over the years in Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, English. I think of Zen Master Naong's great vow, "Each time and every place I am born, I will remain in Prajna and never retreat." Never retreat! I vow silently. I sink under the steaming water, groping for Hot Lava Predator.

I can't say as I understand the Heart Sutra, I just feel closer to it since my parents died.

Therefore, know the Prajna Paramita is the great transcendent mantra, is the great, bright mantra, is the utmost mantra, is the supreme mantra which is able to relieve all suffering and is true, not false.

We are quiet together, naked and complete. I look at my husband and my son, my heart full. Standing, I stretch my arms out, as wide as I can, breathing into the space between us. ❖

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HISTORY COLUMN

The Empress Komyo

by Diane Patenaude Ames

To the sound of gongs and clappers, the colorfully robed priests of the Kofukuji Temple chanted for hour after hour. Court officials in attendance dozed off, bored comatose by another interminable Buddhist ceremony. A charity hospital and a home for the destitute, both of which were associated with the temple, were being placed under the sponsorship of the empress of Japan. A routine event, surely.

Except that it was not. It was 730 C.E., and this had never happened before. For one thing, this was only the second charity hospital, and only the second home for the destitute, ever to exist in Japan. (The first such institutions had been established by Prince Shotoku in the previous century, but were not copied until 723, when these second ones were founded.) The tradition of Buddhist charity, though well established in China, seems to have been slow to take root in Japan, possibly because the archipelago still had an extremely hierarchical society: most Japanese were either serfs or slaves. Besides, civilization was still very much an import reserved for a privileged few. Beyond the embryonic

imperial court at Nara, where the imperial palace, at least, no longer had a dirt floor, and newly literate aristocrats were beginning to indulge in the foreign pastime of writing poems about nature (though falling cherry blossoms were not yet a fashionable theme), the peasants still lived in Neolithic thatched huts and had Neolithic lifestyles to match. To the sophisticated elite, they must have seemed hardly human. Besides, to concede the humanity of slaves is always a perilous step to take if you wish them to remain slaves. Anyway, there had been little, if any, official Buddhist charity since Shotoku's death in 622.

But now the Fujiwaras, a clan both pious and comparatively progressive, were rapidly becoming the real rulers of Japan. Already the court minister, Fujiwara no Fuhito, had staged the unprecedented triumph of having his daughter made a secondary wife of the prince who became the Emperor Shomu (reigned 724-749). Then, in 729, he got this daughter elevated to the rank of empress, all despite the fact that she was not a member of the imperial family. The young woman took the name Komyo (701-760) and rapidly became known as a great patron of Buddhism and Buddhist charity. It was at her urging that Buddhist temples, monasteries, and convents were built all over the country and that charity hospitals and homes for the destitute, sponsored by her, were attached to many of them.

She was known for her compassionate nature; legend has her nursing lepers herself. After the death of her husband, she reportedly became the real ruler of Japan, wielding power in the name of her daughter, the Empress Koken (718-770). When the Chinese monk Ganjin arrived in the capital in 753, both Komyo and Koken took bodhisattva vows at the first Buddhist ordination ceremony ever to be held in Japan. By the time Komyo died seven years later, she had built a lasting reputation as one of the great early patrons of Japanese Buddhism and of Japanese Buddhist charity. ❖

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PRISON PAGE

Letter from a Prisoner

March 16, 1999

Hello friends!

Well once again it's time to put some money where my heart is. Went to the Parole Board a couple of weeks ago. Another one-year denial, but with that I really lost nothing—I just continue what I am presently doing. After all, when you really think about it there is no "in there" and "out there." There is only the present. At the moment I am living better than half the world's people, so I cannot complain. It would have been nice to get a parole date though—then I could finally meet some of the people I have been writing to for the last six years. But that will come—eventually. I am happy to inform you that there are more than a few Buddhists in this prison—a wide variety of schools and thoughts—which is interesting. We share our books and interpretations, which at times are kind of wild but a lot of fun. Can you really picture 10 men—in for murder—talking about when an observation becomes a judgment, over a chow-hall table! Most of the Buddhists in here are very sincere about the dharma and learning—practicing is a major point with us. If we can do it here, we can do it anywhere. Practice is not a location, it's doing. Well I thank you again for fighting the good fight and expressing views that need to be said.

—Peace, M.

Judith McCullough and Terry Stein, members of BPF's Prison Committee and the Bay Area Prison BASE program, are exploring the possibility of starting a newsletter written primarily by and for prisoners. It would contain essays, poetry, art work, and other contributions submitted by people in prisons. We hope to publish the first issue in the first few months of the year 2000. Many prisoners have written to BPF to inquire about how they can become more involved in the

work of BPF and the Prison Project in particular. A newsletter would be one opportunity for shared exploration of our path.

Judith and Terry invite you to write them with your suggestions and ideas. What would you like to see in such a newsletter? How could we assure its distribution? Your ideas will be helpful in determining the next step in BPF's efforts to serve the incarcerated communities. Thanks in advance for any input you can offer. Terry and Judith can be reached at BPF, c/o the Prison Project.

The BPF Prison Project extends deep condolences to the families of Manny Babbitt and Leah Schendel. Manny Babbitt was executed at 12:37 AM, May 4, 1999, at California's San Quentin State Prison. Many of us were there in silent vigil. For more perspectives on the execution, please see the Director's Report on pages 43-44 and the article by Melody Ermachild Chavis on pages 33-34. ❖



The Buddha in the Box, by Richard Lee Gregg, Vacaville Prison

UNIVERSAL EDUCATION: On the Frontier of Socially Engaged Buddhism

by Diana Winston

As I enter the gates of the Universal Education School in Sarnath, India, the first thing I notice is the classrooms without walls. A group of ten-year-olds is studying Hindi underneath the shade of a giant bamboo tree. Ah, yes, I think, just like in the time of the Buddha. I ask for the office and a small boy in a sky-blue uniform politely leads me along a path. In a garden filled with an exotic assortment of plants and flowers, the children shout and run, immersed in games of hopscotch and tag. The buildings are painted a bright terracotta and, unlike many schools in India, seem well maintained and cared for. Suddenly I can't stop smiling.

Universal Education is the brainchild of Valentino Giacomini and Luigina de Biasi, former schoolteachers in Italy. They had been teaching in state primary schools for ten years when they met the Tibetan Buddhist teacher, Lama Yeshe, in India in 1978. Says Valentino, "Meeting Lama was one of the pivotal moments of my life. His Buddhist teachings and my subsequent reading of Eastern and Western mystical literature, as well as transpersonal psychology, radically changed my thinking. Over the years as I practiced and studied, I began to ask myself: Can these fundamental truths which have so changed my life be taught in a very simple, practical, and scientific way to children?"

"I had no interest in preaching morality. To me that was prescriptive, something imposed from the outside. I wanted children to learn to think for themselves. I wanted to teach them universal values, in a way that they could directly understand from their own experience. If they were going to act kindly or generously, it should be because they saw on a deep level a logical reason for it. Most importantly, I wanted to teach them about the nature of mind and reality as I had learned it from my Buddhist teachers."

So for ten years in Italy, Valentino and Luigina developed a synthesis of Buddhist teachings and modern pro-

gressive educational methods. At first they covertly experimented with their methodology and later received full authorization from the Italian government. Drawing on Luigina's extensive background in Buddhism, art, and psychosynthesis, they have written multiple curriculum manuals with exact lesson plans and devised a systematic technique for teaching Universal Education. In 1994 Valentino brought Universal Education to India in order to test the method on a cross-cultural basis. Valentino currently lives at and runs the school in India, and Luigina supports it from Italy and spends two months a year at the school.

For the school site, Valentino chose Sarnath, a sleepy town surrounded by many poor villages, where Buddhist pilgrims support a small tourist industry. Valentino was not unaware of the symbolic nature of starting a school in the place where the Buddha gave his first teachings. They built the school on a quarter-acre of land, started with 70 students, and now have 220 from five villages. A few children board there, but most live at home. There are two program shifts: a full-day program from 8 AM to 4 PM, and an evening



Diana with students in the outdoor classroom

one from 6 to 9 PM. The evening classes are for working children and illiterate adults. Currently there are ten classes (from kindergarten through eighth grade) with ten full-time and three part-time teachers.

My visit to the school was an unexpected part of a larger personal journey. Starting in late 1997, I had lived for a year as a Buddhist nun in intensive retreat practice in Burma. When I emerged from the monastery, I was planning to visit a sampling of socially engaged Buddhist movements and programs around Asia. My day at the school was meant as a brief stop-by on the way to South India. Yet Valentino flagged me down, encouraging me to stay for a few weeks to teach vipassana meditation to the older students at the school.

At first I was reluctant, intent upon a more survey-like approach to learning about the many Asian movements that had so influenced my work in America. But

upon meeting the children, upon noticing their eagerness and the fact that they already understood the concept of awareness, could talk explicitly about their thoughts and emotions (in English as well as Hindi), and that they were some of the most well-behaved and articulate children I had ever met, my hesitations melted, and I agreed to stay for a month. Besides, I thought I could learn a lot there about Buddhism in action.

As that month slid into three more, I found myself in an amazing learning process that challenged and refined my understanding of the connection of the dharma with social change. Both spiritually and practically, Valentino was a rare teacher for me, as were the children themselves.

My students were of mixed castes from the poor village families in the area. Many of them came from homes with a history of abuse and neglect. Most had not previously attended school; many were illiterate. For some, the only clothes they owned were their school uniforms. The sores on their legs, which I first thought were from scratched mosquito bites, I later found out were from vitamin deficiencies. And yet, the joy with which they embraced me, a westerner who wanted to stay and teach them something new, who might even sing with them or offer them a new playground game, was contagious.

Each morning after yoga, forty 11-to-14-year-olds came to vipassana class. We began each day with a 15-minute sitting with guided instruction based on the Satipatthana Sutta: mindfulness of body and breath leading to non-judgmental awareness of sensations, thoughts, emotions, sounds, and mental states. After, we discussed our experiences and talked about key concepts like hindrances or *metta* or working with pain or setting motivation or how thoughts affect our actions. (This has led to the development of my own practice-based Buddhist curriculum for teens.) We followed our discussions with walking meditation, which was a favorite for many. Each day there was a brief, joyous shouting match ("my turn!" "no, my turn!") over who got to lead the blue-clad mini-meditators in their silent, walking "snake" across the playground.

The Buddhist philosophy that influences Universal Education is primarily Madhyamika, specifically the teachings of Nagarjuna. It is also flavored by Vedanta, Krishnamurti, and the teachings of western transpersonal psychologists, such as Ken Wilber.

From Valentino and Luigina's philosophy book:

Universal Education is based on the concept of Unity: unity of the body with the mind and the external world (we are a unity: biological, psychological and spiritual). Reality is without borders... It is a universal space where all people of different countries and traditions can communicate and understand each other, without discrimination or language barriers. This is "Universal Education": a method to discover a unity with ourselves, first, and then with external reality.

Valentino believes that one's experience in the moment depends entirely upon the mind. For him, nothing can be experienced apart from one's mind. Initially children learn that objects have no inherent qualities—a flower is not necessarily always pretty, my friend is not always nice—but that these qualities come from perception, a process of the mind that layers direct experience. They can see this for themselves. For example, even a child as young as four can be taught that if she thinks a juice drink tastes good, but her friend doesn't like it, that the juice itself is neither inherently good nor bad but dependent upon the child's perception of it.

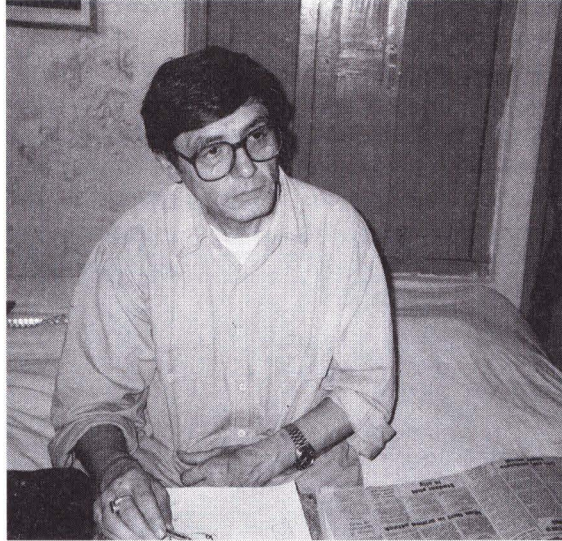
Valentino trains the children in recognizing the perpetual

mistake humans make: conflating perception with reality. He has designed a curriculum that makes use of Buddhist teachings on the mind, awareness training, stories, and myths. He trains his Indian schoolteachers, who in turn teach the children the curriculum in a systematic fashion. He says: "Most people are taught that reality is only material and external. Our children are taught about both kinds of reality. They have to see that a house provides shelter, and also, that it is only experienced within the mind and is not to be clung to.

"If a child is angry, we show him the anger originates within his mind and not in the person who made him angry. Then he can see the situation more clearly. On what basis does he develop compassion and lovingkindness? Where else but from the foundation of understanding emptiness and perception itself? This necessarily bypasses any moralistic prescriptions."

I wryly ask: "So will these children become great mystics and saints?"

"We need to meet them 20 years from now," he answers. "How can I predict what will happen to these children? I provide them with the tools to understand the many dimensions of reality; they can do what they want with them. Perhaps they will become criminals. But if they do, I am sure they will be very aware criminals."



Valentino Giacomini in his "office"

Traditional education teaches to a child's logical and rational mind. Valentino's vast curriculum addresses the many aspects of human intelligence. Of course the children must study the usual Indian government-mandated curriculum for math, Hindi, English, history, etc., but they also study yoga, meditation, martial arts, and massage; the creative disciplines of music, art, and dance; farming; and even social work.

For the children, most of whom have grown up uncared for, in ignorance, without access even to basic sanitation or clean water, this kind of stimulation makes them come alive. It's the kind of training that develops their intellect, that raises their I.Q.s from below average to average and above. It teaches them to think, to make decisions, and most of all, to be aware. Valentino's children score far higher on standardized tests than children under the same socio-economic conditions who attend traditional Indian schools. (In October 1997, test results showed 42 percent of Universal Education children were intellectually above average compared to 15 percent above average for children at the comparative school. They also compared well on attention, memory span, and emotional intelligence.)

Their awareness level continued to startle me. How was this sort of knowing possible at their age? And yet it *was* possible, and continually I was reminded of it. During vipassana class we were discussing the difference between mental and physical pain. Anil, age 11, was the eldest of many brothers whose parents died several years ago, and he was living now somewhat unhappily with his uncle. He raised his hand to answer my question: "During meditation today what were you aware of?" He stood up in that quaint raj-legacy-fashion still evident in Indian schools today to answer: "I felt pain in my stomach. I did not worry about it—I did not make up a story about how I was sick or would have to go to the hospital. Instead I just paid attention to the pain. It was a burning pain that grew and grew. When I forgot and stopped paying attention, I started to make a story and worry about the pain. Too much mental pain, so I went back to the breath."

However, Valentino explains that he cannot guarantee results. "The children arrive here with some very strong imprints from their earlier lives. I think it is unrealistic to expect them to be completely transformed. The most I can do is provide them with the tools of awareness, so that they can have some space around their habits and patterns. Perhaps if they are aware of who they are or

what they do, then they can choose to act differently, so that their behavior is not harmful to themselves or others. But change is not my goal; awareness is."

Valentino reminds me he will only admit students who really want to be there. He tells me the story of Kumar, whose father was a petty criminal. In and out of jail, the father never provided any stability for his extremely bright son. Kumar went to Universal Education because his friends were attending, but from the moment he arrived he had discipline problems, thought the school was stupid, refused to do his work. Finally he came to Valentino. "I am leaving!" he announced. "Fine," said Valentino. Six months later he was back. "Sir," he said, "I went to the other school. They beat you there. I have been studying at home on my own. Please, please can I come back here?" Valentino said he wasn't sure. So every day Kumar came to school and sat outside the gates and waited. Finally, after a month, he was readmitted to the school in the

night class. Eventually, having proved his commitment, he returned to the regular class and now says he loves it.

