

TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP
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Karma

IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO CHANGE!

THE LAW OF CAUSE AND EFFECT AND:

ACTIVISM, JURY DUTY, LIVING ON DEATH ROW, BUILDING THE BIGGEST BUDDHA STATUE IN THE WORLD...

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From the Editor

I love karma, and here's why—

1) It's never too late.

There's always a chance to turn things around or set off in a new direction. I can start now. Today is the first day of the rest of my life, and all that.

It's true that the causes and conditions of the past have spilled me out into this moment. By the same token, what I'm doing right now is part of the karma that shapes my future. After today comes tomorrow, generally speaking.

2) Everything I do matters.

Even the thoughts I *think* have an effect on what happens later, maybe in a few minutes, maybe after I die.

3) Beneficial actions produce beneficial results, *even if we can't see those results.*

As activists, we need to have faith in this aspect of karma. If we work hard to save a tree, and the tree gets cut down anyway, that doesn't prove that we wasted our time. What we did will come to fruition somewhere down the line—maybe a seedling will sprout or a heart will crack open. And we have expanded our own hearts. This also means that we don't get to throw up our hands and quit in despair, Bush notwithstanding.

4) It's not all my fault.

Karma is a team sport. What comes about comes about thanks to what we *all* do, including presidents, and farm workers, and poets, and our brother the sun and our sister the moon. So if that tree gets cut down, it's not my fault, especially not if I did my best to save it. For me, it feels good to know I tried.

5) Karma makes sense.

When I drop a glass on a stone floor, it breaks. When I forget to look at the gas gauge and just keep driving, I run out of gas. When I do barbell curls three times a week at the gym, my biceps get bigger. This predictability is reassuring. It gives me something to work with.

6) But we can't predict the future.

Even though there's logic to cause and effect, we can't step back far enough to see the full picture. This is a good thing, because if we knew exactly what was going to happen next, life would be very boring. The more complex our act, the less predictable the effect. If I cook bouillabaisse for a friend, I have a reasonable expectation that that will make him happy, but it could turn out that he is allergic to mussels.

In the Soto Zen tradition in which I practice, we come together every full moon, and we bow a lot and we chant: "All my ancient twisted karma, from beginningless greed, hate, and delusion, born through body, speech, and mind, I now fully avow." This covers everything.

We do this together because we are all in the karmic stream together. Every full moon—and really it's not just every full moon but every moment—we get to start with a clean slate. All of us together. ❖

—Susan Moon

Coming themes for *Turning Wheel*:

Winter '02: Medical Ethics. Deadline: September 10, '01.

Spring '02: Art and Activism. Deadline: December 10, '01.

To be followed by Youth, Activist Nuns and Monks, and Technology, in an as yet undetermined order.

TURNING WHEEL

The Journal of Socially Engaged Buddhism



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Cover: The central circle and first ring of the Wheel of Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppada*). In the center, the rooster, snake and pig represent the three poisons of greed, hatred, and delusion, respectively. The first ring represents humans karmically descending and ascending.

Letters

Write to *Turning Wheel*, PO Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704, or e-mail <turningwheel@bpf.org>. Letters may be edited.

Spinning Our Own Cloth

Among the important pieces in the Buddhism in Las Americas issue (Spring 2001 *TW*), I was especially taken with Midge Quandt's reflections as a Nicaragua solidarity activist. I felt she was speaking directly to me; for 25 years, I have advocated small-scale economic development and networking in keeping with Buddhist models found in Hua-yen metaphysics, the doctrine of *paticca samuppada*, the teaching of Buddhadasa, and the classic sangha structure.

I think Ms. Quandt is right. Grassroots initiatives cannot of themselves adequately counter globalization. We need to recall Gandhi. We must learn to spin our own cloth, so to speak, but we must also present *swaraj* (independence) right in the face of raw power. Structural adjustment required the poor of India to pay a salt tax, and Gandhi and his followers demonstrated their right to make their own salt. The British raj imposed structural adjustment in many other ways, but what is more fundamental than salt! The selection of that particular issue and the way the *satyagraha* followed through under police batons convinced the world.

Gandhi meditated for months in his ashram before he came up with the idea of a salt march. The action did three things: it presented *swaraj*, it resisted the juggernaut, and it made good sense. Facing the WTO and its affiliate octopi, we

need to find issues that will convince as clearly as the salt tax, and then follow through. I bow to Midge Quandt, and take her hand as I fly to Honolulu to demonstrate when the Asian Development Bank meets behind barricades in May 2001.

—Robert Aitken, Hawai'i

Israel and Palestine

I was more than amazed when I read the article entitled "Injustice Cannot Lead to Peace" in the Indra's Net column (Spring 2001 *TW*). If the mission of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship is truly peace through reconciliation, then this article is not contributing much to that cause. With its obvious one-sided bias and misrepresentations, it looks like a blatant piece of Arab propaganda. The logic of the piece is astonishing: since more Palestinians than Israelis were killed, the Israelis must be unjust and the Palestinians just.

Any student of the Middle East conflict quickly discovers there is more than enough blame to go around on all sides. Portraying the current problem in such naive terms serves only to further polarize a human tragedy in dire need of reconciliation.

Turning Wheel would have done better to point out the urgent need for humanitarian help for Palestinian victims of a violent culture now prevalent on both sides.

—David Spielberg, Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

Annette Herskovits replies:

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of the Mountains and Rivers Order

Our intention was not to add fuel to the fires of a tragic conflict but to provide a factual description of life in the occupied territories, something rarely found in the main-stream American media.

The article does condemn the actions of extremist Palestinian factions, and we do not make light of Israelis' fears for their security. But we tried to rectify unbalanced reporting which denies any legitimacy to Palestinian rights and defends as necessary any Israeli action against the Palestinian population. We do feel the military occupation and the continuing encroachment by Jewish settlers have weakened the voices for peace among Palestinians and actually jeopardize Israel's security.

We hope the next issue of *Turning Wheel*, which focuses on reconciliation, will offer concrete models for dialogue and peace that can be of use in the Middle East conflict.

Video Games and Violence

Mushim Ikeda-Nash's courageous and thoughtful piece on video games (Spring 2001 *TW*) inspires deep discussion and practice. As a federal law enforcement officer, this issue has bothered me ever since I saw unsupervised young boys learning killing skills in casino video arcades while their parents gambled. I periodically face this same technology on a life-size video screen in a darkened training room, with terrifying simulations. The intent is to preserve life and minimize violence in accordance with karmic law and the first precept (not allowing others to kill). Applied with wisdom, this technology contributes to saving lives.

I doubt society's "toxins" are toxic to children mindfully taught to see them for what they are, or as part of occasional play in a mindful household. To ignore them is to ignore the real world!

I find insight in the book *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*, by James Garbarino. Grounded in reality and inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh and Bo Lozoff, Garbarino's monastery program guides young violent offenders to their lost spiritual homes.

—Dave Young, Reno, Nevada

Corrections to the Spring 2001 *Turning Wheel*

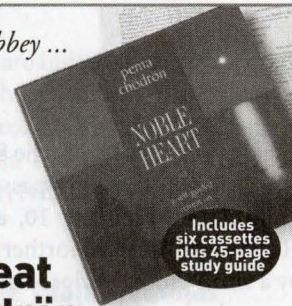
The correct e-mail address for José Antonio Vergara (author of "En el Sur del Sur") is <joseav@llanchipal.cl>.

In the What You Can Do section, Living Acceptance of the Heart is Pedro Ripa's dharma name, not the name of the sangha. The correct listing should read:

Grupo Zen de Ensenada (sangha in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh). Calle 10 #60D; Ensenada, 22800 Baja California, México. Contact: Pedro Ripa, (011-52-6) 174-4377, <ripa@cicese.mx>. More information and translations of dharma texts into Spanish at www.geocities.com/zensenada.

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Remembering Maylie

Kushin Seisho Maylie Scott—mother, friend, dharma sister, teacher—passed away peacefully at 4 PM Thursday, May 10, at home at the Arcata Forest Heart Zen Center in northern California. She was encircled by a small group of close family and dharma relations. The cancer had advanced with terrible suddenness—Maylie died only four weeks after the initial diagnosis—but in her last several days she was quiet and seemed peaceful. Though simply breathing was hard work, Maylie's breath was very steady, like her zazen. As we sat with her I did not sense any distress. At the end, Maylie's breath got quieter, tapering off, until there were several long pauses, and then our good friend moved into the great mystery beyond this world.

Maylie was born in 1935. She married Peter Dale Scott, came to Berkeley, and started a family while still in her twenties. She trained as a psychotherapist and worked for Alameda County as a social worker until retiring in the late 1980s. Maylie joined the Berkeley Zen Center in the early 1970s, and became a priest there in 1987. She and I received dharma transmission from Sojun Mel Weitsman at Tassajara in 1998. Shortly after, Maylie moved north to live as resident teacher and founding abbess of the Arcata Center, where she had been a visiting teacher for years.

Through her Berkeley years Maylie was a social activist. Service and social change work flowed naturally from her deep sense of justice and from her Buddhist practice. She was arrested numerous times for sitting on the tracks blocking the Concord Naval Weapons Station. She worked with AIDS patients and fed homeless people. She went into prisons and jails to work with men and women behind bars. She was the first mentor for BPF's BASE program and

served tirelessly on the BPF board. There are vast worlds of Bodhisattva action in any of these efforts.

Maylie is survived by her daughter Cassie and Cassie's partner Helene Vosters, her son John, his wife Patricia and their daughter Marianna, her son Mika, her sister Mary John,

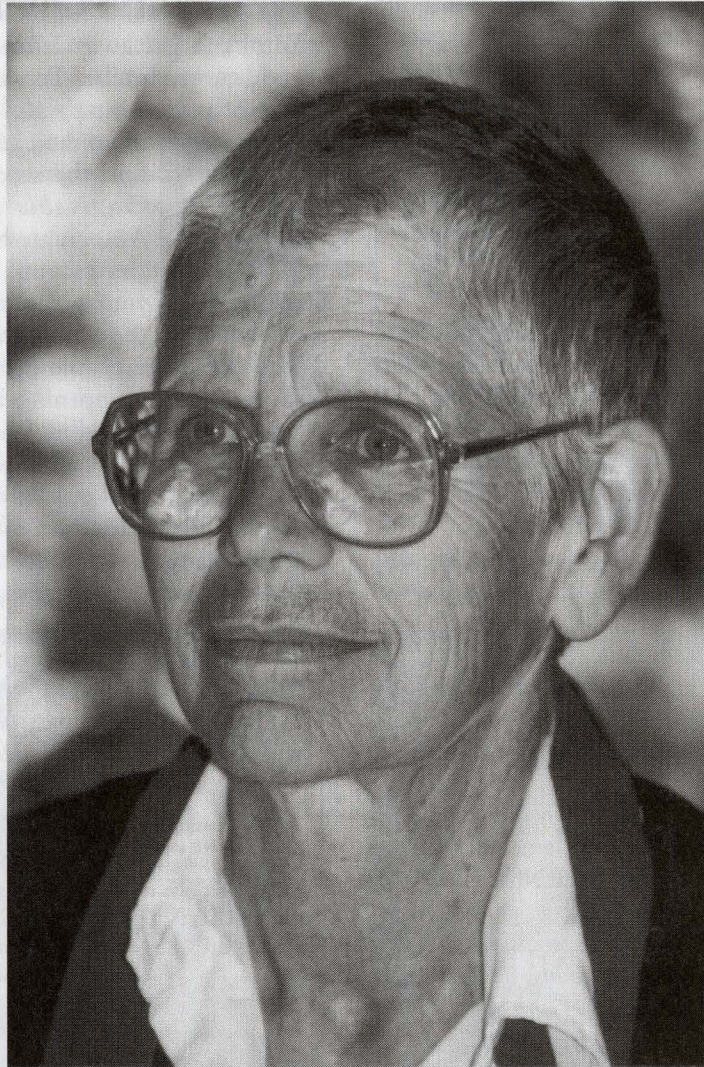
Abbess of West Malling Abbey, Kent, and many, many students and friends touched by her love, her sense of justice, and her open-hearted Zen teaching.

These are some of the so-called facts of Maylie Scott's life. But other ways of looking at her life are just as real. Maylie was like a tree—feet firmly on the ground, graying head and smile aspiring to the sky. I see her as the finest exemplar of socially engaged Buddhism I have known. At Berkeley Zen Center, at BPF, and in other circles of life, I relied on Maylie for unsentimental clarity and heart. As a dharma sister she was always willing to listen fully, to challenge assumptions—even her own—and to point again and again to the strength of zazen. In life and death she showed us how to bear the unbearable.

Knowing that Maylie is gone, I miss her keenly. And I am glad that her

troubles are over. Our own work continues. Maylie's teaching continues. Her voice and actions lead us on.

—Alan Senauke



Maylie Scott, 1935–2001

At Maylie's request, the Scott family suggests that memorial contributions can be made to Buddhist Peace Fellowship, P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704.

In the Fall 2001 issue of *Turning Wheel*, we will devote a section of the magazine to paying tribute to Maylie and to her pioneering work in socially engaged Buddhism.

News from Indra's Net

In the Avatamsaka Sutra, the universe is represented as an infinite network of jewels (Indra's Net), each reflecting all the others. The interdependence of all lives always strikes us when we compile this section, bringing clarity to our purpose: that some reader may find, through an item here, a path to helping all beings.

India's Buddhist Tribes

I recently spent four months in India's northeastern "hill states," an area difficult to reach and rife with terrorism. I went on behalf of the Amida Trust, a British Buddhist organization, to establish links with local Buddhist groups. Roughly 160 tribes live there, each speaking a different language. Some are animist, some Christian, but more than 20 are Buddhist, having migrated from Tibet, Burma, Thailand, and China about a thousand years ago. Almost every tribe has its own liberation movement with different factions.

Originally, the Amida Trust was contacted by the Chakmas, who claim to descend from the Sakyas, Buddha's own people. For hundreds of years, they lived in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), in the Chittagong Hills. But at India's partition in 1947, the area, although over 90 percent Buddhist, was ceded to Muslim Pakistan. Fifty years of persecution followed. In 1964, 40 percent of the Chakmas' agricultural land and many villages were flooded when a dam was built with international aid. Rapes and killings followed as Pakistan's army and settlers moved into the hills. "We want the land, we do not want the people," declared one general. Thousands of Chakmas fled to India's hill states across the border. In 1971, the entire area was caught in a brutal civil war as Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan.

There are now some 400,000 Chakmas and other tribals from Bangladesh in India's hill states. Most live in appalling conditions and meet with prejudice and violence from locals. Although Bangladesh signed an uneasy peace with the Chakma resistance in 1997, refugees are unwilling to return there as conditions remain bad and Bengalis have taken most of their land.

I intended to visit the Chakma ancestral home in Bangladesh but my Chakma guide did not have the papers to cross the border and I was not ready to go on my own. So I went to the capital of the Indian hill state of Tripura. The scenery is spectacular unspoiled mountain jungle, but the area is so dangerous that we went in convoy, about 20 trucks and buses escorted by heavily armed soldiers.

The generosity of the Chakmas and other hill people was overwhelming. Everywhere I was taken in and fed—even by the very poorest, and nearly all are very poor indeed. Many Chakmas live in tiny bamboo huts with bits of newspaper and plastic sheet over the walls, in an attempt to keep out the monsoon. One man—a farmer trying to support seven people on two acres of rice paddy—traveled 70 miles to see me. He refused money, saying he just wanted an outsider to

know his story. The Chakmas are indeed a people ignored. ♦ To find out more about the hill tribes and Amida Trust, e-mail <ian@pureland.freeserve.co.uk> or <amida@quannon.demon.co.uk>; or write: Amida Trust, 53 Grosvenor Place, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2RD, England.

—Ian Finley

Causes and Effects and the Giant Buddhas of Bamiyan

Huian Tsang, a Chinese Buddhist pilgrim who visited Afghanistan in 630 C.E., marveled at the dazzle of gold given off by the colossal Buddhas carved in the cliff overlooking the city of Bamiyan. They represented Vairochana Buddha, the cosmic Buddha whose body is the universe itself.


This past March, the fundamentalist Taliban ruling Afghanistan destroyed the Buddhas, after the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, ordered all statues destroyed as "idolatrous." Islam disapproves of human form representations, but this does not fully explain the order, which contradicted one Omar had issued eight months earlier urging that the Buddhas be protected.

Several events since have increased the power of hardliners within the Taliban. First, the U.N. imposed new sanctions on Afghanistan, even though thousands of children have died of cold and hunger and one million Afghans are at risk of famine. This action came about at the urging of the United States, which puts priority on pressuring the

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Taliban to extradite Osama Bin Laden, accused of masterminding the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Africa.

Second, the Taliban banned poppy cultivation, hoping to gain U.N. recognition and obtain seeds and fertilizer for crop substitution. But neither came. Opium was a main source of cash for much of the population and for the Taliban themselves.

Thus the more moderate in the Taliban lost out. An official claimed the Buddhas' fate was decided when an international delegation offered large sums of money to save them: "If they can kill our children with sanctions, who gives them the right to talk about our heritage?"

But the Taliban's indignation sounds hollow: international aid agencies had to leave Afghanistan in 1998 because Taliban members beat and threatened aid staff; they repeatedly arrested women aid workers, finally demanding they be fired, while denying men, including doctors, access to Afghan women; and they banned all education for women—even landmine-awareness classes. As women suffer, so do the children.

Who are the Taliban and how did they come to power? During the cold war, the United States supported the most radical Mujaheddin ("holy warriors") fighting Soviet troops, even helping Pakistan recruit Islamic militants from around the world to fight in Afghanistan. Refugee camps in Pakistan filled with Islamic schools that taught a radical and debased version of Islam. Young Afghans who had trained in those schools, most from the majority Pashtun ethnic group, became the Taliban's base.

After the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, U.S. aid dried up, but Central Asia's vast oil and gas reserves came into play. Pakistan armed the Taliban—hoping they would bring the stability needed for building a pipeline through Afghanistan to its seaports—and so did Saudi Arabia. The United States did not restrain its two allies—maybe in part because Unocal, a U.S. company, was competing to build the pipeline.

Bamiyan, the valley of the Buddhas, is home to the Hazara people, who have been fighting the Taliban. In 1997, the Hazaras were starving because of failing crops. The Taliban prevented relief trucks from reaching them by blockading the valley. The town of Bamiyan has changed hands several times since. In January, the Taliban killed 300 Hazara civilians 25 miles away from the town. When they blew the Buddhas up, all town inhabitants had fled. The Taliban seem to know little of the mercy at the heart of the Koran's message: "Indeed, those who believe and do good, the Merciful will endow them with loving kindness."