The school has uncovered a tangled web of social problems in the children's villages. One small step to address this is a new school program that takes children into their own villages to find out how they can give something back. The students bring medicine or food to people in

need. One day when I was writing in the school office, a young woman with tangled hair and a dirty red-and-yellow sari arrived, beaming. Her tiny baby on her hip was the size of a six-month-old. I found out the child was two years old. One of the schoolchildren had noticed her in his village a few months ago, nearly dead from malnutrition. Soon he and his school friends started bringing milk and gruel to the mother to feed to the baby. In the office, the mother insisted with pride that I hold her daughter, and I cautiously picked up the rag-clad baby, now healthy and gaining weight.

In this social-work program, it is the children who put the teachings into action. Valentino sees each compassionate act as a step toward purifying the mind and opening up a space for wisdom. As wisdom grows, the interdependent nature of reality becomes more glaringly obvious, and more acts of compassion naturally flow.

Valentino encourages the development of wisdom and compassion, not only in the students, but also in the teachers (the most committed of whom he sends to vipassana courses and to yoga retreats), the volunteers



Walking meditation in the schoolyard

(my four months here gave me an education this article can only briefly touch on), and himself (every few years he takes a five month practice period).

One day the classroom where I taught was being painted, so we held vipassana class on the school roof. Encouraged by the extraordinarily blue and clear sky, I asked them to describe its qualities.

"The sky is open!" "Infinite!" "No borders!" "It is always changing!" "I can't find it or hold it!" they shouted out in a random, overlapping, and excited fashion.

"OK," I asked, "What is it similar to?"

"Our minds!" sang out a few.

The Buddha talks about the three ways of attending to the needs of others. Universal Education School is a beautiful expression of these teachings. First, the children are provided with material needs: medicines, adequate food, and a school uniform, and they learn to keep their clothes and bodies clean. Second, the gift of fearlessness: they are encouraged to think for themselves and to imagine a possibility beyond the down-trodden life they know. Third, they are taught dharma both explicitly and implicitly. From vipassana classes, to a drum that sounds three times a day to remind the children to be aware for the next minute, to active inquiries into the nature of mind and perception, dharma is embedded in Universal Education.

However, Valentino is quick to point out its ecumenical roots. "Actually, Universal Education is not about teaching only a Buddhist viewpoint, since I believe the essences of the great spiritual traditions are really very similar. In India I teach about Vishnu and Siva and the Hindu pantheon; in Italy we referred more to God. I want the children to see what is universal in all spiritual systems, but specifically to value their own religion."

Valentino refuses to be fragmented. His cluttered bedroom is the school office, computer room, counseling hall, doctor's and receptionist's office. There is no separation of his work life from his personal life; I wonder if this is healthy, yet it doesn't seem to bother him at all. He rarely seems tired. He responds to whatever is in front of him, whether it is disciplining an unruly student, rushing off to the village to give medicine to a woman dying of TB, planning an education conference,

diagnosing an earache, or engaging me in two-hour discussions about the school philosophy and the nature of mind. ("Where is this pen, Diana? Right now. Where is it?") His energy is endless. He can be fierce and furious at times, raging about a perceived injustice he reads in the local paper, livid over India's entry into nuclear arms production, disorganized and distracted, and deeply passionate about good Italian coffee.

I was most touched by Universal Education's merging of the philosophical and the practical. The school weaves in the dharma on many different levels. I saw it manifested in the curriculum, in the architecture, in the school's relation to the natural world, in the family-like relationships among teachers, in how difficulties were sorted out, and in the daily joy of the children themselves.

At this school, personal, interpersonal, and structural change is actually happening. Universal Education addresses intrapersonal violence: how we take perceptions and thoughts to be me and mine. Valentino remedies the "wrong view" with the teachings on emptiness and the nature of mind. He teaches the children to look beyond perception and see underlying reality, to stop the personal violence that comes from the reification of self, from being so "caught in our drama."

On the interpersonal level, where violence takes obvious manifestations through words

and actions, peace is taught. Rajiv came to the school four years ago, after having beaten the teacher in his previous school. His aggression was so rampant that the villagers had named him "the mad child." He was illiterate, wild, spoke no English. He hated school and had no interest in learning. However, he latched on to one of the teachers at the school, the only one he said he liked. He began to learn to read and slowly to accept the school. Today Rajiv is 13 and is probably one of the brightest children in the school, often working extra hours to study anything new. He is learning Italian, bakes cakes and pizza, and is already being trained to teach.

Finally, on a structural level, addressing the root causes of violence—such as general ignorance and what Buddhists call clinging to a "wrong view" of self—will have tremendous ramifications as these children grow up and become members of society. Such a universal education is much needed in these difficult times, particularly

When I accidentally stepped on some ants, the girls gathered round and gently tried to gather them up.



Vipassana meditation class

in India where the educational system is in shambles; where 400 million people are illiterate; where corruption is rampant on all fronts; where 1000 schools per year would need to be built in order to address the endlessly burgeoning population; where the gap between poor and rich keeps growing. Here in this school real change is happening. It will reverberate outward.

Valentino has committed to twelve years in India, long enough to see the first group of children through high school and then to train them as teachers. He dreams of starting other Universal Education schools, and perhaps of starting an education movement that will spread throughout India, and even beyond. Is this an unrealistic fantasy?

"Look Diana," Valentino sighs, "I am only doing this because I must, because I have no choice. It is my spiritual practice, my life practice. If I help someone, I am happy. If I don't succeed, at least I can say I tried."

And Valentino continues in spite of difficulties, in spite of the undeniable hassles of dealing with an infuriating Indian bureaucratic system, in spite of never having quite enough money to run the school (it operates mainly on his pension, with minimal private donations), in spite of inadequate facilities, meager supplies, and not enough land for the children to play on.

Two small boys entered the room and look around for Valentino. Knowing their mother recently died, and that they haven't been cared for properly, Valentino offered them the "special school curd," a delicious mix of yogurt, bananas, and sugar. The older boy helped himself to some curd from the bowl meant for his brother. Valentino grew fierce: "What are you doing? That was not for you! Now your brother gets less. Do you know what you just did?" The boy shrugged and walked away.

He turned to me and explained: "I have to ask them if they were aware. When they first come to the school, they have no idea of what they are doing, so we just tell them to share food and not be selfish. Later on we question them. If they admit that they took something and tell us how they felt, happy or not, then we say OK, they have awareness. If they deny that they took something, then they are not aware and then we have a problem. But some day, you'll see, that boy won't take his brother's curd."

And I reflect on Valentino's success: how these children have turned out... How when I was playing ball with them one day two boys started fighting and immediately three other boys separated them, arms around

their shoulders to calm them down, so I had no disciplining work to do; how when I accidentally stepped on some ants the girls gathered round and gently tried to gather them up; how they baked me a cake for my birthday; how the eight-year-olds cook and clean, boys and girls alike; how I sat for an hour with a twelve-year-old boy discussing the cutting of trees in India and the breakdown of the eco-system ("When you cut down one tree ten people suffer," he informed me); how when I got angry with the class for being unruly, we actually "processed" our feelings as a group and we all apologized and got closer for it. I did not feel like these children were parroting back what their elders had told

them. They were not being graded for being kind and compassionate. It was merely who they were, now.

On my last day, the whole class gathered in a large human clump at the bamboo-tree classroom. It was time for unanswered questions

before I returned to America. "Madam, What is mind?" "Where do thoughts come from? Where do they go?" "Where is the beginning and the end of the universe, Madam?"

I deflected them back to the children. "I don't know," I said, "You tell me. The answers are inside you."

"Thoughts come from mind and they return to mind," Radha speculated.

"Maybe," I said. "How can we know?"

"I want to know!" they shouted. There was lots of garbled and excited cross-talk as the sun shifted its position and the shadows passed across their faces.

Finally, Anjali, very solemnly and with much ceremony, stood up and asked, "Ahem—Can a knife cut itself?" There was a puzzled silence. Then all of us dissolved into giggles. ❖

For more information on Universal Education School and how you can help, please write to: Valentino Giacomini, Universal Education, Sarnath-Varanasi, India, 221007. Tel: 0091-542-386-669. Fax: 0091-542-385-379. Email: <boka@lw1.vsnl.net.in>

Volunteers are always welcome for one month or longer, but they must be self-supporting. Sponsors are greatly needed to continue the work of Universal Education.

Diana Winston is the founder of BPF's BASE Program. She has recently returned to the Bay Area after one and a half years in Asia and is now the Co-assistant Director of BPF. She is still experiencing culture shock.



A musical performance

ON DIFFERENCE AND DHARMA

by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

[The following article is adapted from a talk given at Green Gulch Zen Center in October, 1998.]

I often read the online news so that I can be mindful of some of the things that are going on in the world—or at least what some of the people think is going on in what they consider to be the world. It often makes me agitated, angry, or sad, sometimes bored, but usually it is a distraction one way or the other. I would probably be more peaceful if I did not read it. But I read it anyway, because it seems like a good thing to do. Although it is good to be peaceful, sometimes peacefulness is not the most important thing.

I have been reading about the NATO bombing and the war in Kosovo, about Iraq, and Pakistan. I have also been reading about yet another case of racially motivated police brutality in the U.S. I respect police officers, and I believe that out-and-out racial hatred is becoming rare, and yet, in our nation, institutional poverty and racism is very common, though seldom reported in the news. People of color are quite aware of it. The rest of us, I am afraid, are naive.

The U.S. prison population is expanding at a tremendous rate, and there are many more bond issues on our ballots for building new prisons than for building new schools. The prison population in the U.S. is overwhelmingly made up of people of color whose presence there is a direct or indirect result of drugs, which are directly related to poverty and racism. Most citizens of the U.S. see this as a lamentable but normal situation.

When the U.S. and China meet for talks, the U.S. brings up human rights violations in Tibet, and the Chinese say: Yes, but let's talk about prisons in the U.S. To us this seems like an avoidance tactic by the Chinese, and maybe it is, but they are pointing to a true problem. We are blinded by our viewpoint to what is actually going on around us. Just a few miles from our peaceful zendo is a large prison, in which executions are carried out more and more frequently. Some evenings when we are sleeping peacefully in our beds, a few miles away the state is killing one of our brothers. The two people executed so far in 1999 were both men of color.

In our city streets there are many homeless people and many homeless youth. Of these young people, the overwhelming majority are gay. This is because when their parents discover they are gay they are often thrown out of their homes. We all know about the murder last fall in Wyoming of a gay man whose crime was apparently that

he *was* a gay man. A Protestant clergyman and his organization regularly picket the funerals of gay people who have died of AIDS, carrying signs and chanting slogans that demean the deceased as evildoers. Such a protest took place at Matthew Shepard's funeral in Wyoming.

So this is our world. When we meditate, we have to breathe in this world with each inhalation, and accept that this is really how it is. And when we breathe out we have to breathe out relief and hope. Zazen is not an escape or a denial of the world we live in. It is a profound love and acceptance of it, and the cultivation of the mind that wants to heal it, and is, ultimately, capable of healing it.

Conditioned co-production is one of the cornerstones of the Buddhist teaching. It means that things arise in cooperation with each other, and co-produce each other. In reality there are no things at all—only the mutual and continuous arising of interrelated patterns. This means that what happens in this world is our responsibility and our sorrow. It is not about someone else or someplace else. We have to make our mind and heart big enough to see it and to accept it as our own.

When we meditate we see our mind very intimately. So much that we have not wanted to acknowledge comes into view. We see how deeply rooted are the patterns of greed, hatred, jealousy

and fear in the middle of the person that we call me.

The point of Buddhist practice is transcendence. In other words, we are not trying to improve ourselves; we are trying to go beyond ourselves. But this can't be done by jumping over ourselves. "Me" means all of my confused and nasty mental states. "Me" means all my misapprehensions, and my constant conceptual *faux pas*. That is what *me* is. We need to breathe it in and breathe it out. We have to come to appreciate that which we did not want to know was there at all.

Human conditioning is a very ancient and a very thorough matter. The more you look at your mind, the more you see your mind isn't just your mind—it is your parents' mind, your culture's mind, the mind of your racial group or your gender. We want to be free of these things, and in a way we are free of them already. Nevertheless we have to see how these things come up in our minds over and over again. At first when you meditate you may think that you are going beyond all of this. You think that when you sit on the cushion you are not a woman or a man or a white person or an Asian person. There is just breathing going on. This is true, but it is also true that our conditioning is there—and we are men or women or

*Some evenings when we are
sleeping peacefully in our beds,
a few miles away the state is
killing one of our brothers.*

gay or straight at a much deeper level than we ever imagined. We are bound to our conditioning. In the present moment, all of the history of oppression passes through us. The mind that arises now contains the whole history of our culture or family lineage. Meditation practice is not a way around, it is a way through. Each moment we have the chance to liberate all of what has happened. To turn all of it around for the good. This is the work we have to do both on and off the cushion.

It is a tremendous shock to realize that you are a human being. If you are a human being, you have a moral sense. You feel empathy, remorse, and a strong desire to be compassionate. If you are a human being you know that you are capable of great hatred, and that that capability is enormous, and is with you always. You have to respect it. It makes you very humble. Anything that anyone has ever done in this world, whether it is good or bad, you also are capable of. You can see this clearly if you look long and carefully at your own mind.

The mind is like the great ocean—everything can be found in it, and, like the ocean, in some places it is very very deep. In our mind we can see greed, hate, and delusion, which is the same for any of us, and we can also see the power of history—our own personal history, and the history of our family or gender or race. We can see how all of that is working itself out in our own thinking right now. And we will know that Vietnam and apartheid and Rwanda and Kosovo and Iraq are blood emblems of our mind of suffering as it meets history. This is what we have to investigate, grieve over, accept, and dedicate ourselves to liberating. Only when we have appreciated all of it can we awaken to the real nature of things.

In the bodhisattva path there is a stage called the stage of omniscience. Omniscience means that you can see everything, without anything left out. But it's not a supernatural power, like clairvoyance. Omniscience means that you see all things in their true aspect, the fluid cooperative pattern of emptiness. When you can see one thing truly then you are seeing everything. Whatever is in front of you is all things, and each thing is complete. So if you are a woman you can see that woman is empty and includes everything. If you are an Asian you see Asian is empty and includes everything. When we can see things in this way we can celebrate our own history without needing to denigrate other people. A Jew who can appreciate the true universal and empty nature of being a Jew can see that being a Palestinian is

included in that. There is no need to hurt anyone else.

The Buddha did not promise that suffering would disappear. He did not promise heaven or endless peace to anyone. As long as there is consciousness there is going to be some suffering, and in the human world there will always be the suffering of death and disaster, the suffering of loss, and of love that is unfulfilled, the suffering of economic setbacks, and of wanting things that one does not get. But we do not need to make this suffering worse. There can be suffering, but we can be free of it. And it is not necessary that we hate one another. This kind of suffering is of our own making and it can be reduced by the wisdom and courage of our own activity.

Each one of us is different from every other one. We say there are men and woman and Asians and Africans and white people. But if we get closer we see that there aren't any Asians—there are Chinese and Vietnamese, Cambodians and Thais, and they are all quite different. And there are no white people either—there are French and German and American people, there are women who are different from men, and gay people who are different from straight people. If we get closer still, each man will see that he is not like other men, each Jew that she is not like other Jews, each African American that he is not like any other African American.

In the end, most intimately, each one of us is completely different. Each one is a universe of difference, and each universe of difference is impossibly deep. When you really look at your mind, and come to the ocean depths, there is nothing you can say about who you are. What a strange thing it is to be someone, to think you are someone, to speak about

this world as though it were something, to want anything, to find something or to lose something; all of this is very strange.

I think that if we all appreciated the real nature of our minds we would not be able to hate one another. Knowing that we do not understand one another, we would be curious about one another, and all the strangeness of the world. We would want to know all about it and enjoy it. This is how children are. They want to know about everything and to enjoy everything. They have to be taught to hate; they have the natural capacity to love, if only this world would allow them to exercise it.

Why is hatred so common? If it is just something in our minds, why don't we get rid of it easily? It seems



Anything that anyone has ever done in this world, whether it is good or bad, you also are capable of.

(Continued on page 23)

HOW DO I PRACTICE WITH THIS?

by Mary Mocine

[The following article is based on a dharma talk given at San Francisco Zen Center on March 24, 1999.]

I was going to talk about spring and beginnings, and the beginners' practice period that's starting this afternoon. I can see some wisteria blooming outside and I can hear birds singing. I was going to bring up the notion that within this spring there is death; in the middle of the lush spring grass there's dead grass from the year before. And part of what makes it beautiful to us is that we know that this lush grass will one day look like that.

But Wednesday NATO started bombing in Yugoslavia, so that's what I need to talk about. As I prepared for this talk I kept thinking, "How do I practice with this?" I kept wondering, "Is it the dharma to talk about politics?" I guess so. It has to be okay.

Nothing is clear to me. I don't even feel one hundred percent clear that it's wrong to bomb. The notion of ethnic cleansing is so horrific that I don't know. It's not just NATO bombing some "they" over there. It's certainly the United States bombing, so in some sense I'm doing it. If I'm not doing something to protest it, am I complicit? I don't know. It's being done in my name. I just keep coming back to: Can I practice with it? Can I stand to be with it? Can I be present for this, whatever it is, including my aversion?

Last night I thought, "Those people in Serbia, they have so much hatred. How did we manage to do so well in the U.S.?" And then I thought, "Are you kidding?" We haven't done so well. I was just reading in the *New Yorker* about two African American men in New York who were shot by the police. There's a tremendous amount of hatred in this country. I've been known to be unkind myself.

Practice for me is about keeping my eyes as open as I can. "Ethnic cleansing." What a phrase! It's so clinical, like Comet cleanser. It doesn't sound like it has anything to do with actually killing people.

Could this bombing be a terrible necessity? We failed earlier on to do what might have been done to avoid it. We're probably complicit in fanning the flames there. But here we are now, and Albanians are certainly being oppressed. Is the bombing necessary now to stop worse harm? The whole thing is so painful—I'd rather say, "Oh, a plague on all their houses. They're just nuts over there."

As Buddhists we usually reject killing of any kind. We say that violence begets worse violence. And that seems to be happening in Kosovo; it's getting worse for the Albanians there. The Serbs are continuing with their campaign. But is a violent response *never* appropriate?

Is that completely clear?

There is something we call evil, and we have a sense of what it is. Reb Anderson [Senior Dharma Teacher at San Francisco Zen Center] defined it as hurting people out of our own ignorance and self-clinging. By that definition, of course, we all do evil with some regularity; clearly, this ethnic cleansing is on a much grander scale.

I think ethnic cleansing is an evil idea. It combines the sin of killing people with the denial of the humanity of an entire ethnic group. And the Hutu did much the same against the Tutsi in Rwanda. I wonder if we're bombing partly because we feel some guilt over not having responded earlier and better in Rwanda. But surely bombing is the wrong response?

Evil is a loaded word. And, I think, it's a useful word. I don't know how else to describe ethnic cleansing. Every time I say that phrase, my stomach tightens up.

The question keeps repeating, "How do I practice with this?"

There's the story of a man carrying a board on his shoulder. As he's walking around, he can only see what's on one side of the board. You don't want to be the person with the board. It's important to remember

that the Albanians haven't been perfect. They were engaged in nonviolent protest for quite a while, but then the Kosovo Liberation Army was formed and they began to kill policemen.

Isn't ethnic cleansing different because of its magnitude? What is evil,

if it's not campaigns like this, or like the murder of the Tutsis? The first precept is, "A disciple of the Buddha does not kill," but it is also said that sometimes a bodhisattva, an enlightening being, violates the precepts in order to prevent greater harm. And in violating that precept, one must be willing to take upon oneself the karmic consequences. One doesn't violate the precept with impunity. So even if one thought the bombing was acceptable, one would have to take complete moral responsibility for it. Is this the situation? I don't know.

What about the people who conspired to assassinate Hitler? Would it have been morally acceptable if they had actually murdered him? Hitler was backed by German industrialists. He had Goering and Goebbels and others helping him. If he had been assassinated, it might have been worse. In Rwanda, European powers imposed boundaries that played a part in fanning the flames of hatred. And in this age of media conglomerates, who knows what the truth is? Is oil involved in the Balkans? Is this an excuse to engage the defense industry now that the Cold War is officially over? Is NATO trying to establish dominance in the area and maybe in the world?

*Evil is a loaded word.
And, I think, it's a
useful word.*

How do I practice with this?

In *Returning to Silence*, Katagiri Roshi tells of a time when the Buddha was involved in ethnic disputes. His people, the Shakyans, had sent a woman to the Magadha kingdom as a wife for a prince. They had promised to send a woman of noble birth, but in fact they sent a housemaid. And when that was discovered, the people of Magadha were very upset and the king's counselor persuaded him to attack the Shakya people. When the Shakyans realized that the Magadhans were planning to attack, they asked Shakyamuni Buddha to stop them, and he accepted the task.

The Buddha knew the king and his army were coming, so he sat in meditation under a dead tree on the side of the road leading to Kapilavastu—his clan's home. As the king traveled along this road, he saw the Buddha sitting there. Since it was very hot, the king asked, "Why do you sit under a dead tree?" The Buddha calmly said to the king, "I feel cool even under this dead tree, because it is growing near my native country." This really pierced the king's heart, and he was so greatly impressed by the Buddha's action that he could go no further. Instead, he returned to his country. But the king's counselor still encouraged him to attack, and finally he did. This time, unfortunately, Shakyamuni Buddha didn't have time to do anything. Without saying a word, he just stood and watched his country and his people being destroyed.

In the end he was simply present. Surely it hurt him, but he did not turn away from it. Katagiri describes him as being present and "embodying peace beyond the idea of peace or no-peace." One way of practicing with this bombing is to be present for your own response, whatever it is, including the pain, the anger, the helplessness, the wanting to turn away from it.

Practice, too, means *zazen*. *Zazen* reminds us that nothing is permanent, nothing is secure. *Zazen* helps us sit with how much it hurts, how angry or impotent we feel. It helps us sit still in the middle of not knowing; it helps us be willing to see the other side. Katagiri, in that same chapter on peace, reminds us that our opinions really are just opinions, our ideas of peace or no-peace are simply ideas. Not that we don't act, but we act from not-knowing, with "this is the best I can do right now." When we act from uncertainty, that's acting from *zazen*.

I used to be very politically active. Practice has made me less self-righteous, less sure. I'm not suggesting that you do any particular thing or have a particular position. I think that practice is about being willing to be present for whatever your reality is, so that if you choose to do nothing, then be conscious of that choice. If you choose to turn away, which I think we all do sometimes, then know that you're doing that. It's all right. And if you put your energy in some other place, that's okay too.

Yvonne Rand talks about the Braille method—when you are unsure of what to do, you feel your way along. So

Radio Morning April 13

they hit a
passenger train
by mistake,
didn't mean to twist it
into charred debris—
only a few bodies,
not much death,
necessary explosions
on the Danube.

air strikes
barracks
military
deadliest
heavy shelling
naval vessels
attack
seize
bomb
hit
fire
blast

(don't imagine
the sound of a
building breaking
apart, chunks of
flying concrete,
a mother's torn
shawl, a bloody
brother, a cold baby)

It's 6:16 a.m.
in Berkeley California.
My bed is warm, and my dreams
melt with Amalia Rodriguez,
Portuguese romance
guitarra under my skin.
Don't stop the music,
my radio man,
my morning sweetheart.
I have a crush on the invisible.
But war spits in my bed.
Carbon disulfide
from an oil refinery upwind.
Biochemical respiration,
exchange of gases—
air we can't breathe
everywhere

Outside the window: birds

—Nora Ryerson

I ask myself: What do I feel clear about? There are demonstrations going on against the bombing. There are people who say that no killing is ever acceptable, and others who say it's okay only if the U.N. authorizes it.

What do I feel clear enough to do? Contribute to relief work, educate myself about what's going on, pay attention to friends who are more involved in this than I, bring it into our dharma circles by giving a talk.

There are studies of hospitalized people who, when folks pray for them, even if they don't know they're being prayed for, somehow are helped. One of the classic Buddhist responses to suffering is a well-being ceremony or a chant for people who are troubled in some way. I do this, and I include Milosevic in my thoughts. He probably needs it, maybe more than anybody. Chanting opens our hearts, and truly it is helpful, even if we don't know how.

The Metta Sutta is a sutra of lovingkindness. It's very, very old, probably from the Buddha's historical time. It says, "May all beings be happy, may they be joyous and live in safety." It says, "Let none by anger or hatred wish harm to another." So I thought we could chant it together now and send out that prayer. ❖

Mary Mocine is a Zen priest currently serving as director of San Francisco Zen Center's city center. In October she will be establishing a Zen practice center in Vallejo. In her life before Zen, she was a labor lawyer.

(Fischer, On Difference, continued)

very simple, but it isn't simple. Usually people hate one another for good reasons. People hate one another because they have wounded one another, and they have wounded one another out of their own woundedness, and everyone wants and needs satisfaction for their hurts. The Palestinians who hate the Jews don't hate them for no reason. They feel terribly wronged by them. Their families and friends have been oppressed or killed by them. So hatred is not simply something in the mind that will go away if we are nice.

We all want to practice in order to be happy, but it is not possible to be happy without seeing that our lives are implicated completely with all other lives. If we practice thoroughly, we see that we are happy only with everyone else and we suffer with everyone else.

I am often surprised by the narrowness of my world, and this is why I make an effort to look outside my small world and see a bigger world. I know I must do this for my practice. I must do this so that I can understand my own mind. I hope all of us will reach beyond the narrowness of our own conditioning to touch a bigger world, the great and real world of sorrow and joy, the world that leaves nothing out and knows that in actual life, the actual life of liberation, nothing ever *can* be left out. ❖

Norman Fischer is a Zen priest, teacher, and poet, and is currently co-abbot of San Francisco Zen Center.

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IN A TIME OF TURMOIL

by Tova Green

Since April first, every Thursday morning I put on black clothing in preparation for our noon vigil at the Oakland Federal Building. I think of my friends in Belgrade, the Women in Black, who stood in silence from 4:30 to 5:30 PM every Wednesday for over six years in the main square protesting the war—first the war in Bosnia, then the violence in Kosovo. I wonder where my friends are now and whether they are safe. Occasionally I get an email message from them and feel relief—they are still alive and communicating their opposition to the violence.

Every Thursday I stand in silence for an hour with others who come to protest the war. We have two signs, one that says: "Violence only leads to more violence," and the other: "We bear witness to the suffering in Kosovo." After the first week we added to the message: "We bear witness to the suffering in Kosovo *and Serbia.*" Surely the NATO bombing is violence, violence that is killing civilians as well as soldiers.

In the early days of the bombing, as I heard that thousands were fleeing Kosovo, and that bombs were falling in Pristina, the capital, I wondered what had become of the activists I had gotten to know there. Were they in hiding? Trapped in the "no man's land" at the Macedonian border? In refugee camps in Macedonia or Albania?

I felt fortunate to have visited Pristina several times, beginning in 1996. Through a Serbian woman in Belgrade, one of the Women in Black, I met an Albanian woman named Sevdije in Pristina. She introduced us to a network of women leaders—doctors, teachers, writers, lawyers, artists, young and old.

Three women had just founded a health center, the Center for the Protection of Women and Children. Two of the founders, Sevdije, formerly a librarian, and Vjosa, a pediatrician, had become activists. Both had been fired from their government jobs in 1989, when the Serbian government nullified the constitution of Kosovo and began a wave of repressive measures.

Before that, the Albanian majority (about 90 percent of the population) and Serbian minority in Kosovo had shared power and resources, but after 1989, the schools were segregated, and Albanians were not allowed to study in their own language after eighth grade. The homes of Albanian citizens were frequently searched by Serbian police, and Albanian men were tortured and beaten.

In 1996, the Albanian population was still committed to nonviolence. In the next year, the Serbian government signed an agreement with the Kosovar Albanian

There was no privacy, no place to cry.

leader, Rugova, that the University of Pristina would again allow Albanian students to study their own curriculum in their own language. There were many delays in implementing this agreement, and the Albanian university students began holding large nonviolent protests.

In 1997, we began to hear of armed Albanians attacking Serbian police stations, and of Serbian reprisals. Then in 1998, the Serbian military massacred scores of Albanians in Drenica, and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began to grow in numbers. In May 1998, a year ago, the last time I was in Pristina, there were daily nonviolent demonstrations in the main street of the capital. Thousands of Albanians poured into the street at noon. They chanted "U-C-K" (the equivalent in their language of KLA), but they were nonviolent.

The violence escalated. Last summer, the Serbian military tried to wipe out the KLA entirely, and many villagers were forced to flee their homes. Observers from OSCE (the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) were put in place in an attempt to maintain a cease-fire that the KLA and the Serbian government had agreed to. The cease-fire was fraying when talks were held in Rambouillet, France, with the threat of NATO bombing if the Serbian government and the Albanian negotiators failed to agree on the conditions NATO was imposing. The talks failed. OSCE observers were pulled out. The bombing began. Foreign journalists were ordered to leave. And the violence has continued to escalate to this day.

To get back to my friends from Pristina...I began to receive email from a network of women in the U.S. and Europe who had worked in Kosovo and Serbia. We all knew the same activists in the former Yugoslavia. We shared what information we could glean from email and occasional phone calls. We learned that Vjosa was in Macedonia. Another activist, Igo, was in the "no man's land" on the Macedonian border. Then she was inside Macedonia, and then, amazingly, she was in San Francisco.

Igo had been in the U.S. a year ago to receive an award for her work organizing and teaching rural women in Kosovo. Two friends who had met her then invited me to join her and them for dinner. We listened intently as Igo told the story of her exodus from Pristina: How Serbian soldiers forced her and her 78-year-old mother to leave their home and escorted them to the train station, where thousands of people were trying to get on a train. How they waited hours and hours in the

rain until, in the middle of the night, they were able to board a train. How they arrived at the border and joined thousands of others who were not allowed into Macedonia.

Igo began to organize people into groups. She had a cell phone and managed to call international organizations in Macedonia to tell them of the desperate situation of people in the "no man's land." A friend from an international aid organization offered her the chance to leave the day after she arrived, but she chose to stay to help others. There was no privacy, no place to cry. Finally, after about five days, everyone was allowed into Macedonia. She and her mother were reunited with other family members who had gone before.

An American friend had brought Igo to the U.S. so she could rest before returning. She had therapy sessions and massages, a few days of solitude, and time to see her San Francisco friends. She was planning to go to Albania to organize women in refugee camps there. Many of the rural women she had worked with in Kosovo were now refugees in Albania.

While Igo was here, two Bay Area activists, Fran Peavey and Jan Hartsough, were in Macedonia. There they found Vjosa and other women from the Center for the Protection of Women and Children. These women were now in Tetova, a small city in western Macedonia

whose population is mostly Albanian. The same day that Fran and Jan met them, Fran paid the first month's rent on a building that would house the new Center for the Protection of Women and Children. Fran did some trauma counseling with the staff, all of whom had experienced loss, fear, and suffering in leaving Pristina. Many families had been separated.

Fran and Jan visited refugee camps, learned what help was needed, met with international aid organizations, and helped small local organizations gain access to resources they needed. While in Macedonia they sent

email messages every night from a cyber-cafe. Friends in the U.S. forwarded their news to people all over the U.S. Now they are back, writing, giving talks, encouraging others to go.*

During the weeks of the bombing I have found it helpful to do something every day that connects me to my friends in the Balkans. Some days I send email, some days I participate in vigils. I went to speak with a community of people in Healdsburg, a small town in the California wine country. They have been holding weekly vigils on the main street and wanted someone to give them background information. I worked with a few BPF members to organize an evening to discuss our concerns about the Balkans. Every day I meditate at the San Francisco Zen Center. For weeks the morning service has been dedicated to awareness of the conflict in the Balkans with these words: "We offer the merit of this service for the resolution of all conflict based on the delusion of separation. During this time of turmoil may all people in need be provided with food, shelter and comfort, and may we all find peace."

* Fran and Jan suggest: If you are interested in going to Macedonia or Albania this summer, contact:

1. UNHCR Skopje, Jacinta Goveas, Community Services officer for camps and host families/communities.

Tel: 389-91-118641.

Email: <goveasj@unhcr.ch.>

2. UNICEF Skopje, Eddie McLoughney, Education, or Leila Pakkala, Psycho-social services. Tel: 389-91-365798. Email: <office@unicef.org.mk>.