Walking with Communities Suffering from AIDS

"We must find the courage to leave our temples and enter the temples of human experience, temples that are filled with suffering. We have so much work to do." Those words are from Ven. Maha Ghosananda, patriarch of

Cambodia, who has led nine "Dhammayietra" peace walks through refugee camps, heavily mined land, and territory held by the Khmer Rouge, who waged a guerilla war against the government until 1998.

Dhammayietra means pilgrimage of truth in Pali, but the Dhammayietra movement has expanded from peace walks to other peacemaking programs—teaching literacy, helping prisoners—which it likens to walks: by sharing the life of the people, the Dhammayietra staff helps them find ways to ease their suffering.

Last year, Dhammayietra started Peacemakers Walking in Communities with AIDS, in a northwestern province just emerging from the ravages of the civil war. The staff consisted initially of one Cambodian and one expatriate. They spent five months listening and learning—"walking with the communities" rather than imposing predetermined ideas and solutions. Three people from the community then joined the staff.

Working with health volunteers and village leaders, the staff surveyed 122 villages. The men in the villages had been soldiers in 1993 and 1994, at a time when nearly half the women working in brothels had HIV but no prevention program existed. Now, seven years later, these men and their wives are dying of AIDS. The staff found 75 families, including 154 children, in which at least one member was suffering or had died from AIDS. Twenty-three children had lost both parents, and 95 had lost one parent but would probably lose the other as well.

One leader said his villages are most concerned about the young men who leave after the rice harvest to work in Thailand or the border areas. As disastrous floods have destroyed crops this year, more will leave. Some will visit prostitutes, putting their families at risk when they return.

Dhammayietra believes most of Cambodia will face the AIDS epidemic with little outside aid. And Cambodia is so poor that its health care and social service systems can do little to cope with a problem this huge.

Because the peacemakers found village leaders and health volunteers were reluctant to label anyone as having AIDS, they decided to help all those with serious chronic disease. They identify those dying at home; seek volunteers to help care for them and village support for the children; encourage families not to sell land to pay for useless treatments (children who lose their inheritance often become migrant or sex workers); and help families learn about prevention. ❖

◆ To support the walk, send a check (made to Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation) to CPR, PO Box 60, Bungthong Lang Post Office, Bangkok 10242, Thailand.

Indra's Net is researched and written by Annette Herskovits. Ian Finley contributed the first item.

BPF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH

In January 2001, Alan Senauke told the BPF Board he will be resigning as executive director in January 2002, in order to spend more time writing and teaching. The board is grateful for Alan's plan to remain in his position for a year in order to provide for a thoughtful transition process, and has appointed an Executive Director Search Committee. The committee consists of BPF Associate Director Diana Winston, Board Member Mushim Ikeda-Nash, and Board Vice President Terry Stein.

The Search Committee has hired a consultant to conduct an organizational assessment during the next several months. After that, a job description for the executive director position will be developed and posted in the early fall. The committee hopes to have a new executive director selected by the end of 2001.

Filling this position for BPF is both an enormous challenge and an opportunity for the organization, which has undergone significant growth during the past decade under Alan Senauke's leadership. People who have questions about the search process, are themselves interested in this position, or who wish to nominate someone else as a candidate for the executive director position may contact either Diana Winston [510-655-6169, ext. 301; <dwinston@bpf.org>] or Terry Stein [510-836-6050; <tsstein@pilot.msu.edu>].

THE PRISON PROJECT

is delighted to announce that Joi Morton-Wiley has come on board as co-director as of April 30. She is handling the prison correspondence, education, and training programs. Diana Lion will continue to direct the ministry and advocacy programs. Welcome Joi!

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For general submission guidelines or more information, call 510/655-6169, or e-mail: <turningwheel@bpf.org>.

What You Can Do

by Michael Trigilio

The notion of, "What you can do about karma" is fundamentally redundant. Anything we do, of course, is karmic. "Karma" is sometimes translated as "action," and our every action, word, and choice has infinite karmic consequences that we experience in multiple ways. Engaged Buddhists are particularly concerned with finding ways to end suffering and to generate socially transformative karmic actions. Here I'll just mention one of the millions of ways in which our attention to karma can affect social change.

Everyone buys food and clothes, and most of us pay some attention to where our food and clothes come from. It is often difficult to find clothes at retail shops that have been manufactured where there are labor laws that protect workers from sweatshop environments. Similarly, one can rarely enjoy a cup of coffee that hasn't been made from coffee beans grown under oppressive conditions in Colombia, West Africa, or Central America. What are the karmic ramifications, then, of a cup of coffee?

Looking into the karmic consequences of such simple consumer acts is not meant to be a tool for cultivating guilt. Rather, when we examine these seemingly mundane actions, we can see both the negative and the positive consequences. Perhaps the coffee is sold at an independent, local coffee shop run in an ethical way. Maybe the blouse is marked for clearance and just plain makes more economic sense for your checkbook. Maybe it's a gift that will make a friend happy. When we contemplate the karma of our actions, we can begin to make guilt-free decisions to change our behavior, by supporting fair-trade coffee or buying recycled clothing whenever possible. Online resources such as www.sweatshopwatch.com and www.globalexchange.com can help.

And because this column is about karma, not consumerism, the most appropriate way to examine our actions could indeed be the act of asking ourselves these questions:

- When we consider the causes of suffering, how much of the responsibility do we attribute to our own actions?
- How do we acknowledge our accountability without feeling guilty?
- How can we stop negative karmic cycles?
- What's the relationship between forgiveness and karma?
- How do we take personal responsibility without letting social institutions off the hook?
- How can the idea of karma be misused and abused?
- Does the accumulation of wealth (stocks, or a simple savings account) bring negative karma along with it?
- Do children inherit the bad karma of their parents? What about inherited privilege that was gained at the expense of others?
- Does the end ever justify the means? ❖

BPF International Project

The Tibetan Refugee Revolving Loan Fund

by Gordon Tyndall

About a year after the Tibetan Refugee Children's Project (TRCP) had been launched, I was discussing it with a fellow economist. She commented, "But Gordon, that's just a band-aid. You should be stimulating productive investment in the refugee settlements, not consumption!" For a moment, I was speechless. Could our wonderful Children's Project be a mistake? But, on second thought, I realized my colleague was forgetting that the Children's Project *is* investing—investing in the bodies and minds of the children—an extremely productive investment.

But my colleague's comment did start me thinking! I had read about the phenomenal success of the Grameen (small loan) project in Bangladesh, and wondered if BPF could do something similar in the Tibetan Refugee settlements in India and Nepal. When I broached the subject to the BPF Board and to His Holiness's Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC), they were both extremely enthusiastic; but then came the crucial question: Where is the money to come from? My first idea was to seek aid from several large foundations that support international aid programs; so, with the consent of the BPF Board, a number of applications were sent out for grants for a Revolving Loan Fund, with high hopes and expectations. To my dismay, not one of them was approved.

Somewhat shaken by this response, I asked the board for permission to send a fund-raising letter to all members of BPF. The board agreed, and shortly thereafter letters went out asking BPF members to contribute to the fund and suggesting that they make a three-year commitment, with the understanding that my wife Margo and I would match all contributions for the three-year period. The response was wonderful! Two hundred and seven members agreed to support the fund, and over its nine-year life we have raised \$70,000. (This is in addition to the \$25,000 per year that BPF's TRCP has been sending to six of the settlements.)

I now want to describe briefly the way in which the fund is administered and the variety of projects that have been funded.

From the fund's beginning in 1991, it was agreed with the CTRC in Dharamsala that:

1. the fund was to be used only for low-interest loans to finance employment-creating projects in the Tibetan settlements in India or Nepal;
2. the settlements would be encouraged to self-finance their projects as much as possible; and
3. CTRC in Dharamsala would be responsible for approving proposals coming from the settlements and for collecting the agreed-upon payments of interest and principal by the settlements, and each loan would also require the prior approval of BPF.

At this end, I have been responsible for fund-raising and day-to-day administrative details. Major decisions are referred to a committee consisting of the executive director of BPF, a member of the BPF Board, and me.

Since its inception, the fund has made nine loans totaling approximately \$77,000, and has almost completed negotiation for a tenth loan of approximately \$30,000. The total of \$107,000, some \$37,000 more than was sent to CTRC, was possible because of the payments of interest and principal made by the settlements to the CTRC. The nine loans were: \$5,000 to the Cholsum settlement for small looms to make shoulder bags, sweaters, and aprons; \$5,000 for a poultry farm project at the



Trainee and instructor in the weaving project at Cholsum

Bylakuppe settlement; \$16,000 to construct a large water tank as part of an irrigation project at the Bylakuppe settlement; \$8,000 for a project to manufacture detergent at the Hunsur settlement; \$8,000 for a bakery project at the Hunsur settlement; \$6,000 for a project to manufacture vermicelli and noodles at the Kollegal settlement; \$15,000 to the Cooperative Society of Sonamling, Ladakh, for a restaurant, plus accommodations for the employees; \$8,000 for the purchase of "controlled rice" and other seeds for the Tenzingang settlement; and \$4,000 for the purchase of seeds and fertilizer for the Sonamling settlement. The new (tenth) project is for a lime-crushing facility at the Kham Kathok settlement.

As was to be expected, the results have varied widely. Some have had good success; others have been able to pay back the original loan—some with interest, some without—but have later had to close down because of marketing or other problems; and still others ended up as a complete loss.

(Continued on next page)

Family Practice

Becoming A Self-Cleaning Oven: On Family Practice and Karma

by Mushim Ikeda-Nash

Give up the old ways—
Passion, enmity, folly.
Know the truth and find peace.
Share the way.

—*The Dhammapada: The Sayings of the Buddha*
trans. Thomas Byrom

What is our practice as families when it comes to karma? The answer that seems clearer to me every day is that it's kind of like becoming a self-cleaning oven, and throwing the switch to "on" on a regular basis. This means that we regularly take a look at what's accumulated on the sides of the family "oven"—toxic chunks of built-up resentment; tasks we committed to but never completed; difficult conversations we should have initiated but instead chickened out on; appreciations we were "too busy" to voice—and methodically do the work of cleaning up what's there. Like all types of house cleaning, addressing the unfinished business within a marriage or between parent and child requires constant effort. Doing our karmic "homework" can feel heavy and frightening at times, but occasionally it is blessed by moments of insight and forgiveness.

Zen Master Seung Sahn often says, "Don't make anything." I used to think, "How can I manage that? I'm *always* making something. Just by breathing, I'm making carbon dioxide." And so it goes—we make babies, make careers, make homes, make dinner, make garbage, make pollution when we drive, make love, make mistakes. When I consider how my husband Chris, my son Joshua, and I became a family, all I see is the intersection of causes and effects! "Don't make anything" strikes me as being a cheerful Zen slap in the face. Filtered through my "Mom mind," I think I'd follow it up with, "And even if you do, try to clean up your mess as you go along."

Recently I said to my husband, "As a middle-aged person, here's what I think: With you and Josh, I don't have to like you all the time, and I don't have to approve of everything you do all the time, but for things to work best, I do have to *trust* you all the time." For me, trusting also means I trust all of us to know ourselves; honesty is only serviceable to the degree that we've spent time looking deeply into our own motivations and feelings. When I feel a fundamental trust that my husband isn't concealing his thoughts and feelings from me, it's much easier for me to let go of the smaller ways in which he annoys me. When I trust that my son doesn't lie to me, I don't waste any extra energy worrying about

whether I'm in touch with the challenges he's facing as he grows into adolescence. And, sadly, I've seen in the lives of friends the raw pain that is caused by spouses lying to one another about their sexual orientation, or parents keeping secret something that intimately affects the well-being of their children. My husband knows a family in which the mother did not tell her son that the man who had raised him was not his biological father. When the son grew up and had occasion to look at his birth certificate, he was so angry that he cut off relations with his mother.

The koan here is that sometimes, in order to be true to ourselves, we do cause immense pain to those we love. Prince Siddhartha left his wife and newborn baby, his father, and the aunt who had loved and raised him. He slipped away in the night and went into the forest to seek enlightenment. Ultimately, however, as an awakened person, he reunited with his family members within the practice and the sangha. I myself created a sizable heap of karma when I returned from a stint in an Asian Buddhist monastery, penniless and pregnant. My mother told me that she and my father were "devastated" by the news that I intended to become a single mother. Even so, because they loved me, they too were willing to let go of their shame and disapproval. After meeting my son when he was six months old, my father, barely able to contain his joy, had his photograph taken with Joshua in his arms.

"A fine baby!" he exclaimed proudly to everyone.

Not all obstructions burn away so naturally, but even so, I try to make small, daily efforts. If I can't think of anything positive to do in relation to old wounds and estrangements within my extended family or my circle of close friends, I try to extend metta, or lovingkindness, to them. Sometimes I succeed, sometimes I don't. But, at this point in my practice, I don't think I can fool myself: it's my practice and my job to attend very closely to my karma and my family's karma. My happiness depends on it. ❖

Loan Fund, continued from page 10

But they have all provided meaningful employment for some Tibetan refugees, if even for only a limited time.

We hope very much that newer members of BPF who may never have heard of the Revolving Loan Fund will wish to contribute to it, and, of course, we would never want to exclude older members, those who contributed in earlier years as well those who were unable to contribute in the '90s. Checks should be made payable to BPF and sent to me, Gordon Tyndall, at: 88 Clarewood Lane, Oakland, CA 94618-2243. Contributions are tax-deductible.

Please contact me if you have any questions about either the Tibetan Refugee Revolving Loan Fund or the Tibetan Refugee Children's Project. ❖

Gordon Tyndall is a financial advisor, longtime BPF member, former BPF Board member, and a Vipassana practitioner.

History

Ninsho Serves the Shunned

by Diane Patenaude Ames

Although thirteenth-century Japan did not yet have a legally defined group of outcasts, certain people were already widely regarded as *hinen*, “not human.” The Buddhist prohibition on killing caused the scapegoating of butchers and leather workers, while the popular Shinto belief that sickness and death were a source of ritual pollution caused the shunning of coffin makers and gravediggers. Criminals, some entertainers, and people who had merely fallen into destitution were driven out of settlements to live in wretched shantytowns beside rivers. Their social betters invoked the Buddhist doctrine of karma to argue that they must have done something, in a past life if not in this one, to deserve their misery.

Lepers were definitely *hinen*. If misfortune meant you had accumulated bad karma, lepers must have accumulated really terrible karma. In any case, people were afraid of them. So great was the popular horror of lepers and leprosy that there were not even any leprosariums—until a remarkable monk named Ninsho (1217–1303) founded, in Nara, a hospital for these nonpeople that lasted well into the twentieth century.

As a young Shingon monk (Shingon=Japanese Vajrayana), Ninsho became a devotee of Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom and of medicine, whose cult emphasized practical acts of compassion. Ninsho was also

deeply moved by the examples of two early Japanese Buddhists who were regarded as bodhisattvas: Prince Shotoku (577–622), who founded one of the first charity hospitals in Japan on the grounds of one of the first Buddhist temples, and Gyogi (670–749), who organized his followers into a sort of Buddhist Peace Corps in Japan. After reading about these men, Ninsho resolved not only to venerate but to emulate them.

Later he became a disciple of Eizon (1201–1290), the founder of the Shingon Vinaya school, who had decided that the great task before Japanese Buddhism was to restore—or rather to introduce—strict observance of Buddhist precepts on the part of both Buddhist clergy and the laity. Ninsho helped to convince his teacher that observance of the bodhisattva precepts has to involve compassionate action. From the 1240s on, Eizon in turn encouraged Ninsho to embark on a series of social welfare projects. Because Japan’s economic infrastructure—what there had ever been of it—had been damaged during the dynastic conflicts that destroyed the Heian government in the previous century, Ninsho organized community efforts to repair bridges and roads and built at least one shelter for travelers’ horses. He and his master repeatedly distributed food to the very poor, the *hinen* whom they both regarded as in special need of the Buddha’s compassion. In fact, both men taught that to serve the poor, the sick, and the unfortunate was to serve Manjusri, echoing the Buddha, who said, “He who serves the sick serves me.” ❖

original face



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KARMA

Dead Man's Coat

by Jarvis Jay Masters

It was so cold that morning, we were all plastered against the high brick wall that provided the only shield from the chilling winds. We stood on the prison exercise yard, listening to the chattering sound of each other's dismay.

"Man, man!" said Freddie, shivering. "If I had known it was this damn cold I be damn if I had came out here, in all this shitty-ass weather!"

"Me, too," said Troy. "This cold is whippin' my ass...my hands...my feet...ears. Everything is freezin', you know?"

Only a few of us had opted to leave the confinement of our cells to brave the cold. The dread of being cooped up in the stench inside, waiting 72 more hours before being allowed out of our cells again, was why we stood almost paralyzed against the high gray wall, dressed in our dingy state-issued clothing, trying to make the best of it.

"Hey," said Skip, "what if we all just tell the guard we want off the yard, to take us all back in?"

"That ain't goin' to happen," I said, as I stomped my feet to stay warm. "Cause they ain't goin' to stop the program inside just to come and escort us back in. Plus, how many of y'all righteously believe they actually goin' to come out here in this cold to get us?"

"They goin' to have to," said Leo, "at some point—right? So why not now instead of one o'clock?"

"They ain't comin' now," said Freddie, his teeth chattering, "cause they *like* seein' us freezin' our asses off! Think about it! If they didn't, they would have given us better coats. They know how cold it is."

"Yeah," said Skip, "it's not the cold weather, it's this shit they got us wearin'. One pair of socks, state jeans, our sweatshirts, and these thin-ass cotton jackets? Man, this is the real problem!"

"Why you think nobody else is out here?" said Freddie, rubbing his bare hands together like two sticks to get fire. "Look around...We're the only fools, just the five of us out of 50 or so who could be out here wit' us. They had the sense to know. But us—like jackasses! Next time I'm keepin' my bad ass indoors."

A few minutes passed.

"Say, Jarvis," said Troy, with a quick glance down at my coat, "how long you been wearin' that coat?"

"Why?" I asked, looking down.

"Man, look at it! It looks older than Methuselah! Man, they don't even make state coats like dat no mo." The other guys started laughing.

I looked down at my coat again. There were a few holes in it. "I haven't had it that long," I said. "A year or two."

"He's right," said Skip, "'cause I remember Pitchfork havin' that same coat whenever I seen him."