People are needed to work in recreation with children and youth, and to work with older people in the camps who are separated from their families. Trauma counseling and workshops are needed for all ages. ❖

Tova Green, Assistant Director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, has worked in the former Yugoslavia since 1993 with Fran Peavey. Their small non-governmental organization, Crabgrass, works between the cracks.

Easter, 1999

Today I can see the hill
between new leaves—
a luminous bright haze
thinly covering the branches.
Tomorrow less will be visible
as green fills and darkens
and trees blend and the hills
hide again until winter.

I am thinking of you all so far away
—Sevdije, Vjosa, Igballe—are you
on this, for me, crisp spring day
trudging on dirt roads
through the mountains,
carrying your grandchildren,
your mothers? Are the children crying?
Was it their few bottles of milk
the troops gratuitously smashed?
Was it your husbands, your sons,
who were taken to the stadium, or shot
on the steep street leading from your home?
And when the cold rains came
did you have a place to shelter?

When spring comes to you, as it will,
will you notice the small soft leaves
and the orange poppies in the grass,
or will your eyes be searching,
searching for a bite to eat
or a lost face or an old familiar hill?
Would it help to know
someone so far away cares?

—Barbara Hazard

ENTRUSTMENT IS A NEW BEGINNING

An Interview with Sojun Mel Weitsman

Sojun Mel Weitsman is a dharma heir in Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's Soto Zen lineage. One of Suzuki Roshi's early students, Sojun is the founder and abbot of Berkeley Zen Center, and a former abbot of San Francisco Zen Center. After Lew Richmond's article on dharma transmission was published in the Fall 1998 Turning Wheel (see explanatory note on p. 29), Sojun told me he felt it was important for TW to balance Lew's perspective with a more positive view of dharma transmission in the Soto School. (Sojun and Lew are friends and dharma brothers in the same lineage.) I thought this was a good idea, and so I interviewed Sojun on the subject in January, 1999. —Ed.

Susan: Transmission is just a word. What is really represented by the word *transmission*?

Sojun: I feel that the term *transmission* can be a little misleading. I like to use the word *entrustment*. *Entrustment* refers to the result of the long relationship and mutual understanding between teacher and disciple. It bestows a sense of acknowledgment and confirmation. As Master Ugan said to Master Tozan, "Now you have it, so keep it well, and do not let it be cut off in the entire future."

The way dharma entrustment is performed comes I believe from an episode in the *Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Ancestor. In a midnight ceremony, the fifth ancestor, Konin, entrusted the robe and bowl, symbols of the dharma lineage, to Hui Neng, an illiterate rice pounder. An important point here is that Konin saw Hui Neng as the purest vessel for receiving the ancient heritage. In transmitting the dharma to Hui Neng, Konin passed over his highly accomplished, elder head monk, who everyone expected would become his dharma heir. Konin performed the entrustment in the middle of the night in order to avoid the outrage of the community.

This midnight entrustment has been handed down, and forms the core of our present-day ceremony. But the ceremony between teacher and disciple is simply a confirmation of the trust that already exists.

It is necessary of course for the disciple to have a good understanding of Buddha dharma. But most importantly, the disciple should *embody* the dharma, should be a living example of it. That doesn't mean the person must be a virtuoso, but he or she should have upright character, be able to set people at ease, to teach, to inspire confidence, to demonstrate compassion as well as wisdom, and to be humble, putting others first while being a servant of the sangha. It is a lifelong commitment.

Receiving entrustment authorizes one to be an independent teacher, acting *interdependently* with others. One interesting thing about the relationship between Konin and Hui Neng is that they didn't know each other very long. It's more usual in our tradition to offer entrustment after a long, well-grounded relationship between teacher and student. At San Francisco Zen Center it usually takes between 15 and 20 years.

Zen study doesn't ignore scripture, but it's not like academic study. It's not learning step by step, or accumulating knowledge piece by piece. It is practicing together, working, eating, sitting zazen, studying, and sharing understanding, day after day, year after year. It is neither gradual nor sudden. Zen literature tends to focus on dramatic encounters between teacher and disciple, to make a point. But the actual

entrustment of dharma from teacher to student takes a long time, and that is also expressed in the literature.

Susan: Is enlightenment necessary for a person to receive entrustment?

Sojun: Enlightenment is not enough. Enlightenment is the beginning of practice as well as the end. It must be expressed in each activity of one's daily life. Enlightenment is important, but other qualities are equally important. A person may have good understanding but no practice, or may lack compassion, or may not set a good example. Ideally, enlightenment should be tempered by 10, 15, or 20 years of dedicated practice. Some of the biggest problems we have had in



Sojun Mel Weitsman with Maylie Scott, one of his dharma heirs.

this country have come from acknowledging someone as a dharma teacher too soon. Our sanghas were young and things were moving fast, and mistakes were made.

Not everyone who has entrustment will fulfill that entrustment. Most everyone has blind spots and weak spots. A person may break down in some way, become neurotic, predatory, or cause other problems for themselves or others. Ungrounded intellect can also be a problem.

Susan: Do you have a distrust of that?

Sojun: Yes, because intellect that's not guided by the heart easily turns toward cunning, and becomes arrogant and egotistical, causing more problems. In Soto Zen we say that an accomplished practitioner should be a little stupid. We mean that the intellect takes its place in harmony with the heart, so that we don't become top-heavy, or out of balance.

Susan: You seem to be saying that the proof is in the pudding. So if a person's spiritual authority is revealed in their actions, why do we need official dharma transmission? If all that really counts is how a person responds to other people, why not just let the person find their own level as a teacher through the unfolding of their relationship with their students? Let the students create the teacher.

Sojun: Dharma entrustment doesn't make a person a teacher. But it does certify that a person's teaching ability is congruent with the standards of our school. It certifies that one is recognized and has been tested in the crucible of practice. But at the same time, entrustment is not the end. It is a new beginning. One is called a new person, and one opens one's eyes to the world as would an infant.

Susan: So entrustment is a sign to other people that this is someone they can trust?

Sojun: Yes, this is someone who can be trusted as a teacher, who understands what they are doing, and who carries on the lineage. It is also important to remember that a teacher has limitations. But if a teacher is open and straightforward about those limitations, that very honesty will inspire confidence. In our day, entrustment also qualifies a priest to become abbot of a temple or a monastery.

Susan: This seems quite different from the Jewish tradition or the Christian tradition, in which spiritual teachers receive authority and recognition without any sort of private or mysterious aspect to the transmission.

Sojun: I have never thought of dharma entrustment as a mysterious experience, but rather as teacher and disciple sharing a deep intimacy, like that between a child and a parent. It is a blessing. Both Jews and Christians have lineage ceremonies and rites of passage. Each one is different according to the tradition, but they all share a ceremonial aspect.

In Zen Practice we don't depend on scripture. What is primary is the student-teacher relationship, from person to person, warm hand to warm hand. While the other religions you mentioned depend upon divine revelation through scripture, I think of Zen as being more like an oral tradition, depending on intuition.

Susan: Other kinds of Buddhism don't emphasize mind-to-mind transmission, do they? I am not aware of that concept of the lineage in Indian Buddhism.

Sojun: I am not sure what it was like in India. As you know, Buddhism died out there more than a thousand years ago. But many schools of Buddhism share the same lineage all the way from Shakyamuni to Nagarjuna, and then they start branching off.

Susan: But Theravada Buddhism doesn't even have the idea of transmission, does it? They don't have anything like a family tree, do they?

Sojun: I don't know that much about their style. Every tradition evolves its own way of doing things according to its goals and the environment in which it develops. Each way is just right for that particular tradition, and this gives us many choices.

Susan: Coming back to Zen transmission, I have another question. Why does it have to be private? When Buddha held up a flower and Mahakasyapa smiled, that was mind-to-mind transmission, and it was totally public, with everybody watching.

Sojun: That's an interesting point. Even though there were hundreds of monks in the assembly, when Shakyamuni held up the flower, Mahakasyapa was the only one who smiled. He was the only one who recognized what Shakyamuni was demonstrating. It was mind-to-mind recognition in the twinkling of an eye. Then, according to the Zen version of history, Shakyamuni made a public statement that Mahakasyapa shared his seat as well as his responsibility. In our day there would be a ceremony in between those two events called "dharma transmission."

In the course of 2500 years or so, different styles have emerged for various reasons. We don't know how things will change in this culture.

Susan: It sounds like you're saying that private mind-to-mind transmission is just part and parcel of the Zen tradition. You're not saying that it's the only way that spiritual authority can be acknowledged. I think it's important to realize that in other traditions there are other models for passing on authority, and this happens to be our tradition. We follow the form as a way of keeping the tradition alive. I'm reassured by the idea that our way is not a statement that there is something inherently secret and mysterious about the transmission of spiritual authority.

How do you think our tradition of dharma transmission is helpful in the context of our western sanghas?

Sojun: People tend to trust those who have the authority of the tradition behind them. I have given entrustment to eleven priests, and each one is highly respected. They each have their individual ways of teaching, and yet they all have a common understanding. They have tremendous integrity, and because of that, people trust them. In addition, my acknowledgment also gives people confidence in them.

I don't tell them what to do. Rather, I watch them develop in their own way. Periodically we meet and discuss what we are doing and our problems. Five of them have their own sanghas and two are the current abbots of the San Francisco Zen Center.

The question that comes up is: If everyone has their own spiritual authority, why do we need someone else to recognize it? But if I were looking for a teacher, I would tend to trust people who are tested and trusted by others, and who have a long history of practice. In Zen practice, one's education is more than formal study. You absorb it through your pores day after day.

So how do you know when someone is ready? Do you give them a written test? Of course not. It's more like observing fruit on a tree. If you have the eye, you can tell when it's ripe. Hopefully we can help people avoid being taken in by unscrupulous, self-proclaimed teachers. I hope the days are gone when a teacher can feel so autonomous that he or she can do something outrageous without being called on it. We now have the Soto Zen Buddhist Association, whose members have all had dharma entrustment. This group of peers will be a big help for addressing problems of this nature when they arise.

Susan: Your own transmission was a little bit circuitous. You didn't actually get transmission from Suzuki Roshi, who was your root teacher, because he died too soon.

Sojun: Yes, that is so. In the Soto School there are three stages for a priest. The first is ordination with your root teacher. The second is being *shuso* [head monk] for a practice period. The third is dharma transmission. These stages can be with either one teacher or three different teachers. Suzuki Roshi was my root teacher, Tatsugami Roshi was my teacher when I was *shuso*, and I received dharma transmission from Hoitsu Roshi, who had it from his father, Suzuki Roshi. This is quite common.

Susan: I have a related question. Can a student say to a teacher, "I really want dharma transmission. When will you give it to me?"

Sojun: A teacher might say, "When you no longer need to ask." The time for entrustment comes when the student is no longer in the realm of desire, or at least when

the desire is not egotistical. It's okay to ask, but it's usually better to wait. I don't see dharma entrustment as a reward but rather as a responsibility.

Susan: Do you think it's a good thing that more people in our tradition are receiving transmission?

Sojun: Yes, it's good. It's customary for a teacher to have at least one dharma heir. Or, as Dogen Zenji says, "one and a half."

Susan: Most of those Chinese ancestors had just one dharma heir, didn't they?

Sojun: No, not really. Many teachers had numerous dharma heirs. It really depends on the circumstances.

Here in America we have a vital and growing practice and we need good teachers. So it makes sense to produce them.

Susan: Sometimes it seems like there are too many teachers.

Sojun: There can't be too many teachers. At least that's not something we need to worry about. The dilemma of Zen Center is that we want our teachers to be ready to go out and propagate the dharma when people request it, and at the same time, Zen Center needs those teachers in order to train the students. But small sanghas are ideal, where the teachers and students can practice together in an intimate way. Producing dharma heirs is a way of extending the practice to other places.

Susan: After people receive transmission, can they then *give* transmission?

Sojun: Yes, they can. They can also ordain people. But it's customary to wait until they have a temple of their own, or some other situation where they can follow up the ordination with training. After you receive transmission, it's nice to have time to mature without taking on responsibility too soon, time to allow everyone, including yourself, to get used to you.

The way to extend Suzuki Roshi's teaching is through dharma transmission. Students have confidence in Suzuki Roshi's lineage, and many students come to our practice places for that reason. It's also true that not everyone who will carry on the lineage will have transmission. We've been talking about priests here, but there are many lay people who teach, and it's their lineage as well. We have a unique situation here in America. And we have to figure out how to recognize lay teachers. But that's a subject for another time.

Although in both the past and the present, in both Asia and the West, there has been corruption and misguidedness, our task here is to keep the practice and the transmission pure and stable. This venerable lineage joins us to all the ancestors, and enables us to benefit from their example and inspiration. ❖

In Soto Zen we say that an accomplished practitioner should be a little stupid.

DHARMA TRANSMISSION AND THE TANGLE OF WORDS

by Nelson Foster

Explanatory Note: This article and the preceding one are both responses to an article called "Dharma Transmission in the West," by Lew Richmond, that appeared in the Fall 1998 Turning Wheel (see also letter, p. 7). In that article, Lew Richmond, Zen teacher and ordained disciple of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, speaks of three different kinds of dharma transmission in the Zen tradition: "the 'mind-to-mind' transmission of classical Ch'an, the 'professional' transmission of priesthood, and 'seniority' transmission that recognizes longevity of training." He takes a critical look at "mind-to-mind" transmission in particular. This kind of passing on of teaching authority developed in China as a radical form outside the mainstream Buddhism of the time, and outside the study of the scriptures. Such transmission of teaching authority from the mind of the teacher directly to the mind of the student, after long and close practice together, is necessarily secret, Richmond points out, and therefore not objectively measurable. And "by its very nature," he says, "the whole business is susceptible to corruption." Referring to the scandals that have erupted in Western Dharma centers, he suggests that, "acknowledgment of Western Buddhist teachers be granted not by one individual in secret, but by a group of elders and peers in public."

Nelson Foster, one of Robert Aitken's dharma heirs, is the head teacher of the Diamond Sangha and the resident teacher of Ring of Bone, a Zen center near Nevada City, California. He is also one of the founders of The Buddhist Peace Fellowship. His response to Lew Richmond's piece follows.

The three types of Dharma transmission that Lew Richmond identified in his essay for the fall issue of *Turning Wheel* seem reasonably fair and accurate to me. Any typology will eventually break down before the diversity and subtlety of life—ask a biologist!—and all names are ultimately empty, but they sure can be handy, and we humans do seem to love them. In that spirit, I have no problem accepting where Lew has drawn the lines, and I think his three types of Dharma transmission might prove useful to us, as we struggle to sort the actual from the ideal in the Buddhist traditions that we practice and hope to perpetuate.

Thus far, Americans have displayed an extraordinary

willingness to accept Buddhist masters on their own say-so. Frederick Lenz provided glaring evidence of our gullibility in the 1980s, enticing crowds of seekers on both coasts to hand over cash to hear him dish dharma bunk under the bizarre name of "Zen Master Rama." We've gained something valuable from such experiences if they've taught us to be more discerning consumers of the dharma—to ask the kind of hard questions about teaching credentials that Lew raised in his article. I want to build on his contribution by offering a few clarifications and posing some pesky questions of my own.

To begin with, we need to sharpen our definition of the variety of dharma transmission that Lew calls "mind-to-mind transmission." Although this designation is traditional in Ch'an and Zen, it's open to misunderstanding unless, in applying it, we distinguish between two possible meanings of the term. A story that appears in the *Gateless Barrier* and the *Blue Cliff Record* exemplifies mind-to-mind transmission in the more general of its two senses:

Americans have displayed an extraordinary willingness to accept Buddhist masters on their own say-so.

A non-Buddhist asked the World-Honored One [i.e., Shakyamuni Buddha], "I don't ask about the spoken; I don't ask about the unspoken." The World-Honored One just sat still.

The outsider lauded him, saying, "The World-Honored One, with infinite kindness and compassion, has parted the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter the Way." He then made bows and took leave.

Although Shakyamuni goes on to liken his visitor to "a fine horse that runs even at the shadow of a whip," he doesn't confer mind-to-mind transmission in the specific sense Lew intended—doesn't recognize him, that is, as someone qualified to teach.

In the case Lew cites, on the other hand, both these forms of mind-to-mind transmission occur, in rapid succession: Shakyamuni twirls a flower, Mahakashyapa smiles in realization of this teaching (transmission #1), and Shakyamuni, noticing this, then formally "conveys the dharma" to him with a brief speech (transmission #2). These stories are almost certainly apocryphal, but that's beside the point; they lucidly illustrate the classical understanding of mind-to-mind transmission in its two distinct forms.

The distinction is worth making because plenty of people experience mind-to-mind transmission in the gen-

eral sense but don't go on to deepen and embody their experience to such a high degree that their teachers extend transmission in the more restricted sense. Perhaps they have character traits that would be problematic to the community, or perhaps they lack the necessary capacity to articulate the dharma clearly, or perhaps they never established a sufficient foundation of rapport and trust with their teachers. In any case, dharma succession—which is the term I'll use henceforth for transmission of the second variety—never occurs.

Here's where things get tricky. Some of these people may set themselves up as Zen masters anyway—and some may prove to be excellent teachers. Conversely, some of those who receive proper authorization may prove to be louts or incompetents. In this sphere of human existence, as in every other, mistakes have been made and will continue to be made. Also, as Lew correctly reports, certificates of dharma succession have sometimes been issued inappropriately, forged, even traded or sold, so a seeker can't take documentation as a guarantee of a purported master's reliability.

What to do? How to judge? Lew suggests that the problem in assessing a claim of mind-to-mind transmission is its "secrecy." He doesn't mean that it always occurs in private but rather that "its authenticity can't be objectively measured [by others]. It's either for real or it isn't, and only the principals know for sure." Not so. Others who have their eyes open will be able to tell, too. Look back at the old texts, and you'll find countless instances of masters asking thorny questions of others they encounter and occasionally catching impostors red-handed. Here's such a case, as it appears in Burton Watson's translation of the record of Lin-chi (J., Rinzai):

When the Master [Lin-chi] arrived at Hsiang-t'ien's place, he asked, "Not a common mortal, not a sage—please, Master, speak quickly."

Hsiang-t'ien said, "I am just as you see me."

The Master gave a shout and then said, "All you bald-heads—what kind of food do you hope to find in a place like this?"

In this rapid exchange, Lin-chi heard all he needed to assess Hsiang-t'ien's dharma—enough to find his teaching bogus and his transmission, implicitly, suspect. His shout explodes Hsiang-t'ien's words, while his closing comment urges the monks studying there to go find a teacher who could offer them better "food." Dogen Zenji's record is spiced with equally firm condemnations of know-nothing monks he met in China.

Relatively few of us will ever have the eye or certitude of a Lin-chi or a Dogen, and we may not choose to denounce others on (or off) the record. Anyone who

deeply realizes the Way, however, will be able to smell a rat, sooner or later. Some years ago, after a single meeting with an ambitious member of our sangha, a veteran Zen monk sized him up as "kinda one chopstick"—a wry and devastatingly accurate assessment.

So to check out a teacher's reliability, one thing a neophyte should do is make discreet inquiries in the wider Buddhist community. But I'd suggest starting with the sangha rather than its teacher: Do people speak openly? Are some favored and others marginalized or excluded? Are group decisions made democratically or at least subject to question? Is the teacher lionized? Is he or she accessible to all or only to favorites? Is there a high price of admission? Is mystique cultivated? Learn about the lineage's history and reputation. Ask a few oldtimers to speak candidly about the group's past difficulties—and leave if they deny that it ever had any. How are problems handled? Are there appropriate expectations for the teacher's conduct, and means of recourse if misconduct should occur? If everything seems on the up and up, by all means arrange a personal meeting with the teacher, and pay attention to your gut responses: if you feel nervous, okay, but if you feel queasy or like you're being wooed, look further.

*Anyone who deeply realizes
the Way will be able to smell
a rat, sooner or later.*

As for the two other types of transmission that Lew describes—"professional" and "seniority" transmissions—certainly these occur, and as he says, the three aren't mutually exclusive. Unfortunately, it's rarely clear to onlookers which of the three is occurring in the pomp and ceremony of a transmission ritual. I honor the example of Blanche Hartman, who, on the day she formally "ascended the mountain" as abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, publicly acknowledged the pain she felt in assuming that position without having resolved the Great Matter. In so saying, she gave fair notice that her transmission was, to use Lew's term, "professional." I hope that Blanche's example and Lew's article might encourage others of us to make things clear if we find ourselves on either the giving or receiving end of dharma transmission.

Lew suggests we might sidestep the vagaries of existing transmission methods by developing a new, mixed-lineage credentialing process, along the lines of those employed in "other professional disciplines, such as acupuncture, psychotherapy, university doctorates and seminary degrees." While his proposal doesn't ring my bell, I think it exposes a root cause of the problems that he's identified: confusing Buddhist practice with education. Witness the appearance of his essay in an issue of *Turning Wheel* devoted to education!

Perhaps in an effort to differentiate Buddhism from Christianity and Judaism, the initial generations of Anglo-Buddhists have shied away from using the lan-

guage of the church or synagogue, instead almost universally borrowing the vocabulary of schooling. In our tradition, we commonly speak of Zen students and Zen teachers, of koan study, of a koan curriculum, and even of passing koans. No wonder some of us, consciously or unconsciously, equate completing the “curriculum” with receiving a credential that authorizes us to “teach.” Mistake! Mistake!

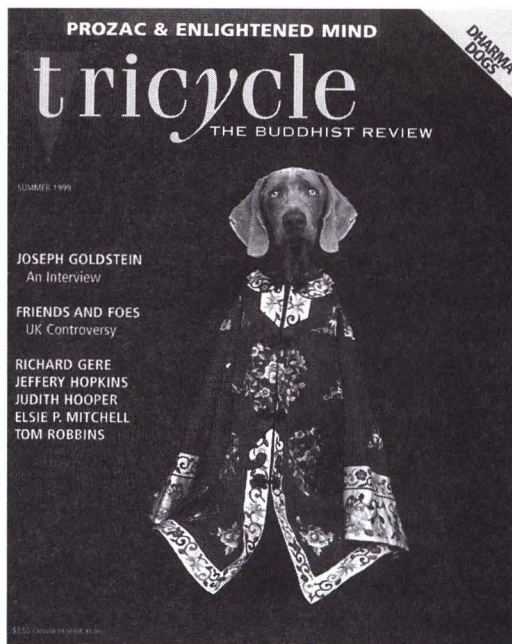
I think this confusion, along with the growing tendency to conflate Buddhism and psychology, has already had unhappy ramifications in the American sangha, but this is not the place to address that large topic. Maybe it’s enough to say that, while I concur with Lew’s call to rethink the forms of dharma transmission we inherit from Asia and to consider borrowing forms from American culture, we’d better scrutinize the American forms just as hard as the Asian ones; otherwise, we may end up merely replacing an inappropriate Asian form with an inappropriate Americanism.

In passing, Lew mentions an ancient Chinese precedent for *election* of abbots, a means that might appeal to us democrats. I’m not sure what sources he’s referring to, but I’m told that in Japanese monasteries senior priests sometimes elect their new abbot, drawing candidates from a pool of monks who’ve previously received dharma transmission. This is a mixed method, in which the personal insight of the outgoing abbot (and perhaps other masters) in deeming certain individuals qualified to teach is balanced against the communal wisdom of the elder monks who elect the abbot. In a similar spirit, Aitken Roshi has sought signs of “sangha transmission”—public and private indications that sangha members regard someone as worthy—before naming that person a teacher. These precedents seem worthy of developing...carefully.

Let me close by reiterating my gratitude to Lew (and to *Turning Wheel*) for initiating this discussion of dharma transmission. Given the diverse traditions and viewpoints involved, I don’t suppose the American sangha will achieve consensus on the matter for a long time to come, if ever, but that seems less important than having the discussion and raising awareness of the issues. Above all else, Lew’s essay serves the sangha by reminding us that the old Roman legal maxim *Caveat emptor*—Buyer beware!—is as applicable to Buddhism as to other human endeavors. ❖



Editor’s Note: It has come to our attention that an esoteric teaching on the transmission of the true lineage was recently delivered by Tofu Roshi, Abbot of No Way Zen Center, to the disciples in his inner circle. We are making every effort to get our hands on this fascicle, and to bring it to you in the next issue of Turning Wheel.



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AN OPEN LETTER ON DIVERSITY

Dear dharma friends:

Receiving several flyers from teachers who have undertaken the task of passing on the dharma in "teacher training" motivated me to write this letter.

I would like to begin by mentioning the First Western Buddhist Teachers' Conference at Spirit Rock and Green Gulch Centers. One realization from that conference which stuck with me is that we are the first generation of emotionally wounded western teachers. That's quite a different situation from the first teachers' conference after the Buddha.

At the Second Western Teachers' Conference at Mt. Madonna, the message was that a special quality of compassion and wisdom is expected of contemporary dharma teachers.

What an awesome fact that we are the first generation of western Buddhist teachers! Our coming together shows that we have taken on a responsibility. This responsibility is great indeed. We will affect the turning of the wheel of dharma for centuries to come.

Our western culture is becoming more diverse by the moment. California is already more than five years old as a state without a dominant culture, and racism is

increasing in California. Cultural diversity will continue to grow at a rapid rate. According to statistics, by 2040 or '45, the United States will not have a dominant culture anymore. What can we do to cultivate a diverse sangha? Is that of interest to you?

Presently, among teachers and practitioners of the dharma who have converted to Buddhism, as opposed to Asian Americans who were born into Buddhism, 95 percent are European Americans. If we don't initiate change, the western Buddhist sangha will cultivate racism unintentionally. We all know that the Buddhist culture in America did not develop based on the wisdom of diversity. The past can't be changed. However, if we do not begin to work on change now, we will promote cultural separation.

After completing my undergraduate degree in psychology and religious studies, I was still searching for the meaning of existence. While in graduate school, sitting in a meditation group, I found a doorway that opened onto compassion and wisdom. But after many years of practicing, I began to lose interest, due to the lack of cultural diversity in the sangha. I began my studies as a dharma teacher in part to address my feelings of isolation as a "stranger in a strange sangha" (African American).

There are only a few Buddhist elders in the West who have been actively working for greater diversity. Some years ago several of us founded what was known as the Interracial Buddhist Council, in the San Francisco Bay Area. Over time, I observed a profound lack of support from the Buddhist community at large, and the Council fell apart. This experience helps us understand that it will take majority support to bring this important issue to the forefront of our discussion.

A new energy is growing around issues of diversity in western sanghas. This is a good thing, because in a sangha where the elders refuse to address the issue of diversity seriously, they are unintentionally supporting the suffering of racism. Racism is just another word for rejection. The emotional pain generated by racist behavior on a large scale is generationally "deep" on our planet.

Presently several teacher training programs are taking place. Training European American teachers exclusively will have an unfortunate effect on how the dharma develops in the West.

May this letter generate right intention and skillful action as we and our elders take on the responsibility of turning the wheel.

With *metta*,
Ralph Steele ❖

Ralph Steele is a vipassana teacher based in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In June, 1999, he begins a year-long monastic retreat in Burma and Thailand, including the study of "breath of fire" in Burma and practice in the forest tradition of Ajahn Chah in Thailand. For information on retreats he will be leading after his return home in 2000, visit his website <www.lifetransitions.com>.



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THE DAY AFTER THE EXECUTION OF MANNY BABBITT

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

Manuel Babbitt, 50, a decorated Marine and Vietnam veteran, was executed on May 4, 1999 at San Quentin Prison, for the murder, 18 years ago, of Leah Schendel. Leah Schendel was a beloved mother and grandmother. She left her door open on a warm night, and Manny Babbitt, who was walking past, entered her apartment and beat her so savagely her heart failed. Evidence showed that a war movie about Vietnam was playing on her TV set at the time. Babbitt had no memory of the event. A survivor of the Khe Sahn battle, Babbitt was traumatized and mentally ill. After he killed Mrs. Schendel, he tied something around her ankle, just as he had tagged the bodies of the many Marines he had bagged at Khe Sahn.

I am tired as if jet-lagged, having traveled once more to that strange place where we gather close together in silence at the prison gate, waiting for the midnight hour when our government, in darkness, kills again. A few hundred of us were there last night, standing or sitting.

I am a private investigator who works on trials and appeals for death-row inmates. Just two weeks before Manny's execution, one of my clients, "Charles," a middle-aged white man, had avoided the death penalty. He was waiting in jail for his death penalty trial to begin, accused of hiring someone to kill his wife, who was shot to death at her workplace. The prosecutor decided not to seek the death penalty for Charles after all, because his murdered wife's family does not believe in it. I "lost my job" on his case in the best possible way: he had beaten the death penalty even before his trial, and I was very glad of that.

But last night I was thinking, "Why not a sentence of 25-to-life for Manny Babbitt?" If Leah Schendel's family had opposed a death sentence, maybe he could have lived out his life in prison, as Charles will probably do.

Capital punishment gives the fates, the arbitrary fates, far too much power. The fact that a pro-death-penalty prosecutor would choose not to pursue a capital case because he lacked support from the victim's family is proof that the death penalty is not about the rule of law. It is simply state-sponsored vengeance.

The only claim politicians can make for any humanitarian purpose in executions is to say they provide "justice" for victims' families. But as a rabbi told us last night, while we huddled in silence at the prison gates, the idea that killing a perpetrator can help a victim achieve healing "goes against all spiritual and psychological wisdom."

I do worry that when we abolitionists gather, we are

so outraged by the injustice of the death penalty that we sometimes fail to show enough sympathy and understanding for victims and their families. Each of us needs only to remember how it felt when our own loved ones died—what it was like to get that phone call or sit by that bedside, to know something of what victims' families must feel.

*We gather close at the prison gate,
waiting for the midnight hour
when our government, in
darkness, kills again.*

I was grateful, therefore, to the pastor who had been Manny Babbitt's spiritual advisor, as he slowly read the names of the victims of the seven men who have been executed in California since 1992. Then he read the names of the seven.

My task is to find compassion within myself for every-

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one in the whole circle, including California Governor Gray Davis, who refused to grant clemency, and the prosecutors, and the guards. So last night, when I spoke briefly just before midnight, I asked people to remember those who were carrying out the execution. As I said that, an officer standing on the roof of a building near the vigil looked at me with astonishment, his mouth literally dropping open. I suppose he couldn't believe anyone there would extend sympathy to the executioners.

In the newspaper, the head of the Correctional Officers Association had said he was "looking forward to attending Manny Babbitt's execution." Officers volunteer for execution duty, and keep their identities secret. Many people condemn them for participating. As a Buddhist, I believe these officers are taking onto themselves karma equal to that of Manny Babbitt's, and that is a burden to be pitied.

The only way I can find meaning in these events is to honor the gift of each life taken. The life of each woman or man on death row illuminates the suffering of hundreds of thousands. Manny Babbitt's gift to us was to hold up to the light our abandonment of Vietnam veterans, and to teach us about the effects of war trauma. He showed us the consequences of inadequate treatment for mentally ill people, and above all, the effects of racism. Here was a black man, represented by an openly racist white attorney and sentenced by an all-white jury, then executed by our government. The connection that rarely is made is that the murder victims are also, by extension, the victims of racism, and lack of treatment for mentally ill people, and all the rest of it.

Every day I think to myself, "Without the death penalty, our criminal justice system would make more sense. Without the death penalty, we could move along to look at other issues of injustice, and we would have a chance to improve the system for everyone."

I felt so sorrowful last night for the Vietnam veterans who joined the vigil. They stood in little groups—middle-aged men of all races, many in old fatigue coats and boots. They had worked so hard to save Manny, and it was clearly written in their anguished, exhausted faces that they were suffering yet another

wound, the loss of yet another member of their ranks, another dismissal of what they were trying to tell America about the war.

One veteran, who was also at Khe Sahn, had collected 800 signatures on a petition asking the governor to spare Manny's life. "Governor Davis just blew us off," he said, visibly controlling himself, his face working. "Manny said he didn't want any anger tonight, so I can't talk. I'm out of here." He handed the mike to someone else.

It occurred to me that perhaps these vets had gathered for their brother Manny in part because they, too, had been made into killers and had killed. Perhaps they alone could really understand.

As the time of execution neared, I saw an image in my mind of someone kneeling at the Vietnam Memorial wall and chiseling into it two more names: Leah Schendel and Manuel Babbitt. Both are surely among the victims of that war. More names could be added every day, as that war lives on and on. As wars do.