"Hell, ol' Pitch got killed," said Freddie. "Remember? He got killed over there on the north block yard."

"Nah, that wasn't him," said Skip. "The last I heard he got out, paroled."

"Man, I'm tellin' y'all," said Freddie. "That was Pitch who got shot and killed. A dude I know workin' in the hospital tol' me. He seen Pitchfork stretched out dead!"

"Is that right?" we all hummed, each of us having our own memories of Pitchfork.

"And I tell you somethin' else," Freddie went on. "I'm willin' to bet those holes you got in your coat are holes from the bullets that killed Pitchfork."

I glanced down at the nickel-sized holes in my coat. There was one on the shoulder, and two more around the collar. "You crazy, Freddie! These ain't no bullet holes, dude!"

"They might jus' be," said Troy. "Watch—I can put my finger right in one like this." He stuck his index finger inside the hole in the shoulder.

"Man, Troy," I said, "leave my damn coat alone. It ain't messin' wit' you."

"Let me see," said Freddie, inching close, "if my finger fits this other hole."

"Hey! Are you guys losin' your minds?" I said. I jumped away from their inspection of my coat. "Getcha paws off me! I know what's really goin' on," I joked. "Y'all is so cold, you tryin' to find somethin' to do, and my poor coat is it."

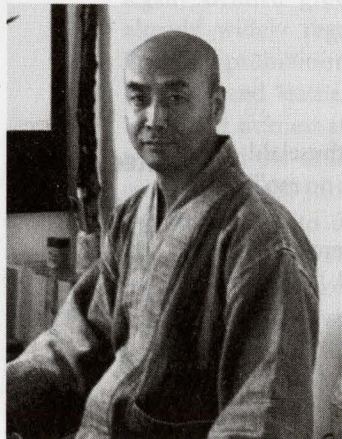
"That's not it," Skip said, laughing. "Man, Jarvis. Jus' trip off this: Here we are, stuck like Chuck in this cold-ass weather. And jus' when we think it can't get no worsen, lo and behold"—Skip bent over laughing—"we see you wearin'—and I don't mean no disrespect to ol' Pitchfork—a dead man's coat! Man, San Quentin ain't right. They got you wearin' a dead man's

I glanced down at the nickel-sized holes in my coat. "You crazy, Freddie! These ain't no bullet holes, dude!"

(continued on page 16)

Cause and Effect

by Ven. Hyunoong Sunim



Originally, fundamentally, we human beings are very clear. Our past, present and future are very clear because our birth occurs from the principles of cause and effect. If the cause is good, the effect is good; if the cause is bad, the result is bad. If the cause is clear and certain, then the effect will be clear and certain. That is why right now is very important. If we are wandering right now, then we'll be wandering in the future.

On occasion we might enjoy some good fortune, but we have no assurance it will continue, and if the wind blows, it could all blow away. This makes us realize how vulnerable we are. If we live our lives depending on good fortune, that makes us weak. We need to believe in cause and effect. If I live incorrectly now, my future will obviously be incorrect. If I commit crimes now, the police will be coming in the future, without a doubt. This is true within religion and within general society. No one who is alive can avoid this.

Often people live their lives giving up on themselves or believing incorrectly in themselves. When we take what is not correct and believe it to be correct, our thinking becomes upside down. This is the condition of living in delusion. We do spiritual practice because we need to go beyond this delusion.

Each individual person has problems that are quite different from other people's problems. Our personalities, habits, and karma are all different. This is why we cannot compare ourselves to other people. The more we compare ourselves to others, the more this will cause us suffering. The one thing that is the same among all of us is our "essence nature." We all breathe and sleep; we all know when we are hungry.

But we human beings turn our backs on our own essence nature. How do we do this? We dream dreams that can never be real, we make judgments that can never be true, and we create ideals that we can never meet. If we look honestly within ourselves we will see this. If we awaken we will recognize that our thinking is upside down, and we will realize just how foolish and even dangerous our judgments have been: "I am this kind of person," "I have these wrong habits," "This is the best I can do," and so on.

Even though we live in a vast world, we create a very narrow world for ourselves. Animals instinctive-

ly live in a pure way, but human beings, if we are confused and if we give up on ourselves, create a ghost world in which we live. We believe in a world that is made of our illusions, and then we try to live in it. This creates unnecessary arguments, abuse, and suffering. We completely create this ourselves. No one ordered us to suffer this way.

When we cause people fear or hurt, we are committing transgressions. Since society must be organized, we establish laws that people must live by; if they break them then they go to jail, which is great suffering. But even if we're not in jail, if we look at ourselves carefully—are we really free? Are we free from our karma, our habits, our delusions? No, we're not. Even if we're not in a physical jail, our karma puts us in our own self-made jail. When we look honestly at ourselves, we have to ask: "Who created this?"

Buddha, Christ, and the Saints all taught us the Path so that we can transcend this condition. You can live without religion, but you cannot live apart from the principles of cause and effect.

If we want to practice Zen, if we want to have a better life, then we have to believe in the principles of cause and effect. In the Bible it says if we don't sow seeds we will have no harvest. Even those who do not believe in any religion are equally affected by this principle. If you eat a food that doesn't agree with you, your stomach will feel upset. If you are frequently angry, your friends will distance themselves from you. If your mind wanders and is filled with complicated, useless thoughts, your wisdom will disappear.

People think of America as a free country but they misinterpret the meaning of freedom. Freedom is a great thing, but if we use it incorrectly, it can become poison. If we are to achieve correct freedom, then we need to live a correct life. If we think that we can do as we please because we live in a free country, this is very dangerous. People become reckless with this attitude. At the time, our recklessness may seem to create no negative results, but eventually we will suffer the effects.

As a teacher I like to give freedom to people, so I prefer not to make strict rules. But this doesn't mean that we are free to turn the principles of cause and effect upside down. We hope that sitting on our Zen cushion will make all our delusions go away, but if our mind has cultivated wrong habits and our lifestyle is filled with bad habits, we can't practice well. We say, "It's because I have so much thinking," or "because I have so much desire," or "because I'm not feeling

well." It reaches the point where whatever we see in front of us obstructs our practice. And the reason we are unable to practice well and have not achieved peace or awakening is because we are experiencing a result from some cause we created.

Why is it important to awaken? When we awaken we realize that the principle of cause and effect is empty. Thoughts arise and disappear like clouds, and we do not become attached to the arising or the disappearance. Our essence nature is empty and vast like the blue sky. No matter how many clouds appear, they will not stay in the sky forever. So it's just the clouds that are passing by—the blue sky is still there unaffected. If you awaken to your own essence you will see that it is that blue sky. Everything that arises in your mind—your thoughts, feelings, emotions—are just passing clouds.

If someone aggravates or upsets you, certain thoughts will arise in your mind, then disappear. Someone who has awoken and experienced that blue sky can let go of things that arise and disappear in their mind because they realize this is a natural process. They have seen and believe in that blue sky. So when clouds come, that's fine, and when they go, that's fine. Awakened people still have mental clouds that arise and disappear, but they pay absolutely no attention to them because they realize this is normal human functioning. This is why they have no attachment.

But when ordinary people have clouds arise, when they get upset, they start asking, "Where did that cloud come from?" and "Where is it going?" Then they follow it, examine it, going back and forth. This is why they are deluded. On the inside they're wandering around, following their own clouds. When many people are doing this they start crashing into each other, and this sometimes leads to fights. They start talking about what is right and wrong. They begin hiring lawyers to continue their battles. The clouds start producing thunder and rain. Boom, boom, bang! Now they no longer even realize there is a blue sky. This is Hell.

If you awaken to your own blue sky, then when someone comes along and aggravates you, it's like an ant on your hand; you just leave it alone. You know it will soon be gone. If you can stay quiet and have No Mind, the other person will begin to feel embarrassed or guilty, because everyone has wisdom.

Before you enter the Zen hall you take off your shoes. Some Americans leave their shoes in disarray, with the left and right sitting backwards or one shoe tossed upside down. Some people think to live like that is freedom. People do that unwittingly. There are some who take their shoes off but when they go back outside, walk on the dirt in their socks and then track the dirt back into the Zen hall, defeating the purpose. It's very strange! This is also not freedom. When I

point this out, they instantly make excuses. When someone like this sits on a meditation cushion their Zen practice will not go well.

A few days ago I had to make a large order of Chinese herb formulas, about 100 packages. It meant I had to count and lay out 100 sheets of paper to make those packages. It made me realize that if I hadn't learned how to count as a child, this task would be very confusing. I looked at myself and thought, yes, I know how to count—how fortunate! When one feels gratitude, the mind's burdens disappear. Then we begin to feel grateful for all things. Of course most people know how to count, but few of us think to feel grateful for that.

You can live without religion, but you cannot live apart from the principles of cause and effect.

If we do Zen and our burdens disappear, then all the things in our ordinary lives become connected to our essence, and the things that obscure our essence disappear. As a result, we can see things clearly. Then we no longer create wrong causes, and we begin creating good causes. By doing this we come to cultivate virtue, and we become kind and respectful towards others, others see us in a positive light, and we want to help others. If we think only of ourselves—as our society has taught us to do for self-protection in this highly competitive world—this will obstruct our inner blue sky. We must be more tolerant, and realize that we may lose a little to others. We may even need to live in such a way that others will perceive us to be a little dull, a little bit of an idiot, because we have to make others feel comfortable. If we are too smart, people will distance themselves from us. Through our Zen we will develop more humor, because we are more relaxed. When people live like this there will be less fighting and a better environment.

From my point of view, Zen and religion are meant to reduce human burdens and free us from our inner



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prison. When we remember that our spiritual practice is not separate from our ordinary life, then we can become healthier, physically and mentally, and we will just spontaneously feel happier.

I am a human being too, and in the past I had many problems. Fortunately I trusted the teachings of the Buddha, and the principle of cause and effect. I continually made efforts to refrain from creating wrong causes, and to create correct causes. Finally my karma changed.

If there is nothing within that obscures you, then this world becomes paradise just as it is. Happiness will constantly arise from within, like spring water gushing from the earth, and your karma will continually melt. Your inner clouds will gradually disappear and brightness will appear. Then you will not create cause and effect. The potential to live like this is what makes us human beings.

Work hard, do your housecleaning, be diligent in your personal life—these are the places where you have to begin. Otherwise, if you just *say* you're on a spiritual path, when you sit on your cushion your mind will be somewhere else, and nothing will happen. Try taking correct steps, little by little. Don't try to correct yourself completely all at once. Let's begin by taking our shoes off and putting them down mindfully, entering the Zen hall in a correct manner.

So will you follow this path or not? It's up to you. Don't begin with a wrong step, because it will lead to continuous turmoil. Taking the correct step may be difficult but it will continually bring you good things. You will meet good friends and good teachers. Then your life will change. ❖

Ven. Hyunoong Sunim has been a Korean Ch'an (Zen) monk for 35 years, with ten years of traditional monastic training under Zen Master Ku San Sunim and eight years of practice alone in remote mountain hermitages. He has studied Sun-do, a chi gong breathing meditation, I-Ching, the Five Elements, and Chinese herbs. He has been teaching in the West since 1986, and is now abbot of the Sixth Patriarch Zen Center in Berkeley, California. He can be contacted at (510) 486-1762 or www.zenhall.org.

TARA WEEKEND FOR WOMEN

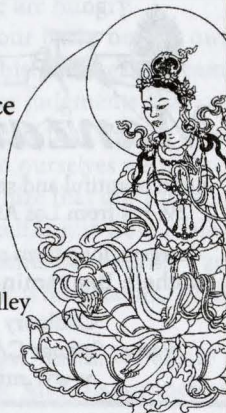
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TWO LOWKU ON KARMA

next time I want to come back
as something that, after peeing
on a white pine, gets petted all over!

when I returned my overdue book
the librarian smiled and said:
"He who was lost is fined!"

—Larry Rapant

Dead Man's Coat, continued from page 13

coat, bullet holes and all!"

"Yo, Freddie," said Skip. "Tell Jarvis what he got on."

"Shoot! A dead man's coat."

"Troy, Leo. Tell the man," said Skip, still laughing, "what he got on."

"Shit! A dead man's coat."

"A dead man's coat," they all chimed in.

"It ain't no way around it, bro," said Skip. "The proof is in the holes." They all burst into laughter. The joking made me feel as if we'd been brought in out of the icy cold.

"Well, in that case," I said, "this means—and y'all can tell me if I'm right or wrong—we're *all* wearin' dead man's coats."

"No, you wrong about that," Troy said. "My coat was new when I got it. 'It's worn out now, no doubt,' he glanced down at it, 'but I tell you this—it was brand new when I got it.'"

"Ours, too," said Leo. "Look at 'em, Jarvis. They don't got no bullet holes. No damn holes in front or back. So I guess you deader wrong than that ol' raggedy coat of yours." And the four of them started laughing again.

"Wait a second," I said. "I still think we're all wearin' dead man's coats. 'Cause the way I see it..."

"Is what?" Skip laughed.

"The way I see it, Skip: *We're all on death row.*"

"Yeah, but..."

"Man," I said. "These are all dead man's coats we have. We're *all* wearin' dead man's coats!"

They looked down at their coats. No one said a word.

And in less than a second, it became freezing cold again. ❖

Jarvis Jay Masters is a frequent contributor to Turning Wheel. He is an African American on San Quentin's death row, where he writes and practices Tibetan Buddhism. His book, Finding Freedom: Writings from Death Row (Padma Publishing) can be ordered from the BPF office for \$15 postpaid. Contact Jarvis c/o San Quentin Prison, P.O. Box C-35169, Tamal, CA 94974.

The 10,000 Causes of Crime

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

My client “Ben” is living in jail while he’s waiting for his death penalty trial. He is an African American young man who came to the jail at the age of 18. Now he’s already turned 20, and he’s still waiting for his trial. This long a wait is not unusual. He will be tried for having allegedly killed a police officer, so it is possible he will be sentenced to death. We’ll have “won” his trial if we get a sentence of life without the possibility of parole for him.

When I visited Ben’s mother’s home, she was drinking whisky while I talked with her. Ben and his mother spent a lot of time in homeless shelters while Ben was growing up. He was conceived in Jonestown in Guyana, just before the mass deaths there. His mother escaped, and he was born some months later. He has lived his whole life under the shadow of that trauma, when nearly everyone his mother had ever known died—she herself had been born and raised in Jim Jones’s People’s Temple community. Again and again, as I look deeply into the lives of my clients, I find the shadows of war, slavery, and trauma.

My job, as a private investigator working for the defense, is to go out on Ben’s behalf and find favorable evidence for his trial. The legal term for it is “mitigation,” but I like to translate it into “compassion.”

The mitigation in a death penalty trial means all of the extenuating circumstances, all of the facts about Ben’s life story, such as being raised by a mother with post-traumatic stress syndrome caused by being a Jonestown survivor, a mother who is also an alcoholic; such as not knowing who his father was, though we know his father must have been in Jonestown. Plus, being poor, being raised in a ghetto neighborhood, being around gangs and guns, being an alcoholic himself at a very young age—a very long list. And not only am I supposed to find out about it from him, but I must find witnesses who can come into court and talk about his life.

In the sentencing phase of the trial, the jurors are asked to balance that mitigation against all of the aggravation, which is the crime itself, and every bad act or illegal thing Ben has ever done. In deliberating, the jurors can also consider mercy. That’s the law. They can weigh their own feelings of mercy as heavily as any other thing and decide for life without parole, or for death. Those are the only choices.

In my 20 years of work as a death penalty investigator, I’ve seen again and again these big forces of

karma coming into play in people’s lives and bringing them to the moment when they might take someone else’s life. And it’s not only the murderer but also the jurors who come to the point of taking this kind of action.

Buddhism does not tell us how society should be organized. In other religions there might be an answer, something like: “If he took the life of a police officer, he should be banished or executed.”

The big law Buddhism does have, the one inescapable law, is the law of karma, the law of cause and effect. This law seems very true to me. More than

*In deliberating, the jurors can also consider mercy.
That’s the law.*

anything else, the truth of the law of karma is what I have learned from my job, from my long investigation into why people do terrible things.

This is what these death penalty trials are about. We, who want Ben to live, are saying: Don’t ignore cause and effect; look at the conditions; this is a complicated thing. And we’re not just saying: Because this child was in a homeless shelter, was poor, had an alcoholic mother, and so on, that is why he might have killed a police officer. That’s way too simple. We’re talking about the whole huge swirl of karma, including a group of youngsters, a gun, a car, even police brutality. There are a lot of causes, 10,000 causes. For example, Ben was expelled from a middle school named for a famous black musician, Calvin Simmons. Yet that middle school has no music program. Ben loves music and wanted to study it.

Buddha said: “Because there is this, there is that.” We understand that Ben is how he is because we allow guns to be sold in a store near his home; because we allow Calvin Simmons School not to have a music program; because we allow kids to be expelled from school and don’t ask whatever happened to them after that, and on and on. We understand that in many ways we failed to act to save the life of a police officer, whose loss is mourned by so many.

But the prosecutors have little sound bites for our position—they call what we say “abuse excuse,” and they ridicule it. They tell the jury: *All* the children who were homeless and neglected did not kill somebody.

They’re saying: Individual responsibility. They’re

**I say to Ben:
"You can do this.
I know because
other people have
done it. You can
stay in that room
alone, and you
can wait another
year."**

saying that we are each responsible for our own actions, and Ben is allegedly responsible for firing a gun towards some police cars in the night. And of course, individual responsibility is true too, isn't it? This is the other side of the law of cause and effect. We are creating our karma minute by minute, and we are responsible for the ripples our actions send out. We are setting things into motion every day and every minute as we are living. And we're responsible for it.

I don't know about rebirth. In Zen—I've been studying Zen Buddhism for 10 years—hardly anybody says a word about it, but before that, I studied Tibetan Buddhism, and there was a lot said about it. I'm in a place of not knowing.

Recently, I heard a Tibetan teacher give a talk in Berkeley. He spoke about African American people living in a terrible housing project in Baltimore, and he said: "Boy, they really must have done something awful in their last lives to get born there!"

I was sitting with my partner in investigations, Pam Siller, who is a Buddhist and African American. She wanted to leave. She knows that being black and poor can't be just a punishment. She and I feel sure that poverty is not something that we should just accept. So I do not know about rebirth. I couldn't say that Ben was conceived in Jonestown and born to his alcoholic mother because of terrible things he did in a previous life.