The gift of Manny Babbitt's execution was the way it brought together advocates for veterans and the mentally ill. It called forth the best effort for clemency made in California since the death penalty was reinstated. Even some conservative, pro-death penalty people spoke on Manny's behalf. This kind of action will eventually turn the public away from capital punishment.

In a poem, Manny wrote that he wanted no one but himself to "feel the sting" of his death. He fasted for three days before he died, and donated the \$50 allocated for his last meal to homeless veterans, though the prison, after his death, refused to pass on the money. The morning-after newspaper said that Manny Babbitt's last words to his executioners were, "I forgive all of you."

Abolishing the death penalty will be a long struggle. If we are going to bear the proud name "abolitionists," we cannot stay discouraged. We are finding each other, and growing in strength and understanding. ❖

*Melody Ermachild Chavis is a private investigator, a writer, and a Zen practitioner. Her book *Altars in the Street (Belltower)* is now available in paperback for \$12.*

The Bodhisattva Steps from Sunlight

The mote drifts into the ray.
Between the dark and the dark
it flames, however unnoticed.

The largesse of minutes speeds
across wide, uncontrollable latitudes
as we barter in each newest auction.

The array of meteoric moments
is dropping out of view,
out of the one reality I know.

Out of the distant wealth
of horizons, sometimes we see
ourselves approaching.

—Daniel Corrie

MONK MEETS BUTTERFLY

by Carole Melkonian

On April 6, I was lucky to be part of a group of 24 people led by Ajahn Pasanno that traveled to Humboldt County, California, to see Julia Butterfly. Julia is a 25-year-old woman who has been living high in a redwood tree for the past 14 months. Ajahn Pasanno made the two-hour drive north from Abayagiri Monastery in Mendocino County, where he serves as co-abbot. Accompanying him on the trip was Ajahn Amaro and other monks, nuns, and friends. Ajahn Sundara, who was one of the first Western women to be ordained as a nun under the guidance of Ajahn Sumedho in the Thai Forest tradition, joined us for the hike. Dragor Cochrane, age six, was the youngest hiker and wore red cowboy boots in preparation for the steep climb.

Early in the morning, I left the Mendocino Coast with my friends, Margaret and Iris, to meet the group at a rest stop near Stafford, the town closest to Julia's treetop home. The weather had changed significantly from bitter cold rains (snow inland) the day before, to warm sunshine. Like the preceding 400 days or so, Julia was spending this one perched 180 feet high in a redwood tree named Luna. Driving behind logging trucks on the way to see her, we were surprised by how thin and young the trees looked. I thought about Luna, the 1000-year-old tree that had been sched-

uled to be cut down two years ago by Pacific Lumber, a part of Maxxam Company owned by Texas businessman, Charles Hurwitz. The first person to find Luna was Daniel, a young man in his twenties. In 1997 he saw that Luna was soon to be cut down, so he free-climbed this mammoth tree and stayed there for two weeks. He and

many others took turns tree-sitting in Luna, and when it was Julia Butterfly's turn, she went up, took her turn, came down, then climbed back up, and has remained in Luna's branches since December 10, 1997. The blue X painted on the lower bark of Luna, marking it to be logged, has now been washed away by the many protectors of this forest.

It was mid-morning when we met Ajahn Pasanno. As the monks can only take food before noon, we picnicked on the lawn of our rest stop rendez-vous. After bathroom breaks and a little skateboarding by Dragor's older brother Lance, we traveled on to Stafford where we met Michael O'Neal. Mike and his neighbors share a painful part in the history of this forest. In 1993, Pacific Lumber

clear-cut the slope above Mike's neighborhood. According to Mike, this led to a "gigantic mud-slide, the size of a football field" on December 31, 1996, that destroyed many of Mike's neighbors' homes. Mike's home was damaged but salvageable. Legal action was taken and it is expected that the outcome will hold Pacific Lumber responsible and that the company will have to pay for the damage done to the homes below the clear-cut.

Mike was our guide for the hour-and-a-half long hike. Lay people and monastics made a rare blend of gold robes, brown robes, polypro caps, purple and pink wool sweaters, and all sorts of boots. We carried

water jugs, and daypacks filled with supplies for Julia: fresh fruits and vegetables, juices, candles, and easy-to-cook meals. Mid-way up, we could see Julia's platform high above us and a great distance away. On the count of three we yelled exuberantly, "We love you, Julia!" We did this three times, then continued our walk.



At the base of Luna

Two-thirds of the way up we saw an area that had been clear cut and then had eroded until it looked like a riverbed about 50 feet wide, sloping down at a 45-degree angle. No vegetation grew in this canyon of rocks and tumbled earth. "This is where the mud slide began in 1996," Mike said, and he went on to tell the disturbing story of how this slide destroyed many homes below it. Sobered by the sight, we continued the climb. It was mid-afternoon when we came to the base of Luna. Being 180 feet above us on a windy day, Julia had to use a walkie-talkie to communicate with us. Two ropes hung down from Julia's platform and we began putting supplies into sacks to be pulled up by her. We didn't realize how much work it would be to pull the supplies up in the wind. Julia managed to pull up the first load, but it was too heavy for comfort, and we packed the remaining loads much lighter.

After Julia collected the supplies, we climbed a short distance up the steep hill that Luna is rooted to, until we were at the same level as Julia. We could see her movements clearly, but not her facial expressions. Ajahn Pasanno spoke with her by walkie-talkie, explaining that the Pali chants that were about to be offered were to support her spiritual wellbeing and the work that she is doing.

As the monks and nuns led the chanting, Julia sat facing us, resting her head gently on Luna, like an old friend would, and swinging her bare feet in the wind. In a conversation Margaret Howe had with her a week later, by cell phone, Julia said how hard it was to let go of all the things she had to do that day in order to be present and take in the support that was being offered her. "I'm busier now than I've ever been in my life," she said. Julia spends her days on the phone organizing and strategizing about forest work and answering the many letters she receives from all over the country. She does a few interviews every day with schools, newspapers, community organizations, and radio stations.

Julia blends her radical commitment to preserving the forests with an energetic spirit of kindness in the face of aloneness, meager resources, and often harsh weather. During the last Pali chant, she began to cry. Ajahn Pasanno told her later that that chant was for

protection. Julia replied that during the chant she had felt protective energies around her and Luna. We all had an opportunity to speak with Julia on the walkie talkie and write her notes of support.

After goodbyes, on the walk down the hill, we talked with Ajahn Pasanno about the work he did to protect forests in Thailand. What I remember most about this conversation was that the chief of police practiced at the monastery where Ajahn Pasanno lived. Over time they became friends, and with patient determination

Ajahn Pasanno was able to get more and more people from all walks of life involved in protecting the forests there. When Ajahn Pasanno was asked what prompted him to drive the distance and hike the steep climb to see Julia he replied, "I connect with Julia's forest activism. Being up in Luna for so long is like being on a long retreat, and I know what that's like. I want to help support her spiritual well-being."

When we returned to our cars at the base of the hill, we did not want to leave each other's company. So we caravanned to a restaurant in Garberville and visited a little longer, over tea for the monks and nuns, and dinner for the rest of us. We then said our goodbyes. On the drive home, I thought of Julia spending yet another night in the protective arms of Luna, doing all she can to protect Luna and all the trees that are scheduled to be cut down in an unsustainable way. I remembered a comment Julia made: "Living up here with Luna,

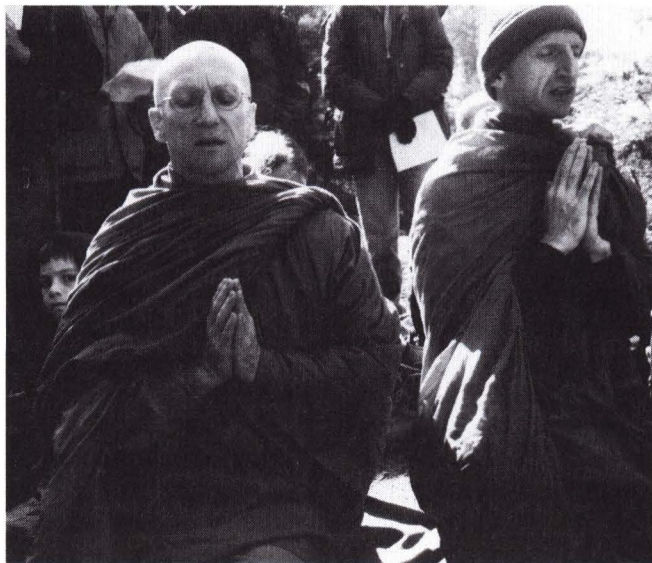
I have learned a great deal about strength, endurance, commitment, and love."

If you would like more information on protecting the ancient redwoods in Northern California, please contact:

- North Coast Earth First, P.O. Box 28, Arcata, CA 95518. Phone: 707-825-6598.
- The Trees Foundation, P.O. Box 2202, Redway, CA 95560. Phone: 707-923-4377.
- Environmental Protection Information Center, P.O. Box 397, Garberville, CA 95542. Phone: 707-923-2931. Email: <epic@wildcalifornia.org>. ❖

Carole Melkonian works as an ICU nurse, and currently edits SEED Exchange: A Local Currency Guide for the Mendocino Coast. She practices Buddhism with a great sangha in Caspar, CA.

*Julia sat facing us, resting her head
gently on Luna and swinging
her bare feet in the wind.*



*Ajahn Passano and Ajahn Amaro chanting
in support of Julia Butterfly*

Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki

by David Chadwick

Broadway Books, 1999, 432 pages, \$36.95, hardcover

David Chadwick has woven a beautiful narrative biography of Shunryu Suzuki (1904-1971). It is a rich, multi-layered portrait of a key figure in the development of American Soto Zen, and heartily recommended.

The story is arranged chronologically and reads like a novel, vivid with scenery and dialogue. You'll find many a footnote for facts or quotations, but Chadwick does seem to have done his homework. In an appendix, he says his sources include nearly 300 lectures by Suzuki; letters and other documents from the San Francisco Zen Center archives; his own memories; conversations with Suzuki's students and others; and interviews, conducted by various people over three decades, with Suzuki, his relatives, friends, students, and acquaintances, in both the U.S. and Japan. It's a remarkable compendium, but the scholar in me wishes for an annotated edition that cites these sources more specifically.

Chadwick studied with Suzuki for five years and was ordained by him in 1971. Chadwick clearly loves and respects his teacher; he writes with great care and sympathy, and scatters wonderful quotations throughout the book. He portrays Suzuki as a person of simplicity, subtlety and depth, who passionately loved Dogen's Zen and strove to convey it to his American students. But he was no saint, and Chadwick does not romanticize him.

Suzuki was an ordinary man, with foibles, biases, and limitations. He was extremely absentminded, sometimes "borrowed" things without permission, and could hardly be called a family man. He also firmly planted the seeds of dharma into American soil.

Suzuki was trained by a Zen teacher who mostly comes across as mean, derisive, and abusive. Suzuki loved him, and learned to be respectful, alert, understated, and indirect. But the abuse may also have fueled Suzuki's fierce outbursts of rage.

During World War II, Suzuki opposed Japanese militarism, and led discussions of alternatives in his temples, but overt protest was extremely dangerous. (In 1911 one outspoken, pacifist Soto priest had been defrocked and executed for treason.) Japanese soldiers and Korean slave laborers were housed at Suzuki's temple, and its bells were melted down to make cannons.

Suzuki was married three times, and suffered two tragic deaths in his family. He was well-liked in the Japanese temples he ran, but yearned for the adventure of teaching Buddhism to Americans.

During his 12 years in San Francisco, he founded a thriving Zen Center for western students and the first Zen monastery in the West. Chadwick has made a wonderful, valuable contribution to Suzuki's legacy. ❖

Work as a Spiritual Practice: A Practical Buddhist Approach to Inner Growth and Satisfaction on the Job.

by Lewis Richmond

Broadway Books, 1999, 258 pages, \$25, hardcover

This book's purpose is clear from the outset: "to guide you on a path of spiritual discovery about the work that you do and offer practical ways to make that work more connected to your inner life." (p.5) Although some people don't have the privilege of choosing a particular job or career, Richmond asserts that each of us is still "the boss" of our inner life. He says, "[W]hether you love your job or hate it, you can be awake and aware in your work. I want to redefine the term *job satisfaction* to mean not a job where everything goes well and we rise quickly to the top but a job where we can grow, develop and mature as human beings, regardless of what happens." (pp.18-19)

Richmond spent 15 years in the three communities run by San Francisco Zen Center, and served as a senior priest. Since he left Zen Center about 15 years ago, he has worked as a software designer, business executive, entrepreneur and musician/composer. While he values his monastic training, he says, "the deepest spiritual lessons I learned were out in the world." (p.19)

In both the monastery and the workplace, "spiritual practice is not a warmup or rehearsal, but an end in itself, an activity that expresses and develops our inner life." (p. 13) It cultivates character. As a Zen Buddhist, his starting point is the "Koan of Everyday Life": the practice of regarding "every situation as though it were a profound spiritual question." (p. 9)

Richmond then outlines an "Energy Wheel," a modern variation of the traditional "Six Realms" of Buddhist doctrine: states of mind through which we cycle moment by moment, usually out of habit and conditioning. He divides these states into four categories: *Stressful* (hot negative—anger, fear, worry, and stress); *Inspiring* (hot positive—creativity, ambition, forgiveness, and joy); *Content* (cool positive—generosity, contentment, and calm); and *Sad* (cool negative—boredom, discouragement, failure and depression).

Each successive chapter offers simple, specific, workplace-related meditation and mindfulness practices that help one cultivate the "positive" states and transform the "negative" states so that they function as spiritual food. He includes examples from a variety of modern workplaces, and teaching stories from Zen tradition. Richmond also offers thoughtful discussion and practical advice about such work-related issues as money and time, power, control, gratitude, and quitting.

This book is highly recommended for everyone who seeks to integrate Buddhist practice with work life. ❖

— Reviews by Shannon Hickey

***The Monk and the Philosopher:
A Father and Son Discuss
the Meaning of Life***

by Jean-Francois Revel and Matthieu Ricard
Schocken, 1999, 310 pages, \$24, hardcover

Reviewed by Jon Stewart

Arnold Toynbee, the great English historian, opined a century ago that the crowning historical event of the modern age might prove to be the fateful meeting between Buddhism and the Christian West. Now that Buddhism is getting sympathetic attention on the cover of *Time Magazine* and in Hollywood films, Toynbee's prescient prediction seems more plausible than ever. Except that in hindsight he might more accurately have characterized the encounter as one between Buddhism and the secular West, where the scientific worldview has long since established its philosophical dominance.

Indeed, for generations of educated westerners—including many who cling to vestiges of Judeo-Christian faith—the scientific method serves as the reigning credo of a philosophical/moral system that rejects all notions derived from faith, and worships only at the altar of enlightened, pragmatic, demonstrably productive self-interest. This historic shift, which has occupied us for the last 300 years or so, makes the present western encounter with Buddhism all the more fateful and fascinating—a spectacular meeting between enlightened self-interest and the enlightenment of no-self.

The tectonic philosophical and social forces driving the encounter between East and West, between metaphysics and science, between faith and reason, have been the subjects of a growing literature in recent years. Why is Buddhism so attractive to so many Americans and Europeans at the cusp of the millennium? How might Buddhism transform the West, and how might the West transform Buddhism? Is science, as the West knows it, reconcilable with metaphysics, as Tibetan lamas know it?

A recent contribution to such inquiries, *The Monk and the Philosopher*, adds an altogether unique and illuminating twist by examining the meaning of it all in the form of a philosophical interrogation—a Gallic version of dharma combat—between a French father and son who happen to be brilliant and articulate representatives of Western rationalism/individualism and Tibetan Buddhism, respectively. The father, the noted philosopher-journalist Jean-Francois Revel, is a famously fierce opponent of all things authoritarian, from communism to Christianity. His son, Matthieu Ricard, abandoned the fast track to scientific prominence as a molecular biologist when he left the Institut Pasteur in 1972 and moved permanently to Nepal in order to immerse himself in Tibetan Buddhist studies, translate sacred texts, and live the monastic, contemplative life. Today, 27 years later, he serves as an aide and French

interpreter to the Dalai Lama.