But I have learned a lot about cause and effect from listening to my clients talk about how they feel about their lives. Here is Ben, sitting in solitary confinement in the jail for two years. He has no TV, only a few books, a Bible. He never gets out of his cell to talk with anyone except me and occasionally his mother or his lawyer. He's in a tiny room with solid walls—there aren't bars. He can yell to other prisoners through the crack at the edge of the door a little bit. And for exercise, for one hour per day, he is allowed out alone into "the pod"—the hallway—and he also showers there, and then steps back into his cell.

So he has time to think about his short life, and he tries to come to terms with what has happened. He has been sad, and very remorseful. He cries often and prays for the officer. Sometimes he sees the causes and conditions outside himself and he says: "It's just how I was raised, you know—everybody had a gun and everybody sold drugs." And he feels that his life has been unfair. He feels put upon, and afraid that he won't get a fair trial because all his life everyone has been dumping on him. He feels he never had a chance.

But a lot of the time that he's been in the jail he has seen the karma as being all of his own making. He says: "I'm no good, my life is worthless." He is suicidal; he wants to die. He's been on suicide watch a lot of the time. So he's teetering back and forth. We all do this. We're either feeling like: It's not fair to me. There is

nothing I can do about my life. Destiny is ruling me. Or, at other times we feel: It's all my fault, I'm really messing up.

How do we find the balance? I think the way is to realize (and sometimes this happens for Ben): it's *all* true. As Buddhism always reminds us: Don't think dualistically. Both are true: we have our own responsibility *and* we are tremendously affected by our ancestors and all that they have done and by the circumstances in the society around us.

And the very next step, which Ben sometimes gets little glimmers of, is to begin quickly, without wasting a single second, to transform all this karma by extending oneself to others. Hurry up and do it.

Bo Lozoff, who works with prisoners, says, "You can do it." It's like a promise. And I always say that to Ben: "You can do this. I know because other people have done it. You can stay in that room alone, and you can wait another year. Other people have done it, and many people are doing it right now." Sometimes I worry: *I haven't done it*, so who am I to say this? But I'm the only person coming in there, so I tell Ben, "You can do it. You can send loving letters to your cousin—why not? Why tell her 'I am mad at you that you didn't visit me.' Why don't you write: 'I hope you are doing well' and give her good advice on her boyfriend, or whatever you can do to help. You can be a human being." And what *is* a human being all alone in that room? It's someone who is giving love. That's how you can join the human race. And that's our way of transforming our karma.

I really believe in transformation, because I've seen, so many times, people avowing their karma. That's our chant, that's our vow, and it happens. We realize what we've done, we really get it, and we begin to transform it. (Of course the prosecutors are arguing against the possibility of transformation. They're saying: You are defined by the worst thing you've ever done, and you must die for that. They say: We can't allow for any growth or transformation that might take place after a crime has been committed.)

As Buddhists, we know that the death penalty and prisons and everything else we see will pass away some day. Things arise and things dissolve and karma is created and burned up again. But meanwhile, what do we do? I believe that in order to transform our own karma, we work for a more just society. And it comes very naturally to us.

When I was in the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement prison group, Maylie Scott was our teacher, and she said it's completely natural for us to work for social justice. She compared it to sitting zazen. "You're sitting, and you start slumping down a

(continued on page 21)

The Jury Room

by Lin Jensen

Nancy is the first to break out a deck of cards. We are to discover that a good deal of our time during the course of the trial will be spent waiting in the jury room. Nancy seems to have anticipated this. On the first day of the trial, when the rest of us are watching the clock on the jury room wall tick away the long minutes and hours, wondering when—if ever—we'll be called back to the court, Nancy is absorbed in a game of solitaire.

The doors to the jury room and courtroom face each other across a narrow hallway. At best a mere dozen steps separate the table where the 12 of us sit from the courtroom where the case of the *People v. Trevor Bird* is under way.

We jurors are under the strictest admonition to avoid all media of any kind and to avoid any conversation regarding the trial, not only with acquaintances and family but with each other as well. For the 12 of us, the trial is everything. It is, for the moment, our whole life. Even though we are silenced on the matter, the trial discloses itself in every word we utter regardless of what we talk about. Its unspoken presence can be heard in the least comment on the weather or on what one is having for lunch or what one does for a living.

Not only that, but we are also instructed to form no opinions regarding the trial until the time of deliberation. Thus we're enjoined not only not to talk but not to even think about the one thing that's on all of our minds.

So we do everything else instead. Nancy, one of four alternate jurors, shows up with a book entitled *Card Games One Can Play Alone* and settles down to solitaire. Marilyn, a third-grade teacher, brings her Macintosh iBook, intending to work on lesson plans, but succumbs instead to her favorite computer game. Dennis, who recently retired and whose wife is critically ill with Lyme disease, donates a jigsaw puzzle. Jake, once a racehorse trainer and groom, reads from a book called *New Trails*. Rose hangs a dartboard on the jury room wall but complains that darts is not a game she can play sober. Terry is tearing her hair out for want of a cigarette. And so it goes: a cribbage board appears, several books, some knitting, and two more laptop computers. We are all of us busily engaged in doing anything other than what we are here to do.

Lance, the deputy, tells us when it is time to go back to the courtroom. He unlocks the doors that sep-

arate the jury room from the courtroom and we all file into the jury box. I am juror number eight. Barbara, an elementary school teacher who writes down all the testimony, is number seven. She sits on my right. Jake, wearing jeans and a silver belt buckle in the shape of a horseshoe, sits on my left. He is number nine. In the abrupt traverse of a few yards, we have come from our card games and puzzles and innocuous conversation to sit as jurors on this elevated platform with the whole courtroom spread out before us.

We are here to judge the guilt or innocence of the defendant Trevor Bird, charged with murder in the first degree. We hear Judge Roberts declare that "the case of the *People versus Trevor Bird* is in session" and that "the jury is present and ready."

Gradually, the evidence in the case takes shape. We listen, along with Trevor Bird and his mother and father and grandparents and the nameless others who have come out of curiosity or concern, as witnesses describe the beating death of Lloyd Brown in an alley on a cold November night in Chico, California. Brown, we are told, was a homeless man of undetermined age. An alcoholic and long acquaintance of the Chico police, he was known in all the local AA groups. We learn how the 20-year-old college football lineman Trevor Bird overtook Lloyd Brown, who was fleeing from him down the alley. We are told how Bird slammed the flat of his palm into the back of Brown's head, shoving him face forward onto the pavement and splitting his chin open to the bone. We learn that Trevor Bird and another lineman, Derek Phillips, proceeded to kick the helpless and unresisting Lloyd Brown where he lay on the ground until blood ran from his ears.

We are told how Trevor Bird pulled a fence board from an alley fence and began to beat the victim with it, repeatedly swinging the board overhead and shouting, "Who's a punk ass now!" We're shown the board itself, which, although it's heavy and solid, was fractured into pieces from the force of the beating, as Trevor Bird wailed away at Brown until there was so little left of the board that he was more or less flinging his bloodied fists against Brown's body. We learn how he and Derek Phillips turned Lloyd Brown face up and, finding a filled five-gallon Alhambra water bottle in the bed of a pickup truck, dropped the bottle repeatedly into Brown's unprotected face. We are shown a 40-pound tire and wheel, its projecting hubcap stained with blood, which the two of them took

We have seen how he wears his hair neatly parted on one side, and how he blinks sometimes as if to clear his eyes of some obstruction. None of us wants to send Trevor Bird off to prison for life.

from the truck bed for the same purpose. We hear a 911 tape of a caller who stood at an apartment window overlooking the alley and who witnessed all of this. "They're beating the crap out of him," she says, and then, "Oh my god! Oh god! Oh my god!"

The county forensic pathologist diagrams the extent of Lloyd Brown's wounds: the base of his skull

Phil wants to hear each of us say it. So in turns around the table we all say, "Guilty."

fractured in five places, his whole face caved in, his brain flooded with blood, his ribs broken, his liver lacerated, 28 distinguishable wounds in all, 13 of them deemed fatal. A picture of Lloyd Brown after the beating that is circulated among us reveals no recognizable human face at all. We are all of us echoing the 911 caller's anguish: "Oh my god! Oh god! Oh my god!"

The jury is released for lunch and I drive to a nearby lake to eat alone. I park where the grass slopes down to the water and a few willows line the bank. There are some mallards resting on the grass and a covey of coots going in and out of the water. Further out on the lake, bufflehead and grebes are diving for food. I watch

as they disappear below the surface and then bob up again, their bills dripping with tufts of brown waterweed. A flock of Canadian geese drops down from the sky in long gliding descents. I watch as their wings flare and their feet touch water and they slide to a stop. I want to go down among the grasses and the water. I want to pull weeds from the lake bottom with my teeth. I want wings to carry me into the sky.

After lunch when we reassemble in the jury room Gail complains that court security has confiscated her nail file and Terry says, "Come on ladies, let's not be brandishing weapons." We all laugh much harder and longer than humor itself requires.

The days of our isolation continue, each of us carrying the life of the trial in the confinement of our own minds. We long to speak of it to each other. And suddenly, one day, the case is ours.

Now we're not sure we're ready for it. We're given final instructions on the law and the 12 of us are locked into the jury room, charged with the task of arriving at a verdict. The four alternates—Nancy, David, Marilyn, and Rose—are sent away. We miss them. When the door shuts behind their departure, we feel all the more alone.

Released at last to speak of the trial, we find it hard to start. We select Phil as our jury foreman because he has done it before, but that takes only a few seconds to accomplish and we're still stuck with what has to be done. For the first time since the trial began, the jury room is silent. Maybe Phil can get us going.

The verdict is predetermined from the start. Still, it takes us four hours to arrive at it. Phil says that's because we're shooting for the stars. He means that we want to be absolutely sure that the verdict we reach is the right one. But we already know what the verdict is; it's just that we aren't able to say so yet. Still we go over and over the evidence trying to wring from it any mitigating circumstance that might justify reducing the charge. We have watched Trevor Bird through these long days of testimony, sitting beside his attorney, wearing his tie and slacks, looking as if he's not used to dressing up that much. We have seen how he wears his hair neatly parted on one side, and how he blinks sometimes as if to clear his eyes of some obstruction. None of us wants to send Trevor Bird off to prison for life.

An hour into deliberation, we take our first straw vote. Terry unfolds the slips of paper bearing our votes, stacking eight of them into the guilty pile and four in the nonguilty.

"Couldn't it possibly be a case of second-degree murder? Wasn't alcohol a factor in the crime?" Gail questions. "He's just a boy," she continues. "He got to drinking and made one bad choice after another. Isn't that how it happened?" Yes, Trevor was drinking, but he

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wasn't too drunk to recognize a police siren and race the length of the alley and up the street, and duck in among some houses, and climb onto a rooftop and leap from roof to roof in his effort to avoid capture. We've all tried Gail's argument but it simply won't work.

"I'm just not ready to vote on it," Leslie explains. "I can't bring myself to write down *guilty*." She wants to hear the law again governing first-degree murder by torture. Phil offers to read it aloud but Leslie wants to read it for herself.

Four hours after we began deliberations, we watch as Terry stacks 12 slips of paper into the guilty pile. We've convicted Trevor Bird.

Phil wants to hear each of us say it. So in turns around the table we all say, "Guilty," and Phil hears himself say it last. He fills out the verdict form, reading it aloud as he goes. "We the jury find the defendant Trevor Bird guilty of the crime of murder in the first degree." He dates the document and signs it. And then one of us starts weeping, silently, with streaks running down her face. And then, quite remarkably, we are all of us weeping, looking across the table at each other and no one saying a word. And then Terry gets up from the table and pushes the signal that will bring Lance, the deputy, to the jury room. "Who wants soft drinks?" she asks.

We all want soft drinks, even I who haven't drunk one in years. Lance authorizes Terry to go after the drinks and we all divvy up coins and put in our orders. We ask how long it will take for the court to reassemble and Lance says we have about a half-hour. It's a half-hour that we need because we know that when we file into the jury box for this last time Trevor Bird will be waiting there and his family will be waiting. Each will be hoping, as we jurors have hoped, that there will be some way to avoid the inevitable.

Too soon, the doors separating the jury room from the courtroom swing open. The case of the *People v. Trevor Bird* is in session. The jury is present and ready. "Have you reached a verdict?"

"We have, Your Honor."

The clerk reads the verdict to the court. "We, the jury, find the defendant, Trevor Bird..." I watch Trevor as the door to his future slams shut. He stares fixedly forward, as the merest tremor of a movement passes through his body. Trevor Bird, 20 years old, will be 46 before he is even considered for parole. He will never graduate from college. He won't ski or fish or take hikes in the woods or swim in a mountain lake or walk to the corner store for a magazine. He won't marry or have children of his own. In all likelihood, he'll never be released from prison.

I hear the stifled outcry of Trevor's mother. Her husband sits stiffly beside her, his body rigid with the effort to control himself. And surrounding these two are the

stricken forms of grandparents, brothers, sisters, friends. In passing judgment on Trevor Bird this day we have sentenced all these others as well. We have sentenced ourselves. In violation of our own hearts, we have voted to discard this boy. Nothing we can tell ourselves will ever alter the consequence of having done so.

I watch as Trevor is taken into custody and led away. I understand then that whatever innocence the 12 of us may have brought to the jury room, none of us will ever know such innocence again. ❖

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10,000 Causes, continued from page 18

little, and then you notice, and you straighten up your spine." Maylie said that's what working for social justice is. It's the intention you have when you think: Well, things are out of whack, and I'm going to try to make things a little bit better.

I think of Maylie sitting in front of the gun store in Oakland, ringing the bell once for each person who had been killed with a gun in the city. It went on and on, over 300 rings, and her spine was so straight, sitting on the sidewalk next to the traffic on San Pablo Avenue.

Maylie showed me how working for justice is as simple as sitting still striking a bell. My job is to sit in a cell with Ben as he struggles with the reality that he may never walk out of prison. He looks for help from others who have lived this experience. Jarvis Masters, an African American Buddhist prisoner on San Quentin's death row, is such a person. Ben's copy of Masters's book *Finding Freedom* is dog-eared and worn. More than anything, Ben wants to find something he can do. He is intelligent and literate, and he hopes to become a writer too. Ben reminds me of Jarvis.

The first time Jarvis's teacher, Chagdud Rinpoche, came to death row to visit, Jarvis asked him, "What can I do?" Chagdud said: "Don't waste time, because you're on death row. You may have taken actions that harmed lots of other people. Get to work."

Work on transforming karma, that's the message. What a great message. You could save *the world* with that message! ❖

Melody Ermachild Chavis has worked as a private investigator for 20 years. She is a former member of the BPF Board and a founding member of BPF's prison project. She practices at the Berkeley Zen Center.

I watch Trevor as the door to his future slams shut. The merest tremor of a movement passes through his body.

Karma

by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

Karma is one of those words we don't translate. Its basic meaning is simple enough—action—but because of the weight the Buddha's teachings give to the role of action, the Sanskrit word *karma* packs in so many implications that the English word *action* can't carry all its luggage. This is why we've simply airlifted the original word into our vocabulary.

But when we try unpacking the connotations the word carries now that it has arrived in everyday usage, we find that most of its luggage has gotten mixed up in transit. In the eyes of most Americans, karma functions like fate—bad fate, at that: an inexplicable, unchangeable force coming out of our past, for which we are somehow vaguely responsible and which we are powerless to fight. "I guess it's just my karma," I've heard people sigh when bad fortune strikes with such force that they see no alternative to resigned acceptance. The fatalism implicit in this statement is one reason why so many of us are repelled by the concept of karma, for it sounds like the kind of callous myth-making that can justify almost any kind of suffering or injustice in the status quo: "If he's poor, it's because of his karma." "If she's been raped, it's because of her karma." From this it seems a short step to saying that he or she deserves to suffer, and so doesn't deserve our help.

This misperception comes from the fact that the Buddhist concept of karma came to the West at the same time as non-Buddhist concepts, and so ended up with some of their luggage. Although many Asian concepts of karma are fatalistic, the early Buddhist concept was not fatalistic at all. In fact, if we look closely at early Buddhist ideas of karma, we'll find that they give even less importance to myths about the past than most modern Americans do.

For the early Buddhists,

karma was nonlinear. Other Indian schools believed that karma operated in a straight line, with actions from the past influencing the present, and present actions influencing the future. As a result, they saw little room for free will. Buddhists, however, saw that karma acts in feedback loops, with the present moment being shaped both by past and by present actions; present actions shape not only the future but also the present. This constant opening for present input into the causal process makes free will possible. This freedom is symbolized in the imagery the Buddhists used to explain the process: flowing water. Sometimes the flow from the past is so strong that little can be done except to stand fast, but there are also times when the flow is gentle enough to be diverted in almost any direction.

So, instead of promoting resigned powerlessness, the early Buddhist notion of karma focused on the liberating potential of what the mind is doing with every moment. Who you are—what you come from—is not

anywhere near as important as the mind's motives for what it is doing right now. Even though the past may account for many of the inequalities we see in life, our measure as human beings is not the hand we've been dealt, for that hand can change at any moment. We take our own measure by how well we play the hand we've got. If you're suffering, you try not to continue the unskillful mental habits that would keep that particular karmic feedback going. If you see that other people are suffering, and you're in a position to help, you focus not on their karmic past but your karmic opportunity in the present: Someday you may find yourself in the same predicament that they're in now, so here's your opportunity to act in the way you'd like them to act toward you when that day comes.

This belief that one's dignity is measured not by

WAKENING, WAKENING

*Woke
in the dark.
Was the imploded knot
of what?
Not light (sound?)
not dust.
No, not a seed.
A point only
a knothole, of time.
A place in space
needle-tip size.
Until,
unrolled
became saucer
bowl, whole:
a self
then
my self
then
my bed, my room, my time. Then
too much to find.*

—Sally Fisher

one's past but by one's present actions, flew right in the face of the Indian traditions of caste-based hierarchies, and explains why early Buddhists had such a field day poking fun at the pretensions and mythology of the Brahmins. As the Buddha pointed out, a Brahmin could be a superior person not because he came out of a Brahmin womb, but only if he acted with truly skillful intentions.

We read the early Buddhist attacks on the caste system, and aside from their antiracist implications, they often strike us as quaint. What we fail to realize is that they strike right at the heart of our myths about our own past: our obsession with defining who we are in terms of where we came from—our race, ethnic heritage, gender, socioeconomic background, sexual preference—our modern tribes. We put inordinate amounts of energy into creating and maintaining the mythology of our tribe so that we can take vicarious pride in our tribe's good name. Even when we become Buddhists, the tribe comes first. We demand a Buddhism that honors our myths.