To some extent, the carefully written dialogue between father and son (based on lengthy conversations in Nepal and Brittany) masks a long delayed, highly personal accounting for what happened 27 years ago. How could you have done such a thing, asks Revel: "You had within your grasp everything you needed to take part in one of the most extraordinary intellectual and scientific adventures in the history of mankind, as recent discoveries in molecular biology can attest." To which Ricard responds, with occasional flashes of his own exasperation: "But does knowing such things [as biology and physics] help us elucidate the basic mechanisms of happiness and suffering?...Whether [the earth] is round or flat doesn't make a great deal of difference to the meaning of existence."

Beyond the personal dimensions of the dialogue, which form a lively subtext to the sometimes challenging intellectual arguments, Revel's probing questions and Ricard's mostly patient explications cover a broad range of topics relevant to any Westerner with the slightest interest in Buddhism. Is Buddhism a religion? Can one be a secular Buddhist? Is Buddhism compatible with the scientific method? If so, how does one explain reincarnation? What role, if any, is reserved to faith? What is consciousness? Or the nature of reality? Is there a place for politics and social activism? What should one do in the face of the bloodletting in the Balkans? Again and again, such issues are explored not merely as interesting abstractions but as concrete, practical questions with real-life consequences for both men, each of whom is passionately determined to bring meaning to his life, and to answer, if in radically different terms, Socrates' question, "How should I live?"

In the end, Revel's Cartesian logic transforms itself into a kind of fatherly sympathy and acceptance of his son's convictions. His probing scepticism gives way to listening and appreciation, and to a better understanding of Buddhism's attractions. He says:

The West has triumphed in science, but no longer has plausible systems either of wisdom or ethics. The East can bring us its ethics and teach us how to live better, but these are devoid of theoretical foundations...Yet such limits [the lack of logical proofs] have to be accepted. Wisdom will always be a matter of conjecture. Ever since the Buddha and Socrates, man has struggled to turn it into a science, but in vain...Wisdom is not based on scientific certitude, and scientific certitude does not lead to wisdom. Both, nevertheless, exist—forever indispensable, forever separate, forever complementary.

Revel also comes, in the end, to a new respect for Buddhism's potential to provide the moral and ethical foundation for an action-oriented cosmopolitanism, by which he means a personal sense of "citizenship of the world" that requires action on behalf of social justice.

(Continued on page 39)

Fragrant Palm Leavesby *Thich Nhat Hanh*

Parallax Press, 1998, 216 pages, \$20

Reviewed by Alan Senauke

The teaching of Thich Nhat Hanh (“Thầy”) seems always to be watered with tears. Tears of loss and longing, tears of appreciation, sometimes even tears of rage. They arise from the depths of his personal experience, that place where the dharma and the world meet without even a sliver of separation. In recent years he has been doing us the service of punctuating his more traditional teachings—and I use the word “traditional” advisedly, because even in dharma terms Thầy is what Sulak Sivaraksa might call a “radical conservative”—with works that are more personally revelatory. These works include *Teachings on Love*, *Love in Action*, and now *Fragrant Palm Leaves*.

Fragrant Palm Leaves is edited from journals covering the years from 1962 to 1966, which saw a growing movement of engaged Buddhism in Vietnam, along with escalating violence in a civil war fueled by fears, arms, and soldiers from outside, largely from the U.S. This bittersweet narrative covers Thầy’s years as a student and teaching assistant at Columbia and Princeton in 1962 and 1963, and his return to village and temple life in South Vietnam. It includes the formation of the School of Youth for Social Service, through which Thầy and his fellow monks and nuns offered assistance to people hurt by the war, no matter what “side” they were on. The last entry, in May of 1966, completes both the manuscript and a cycle in Thầy’s life. Putting down his pen, he contemplates leaving Vietnam the next day. He has lived in exile ever since.

Since I was a young man, I’ve tried to understand the nature of compassion. But what little compassion I’ve learned has not come from intellectual investigation but from my actual experience of suffering. I am not proud of my suffering any more than a person who mistakes a rope for a snake is proud of his fright. My suffering has been a mere rope, a mere drop of emptiness so insignificant that it should dissolve like a mist at dawn. But it has not dissolved, and I am almost unable to bear it. Doesn’t the Buddha see my suffering? How can he smile?

What I like best about this book is the vivid sense of people and places, times and seasons. These almost tangible qualities are sometimes lacking from Thầy’s other work, but this book is full of brightly focused moments. In a noisy New York City apartment he calls forth the deep silence of his home village in Vietnam. Back in Vietnam he imagines the icy winter streets of Princeton. There are friends on both sides of the ocean, nightmares, noodles, awakening, and the pervasive grief of watching one’s people and country give way to war. It’s all very clear, except for the reasons, and meanwhile in Vietnam,

Thầy’s dharma brothers and sisters die or disappear.

The constant streaming of jet planes here in Gia Dinh province disturbs the countryside, which would otherwise be quiet and tranquil. The noise makes my head throb. I don’t know why they are constantly passing over, but they leave me breathless. An hour ago I was sitting and playing with a group of children by a haystack. They looked up at the jets with fear, not with the excitement you’d see on children’s faces elsewhere. There was no laughter.

But the journals do not give way to fatalism or morbidity. There is a wonderful and mouthwatering description of food vendors outside Phap Hoi temple. Verses and poems lighten the longing. Unusually, Thầy offers several accounts of spiritual opening, unitary moments that arise and flower even within real suffering. I found these deeply encouraging.

There is no unfamiliar teaching here, but a pervasive warmth and humanity that goes far beyond ideas. Perhaps that is why this is my favorite Thich Nhat Hanh book in a long time. When things fall apart, stories still have a healing power. By giving us a glimpse of himself, Thầy subtly suggests how we might be more truly our own selves, carefully walking the path of practice. ❖

(monk and philosopher, continued)

The successful consciousness-raising activity of the Dalai Lama, he asserts, is the best proof that “Buddhist quietism is just a myth.”

Ricard, for his part, never rejects the legitimacy of the science he once embraced, nor its compatibility with Buddhism. Science is a useful methodology to elucidate the phenomenal world, he says, but it doesn’t offer much in terms of showing us how to live our lives. For that, we must depend on the search for truth through individual, contemplative experience, which is non-replicable and non-demonstrable. Buddhism offers a spiritually deprived West a true “science of the mind, a contemplative science more in tune with our times than ever, and one that will always be so—since it deals with the most basic mechanisms of happiness and suffering.”

Yet when all is said and done, Ricard concludes, no logical constructs, no well-reasoned arguments—not even an engrossing book-length dialogue between East and West, son and father, monk and philosopher—“could ever be a substitute for the silence of personal experience, so indispensable for an understanding of how things really are.”

No doubt—and yet we can all be grateful that this particular father and son finally sat down together, butted intellects, and let their extraordinary minds flow freely on behalf of both scientific and extra-rational truths. No one who reads the result will come away without a better understanding of how things really are. ❖

Jon Stewart is a Bay Area journalist, and a contributing editor to Turning Wheel. He practices at the Berkeley Zen Center.

***Engaged Pure Land Buddhism:
The Challenge Facing Jodo Shinshu in the
Contemporary World***

Essays in Honor of Professor Alfred Bloom
edited by Kenneth K. Tanaka and Eisho Nasu
WisdomOcean Publications, 1998, paper.

Reviewed by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

For those unfamiliar with Jodo Shinshu, I'd recommend they read Kenneth K. Tanaka's *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo-Shinshu Buddhism in America* (Berkeley: WisdomOcean Publications, 1997) before they sit down with the more scholarly *Engaged Pure Land Buddhism*. *Ocean's* warm, conversational style invites us to come closer to the everyday mind of Shin Buddhism, a mind characterized by humility and gratitude arising spontaneously from an awareness of interdependence.

EPLB offers a rich array of academic essays by 15 authors, including the well-known scholars Taitetsu Unno, Paul Ingram (a Christian professor of religion), and Maya M. Hara, the only woman contributor. Coeditors Tanaka and Nasu are themselves Jodo Shinshu ministers and scholars, seeking to make Jodo Shinshu's historical contributions to Buddhism better known, while simultaneously facing the internal dilemmas that make the future of Jodo Shinshu in North America particularly challenging. In paying homage to Dr. Alfred Bloom, whose career has combined academic analysis with spiritual practice and faith, *EPLB* takes up several important concerns, including the question of whether an other-power religion like Jodo Shinshu is more passive in terms of social engagement than a self-power tradition; the problem within the Buddhist Churches of America of "gradual loss of membership, due to the assimilation of the third-generation Japanese Americans and other [more deeply doctrinal] factors" (Unno, p.10); and the emergence of Jodo Shinshu into the contemporary world religious dialogue.

Ranging from the historic ("A Brief History of Pure Land Buddhism in Early Japan" by James C. Dobbins) to the innovative ("Existentializing and Radicalizing Shinran's Vision" by Gregory G. Gibbs), essays in *EPLB* reward academically inclined readers with new insights, information, and inspiration. Although the essays are not uniformly accessible in style and content, the book as a whole presents a sophisticated appreciation of socially engaged elements in Pure Land Buddhism.

I particularly admire the risk-taking displayed by some of the authors and by editors Tanaka and Nasu, who urge the Jodo Shinshu establishment to confront rather than avoid the need for change. These authors have what radical Christian theologian Paul Tillich called the dynamic concept of faith: an ultimate concern that embraces doubt, resulting in continual self-critique and renewal by religious persons and institutions. ❖

BOOKS IN BRIEF

Reviewed by Barbara Hirshkowitz

Buddha Laughing: A Tricycle Book of Cartoons
Bell Tower, 1999, 85 cartoons in a mini book, \$9.00

The only thing not funny about this book is the price. Most of these cartoons have appeared in *Tricycle Magazine* and they bear repeating. You can carry this small, square book in a pocket and pull out a chuckle whenever you need one. Here's one by E. Subitzky that isn't too dependent on the visual for you to ponder: "Which came first...the drawing of the chicken, the drawing of the egg, or the pencil?"

Prayers for a Thousand Years: Blessing and Expressions of Hope for the New Millennium
Edited by Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon
HarperSanFrancisco, 1999, 360 pages, \$15, paper

Similar in format to *Earth Prayers* and *Life Prayers*, this collection contains over 250 texts from authors both famous and unknown (Bob Marley/an 11-year-old Costa Rican girl), Buddhist, Baptist, and Jew, and a few others. The book is arranged in 10 sections, by themes such as "Visions of Hope," and "We the People," just right for daily inspiration. It has an author index, and the original sources are printed in the back. The book feels and looks good—a lot of wisdom bound up in a small package. For example, this short poem by Holly St. John Bergon:

We have eaten of the world.
Molecules of chaos and chance
Reign in our bodies.
You are cast in the river
To dwell in the transformation.

Heal Thy Self:

Lessons on Mindfulness in Medicine

by Saki Santorelli, with a foreword by Jon Kabat-Zinn
Bell Tower, 1999, 252 pages, \$23, hardcover

"This book holds as its central focus the healing relationship, exploring the dynamics of this archetypal connection when cradled within the practice of mindfulness meditation." This concise statement opens the introduction and perfectly describes what follows. The author, Saki Santorelli, director of the Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center for the last 20 years, has been refining healing techniques, and presents a distillation of the process and the findings. The book is structured chronologically, as it traces an eight-week healing process, and includes exercises for each segment. Each chapter includes many eloquent stories. The teachings about mindfulness practice are drawn from various traditions. This is an engaging book for anyone interested in exploring the paradoxes of brokenness and wholeness. ❖

WHAT YOU CAN DO

What to do about Military Crisis: Commit to One Action a Day!

Twice in the last six months, the U.S. government has gone to war—against Iraq and against Serbia. In this column we want to encourage BPF members to make an active response to such crises when they arise, through committing to take one action a day during the course of the crisis.

With the suffering in Kosovo unfolding as this column is written, we want to emphasize the importance of the spiritual community's active response. American Buddhists can offer a voice that challenges the power-based nature of international relations and its usual knee-jerk response of military action. We encourage coalition building and citizen-based nonviolence as a response. The escalation of the violence in Kosovo as the NATO bombing continues demonstrates the futility of using violence as a "solution."

Our elected government is carrying out these policies with our tax dollars, and our family members are flying the bombers; our collective karma is unfolding. How do we create the support we need to face these truths and move into creative action? How do we speak our vision of interconnection and nonviolence, and create avenues out of the suffering?

Our commitment to action not only will address the immediate crisis, it will help with what Joanna Macy calls "The Great Turning"—the movement toward a more sustainable, life-affirming world.

Luckily we do not have to know what to do all by ourselves; we have great wisdom together. In fact, in order to have a more rapid response to these crises when they arise, we encourage finding a cluster of friends or a BPF chapter who will agree to come together at times like these.

What follows is an outline for how to begin to respond to this crisis, or to other similar issues. These responses are not separate from our spiritual practice; how we handle what arises is part of how we define our practice. Think of the process as a spiral, not a straight line. Connection leads to learning about the issues, which leads to action, back around to deeper connection. Begin taking steps wherever you are. It is not aloofness but engagement that will deepen our practice and understanding. Our world calls us to awaken with it!

I. Expanding our Spiritual Practice

→ Don't let yourself be deadened or go numb. Joanna Macy's new book, *Coming Back to Life*, offers analysis and meditations that help connect us. Take part in a "Council of All Beings" or a "Despair and Empowerment" workshop. While in your meditation, observe how you are

opening to the suffering of the world.

→ Pema Chödrön teaches tonglen meditation in her book, *Start Where You Are*. This is a powerful Tibetan Buddhist practice by which one takes in suffering, transforms it, and sends it outward as compassion.

→ Regular *metta* (lovingkindness) meditation can deepen our connection with all sides in a conflict. One Zen Center is reciting the Metta Sutta daily during the crisis and dedicating it to relieve the suffering in Kosovo.

II. Information Alternatives

→ Search out other sources of information. The Balkan situation is far more complex than the mainstream media reports. Other sources offer differing viewpoints, some from a religious perspective.

→ Fellowship of Reconciliation always puts out an immediate position paper on crises as they arise, and an action packet that offers a spiritual, nonviolent response to the situation. They have one on Kosovo. Write to: Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. Tel: 914-358-4601. <www.nonviolence.org/for>.

→ Subscribe to the BPF email listserve, which sends out regular info and acts as a discussion group. Email: <bpf@bpf.org>.

→ Alternative press: Pacifica Radio, *The Nation*, and others.

→ Some websites on Kosovo are: <www.alb-net.com>, <www.hrw.org>, and <www.commondreams.com>.

III. Manifesting Our Understanding

As we move into the marketplace, the depth of our understanding is reflected back to us in our actions, and we discover our growing edge.

→ Join a BPF chapter or local support group of others concerned about the issues, to transform the numbness and overwhelming feelings into a helpful response.

→ Join groups in your area at vigils, religious services, rallies, direct actions, town hall meetings, public meditations, street theater.

→ Write letters to elected officials, local papers, and your friends.

→ Contact the White House and let them know your sentiments: 202-456-1111 <president@whitehouse.gov>.

→ Organize a forum or a speaker on the Kosovo issue. Invite local Albanian or Serbian Americans, and others.

→ Check the "BPF Activist News" page in *Turning Wheel* (next page) to see how others are engaging.

→ Find a way to connect with the victims of violence tangibly—with money, goods, or work. Aid for the Kosovar refugees can be sent to AFSC, Kosovo Relief Fund, 1501 Cherry St., Philadelphia, PA 19102.

→ Voluntary simplicity. By beginning to disengage from heavy consumerism, we can shift power away from the corporate and government institutions that depend on these wars. ❖

—Margaret Howe

BPF ACTIVIST NEWS

Come wrapped in silence.

Come embrace:

The Way of Compassion

The Way of Not-knowing

The Way of Witnessing

The Way of Suffering

The Way of Silence

The Way of Non-duality

The Way of Forgiveness

The Way of Interbeing

This was the invitation from the **Central Texas** BPF Chapter and the local FOR and Plum Blossom Sangha, to a Walking Meditation for the people of Yugoslavia. "Join us...in support of all our Albanian and Serbian sisters and brothers and All Beings who suffer," the invitation continued. Seventy Buddhists, Quakers, and Methodists participated in the April event.