From the standpoint of karma, though, where we come from is old karma, over which we have no control. What we "are" is a nebulous concept at best—and pernicious at worst, when we use it to find excuses for acting on unskillful motives. The worth of a tribe lies only in the skillful actions of its individual members. Even when those good people belong to our tribe, their good karma is theirs, not ours. And, of course, every tribe has its bad members, which means that the mythology of the tribe is a fragile thing. To hang onto anything fragile requires a large investment of passion, aversion, and delusion, leading inevitably to more unskillful actions on into the future.

So the Buddhist teachings on karma, far from being a quaint relic from the past, are a direct challenge to a basic thrust—and basic flaw—in our culture. Only when we abandon our obsession with finding vicarious pride in our tribal past and can take actual pride in the motives that underlie our present actions, can we say that the word *karma*, in its Buddhist sense, has recovered its luggage. And when we open the luggage, we'll find that it's brought us a gift: the gift we give ourselves and one another when we drop our myths about who we are, and can instead be honest about what we're doing with each moment—at the same time making the effort to do it right. ❖

Thanissaro Bhikkhu (Geoffrey DeGraff) has been a Theravada monk since 1976. He is currently abbot of Metta Forest Monastery near San Diego. His books include Wings to Awakening (DhammaDana, 1996) and Noble Strategy (Metta Forest Monastery, 1999). For copies, please write: PO Box 1409, Valley Center, CA 92082. Thanissaro's Web site www.accesstoinsight.org, is also an extensive resource for dharma teachings.

Deep Belief in Cause and Effect

by Dogen Zenji

[Following is an excerpt from "Jinshin Inga," or "Deep Belief in Cause and Effect," essay number 72 in *The Shobogenzo, The Eye and Treasury of True Law*, Volume Three, translated by Kosen Nishiyama, and published by Nakayama Shobo, Tokyo, Japan, 1983. Dogen (1200–1253) was the founder of Eiheiji temple and the Soto school of Zen in Japan.]

Whenever Zen master Daichi Ekai of Mount Hyakujo gave a discourse on the Dharma to an assembly of monks, there was always an old man in attendance; when the monks left at the end, the old man also left. On one occasion, however, the old man remained, and Hyakujo asked him who he was.

The old man replied, "In reality I'm not a human being. At the time of Kasyapa Buddha I was head priest of this temple, and in that capacity was once asked by a monk whether an enlightened person remained subject to causality. I replied, 'No,' and as a result of this mistaken answer I have continued to be reborn as a wild fox for five hundred lives. O honorable priest, I entreat you, please teach me the meaning of causality so that I may be released from this suffering."

The old man questioned, "Is an enlightened person subject to causality?"

Hyakujo replied, "Yes, no one is beyond the effect of causality."

At these words the old man awoke to great enlightenment and, prostrating before Hyakujo, said, "I am now released from the life of a fox, the corpse of which lies at the foot of the far side of this mountain. Please take this corpse and cremate it with the rites for a dead priest."

Hyakujo agreed, and the head monk was instructed to inform the monks that a service for a dead priest would be held following the next meal.

The monks were surprised by this announcement, for all were healthy and the sickroom had been unoccupied. After they had eaten, Hyakujo led the monks to the far side of the mountain. There, using his staff, he uncovered the corpse of the fox. The cremation ceremony began accordingly...

It is imperative that trainees clarify the principle of causality, otherwise they will remain susceptible to false views, their practice will decline, and finally they will cease from doing good altogether...Even if one creates no other bad karma than that of having denied causality, this alone will result in inestimable suffering. ❖

Practice as Life Improvisation:

Karma and Dramatic Interdependence

by Peter Hershock

Ending suffering is never just about removing factual difficulties. Often, changing the facts is not even an option. Suffering is resolved when we revise our narration.

Karma does not have a particularly good reputation. This shouldn't be surprising. Even for those fortunate enough to listen directly to the Buddha, it was notoriously difficult to see how the teachings of no-self and emptiness could go hand-in-hand with the teaching of karma, and not into thorny contradiction. But, especially for engaged Buddhists, understanding karma is indispensable.

In popular terms, karma means "what goes around, comes around": for every action, there is a morally relevant reaction. Given such an understanding, it's easy to imagine karma operating like a banking institution, keeping track of our moral "debts" and "credits" and insuring that, sooner or later, everything balances out. By making merit or "good karma" we hope to insure, if not a better birth, at least the avoidance of a worse one.

Understood in this way, it's easy to regard the teaching of karma as ethically simplistic and practically irrelevant: people are poor or suffer apparent injustice because of their karma. The temptation is to dismiss the teaching of karma as kin to other "ethics of fear" that promote social and political conservatism and that are often used to rationalize inequity and justify a status quo of unattended misfortune (for others). But this temptation is only compelling if we wrongly take the teaching of karma to be a doctrine about "how things really are" and not an invitation to fundamentally revise the meaning of all our relationships. Far from riding roughshod over ethical complexity, the teaching of karma invites us into a practice suited precisely to negotiating viable paths between complex and competing "goods" or values—for example, between personal advancement and loyalty to friends, or between national economic health and global environmental healing.

The Buddha once remarked that at the root of all of our suffering is the conceit that "I am," insisting that "is" and "is-not" are the "twin barbs on which all humankind is impaled." Ending suffering pivots on ceasing to ignore the interdependence—and, thus, the emptiness—of all things. The Middle Path can be seen as a practice of restoring the middle ground between "self" and "other," between what we "are" responsible for and what we "are-not," between our own heart-minds and Buddha-nature.

Of course, when we ignore the interdependence of all things, it's not for the purpose of causing suffering

for ourselves. Instead, we're often just caught up in trying to make sense out of things that have gone obviously wrong, or trying to find a way to turn a "bad" situation into a "good" one. We do so in keeping with our individual likes and dislikes, our needs and values, our desires and dreams, and our general strategies for fulfilling them. The problem is, in spite of our efforts to choose and act well, suffering keeps arising.

And here is the critical point. Ignoring the interdependence of all things is inevitably an expression of our karma. If our life stories are characterized by chronic conflicts, trouble, and suffering, then it is we, and not so-called "natural laws" or chance, who are finally responsible. This is true even of suffering that is not our own. Given the interdependence of all things, our awareness of that suffering is already indication of our implication in it.

The Buddhist teachings of karma and no-self direct us to see ourselves and everything happening in our worlds as "symphonic" movements of dramatic interdependence. As we revise our values and intentional activity, we effectively elicit new lived worlds, new patterns of dramatic affinity, aligning ourselves with different constellations of meaning and patterns of narration. This is perhaps clearest in our caring attention to friends and family members. As my son fell into "friendships" with members of a fraternity in his first semester of freshman year, it was easy to see a marked change in the direction of his experiences, the people he was meeting, and the activities into which he was invited and which eventually dizzied his moral sensibility and altered the tenor of his life story.

Seeing that we have no fixed or essential selves means seeing ourselves as evolving patterns of relationship. We are not autonomous individuals who remain self-identical over time, but characters in continuous development. As we enter into new relationships, we refocus the overall interdependence of all things, aligning or attuning ourselves with different streams of energy and meaning. This changes our present, but also our past and our future. Things and events that previously played no part in "my" past suddenly become crucial to who I now find myself to be—and my past changes. Our karma consists of precisely these patterns of affinity or dramatic confluence.

If all things are most truly seen as empty, impermanent, and interdependent, then the relation

between our past actions, present experiences, and future consequences is best seen as narrative. The teaching of karma invites us to be aware of and care for the process by which an “originally” ambiguous and yet infinitely meaningful world is given direction—most fundamentally toward samsara or toward nirvana—and made our own. Living in a cosmos of horizonless, dramatic interdependence, our life stories are irreducibly meaningful and open to revision.

Importantly, this means that our suffering is, at bottom, also dramatic and not just a matter of fact. When a child falls and skins her knee on the playground, it is painful. She cries, but can be relatively easily consoled with an antiseptic gel, a band-aid, and a calming touch. But if she fell because her “best friend” pulled her down from behind while they raced each other across the playground, the pain of her scraped knee is almost negligible. What really hurts is the betrayal, the utter violation of the story of being best friends.

When we can go on comfortably with our life stories, no matter what factual challenges or pain we may be forced to deal with, we do not suffer. Suffering arises when we arrive at a dramatic impasse—when we simply do not know how to respond in a way that is both meaningful and appropriate, when nothing we do seems to work. Ending suffering is never just about removing factual difficulties. Often, changing the facts is not even an option. Suffering is resolved when we revise our narration, our dramatic relationship with the facts.

Buddhist practice thus entails a commitment to unrelenting improvisation in order to find our way through dramatic impasse. Because all things are marked by trouble, impermanence, and the absence of any abiding “self,” it is a path of continuously negotiating shifts in the meaning of our situation away from samsara and toward nirvana. This karmic work requires what I call attentive and responsive virtuosity. On the one hand, this means fully appreciating the emptiness or mutual relevance of all things. On the other hand, it means realizing our unlimited skill-in-means (*upaya*)—our ability to make a contribution.

This is possible only if we are able to cut through our habitual ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting. But if we fail to perceive our own karma, we cannot hope to develop the resources needed to live up to the bodhisattva ideal of according with any situation and responding as needed. Appreciation, or attentive virtuosity (*samadhi*), must be paired with moral clarity (*sila*)—a capacity for immediate and unwavering re-direction of the meaning of a troubled situation. Such resolve is most explicitly expressed in the taking of bodhisattva vows. But since such vows are limitless, moral clarity cannot be a matter of simply following the rules and precepts. It means demonstrating con-

tributory virtuosity—the same sort of improvisational genius that is demonstrated by great musicians and athletes, but here focused on opening paths away from dramatic impasse or samsara and in the direction of nirvana—a liberating intimacy among all things.

We can at least glimpse what this intimacy means by reflecting on the Buddha’s description of his insight into the interdependence of all things as like coming upon a “lost and forgotten city.” Life in a city reminds us that we are not finally self-sufficient. It is a life of relying continuously on the contributions of others, just as they rely on ours. Moreover, cities foster degrees of specialization, education, and cultural refinement that, at least in the Buddha’s day, would have far exceeded the levels of diversity possible in rural or village life.

However, cities are not essentially ideal places. In the Cakkavatti-sihanha Sutta, the Buddha tells the story of King Dalhanemi and his heirs, whose idyllic urban kingdom eventually degenerated into a moral free-for-all in which violence, selfishness, and addictions were celebrated as norms, in which beauty all but disappeared, and in which the average lifetime plummeted from 80,000 years to a mere seven.

The fall begins when one of Dalhanemi’s heirs, relying only on his own thinking, fails to attend to poverty in the capital city. In a series of well-intended follies, he repeatedly tries to control the behavior of the people, but things go from bad to very much worse, only turning around when a few people retreat from the society and form a community of their own based on shared practices for appreciating and contributing to the benefit of others.

There are three very interesting themes in this apparently simple tale. First, the collapse of consciously lived interdependence is forewarned by the appearance of poverty—the experience of being in want, of not being contributed to as needed. In the story, this occurs when people are not able to work for their community in a way that advances their own life stories while contributing to the welfare of others.

The information revolution has led to a colonization of consciousness through which attention itself is commodified.



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Secondly, failure to break through this impasse leads to increasing ignorance about our interdependence, and brings with it decreasing beauty, vitality, and lifespan. That is, ugly circumstances reflect our moral distraction. We lose personal and cultural memory, and the capacity for attention, appreciation, and long-term commitments.

Finally, the story makes it clear that the strategy of securing ourselves against trouble through exercising control is ultimately self-defeating. Sooner or later, controlling activity crosses the threshold of its own utility and begins causing more trouble than it resolves. It doesn't matter who has control. As our karma for control deepens, we become more adept at and committed to exercising it. But this means we're also finding more and more opportunity to do so—until our life is perceived as perpetually just “out of control.”

In the story of Dalhanemi, this fall only reverses with the understanding of our interdependence, and culminates in the expression of the four immeasurables: lovingkindness, compassion, joy in the good fortune of others, and equanimity. Thus, the restoration of society depends on relationships in which we realize appreciative and contributory virtuosity.

Karmically, our present moment is always *wei chi*—both opportunity and danger. In this very moment, we can enter into the Buddha's “lost and forgotten city,” passing through the gates of nirvana—wisdom, attentive virtuosity, and moral clarity. Turning the other way, we can leave it through the gates of samsara—ignorance, habit formations, and clinging desire. No matter where we are in our life stories, we stand poised within this dramatic gateway.

As engaged Buddhists, we can fruitfully ask which direction we are facing, what karma we are fostering. Consider a few relevant “facts”: First, our global economy is an engine for poverty—the income gap between the richest 20 percent and the poorest 20 percent doubled from 1970 to 1995, driving the num-

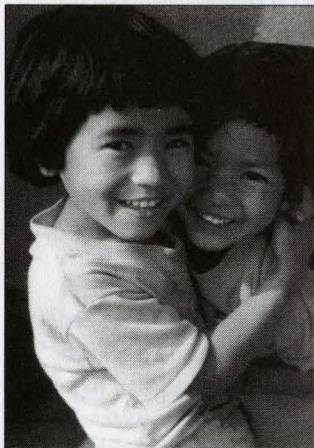
ber of people living in “absolute poverty” up 50 percent to nearly 1.5 billion. Consumption has been made miraculously convenient, but by processes that have converted subsistence needs and services into commodities, eroding most people's means for making direct contributions to the welfare of others.

Indeed, the power of the information revolution that goes along with globalization has also led to a colonization of consciousness through which attention itself is commodified. American fathers on average spend four and a half hours a day passively watching television, and only 45 minutes a week fully attentive to their child or children. This “invisible” environmental damage—our deep, dramatic impoverishment—is bringing about a stunning depletion of precisely the resources we need if we are to meaningfully resolve our suffering. Meanwhile, this very commodification is celebrated as “proof” of our freedom. Finally, the fashioning of our identities through patterns of consumption provides us with unprecedented degrees of control over those identities, but also makes us subject to momentary fashions, and thus to fashioning by others.

Seen through the critical lens of karma, it is clear that the better we get at getting what we want, the better we get at wanting; but the better we get at wanting, the less we want what we get. No matter how many times we go around the cycle of satisfying our craving-based desires through control, we find we are still left wanting. Because we also valorize both autonomy and equality, the social cost of this karma is the rise of institutions and technologies that dramatically insulate us, placing sufficient “distance” between us that our differences no longer make any difference. Diversity gives way, even explosively so, to mere variety. Instead of resembling natural ecologies in which all living beings mutually contribute to one another's welfare, our communities more and more resemble shopping malls or zoos where things coexist in stunning variety, but in such a way that none of them really matter to any of the others.

We suffer, we live in constant want, and we do not realize that this is what *we* have done and what *we* must undo if it is to be undone at all. If we are to heal the wound of existence, we must eschew the karma of control, and cultivate instead karma for appreciative and contributory virtuosity through which all things are enabled to do the great work of enlightenment. ❖

Peter Hershock is a research fellow in the Asian Studies Development Program of the East-West Center in Honolulu, Hawai'i. His publications include Liberating Intimacy: Enlightenment and Social Virtuosity in Ch'an Buddhism and Reinventing the Wheel: A Buddhist Response to the Information Age. Peter has been a practicing Buddhist for 20 years, and has surfed almost daily for over 15 years.



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The Biggest Buddha Statue in the World

is going to be built in Bodh Gaya, India. We know this is a controversial project, raising sensitive issues that go to the heart of matters of faith, spirituality, and social justice. Here at *Turning Wheel*, we want to open the dialogue, and so we present two different viewpoints below. There are no doubt other opinions about the Maitreya statue which are not represented here, but this is a starting point. Questions are raised, along with the statue, about what it means to build a religious monument.

When Bodhidharma went to China, he met Emperor Wu, who had built great Buddhist temples. Emperor Wu asked Bodhidharma about what kind of merit he might gain from making these offerings, and Bodhidharma gave the clipped reply, "Vast emptiness. Nothing holy." Do we, too, think that vast monuments are empty? If we did, we probably wouldn't be so upset by the Taliban's destruction of the Buddha statues of Bamiyan. Or take

any satisfaction in the toppling of giant Lenin statues in Russia after perestroika.

Not only do great monuments carry a weight of cultural meaning, their erection and maintenance creates a lot of karma, both positive and negative. Many slaves died building the Pyramids at Giza. On the other hand, many immigrants have been sustained by the sight of the Statue of Liberty. What about the Taj Mahal? The Cathedral of Chartres? The temple of Angkor Wat? Have these monuments given more to human beings than they have taken away?

And what is the significance of a statue being the BIGGEST Buddha statue? If the Chinese government builds an even bigger Buddha statue—as they are talking of doing—will this diminish the power of the Maitreya statue in Bodh Gaya? And how can these various kinds of karma be weighed and measured? —Ed.

Maitreya Project:

A Ray of Hope at the Site of Buddha's Birth

by Linda Gatter

Historical Context

Bodh Gaya, India, where Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment, is one of the holiest pilgrimage places in the world for Buddhists. According to Buddhist scriptures, all future Buddhas will attain enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, including the next Buddha, Maitreya.

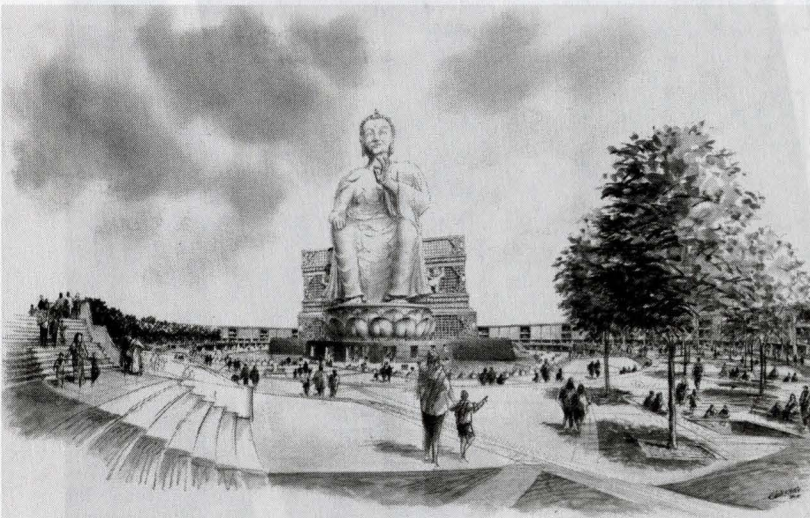
Present Context

Bodh Gaya is in Bihar, one of India's most densely populated and poorest states. Home to 95 million people, Bihar has been in a prolonged period of decline. It is a place of spiritual wealth and contrasting economic poverty.

The majority of people living in Bihar lack even running water and sanitation facilities. And government statistics show that millions of children between the ages of 6 and 14 have no access to school. A Family Health Survey conducted by the World Health Organization showed that within a two-week period in Bihar, 21 percent of the children suffer from a fever and 13.7 percent of the children suffer from diarrhea.

Additionally, in November 2000, the original state of Bihar was divided into two separate states: the new state of Jharkhand and what now remains of Bihar. Unfortunately, nearly all of the original area's few natural resources now belong to Jharkhand.

Bihar's infrastructure is in a state of decay: industries previously located in Bihar have left, and investment in the local economy is virtually nonexistent. With no significant industrial base or natural resources, employment opportunities are scarce and



those that exist are limited to small-scale tourism and seasonal agriculture.

The economy of Bihar is on the verge of collapse. Not surprisingly, the people of Bihar are enduring crime, a lack of healthcare, high rates of illiteracy, poor life expectancy, and hopelessness.

The Maitreya Project

It was the dream of the late Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935–1984) to assist the people at this holy place of Bodh Gaya by creating a monument to the future Buddha that would also bring economic and social benefits to the area. Today, that dream is taking shape.

The focal point of Maitreya Project's activities is the building of the 500-foot-tall bronze statue of the future Maitreya Buddha—an archetypal symbol of the spiritual and social values of compassion and responsibility for all living beings, a symbol of the “good heart.”

The statue/building itself will contain public facilities, including temples, meditation halls, teaching halls, and exhibitions that celebrate the history and value of the Buddha's life and teachings.

The statue will be the centerpiece of a beautifully landscaped 40-acre public park containing small meditation pavilions, a conference center, library, children's park, hotel accommodations, and hospitality services.

Maitreya Project will also include a public hospital of international standard and a school to serve the needs of children and adults, including an outreach program to serve rural communities that are cut off from access to education in urban areas.

Because Bodh Gaya is the site of the Buddha's enlightenment, all the major Buddhist traditions already have a presence here. Within the park, Maitreya Project will build a secluded monastery and nunnery to welcome monks and nuns from all Buddhist traditions. Maitreya Project is funded solely by donation via its Web site, www.maitreyaproject.org. For more than 10 years, the project's lead sponsor, Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, has been engaged in social work in Bodh Gaya, providing free healthcare and free education at the Maitri Mobile Clinics, the Maitri Leprosy Project, and the Universal Education School.

The Economic Benefits of the Project

There are intensely practical aspects to Maitreya Project's activities. As Lama Zopa Rinpoche, spiritual director of Maitreya Project, has said, “Construction

of the statue is not the goal—it is the method for achieving the goal. The goal is to benefit as many people as possible for as long as possible.”

Building the statue will bring lasting economic renewal to Bodh Gaya and Bihar. During construction, and afterwards in operation of the facilities,

“It is indeed a pleasure to know that the Maitreya Project management has placed its plans for the project before us. Actually, before today's meeting we all had some confusion and negative opinions about the project. Now these are all clarified... I want to say to everyone: Let Maitreya Project be a reality. There are a lot of places, but Lord Buddha came to Bodh Gaya. Only because of that we are here together, locals and foreigners, talking and communicating to each other. So, this is a blessing... We have a lot of Mukhias [village headmen] and a lot of village folks in attendance today.... Let the 500 ft. statue come up along with the development of the surrounding villages. I want all of the monastery people to open their doors for the development of Bodh Gaya. [The statue] will stay here and we will benefit from it. Even if we don't get the benefit now, it will be passed over to our future generation. Thank you on behalf of Bodh Gaya and all its people.”

—Pramukh Sri Kali Charan Yadhav, leader of the village headmen

hundreds of people will be employed to provide services to visitors and maintain the park year-round.

Additionally, the project will act as a focus for new investment in the region, thereby creating even more jobs and benefits, which will continue to multiply with the resulting growth of the area's infrastructure, services, and tourism.

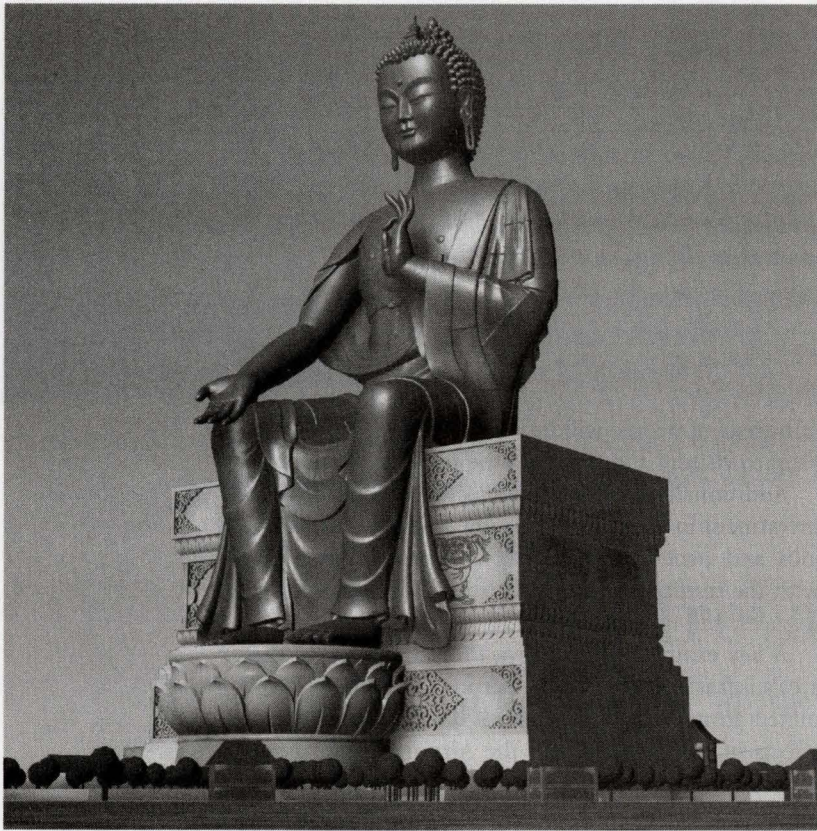
A key example of Maitreya Project's effect on the area's infrastructure is Gaya Airport, located six kilometers from the project site. Based on the anticipated effects of Maitreya Project, the Airport Authority of India has decided to renovate and reopen the abandoned airport as an international facility. This will serve the entire region, benefiting people of all religions and cultures and a wide range of businesses.

India's government has designated tourism as a key to regional development. Maitreya Project will bring in the biggest flow of funding the Bihar tourism sector has seen. The improved Gaya Airport will give a greater number of visitors access to Bodh Gaya and Bihar's other holy sites, and the project will provide a powerful additional attraction. It will further define Bodh Gaya as a site of pilgrimage and a unique, inspiring, and educational place to visit.

In the interest of creating a truly sustainable project, the statue—which is the linchpin of the entire project—is being designed to last at least 1,000 years without the need for major renovations. This is a very demanding requirement for the project's architects and engineers, but it is integral to the project's success, enabling its spiritual and social work to thrive for at least a millennium. For all of these reasons, and many more, the *Times of India*, on January 1, 2000, called the Maitreya Project “the only ray of hope in an otherwise gloomy scenario.”

Maitreya Project Universal Education School

The Maitreya Project Universal Education School, established in 1999, is currently located close to the Maitreya Project site in Bodh Gaya. By developing the school, the project intends to provide quality affordable education from kindergarten through university



and to act as a model for schools in other parts of the world.

The curriculum includes the Indian government's syllabus presented in a holistic context that promotes personal, social, and ethical responsibility, as well as academic excellence.

At the beginning of 2000 the number of children attending the Maitreya Project Universal Education School in the daytime was 200 with an additional 100 students attending evening classes. The day school currently caters for students from kindergarten to Class Six. In the evening, informal classes for children who cannot attend in the daytime and literacy classes for children and adults are offered.

Most of the children come from two small villages west of Bodh Gaya. A few are Muslim but most are Hindu. Their families are very poor and many of the children come from difficult situations. Some arrive without breakfast, others have trouble keeping their uniforms clean because their families have little access to water, and some work long hours in the fields or the family shop. The school provides free tuition and educa-

tional supplies like uniforms and books to those in need.

Maitreya Project Healthcare

The project will build a hospital of international standard in Bodh Gaya. The first phase is planned to be a 100-bed facility designed to serve 8,000 patients per year, providing services in general medicine, surgery, pediatrics, and gynecology. An emergency and outpatients' department will be designed to handle many thousands of consultations each year.

Public Support for Maitreya Project

On January 23, 2000, Maitreya Project organized a town meeting in Bodh Gaya to discuss the project with the local community. The meeting, chaired by the district magistrate, was attended by community and village leaders, NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), members from a cross-section of local Buddhist institutions, representatives of other religions in Bodh Gaya, eminent local persons, and the media. About 150 people participated in a dynamic meeting. Speaking on behalf of all of the elected village leaders, the Pramukh (leader of the village headmen) Sri Kali Charan Yadhav expressed the villages' full support for Maitreya Project.

Bhante Wimalasara, general secretary of the International Buddhist Council of Bodh Gaya and bhikkhu-in-charge of the Mahabodhi Society of India, Bodh Gaya branch, also offered complete support for Maitreya Project.

Many other well-known Buddhist teachers, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama and His Holiness Sakya Trizin, have offered their blessings, and Maitreya Project has received the full support of India's national government, Bihar's state government, and Bodh Gaya's government.

Environmental Principles

Maitreya Project's commitment to environmentally sound, sustainable development is a fundamental principle. The project has commissioned major environmental consulting firms in India and in the West to conduct full social and environmental impact assessments. The process of monitoring the environmental and social conditions will be ongoing throughout the planning phase, the construction phase, and thereafter during operation of the facilities.

Water is a resource of special concern in Bihar. For centuries, water wells have been dug indiscriminately, causing a dangerous depletion of the water table; and the traditional method of growing rice—in hardened, flooded mud paddies—has caused a dangerous yearly runoff of water and loss of soil fertility.

Maitreya Project is working with environmental consultants and engineers to demonstrate how to use less water and, at the same time, rejuvenate the fertili-

ty of the soil. The project will act as a model for innovative, low-impact, sustainable methods of water harvesting, storage and disposal—for the benefit of everyone: villagers, farmers, and businesses alike.

The project is committed to generating as much of its own power as possible, and new technology is currently being researched and incorporated into design plans to provide passive energy solutions. For instance:

- using solar energy and natural, ambient lighting
- collecting and storing rainwater during monsoon
- harnessing the wind and water for energy
- recycling waste and natural resources

The project's demanding requirement that the statue and its building must function for at least 1,000 years provides an additional reason for designing in a sustainable way. Even if the standard, active energy methods fail—either because of future changes in society or a loss of the world's natural resources—the statue and building will still be habitable due to the project's reliance on methods of passive, renewable resource management.

Spiritual Vision

Human beings have a long history of building monuments as objects of veneration. Religious statues and paintings are a powerful means by which we can imbue our minds with the positive imprints that are

essential to the development of spiritual and world peace. Maitreya Project statue and park will include reflective water pools in quiet groves, and stone carvings that tell the stories of the Buddha's great deeds. And like other great religious monuments throughout the ages, the Maitreya statue itself will be an abiding source of inspiration and a recognizable symbol of universal spiritual values.

The Bodh Gaya area already offers many attractions for tourists and students with an interest in history, art, religion, philosophy, and architecture, but the poverty and lack of infrastructure in the area make access difficult. Once the infrastructure of the region has been improved, especially in the areas of transportation and tourism, thousands of people every year will have the opportunity to visit one of India's most interesting and holy places, and there to explore spiritual values, such as compassion, patience, tolerance, and peace.

For more information, please visit our Web site at www.maitreyaproject.com. ❖

Linda Gatter began studying Buddhism with Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche in 1978. She and her husband were co-directors of Land of Medicine Buddha, an FPMT Dharma center in Soquel, California. Currently she lives in England where she is publicity manager for Maitreya Project and an editor at Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive.

The Maitreya statue will be an abiding source of inspiration and a recognizable symbol of universal spiritual values.

The Unhappy Prince

and the Maitreya Statue Project

by Christopher Titmuss

Oscar Wilde, the 19th-century Irish writer, wrote a story called "The Happy Prince," about a tall statue gilded with leaves of fine gold, with two bright sapphires for the eyes and a large red ruby on his waist.

One cloudless night, a swallow who was flying south to Egypt for the winter took rest at the foot of the statue. Suddenly and unexpectedly, a drop of water fell on the bird, and then another drop, yet there were no clouds in the sky. The swallow looked up and saw that the eyes of the Happy Prince were filled with tears. "Why are you crying?" asked the swallow.

The Prince replied that when he was alive, he had lived in the Palace of Sans Souci, where there was no sorrow. "Now I am a tall statue and I can see all the misery in the city. In a room, I can see a poor woman with her little boy lying very ill with a high fever. But my feet are fastened to this pedestal and I cannot move.

"Please take this ruby fixed to my waist to the sad mother and her thirsty boy." The swallow agreed. He

took the ruby and left it on the table of the poor family, and then, with lovingkindness, he flapped his wings above the boy to cool him down.

At the Prince's request, the swallow next took the two 1,000-year-old sapphires from his eyes and gave them to needy people in the city—even though the Prince lost his eyesight as a result. "There is no mystery so great as misery," said the Happy Prince. "Fly over the city and tell me what you see." The swallow saw suffering all over the city, so he gave up making the journey to Egypt.

Every night, the swallow stripped the statue of its gold leaf to give to the poor. When the gold was gone, the swallow was weak, and cold from the winter. He made one last effort to thank the Prince for his lovingkindness, flying up high to kiss the lips of the Happy Prince, and immediately afterwards he dropped dead from exhaustion.

Seeing that the statue now looked like a beggar, the city councilors melted down the Happy Prince in a fur-

nance in order to build another statue. For a long time, the councilors argued over which one of them the next statue should be named after.

In 1995, the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), a California-based

A person looking up at the statue will be as small, relatively speaking, as a beetle looking up at a human being.

Tibetan Buddhist organization, decided to launch a major international appeal to raise \$5 million to build the world's tallest statue in the name of Maitreya Buddha, the Buddha of Lovingkindness, who will succeed Shakyamuni Buddha. As the location for the statue they chose the town of Bodh Gaya, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment, in Bihar, the poorest state of India.

Two years later, the estimated cost of the statue had risen to \$20 million. By 1999, the organization told donors that the statue would cost \$100 million. In 2000, the board of trustees of FPMT announced that the estimated cost to build the statue had risen another 50 percent to a staggering \$150 million. The official FPMT brochure for 2001 now states that the estimated cost of the statue has risen to \$190 million. Construction work is due to start in July 2001. FPMT is believed to have raised so far around \$20 million towards the statue.

To be built in bronze, this massive statue will stand some 500 feet (152.4 meters) high, more than three times the height of the Statue of Liberty in New York. To put it another way, a person looking up at the statue will be as small, relatively speaking, as a beetle looking up at a human being.

The FPMT, supported by leading figures in the Tibetan community, including the Dalai Lama, has spent more than \$2 million to build a small prototype and promote the project, including purchasing vehicles and equipment and hosting teachings of the Dalai Lama in Bodh Gaya. The foundation has bought about 40 acres of land from Bodh Gaya farmers. The FPMT also plans to build a hospital, clinic, and school from money raised separately from funding for the statue, and hopes to complete work on the statue by 2006.

I believe that the Maitreya statue project expresses a genuine wholesome motivation to bring benefit to all sentient beings. The FPMT has made a bold step in this direction. That certainly needs to be acknowledged. But I also believe that the height and scale of the project reveals an error of judgment. Is it skillful

means (*upaya*) to build a \$190 million statue—more than \$1 million per meter—in the poorest and most economically deprived region in the whole subcontinent of India?

The primary grounds for calling a halt to the building of this statue are four-fold:

1. The statue will be a crude imposition on a desperately impoverished region. Upon the statue's completion, only a small fraction of local people—400 to 600, according to estimates by the foundation itself—will receive employment gardening, cleaning, and doing other forms of manual labor. Within the shadow of the statue, the literacy rate is as low as one percent, while the literacy rate in the Gaya region is around 23 percent, the lowest in India. Illiteracy guarantees that the masses stay powerless.

Through Western donations and hard work, Tibetans have built monasteries and Tibetan guest houses in Bodh Gaya, but there has also been discord. For example, during the 1990s, Indian contractors bought children in the villages near Bodh Gaya for about 150 rupees (\$4), and sold them to Tibetan merchants for child labor elsewhere in India. (I have documents of sales.) "How will the statue help us?" cry out the poor today.

2. In February 2000, respected Indian scientists at an international conference in New Delhi warned the country that water availability (per capita) in the country has dropped by 60 percent in the past 50 years, putting incredible stress on a sustainable agriculture. Eighty percent of the population relies on groundwater, mostly from wells.

The building, upkeep, and cleaning of the Maitreya statue will take an enormous toll on the water supply in one of the world's hottest inhabited places—in the summer temperatures occasionally reach 50 degrees C, or 130 F. Scientists report that in places like Bihar the recharge of rainwater into water tables has become a serious problem, because more water gets used than gets replaced. Additionally, more and more of India's water—perhaps as much as 70 percent—has been polluted, particularly through industrial waste. It is unclear what impact the depth of the statue into the ground will have on the already fragile water table. Is the risk worth taking? Furthermore, there is local concern about the reflected heat that this bronze statue may generate when the fierce Indian sun hits the statue, day in and day out, during the hot season.

3. Those who work to maintain the statue will benefit through some income, but it is hard to see how this huge statue will contribute to the spiritual and cultural upliftment of these unbelievably poor people. It was not until January 2000 that the FPMT finally called a meeting of field workers from NGOs

(nongovernmental organizations), local officials, and the business community to discuss local needs. I attended that meeting. In our proposals, we urged the FPMT to consider the needs of the local people and environment before its goal of building such a colossal statue; we felt that the FPMT ignored our appeal for a religious site respectful of local needs.