Twin Cities, MN BPF is sponsoring a weekly interfaith vigil to witness the suffering in Kosovo and the Balkans—a walk across the Lake Street Bridge. The bridge, which connects Minneapolis and St. Paul, is designated as an international peace site, and is a reminder of the destruction of other bridges and a symbol of the hope for connection. Fifty people attended the first walk. The format is 20 minutes of walking on the bridge in silence, a 15-minute presentation/discussion off the bridge for those who want some words, and another 20 minutes in silent vigil. Each week one of the sponsoring faith communities facilitates the talking part.

The **Arcata** Zen Group is taking part in a weekly silent Buddhist-Christian witness for nonviolence. The format consists of three periods of silence interspersed with a recitation of the Metta Sutta and a prayer from the Christian or another tradition. Member Suzanne Mallet wrote: "I couldn't help thinking, as the shadow of someone walking behind me passed before me on the sidewalk, of all those who live in danger, not trust—and how fragile is the trust we tend to take for granted in our own culture."

The BPF National Office has been organizing weekly silent vigils at the **Oakland** Federal Building with signs bearing these messages: "Violence only leads to more violence" and "We bear witness to the suffering in Kosovo and Serbia." Members of the **New York** Chapter participated in a vigil called by the War Resisters League.

At **Green Gulch** Zen Center and **San Francisco** Zen Center, BPF chapter members and community members gathered soap, bandages, and candles and assembled hundreds of Kits for Kosovars, a project to aid refugees in Macedonia organized by the American Friends Service Committee.

Zen student Brooks Prouty, 34, and Daniel

Weitsman, 17 (son of Zen teacher Sojun Mel Weitsman), left Berkeley, CA, in early May to bicycle around the U.S. Brooks is dedicating the expedition to the people of Serbia and Kosovo. He says to them, "I have no fantasy that in doing this I end the war, but if my intention is of any consolation to those who hear of it in your land, I will regard my hope fulfilled."

Melbourne, Australia Chapter Coordinator Jill Jameson writes: "Today the first group of Kosovar refugees arrive in Melbourne, going to army barracks and a 'virtual refugee camp.' Through the Foundation for the Survivors of Torture and Trauma, a few of us are working on a proposal to document the refugees' experiences, which will hopefully also be part of a healing process. But they are so far from home—almost adding to the crisis."

In another vein, the **Arcata** Zen community has been researching the use of sustainably harvested lumber and chemically safe building materials in the remodeling of their garage/zendo. They also attended a recent meeting of steelworkers and environmentalists. These two groups are working together to build a coalition that was initiated May 14 at a Maxxam shareholders' meeting in Houston. Bill Duvall writes: "Leaders of the United Steelworkers called for an alliance between workers and conservationists...uniting not only to face a common enemy—giant corporations who have power and money—but uniting in our common purpose of maintaining ecological sustainability."

"David Brower, a conservation leader for 60 years, suggested that Moses brought down only half of what we need to know about our responsibilities as humans on this planet. 'He brought down the Ten Commandments on how we should live with other humans. He should go back up the mountain and bring down the commandments on how we should live with nature.'"

The **Colorado** group, called CO-BASE, is working with the Boulder County Shelter for the Homeless to create an open-air "sacred space" area behind the shelter. The non-sectarian space will be for use by the shelter community for group events like memorial services, holiday ceremonies, and other rituals. It will be available for individuals seeking a quiet place for reflection, prayer, and meditation.

BASE News

The BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) community will hold a visioning day in June to explore where BASE has come from and where it is going. BASE is five years old; nearly 100 people across the U.S. and abroad have participated in BASE groups, and countless people have been touched by the work of BASE participants. The BASE committee will work to implement the ideas we generate.

The Bay Area Educators BASE will begin with a retreat in August and the program will run through the 1999-2000 school year. ❖

—Tova Green

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Vigil at San Quentin for Manny Babbitt

The weather was kinder at San Quentin than at our vigil only two months before for Jay Siripongs, but the machinery of state was as cruel as ever. At 12:37 AM on May 4, less than an hour past his fiftieth birthday, Manuel Babbitt was put to death for the murder of Leah Schendel in 1980. The question was not about whether Manny Babbitt committed the crimes he was accused of. He acknowledged them and tried to express his remorse. But his own crimes are entwined with crimes committed against him as a wounded and decorated Vietnam combat veteran. Manny Babbitt served in a war that was itself a crime, a war whose devastation is still felt both in Vietnam and here in the United States. Psychiatrists attest that his crimes were sparked by a long history of mental illness and by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder resulting from the violence he participated in and witnessed in Vietnam.

Zen Master Dogen wrote an essay called "Twining Vines" nearly eight hundred years ago. Our actions are inextricably bound up

with the actions of all beings, all Buddhas. And still we are responsible for ourselves. About 75 of us sat at San Quentin until Manny Babbitt was pronounced dead. Around us were several hundred others in grief, anger, and perhaps some few even eager to see the death sentence go forward. As I sat, I listened to the speakers' often strident voices and to my own thoughts. I tried to imagine myself in that prison death room with its mock-clinical apparatus. Near the end, when representatives of faith communities spoke—our good friend Melody Ermachild Chavis, Rabbi

Alan Lew, Reverend Bruce Bramlett—did it come clear to all of us that Manny Babbitt, Leah Schendel, their families, prison guards, wardens, judges, and governors are all just people, whose lives are twining vines. Twining vines go beyond good and evil, right and wrong. Nothing can justify the murder of Leah Schendel. Nor can I be silent about the conscious murder of a prisoner

by a state acting in my name.

Please, not in my name. Not in San Quentin, not in Yugoslavia, not in Vietnam or Iraq, not in New York City or Oakland. Violence gives rise only to more violence. When violent actions are done in my country's name, I vow to consider what I am willing to do, to risk, to give up, so that others won't have to die to protect a privilege I never asked for. Clearly this means stepping outside my zone of comfort. We must help each other take this step in wisdom and compassion.

Yugoslavia

Once again the dubious strategy of bombing seems to be the best our western political leaders can come up with. Many of us feel at a loss as to how to prevent the "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovar Albanians. Once again we have lost an opportunity for a Buddhist strategy of generosity rather than punishment. But I confess that I think there is a purpose to the bombing. The end in sight is to make the world safe for global capital flow, tying the Europeans ever more closely to our coattails by implicating them in war. And of course, there's the money that goes to the arms dealers. My analysis may be over simple, but looking at the structural expression of greed, ill-will, and delusion, I would bet on it.



At the INEB conference: Ouyporn Kuankaew, Thai activist; Panadda Kosakarn, INEB's new Executive Secretary; and a Ladakhi nun.

INEB's Tenth Anniversary

In late February and March I made a trip to South Asia, visiting Bangladesh for the second time and Sri Lanka for the first. In Sri Lanka I visited a temple forest restoration project in the hill country, work supported by Dharma Gaia Trust, a BPF affiliate. From there I continued to Kandy, making a pilgrimage to the Temple

of the Tooth, one of early Buddhism's sacred sites. But the real focus of this long journey was the ninth International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB) conference at Sarvodaya, and an INEB Executive Committee meeting afterwards.

The conference itself, our first outside of Thailand, was a mixed bag. On the positive side, almost 100 members representing 22 countries made the long and costly trip to Sri Lanka. More than half of these were women—nuns, bhikkhuni, laywomen—a remarkable expression of INEB's real strengths. It was wonderful to be with so many old friends from Asia, Europe, and the U.S. Their personal friendship and their many connections to BPF are deeply important.

The conference site at Sarvodaya in Moratuwa, on the west coast about 15 miles south of Colombo, was proposed by Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya's founder and a BPF International Advisory Board member. He was a gracious host, and the Sarvodaya staff helped us feel very much at home. The conference spurred Sarvodaya to paint and refurbish their large hostel to accommodate us comfortably. But beyond convenience, I felt that at Sarvodaya we were in a unique place of Buddhist social vision, the hub of a network that includes thousands of villages and millions of Sri Lankans of every faith. Just seeing one small corner of this work is inspiring.

BPF volunteer Karen Biel and San Franciscan Richard Peterson (who found out about the INEB conference through the BPF website) were conference staff, along with Executive Secretary Martin Petrich. Martin, Karen, and Richard worked long and hard for weeks. It couldn't have happened without them.

But that rhinoceros in the corner—the Sri Lankan conflict between Hindu Tamils and Buddhist Sinhalese—was an ominous presence. Other than Dr. Jehan Perera from the non-aligned National Peace Council, none of the other parties to the conflict was willing to address the conference directly. Buddhist and Tamil leaders and activists didn't know or trust INEB, so we had very little opportunity to listen or learn.

During our conference the tension of this very present reality kept coming up in our discussions. Each time we had to turn back to our agenda. Very difficult. The lesson here is that if we want to meet and work in other countries, we really need to do our homework. We must inform ourselves and build trust from the start. There are no shortcuts.

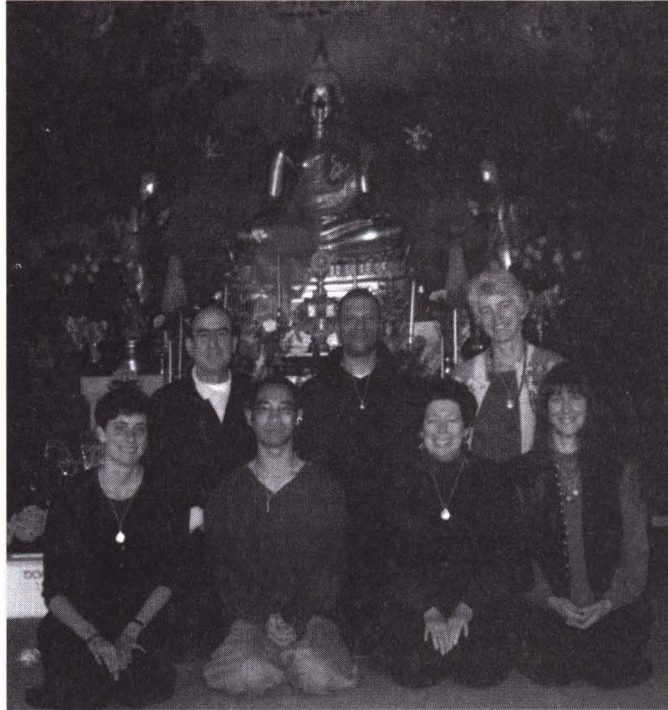
The last piece of INEB business was to hand over the Executive Secretary position from Martin Petrich, who has done a hard job well for two years, to Panadda Kosakarn, a Thai woman and a Buddhist activist, who

will carry on at least through the next conference in two years. This is a watershed time for INEB. In our tenth year, we can see the possibility of growth as an *activist* organization as well as a network. Many of us, from Japan, the U.S. and elsewhere, keenly feel the need for international Buddhist activism, putting our ideas to the test. We have real confidence in Panadda and in the leadership of the new Executive Committee, which intends to focus on women and gender issues for the near term. We are currently planning our own INEB journal and expanding the membership base. The time is right.

Staff Changes

Last month we welcomed Diana Winston back from her meditations and travels in Asia. I am glad to have her working with us again, this time serving as Assistant Director along with Tova Green. It's an interesting time of transition. Lewis Woods is leaving at the end of July to begin graduate studies in philosophy. I am not ready to say good-bye to him yet, so I won't do it here. Lewis, Tova, Diana, and I are in a challenging process of redefining our areas of responsibility at BPF, juggling program, administration, fundraising, speaking, networking. Now that we are sitting down to sort all this out, it is amazing how complex and interdependent are the workings of our modest organization. So please forgive me if I leave you in suspense about our various job descriptions for the time being. I only hope we can continue to be a source of informed activism, wisdom, compassion, and encouragement. For you and for ourselves. ❖

—Alan Senauke



*BPF staff on retreat at Wat Buddhanusorn, Fremont, CA
Front row: Diana Winston, Mark Kunkel, Tova Green,
Diana Lion; middle row: Alan Senauke, Lewis Woods,
Susan Moon; back row: Buddha*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & CLASSIFIEDS

HEALING RACISM IN OUR SANGHAS. How can we make our Western sanghas truly welcoming to people of all ethnic and racial groups? This question is the focus of monthly gatherings for Buddhist practitioners of color and of European American origin, at Empty Gate Zen Center, 2200 Parker St. in Berkeley, on the first Friday evening of each month from 7:00–9:30 PM. Call 510/464-3012 for more information.

SANGHA FOR BUDDHISTS OF COLOR meets monthly in the San Francisco Bay Area, for meditation, dharma talks, and mutual support. For information, or to be placed on their email list, contact Lauren Leslie by phone: 415/642-7202 or email: <bebuddha@hotmail.com>.

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

BUDDHIST PRISONER IN TEXAS needs pro-bono legal advice to bring suit against the state of Texas in order to be able to practice Buddhism in prison. He’ll do all the research, but he needs guidance. Contact Jimmy Brooks, #715108, 9601 Spur 591, Amarillo, TX 79107.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MIND OVER PAPER Weekend writing and meditation retreat with Susan Moon (editor of *TW*) and Jiko Linda Cutts, July 23-25, at Green Gulch Farm, Muir Beach, CA. For more information, call 415/383-3134.

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

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

A CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE ECSTASY: An egalitarian experiment in Cultural Evolution—Now recruiting. Integrating community living, mindfulness practice, and right livelihood. Cultivating the dharma through teaching juggling (We kid you not!), growing veggies, etc. We’re inspired by the insights and examples of such pioneers as Joanna Macy, Alan Watts, Ram Dass, Gary Snyder, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Details at our website: <www.twinoaks.org/members/center/home.htm> or send SASE to 138 Twin Oaks Rd., Box K-3, Louisa, VA 23093. <Craig@twinoaks.org>.

PERSONAL MASTERY GUIDE available. Produced by Alan Oliver, with a grant from the Delinquency Prevention Commission of San Francisco, this guide for mentors who work with youth includes Buddhist perspectives and tools for teaching meditation, inner awareness, waking up. Copies of the guide are available from the BPF office for a small donation of at least \$1 to cover mailing. For more info, contact Alan Oliver, Synergy Plus, 2261 Market St.—Box 438, San Francisco, CA 94114. 415/267-6970, or <A7oliversm@aol.com>.

NEVADA DESERT EXPERIENCE presents: Millennium 2000: Walking the Ways of Peace, religious action for disarmament. Dec. 29, 1999–Jan 2, 2000, in Las Vegas and at the Nevada Test Site, including special youth program. Co-sponsored by Fellowship of Reconciliation and other groups. Bring in a new millennium of peace and justice with a candlelight procession onto the test site! For info: Nevada Desert Experience, P.O. Box 4487, Las Vegas, NV 89127. 702/646-4814. <nde@igc.apc.org>

HELPING TURN THE WHEEL

BPF gratefully acknowledges contributions above membership received between January 1 & March 31, 1999.

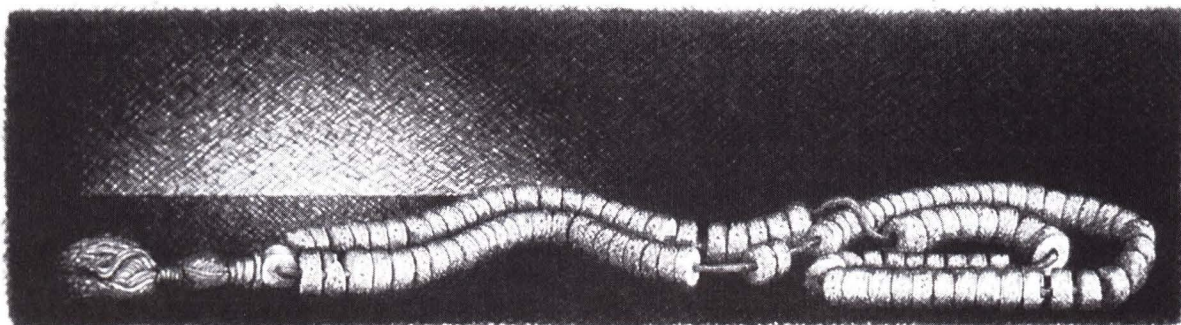
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Thanks to all our event and office volunteers, with special thanks to Isabella Rosekrans, Sandy Hunter, Drolma Lhamo, and David Hauer.

Thank you!



Philip Sugden

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