4. Respected economists around the world acknowledge that international tourism offers little for a local economy in poor countries. Architects, engineers, designers, builders, and skilled labor will be imported from overseas to construct the statue, leaving only the most menial tasks to local people. The skilled workers' wages are often literally hundreds of times greater than the wages paid to local people, who find themselves priced out of the local market. Wealthy traders from other parts of Bihar and further afield will certainly set up shop to provide for the personal needs for the flood of foreign skilled labor needed to build the statue.

Businessmen, big and small, are understandably keen to take advantage of business opportunities on hearing the huge sums of money involved. Corruption is epidemic in Bihar, where last year even the chief minister for the state of Bihar governed the state, via his wife, from the jail in Patna, the capital of Bihar.

The kindly Ven. Lama Zopa, spiritual advisor to the Maitreya Project and cofounder of FPMT, insists that the "main goal is not the statue itself but peace and happiness for all sentient beings." He says that the "statue is essential for the cause of love and happiness in the world." While acknowledging Lama Zopa's sincerely held beliefs, I believe that the sum of money involved has become grotesque given the nightmare existence of people's lives in this area. I have urged the FPMT for years to examine its priorities. For example:

By taking one meter off the height of the 152-meter statue, FPMT would save approximately \$1 million. This sum of money would educate every child from the age of 5 to 15 years in the neighboring 180 villages surrounding the statue. This education could include the ordinary school curriculum, plus spiritual and cultural teachings. In 1991, dharma friends and I cofounded the Prajna Vihar School (School of an Abiding Wisdom) in Bodh Gaya, for desperately poor children, mostly of illiterate parents. More than 380 children now attend our school with its focus on interreligious culture, the arts, and formal education.

Take another meter off the statue, and FPMT could pay \$1 million to provide technical training centers and women's literacy programs; teach practical skills in agriculture, business, and building construction; and provide right livelihood for thousands of young men and women.

Take another meter off the statue, and FPMT could spend the money to transform the Bodh Gaya region through environmental initiatives, such as planting forests and groves of fruit trees, and introducing permaculture and other aspects of sustainable development.

If the height of the Maitreya Statue were reduced by 30 meters, it would still be the world's tallest statue.

Currently, the world's tallest statue, the Ushika Buddhist Statue outside Tokyo, stands at 120 meters. That statue had an infrastructure and facilities to support the project. If the height of the Maitreya Statue were reduced by 30 meters, it would still be the world's tallest statue.

In a four-page letter to the board of directors of FPMT, in December 1999, I stated my concerns along with some of the above proposals. I suggested that the board drastically cut the height of the statue, out of compassion for the suffering of local people and their barren and depressed environment.

I encouraged the board to invite volunteer Indian, Asian, and Western artists to train local people to make thousands of Buddhist and Hindu statues, as well as Maitreya statues, for export worldwide. Bodh Gaya could join the tradition of Buddhist artists coming together for their collective welfare and the joy of pilgrims. But it seems to me that one single metal statue lacks such diversity, or any connection to cultural tradition.

I imagine tourists stepping out of their air-conditioned coaches to take a brief look at the statue, before going on to pay respect to the main shrine of the Bodhi Tree, three miles away. Sometimes the tourists will be disappointed, because they will find themselves deprived of seeing the head of Maitreya Buddha, or even the whole trunk of the body, since much of the statue will be lost in low-lying clouds during the tourist season. It seems an ironic twist to the whole project.

NGOs that have been working in the area for many years and have a wealth of local experience have signed statements of concern about the project. They feel the money could be used to awaken the real potential of the entire region spiritually, culturally, and economically. My Buddhist brothers and sisters in the Tibetan tradition take a very different view. At the present time, the FPMT has mounted a public relations offensive to persuade the West of the merits of the statue.

In the official FPMT publicity brochure for December 1999, an article under the heading "Why not build hospitals instead?" claimed: "Money alone will

not change people's minds from creating the karma causing poverty, disease, and other problems. Money spent on a statue, that is, on a Holy Object, will plant the imprint of the seed of liberation in the mind. Just seeing the statue, even seeing a picture of the statue, will plant a seed and then gradually achieve liberation."

But pictures of the statue also plant seeds of deep concern, at least in myself. Buddhist economics, "small is beautiful" principles, human-scale design, and respect for the environment seem to have been overlooked.

Meanwhile, one in five children born in the villages around Bodh Gaya never reaches the age of four due to malnutrition and sickness, while countless others spend their lives trapped in fear and hardship, with a life expectancy of around 55 years.

Tibetans and Westerners who support the project will rely upon the generosity of Taiwanese Buddhists to fund much of the \$190 million. Senior Tibetan lamas have made trips to Taiwan to offer long-life *pujas* (ceremonies) to influential and affluent Taiwanese devotees.

Taiwanese benefactors might have second thoughts about the project if they were aware of the profound concerns in Bodh Gaya about the human and environmental impact of such a statue. Some donors, both Asian and Western, were told that if they donated money to the Maitreya Statue, they would be reborn as a disciple of Maitreya. Lamas tell local laborers they will make much merit working on the statue. Some Mahayana Buddhists believe that the statue will ensure Maitreya Buddha's speedy return to this world.

There are questions that deserve attention:

Will the statue be regarded worldwide as a symbol of gross religious materialism?

If the statue is built, will Buddhism be seen in the West to be as materialistic as any other religion?

Will the statue cause harm to the Tibetan cause worldwide, since so many Tibetans in India and the Himalayas live in hardship themselves?

We should not be afraid to ask these questions. I believe that the Maitreya Buddha Statue in Bodh Gaya, like the Happy Prince, would also drop tears of anguish on the swallow resting at his feet.

May all beings live with wisdom and compassion. ❖

Senior Western teacher in Bodh Gaya, India, Christopher Titmuss has been teaching retreats there every January since 1975. Cofounder of the Prajna Vihar School in Bodh Gaya, he supports a variety of projects in the area. Christopher is a member of the international advisory board of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He is cofounder of Gaia House, Devon, U.K., and the author of The Green Buddha and Light on Enlightenment.

The Cause Comes before the Effect

Random Thoughts on Karma

by Tofu Roshi

Every month, by the light of the full moon, you should join with your coworkers to avow your ancient twisted karma. At this time, I encourage you to call out the numbers of the precepts you've broken: "Number Three!" "Number Six!" and so on.

The precepts about speech are perhaps the most frequently broken. Given the harm that wrong speech can do, sometimes it's better just to hit the person, gently, with a feather or a limp noodle.

Karma is often compared to a bank account, but it more closely resembles a frequent flyer account. You accumulate merit just as you accumulate miles, and you can dedicate that merit to someone else. Give a friend an upgrade! Take a vow not to fly to a tropical beach resort until all beings have flown to a tropical beach resort, no matter how touristy. Buddha said, "Nobody goes business class until *all beings* go business class."

You can get merit by giving away money. But you can't get merit by giving away merit—that's the whole point of giving it away—it's not yours anymore. Another idea: you could actually *sell* your merit, though this has not been fully explored. If you can give away money and get merit for it, why not give away merit and get money for it?

Rich people can get merit by giving money away to temples and monks and beggars. But if you are a poor person, you might not have much money to give, and so you might have to gain merit for yourself in other ways. You might actually have to help people.

Everything that happens happens because of an intricate network of 10,000 causes and conditions, give or take a cause or two. And so, when bad things happen to you, you shouldn't take the blame. When you get a parking ticket, remind yourself that it's not *your* fault that the meter isn't broken. But when good things happen to you, I encourage you to take the credit. This will increase your confidence.

As ye sow, so shall ye reap. (She sells sea shells by the seashore.) You must water the seeds that you want to grow. The seeds of love are small and heart-shaped, and should be planted with the pointed end down. The plants will grow to a height of 18 inches, and the blooms may be barn red or salmon pink.

Sometimes we don't get to see the fruits of our actions in this lifetime, but we almost always get to see the vegetables of our actions, especially if we plant fast-growing crops. ❖

Tofu Roshi is the resident teacher of the No Way Zen Center in Berkeley, California.

The Bracelet

by Irene Borger

Desires are endless. I vow to put an end to them. Desires, like a neon Las Vegas, call out across the desert to me. I am in the zendo, at Zen Center Los Angeles, and, out in the hall, behind the accordion door, among the brooms and brushes and upright maroon vacuum cleaner, in my wallet, is the ad, cut from the *New York Times*, for the silver cuff from Tiffany's. I have known all week that after I sit and walk and sit and chant, I will steal away from this neighborhood of taco stands and *menudo* on Sundays, this neighborhood of what-do-people-do-all-week-to-earn-their-meager-livelihoods (and why does my housekeeper make in one long staggering day what the psychopharmacologist I visit four times a year earns in 20 minutes?) to drive over to Beverly Hills to buy the bracelet which will be wrapped in a soft turquoise pouch, put into a tissue-papered turquoise box and tucked into a slick turquoise bag, and no one in the sangha will ever know about this trip because, of course, I will never wear the bracelet at the zendo. (A cuff, it's called a cuff, a cuff someone has actually made by hand, but I will not dwell on the craftsmanship right now, on the labor.) I drive west from the dusty streets where the signs are in Spanish: check cashing, tickets to Guatemala, *manzanas y masa harina* and *pollo* of the sort I would never ever buy, just the thought of chicken at 49 cents per pound, with its heads and necks and hormones, sickens me. I pass the Korean signs, recognizing those blocky characters even as I cannot decipher them. In this city of millions of Koreans, I know not a single one. (How odd it is that in two generations a Jew like me has become a white Anglo.)

I turn into Hancock Park with its big green lawns and iron gates, enjoying the cool refreshingness of wealth. How comforting this shade on a hot afternoon! I do not dwell on the fact that I will never be able to afford a home here. In fact, I rate them: yes to a terrific 1930s deco, no to that pretentious Tudor with the vulgar fountain. (Probably Republicans.) Now the houses are getting smaller, and even the ones I disdain are out of reach. But who cares? I am in pursuit of a present for myself, for my birthday. I adore presents. Smart clever things. For my family. For my friends. For me!

(How hard I work. How tired I am. No husband to wrap his arms around me. I will buy something beautiful. I will admire my own wrist.) I will not wear it in places where people who do not even have a Honda

with manual windows might mistake me for rich. How is it possible that I earn more than most families of four in this country? How to comprehend the incomes of third-world workers? Who could live on 50 dollars a year?

Driving fast (in my Honda with manual windows), I need not think about contradictions or greed. Here we are, in the parking lot at Whole Foods in Beverly Hills, a couple of blocks away from Tiffany's, where no one would think me wealthy. A voice in my head pops out like a bolete after the rain. "What is enough, really?" No, not now, don't interrupt my reverie.

The signs warn that the garage is just for customers, but I'll come back and consume afterwards, won't I? I'll buy endive, berries, free-range chicken, organic tomatoes. No lettuce from Honduras with pesticides. Surplus capital shields me.

I pass the tourists on Rodeo Drive, folks giddy with proximity to luxury who are taking pictures to prove they were here, and glide through the big silver door. Whoosh. No one stops me. I am white, and groomed, and they can see that I am here on a mission. Not merely to buy but to acquire.

I sweep past radiant emeralds, canary diamonds, necklaces hung with curatorial care. Nothing crowded. No streaming masses, no boat people. One simple necklace on display, woven and golden, is lit well enough to convince me that I am at the Louvre. Invisible are the workers who vacuum the thick carpet, dust the double-glazed glass cases, and go blind fashioning the close, expensive filigree. (I will not stop to think about them. Nothing will stop me, do you hear?)

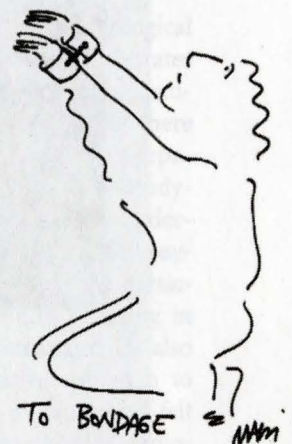
A vendeuse points me towards the silver section, down a few steps. The spatial symbol is clear: Less than gold. Silver. And there, a simple silver bracelet that costs more than a week of daycare, which I will never wear to Zen Center. What's the fuss?

The clerks are busy so I wander over to

(continued on the following page)



FROM BANGLES

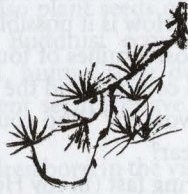


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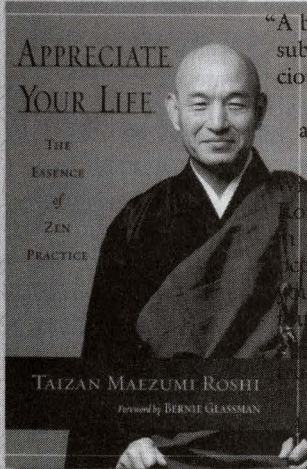
REINCARNATION

*Not cherry blossom
not snow, spectacular
but evanescent
a granite chip perhaps.
The rain could smooth
the sun polish me.
The wind could be my lover
inconstant
but never permanently neglectful
and my destiny would be settled
for several kalpas.
The wheel of fortune
turning on and on
unnoticed.*

—Lenore Mayhew

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The Bracelet, continued from page 35

the case with sterling silver razors. Oh, look, a silver harmonica. Maybe I'll get it for my father's 85th birthday. He loves to play the harmonica. I'll have it engraved with his initials. Desires are endless. And my parents are leftists. People who have never been inside Tiffany's even though they live in New York and, really, my father already owns two harmonicas and he prefers the cheap one.

The clerk is ready. He brings out the bracelet I have been coveting all week. How sleek it is. Organic, really. Now I can possess it. All this elegance. How it becomes me. ❖

Irene Borger is a writer and teacher living in Los Angeles. A longtime Vipassana student, she is a member of ZCLA. She is the editor of From a Burning House: The AIDS Project Los Angeles Writers Workshop Collection, Washington Square Press/Pocket Books.

Book Reviews

Toward a Psychology of Awakening: Buddhism, Psychotherapy, and the Path of Personal and Spiritual Transformation

by John Welwood

Shambhala, 2000, 330 pp., \$26.95 clothbound

Reviewed by Anne Connolly

While increasing numbers of Buddhist titles crowd bookstore shelves, rarely do I find a book that carries such a depth-charge of insight that it provides new inspiration for my practice. *Toward a Psychology of Awakening* fits the bill. Every reader may not share the extent of my enthusiasm; nonetheless I believe this book should be required reading for American Buddhists. John Welwood articulates some of the biggest pitfalls and opportunities facing Western practitioners today, and offers up an integrated approach that I, for one, have been sorely lacking.

There is much debate about how Buddhism should unfold in the West, and concern in some quarters that any melding of Buddhist practice with such influences as Western psychology is tantamount to watering down or corrupting the tradition. But Buddhism is a response to suffering, and as such has always adapted to the needs of the various environments it has migrated to in its long history. Here in America we are fortunate to have access to all those permutations of Buddhist teaching that have arisen in other cultures where the practice has taken root. Buddhism in the West will slowly find its own voice and make its own contribution to the tradition, while carrying on the most fundamental principles of the dharma.

Not that this adaptation should proceed unquestioned, of course. Right understanding is essential to the path, and it is important to investigate our assumptions about the nature of mind, how and why we define “East” and “West,” and to what extent we should focus on psychological principles in relationship to Buddhist practice. Welwood deftly negotiates these issues in the service of understanding how we can most effectively heal our mind/body/spirit fragmentation. He has spent 30 years investigating the nature of self through Buddhist and psychological inquiry, and his experience clearly illustrates how the intersection of these two traditions supports the path of awakening. Because Welwood’s discoveries are grounded in years of meditation and psychotherapy rather than in purely theoretical ponderings, this book provides a rich history of applied practice.

Welwood assures the reader that he wants to neither “psychologize Buddhism nor spiritualize psychology,” but rather seeks to explore the interplay of both traditions. He asks, “What is the relationship between individuation—the

development of soul—and spiritual liberation—total release from the limiting boundaries of self?” (p. xii). Stories abound of Western meditators who have practiced seriously for years and had profound spiritual realizations, yet remained plagued by difficulties in everyday life and relationships, as though transcendent insight were available for a limited time only within the confines of retreat space.

In explaining this apparent disconnect between the spiritual and personal realms, Welwood coins the term “spiritual bypassing,” which he defines as “using spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep personal, emotional ‘unfinished business,’ to shore up a shaky sense of self, or to belittle basic needs, feelings, and developmental tasks, all in the name of enlightenment” (p. 207). Psychology is the wisdom tradition of the West, a study of how the psyche deludes itself, and can offer great insight into how our unconscious motivations derail spiritual practice.

Welwood describes another potentially serious trap for Western seekers: our “susceptibility to the ‘spiritual superego,’ a harsh inner voice that acts as relentless critic and judge...this critical voice keeps track of every failure to practice or live up to the teachings, so that practice becomes more oriented toward propitiating this judgmental part of [our]selves than opening unconditionally to life” (p. 213). Spiritual ideals are appropriated all too often into the service of self-hate—and in epidemic proportions. People can use practice to browbeat themselves into being perfect meditators and compassionate bodhisattvas without even noticing the aggression they bring to the task.

Of course, if you’re going to beat yourself up, you can do that anywhere, in spiritual practice or in therapy. But “trying to bring about transformation through waging an assault on the conditioned personality is a mistake that a number of spiritual teachers and therapists have made” (p. 23). Welwood stresses the importance of understanding the unique gifts of our personality and the potential locked within even the most difficult emotions. This acceptance doesn’t have to mean building up a solid sense of identity, but can instead signal the healing of a divided and grasping self.

While acknowledging the limitations of psychological theory in seeing ego as a fixed entity, Welwood elaborates upon psychotherapy’s potential to heal the sense of woundedness that seems endemic to the Western psyche. Yes, there is the universal fact of suffering inherent in having a separate self, and the author discusses the importance of studying such Buddhist teachings as the five skandhas to understand how we construct our identity and suffering. But psychology’s unique contribution to this study is in the particulars—the nature of our conditioned mind’s suffering in terms of development and interpersonal structure. He also introduces what he terms a “contemplative approach to therapy,” which relies on unconditional presence and felt experience, rather than analysis, as the method of exploration. This framework fosters a holistic approach that emphasizes acceptance over self-improvement, and strives

toward synthesis of mind/body experience.

In addition to meditation and psychology, Welwood focuses on conscious relationship as a necessary journey on the path of awakening. His approach is the most inspiring blueprint for deep, authentic connection with another person, and I can only hope that such commitment to true intimacy will achieve greater popularity. For relationship here means neither safe harbor nor infatuation but a radically honest, dynamic dance between self and other. We are bombarded from an early age by society's assumptions about marriage—an assumption that prevails despite many alternate forms of relationship/partnership and family life—but thoughtful discussion of how to be in relationship is nearly nonexistent. Meanwhile, practitioners in spiritual communities may encounter old biases that elevate celibacy and distrust romantic relationships as mere distractions based in desire.

Happily, Welwood offers a more transformative vision: "Relationship inevitably brings us up against our most painful unresolved emotional conflicts from the past, continually stirring us up against things in ourselves that we cannot stand—all our worst fears, neuroses, and fixations—in living technicolor" (p. 236). While most dialogue about personal awakening focuses on the meditation cushion or the therapist's office, we are reminded here of the great potential that relationships have to draw us from the safety of our solitary cocoons and challenge our self-clinging as effectively as any Buddhist teaching or psychotherapeutic technique.

Welwood's inquiry into the confluence of Western psychology and Buddhist practice extends well beyond what is mentioned here. This richly variegated exploration should appeal to therapists, therapy clients, and Buddhist practitioners, whether or not they partake of both traditions. This book illustrates the ways we can use both Buddhism and psychology in the service of awakening or, unwittingly, in the service of delusion. Here we have the opportunity to learn more about the muddy waters in which the Western lotus grows.

Anne Connolly is a closet contemplative negotiating practice in the marketplace, living life at the intersection of meditation and California utility bills. She resides in rotating outage block 02.

BRIEFLY NOTED

by Marianne Dresser

The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals

Edited by Patrick Hart and Jonathan Montaldo

HarperSanFrancisco, 1999, 375 pp., \$16.00 paperback

The writings of the Trappist monk Thomas Merton are well known—and loved—in American Buddhist circles for their elegant, insightful syntheses of Eastern religious

thought and practice with contemplative Catholicism. His spiritual memoir, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, in print since 1948, remains a classic and a benchmark of the genre. Merton was also a prodigious journal writer—he recorded the details of a seeker's life, what he called his art of "confession and witness," in numerous volumes.

This collection has been culled from the seven volumes of the complete, extant journals published by Harper. *The Intimate Merton* is divided into chapters corresponding to each volume: "The Story of a Vocation, 1939–1941"; "Becoming a Monk and Writer, 1941–1952"; "Pursuing the Monk's True Life, 1952–1960"; "The Pivotal Years, 1960–1963"; "Seeking Peace in the Hermitage, 1963–1965"; "Exploring Solitude and Freedom, 1966–1967"; and "The End of the Journey, 1967–1968."

The volume is well named: the portrait of Merton that emerges here, in this compressed version of a life's work of engagingly written journals, is an intimate glimpse into the workings of a profound spiritual intelligence. Those new to Merton will find in this book an intriguing introduction; those already familiar with the writer-monk's work will be inspired to revisit the full journals and his numerous other writings.

Women's Buddhism, Buddhism's Women: Tradition, Revision, Renewal

Edited by Ellison Banks Findly

Wisdom, 2000, 498 pp., \$24.95 paperback

This sizable anthology is based on a series of papers presented at a 1998 conference called "Women Changing Contemporary Buddhism" sponsored by Trinity College. Thematically arranged in the sections "Ordination, Affiliation, and Relation to the Sangha," "Teachers, Teaching, and Lineages," "Political and Social Change," "Art and Architecture," and "Body and Health," the essays discuss a wide range of topics in addressing the book's overarching thesis: that "in the contemporary setting, women are playing a significant and even decisive role in the way the forms, practices, and institutions of Buddhism are changing to meet the needs and demands of life in late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century culture."

Editor Findly, who with Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad co-edited the 1985 collection *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, has brought together the voices of Buddhist women from all over the world. Especially noteworthy are the many contributions from and about Asian Buddhist women—lay practitioners, monastics, teachers, activists. In fact, the book is predominantly concerned with the issues faced by women in Buddhist Asia who are working to change Buddhism from within culturally bound traditional institutions and societies. This anthology is an important resource for those interested in women in contemporary Buddhism—East and West.

When the Iron Eagle Flies: Buddhism for the West

by Ayya Khema

Wisdom, 2000, 223 pp., \$16.95 paperback

Visible Here & Now: The Buddha's Teachings on the Rewards of Spiritual Practice

by Ayya Khema

Shambhala, 1999, 214 pp., \$14.95 paperback

These two recently released titles are by the late Ayya Khema, Theravadin nun and teacher, founder of several international Buddhist centers, including the Parappuduwa Nuns Island in Sri Lanka and Buddha-Haus in her native Germany, and author of numerous books including *Being Nobody*, *Going Nowhere*.

When the Iron Eagle Flies presents a complete meditation course as taught by Khema, based on the Upanisa Sutta from the Samyutta Nikaya (Connected Discourses). The author's unvarnished style is well suited to her discussion of such essential teachings as dependent arising and mindfulness, framed in the context of everyday life experience. Various meditations are presented in a simple and clear manner. The book is based on edited transcriptions of oral instruction, interspersed with question-and-answer segments from course participants, which lends it a pleasing quality of immediacy.

Visible Here & Now is a commentary on the Sammanaphala Sutta, a record of the teachings offered by the Buddha in response to questions posed by a lay follower, King Ajatasattu—in particular, the “tangible rewards” to be gained from Buddhist practice. Khema leads the reader through a discussion of the eight *jhanas*, states of meditative absorption, through which the practitioner experiences joyful, serene, and peaceful states of mind which lead the way to clarity and liberation.

Meetings with Remarkable Women: Buddhist Teachers in America

by Lenore Friedman

Shambhala, 2000, 362 pp., \$19.95 paperback

This is a revised and updated edition of a collection of interviews with 16 women dharma teachers first published in 1987. A new preface reports on the positive changes in American Buddhism since the book's initial publication, with greater numbers of women teachers taking on important roles, and a stronger influence of feminist values in Buddhist institutions. Each of the original interviews, including those with such teachers as Pema Chödrön, Ruth Denison, Sharon Salzberg, Joanna Macy, Yvonne Rand, and Charlotte Joko Beck, has been appended with a recent (2000) update. The interviews are personal, insightful, and accessible.

Boundless Healing: Meditation Exercises to Enlighten the Mind and Heal the Body

by Tulku Thondup

Shambhala, 2000, 216 pp., \$22.95 clothbound

Drawing on many of the same principles as the author's 1996 *The Healing Power of the Mind*, this book offers a complete guide to understanding and harnessing the power of meditation and visualization for healing mind and body. The author guides readers through the Twelve Stages of Healing Meditation, a set of meditative practices designed to induce a calm, peaceful mind as the foundation for healing, whether physical or psychological.

The book contains many examples of meditations that have had dramatic effects in healing serious physical ailments; nonetheless, Thondup emphasizes that while “it is not always possible to cure the afflictions of the body, at least we can ease our suffering or learn to tolerate it better.” “The most reliable support” for dealing with the inevitability of illness and death, he writes, “is a more peaceful mind.” *Boundless Healing* shows how these time-honored Tibetan Buddhist teachings and practices can be applied by people of any religious tradition to awaken natural healing energies and become more peaceful—and thus happier and healthier—in everyday life.

Zen's Chinese Heritage: The Masters and Their Teachings

by Andy Ferguson

Wisdom, 2000, 518 pp., \$24.95 paperback

This is a comprehensive survey of 25 generations of Chinese masters of the Ch'an (Zen) tradition, from Bodhidharma in the fifth century through the mid-thirteenth century. Included are translations of stories, teachings, and poems of hundreds of teachers, presented to “let the Zen tradition speak for itself.” The material is organized into three sections, roughly corresponding to stages of the development of Zen literature in China: “The Legendary Period 480–755,” “The Classical Period 755–950,” and “The Literary Period 950–1260.” A select bibliography, Romanization tables (names are cross-referenced in Pinyin, Wade-Giles, and Romaji), notes, and a pull-out lineage chart of the Zen ancestors, detailing lines of succession of 179 of the most well-known teachers, make this an excellent resource for Zen students. General readers will enjoy the pithy stories and teachings, many of which are classics of iconoclastic Zen wisdom. ❖

Marianne Dresser is the editor of *Buddhist Women on the Edge* (North Atlantic Books, 1996) and the book review editor for *Turning Wheel*.

Executive Director's Report

Uppermost in my mind is the passing of my friend, dharma sister, and BPF Board member Maylie Scott. I miss her deeply. Maylie embodied a rare combination of exemplary Zen practice and dedicated social activism. I say more about her on page 6, and in the next issue of *Turning Wheel* we will include an extended appreciation of Maylie's life, practice, and activism. For now I can just say that April was a cruel month and early May was not much better.

Another painful aspect of the recent past has been watching President Bush find his legs as he has called for the following policies: drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, ignoring the Kyoto Protocols on the world's environment, cutting support for security and stewardship of nuclear materials in the former Soviet Union, and building a "Star Wars" strategic missile defense system. Bush and his Vice President Dick Cheney have declared with great confidence that energy resources are not limited for the foreseeable future, and that they want to guarantee that Americans have all the energy we want, *when we want it.*

What is a Buddhist understanding of George Bush and his "compassionate conservatism"? Alas, I see little compassion. And the only things conserved are the fortunes and privilege of the tiniest portion of the world's elite. Often I have felt that we Americans get the government we ask for and deserve. In this case, however, a clear majority of people did not ask for a Bush presidency.

But I have wandered away from the point, a question about "Buddhist understanding." George Bush is caught in suffering along with the rest of us—it is incomplete to think that I (or we) are suffering and George Bush is not; but it is nevertheless essential for us to act according to what we believe is just and peaceful. We must let Bush know about the anger and sorrow we feel as a result of his decisions. How he responds will determine what we make of his "compassionate conservatism."

Think Sangha is an engaged Buddhist "think tank" using a sangha model to explore pressing social issues and concerns. It grew out of a series of peer gatherings at International Network of Engaged Buddhists conferences

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in the 1990s. In March we—Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt, David Loy, Phra Phaisan Visalo, Donald Rothberg, Santikaro Bhikkhu, Siddhartha, Jonathan Watts, Diana Winston, and I—organized a five-day meeting in a state park on Hawai'i's Big Island, availing ourselves of the keen participation of Robert Aitken Roshi, who lives nearby. We wrangled and enjoyed intensive discussions about globalization, technology, and practice, and sampled some of the local culture. On day one we began with "way-seeking mind" talks, each person speaking about the issues he or she faces in life and practice. Out of those talks we distilled six themes for later discussion.

- 1) How do we relate to various theoretical and intellectual movements in the wider world?
- 2) Who are we as activist-intellectuals, in a setting of American anti-intellectuals?
- 3) How can we help connect Buddhist practice and activism?
- 4) What moves socially engaged Buddhists to act in the midst of privilege, and to step aside from privilege?
- 5) How do we see and address core problems of modern life—loneliness, consumerism, busyness, nihilism?
- 6) How is setting priorities in our lives also a priority for socially engaged Buddhists?

Sarah Laeng-Gilliatt, with help from David Loy, offered an excellent presentation on globalization, simultaneously raising questions about its greedy and predatory nature, and its lack of coherence as a social force, pointing out that it's not one monolith but a cluster of interlocking processes. There were also discussions about socially engaged Buddhist methodology, and about the way current technological pressures overwhelm us personally and structurally. While none of these issues was resolved, our working groups plan to pursue them in dialogue and in our writing. If you are interested, check out the Think Sangha section of the BPF Web site: www.bpf.org.

Finally, I want to share an important decision of my own with you. I am planning to step down as Executive Director of BPF in January of next year, by which time I will have served 11 years at the job. The board and I have begun transition planning, and we will have more to say about this in the next issue. BPF has developed into a large and important organization whose still growing activities and vision affect the shape of Buddhism in the world. I am endlessly grateful to have been tangled up in this movement—it is inseparable from what I value most. I hope to stay close to BPF, helping with networking, teaching, writing, international work, and with creating an active board of teachers and elders, among other things. I feel clear and good about this decision. It is also a difficult choice, like stepping forward from the top of a hundred-foot pole. But my faith in dharma, in BPF, and in the vast circle we inhabit gives me confidence. It is still too early for goodbyes, so I will stop here. ❖

—Alan Senauke

Youth BASE: Reflections in the Wake

by Diana Winston

Youth BASE, the brainchild of Aran Watson, a 23-year-old who had participated in BASE as a teenager, was dedicated to exploring the intersection of Buddhism and activism for young people aged 19–25. At least that's how it was initially conceived. In the end it became much more than that. Over the years I've watched each BASE (Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement) program emerge with its own characteristic strength. In some groups the study focus reigns; in others political activism is foremost, and the group trains weekly in skills to support the social change work. One group was dedicated entirely to group process; another group sent a few of its members straight into monasteries when the program ended. In retrospect I realize Youth BASE was more than anything about creating community, which is so needed, especially for young people these days when Buddhist sanghas are graying.

I readily accepted the role of mentor: to offer dharma teachings, advice, spiritual and political support, and to play the role of big sister. I recognized that as I was at least 10 years older than most folks in the group and had more practice experience, mentoring Youth BASE would be a good match. The questions and struggles of this time of life were behind me but still fresh in my mind. And hopefully I had wisdom to offer, based on my years of practice.

At our first retreat in September 2000, nine young people and myself gathered at Jikoji retreat center in the Santa Cruz Mountains. I observed with delight some differences from previous BASE groups. First, the group was more racially diverse than any previous group—one-third people of color. Second, the tattoos, dyed hair, and piercings diverged from the usual spiritual-seeker stereotype. There was both an ease and a posturing. We all had expectations and we looked at each other with wariness. *Will you be my friend? We're young, Buddhist, and we believe in political freedom as much as we believe in spiritual freedom, but does that mean you will be my friend?*

At the first retreat we shared our life stories, and I talked about the history of socially engaged Buddhism. We talked

about the life of groups and created group safety agreements. Some of us tried to impress the others with our jokes, or our practice experience. (*You do vipassana? I do Zen!*) I remember my exasperation when several participants questioned why we had to get up at 6 AM to sit. "But we're night people!" they reasoned. "I don't get why the Buddha made his monks wake up early."

On the last morning, we walked down to the moss-filled lake and stated our intentions for the next seven months. Mine were to: 1) grow into the role of mentor, learning when to come forward, when to step back, 2) meet all of the group where they were and to help them flower, and 3) relax and try not to do everything, remembering it's a lifetime commitment. I wondered how well I would fare.

Following this retreat we started meeting weekly at the Berkeley Buddhist Monastery or in one member's living room. Our commitment was to meet for seven months, once or twice a week, for sittings, check-ins, support, training, study, and practice. Each BASE participant would be



Youth BASE, left to right: Hannah Bortwick, Diana Winston, Lindsay Toub, Corey Cohen, Phillip Cryan, Francesca Francia, Steve Kelly, Bren Boseman, Kenji Liu. Missing: Aran Watson

working or volunteering in a social service or social action job during the week. We also scheduled six daylong or weekend retreats. Aran and I told each other that whatever we expected, it would definitely turn out differently.

Through the course of the program we took the six *paramitas* as our theme. Each month we studied a new one: generosity, morality, equanimity, energy, meditation, and wis-

Executive Director's Report



Kenji Liu and Aran Watson, my cofacilitator

dom, letting them be the guides for our work in the hospice or the childcare center, as we fed the homeless in the park or organized a rally in support of indigenous people in Chiapas. We gave ourselves homework: to examine our motivation, to work with our speech, to practice mindfulness in action. Much of our meeting time was devoted to simple check-ins about what was happening in our lives, how our placements were going, how our meditation practice was that week. We studied nonviolence movements; we learned practical skills of nonviolent communication; we spent several weeks discussing race issues and looking at our own conditioning around it. We had potlucks and parties. We went to protests and actions together. We supported the person who broke up with his girlfriend. We fought over commitment issues and unskillful communications. We talked about sexuality, drugs, career, and other issues relevant to our lives. We practiced—in many forms—and expanded our definitions of what practice was. We formed a Buddhist container that was grounded in discipline yet retained the vitality and vibrancy of youth. We created community from 10 strangers.

Midway through the program I found myself overextended in my daily life. Exhausted, with too many commitments to all the “good things” I was accountable for, I had spiraled into the dreaded state of near-burnout. One night, I brought my overwhelmed condition to the group. It didn’t matter that I was the mentor; tonight it was my turn to ask for help.

“I don’t want to burn out,” I said, “but I don’t know what to do to change things. The habits are so deep, and to go against them seems nearly impossible. There’s so much suffering—how can I say no? Besides, I’m a natural overachiever—it’s in my genes.”

The group mind began to flow: “I’m convinced that if we are

socially engaged without our ego involved, we don’t burn out.”

“Well, I’m not there yet!”

“Gandhi did it.”

“Yeah? Who here is Gandhi?”

“You have to take care of the self too. I always get caught up in wanting to take care of everybody else—the kids at the childcare center, my family—rather than myself.”

“It’s like walking the edge of the wisdom/compassion duality. On one level there’s nobody acting, on another you have utmost compassion for all beings and that includes yourself. God, I want to have pure motivation.”

“No one’s motivation is ever pure.”

The back-and-forth went late into the evening. At times it felt like we were improvising music together. We had struck on one of the core dilemmas of the spiritual activist. How can we take care of ourselves and still take care of the world? As happens often at BASE meetings, our conversations ranged widely, all the way from our desire for political justice to our wish to learn to take ourselves out on a date.

Finally I said, “I have an idea. I need to write down some of your wisdom so I can remember it. Feed me sentences to counteract my beliefs. What should I remember?” Immediately group members shouted out phrases that I hastily scribbled in my notebook.

I have a right to just be.

If I never do another thing the rest of my life, I have already done enough.

The better I am to myself the more I can help others.

If I stop achieving, people will still like me; it’s not contingent upon what I do.

Trust in my own happiness.

I can do less.

Then I had a spontaneous vision of a ritual for the healing I needed. “Here’s what I want to ask for from you. I’m going to say each phrase I wrote down and you are going to shout “YES!” after each one, okay? Are you with me on this?”

I took a breath and announced the first one... “I have a right to just be.”

The group, in unison, with big smiles on their faces, shouted, “YES!”

One by one we went down the list, and each halting phrase from me was met with a resounding “YES!” Moment by moment, my BASE group was replacing the self-hating, chiding, overworking voices in my head with fresh wisdom. This was brilliant psychodrama. As I read out the sentences, my body shook and the tears came. I finally shouted the last one, feeling fear and relief at the same time: “I can do less.” “YES!”



Francesca Francia and our BASE altar

And since that evening, I have not been stressed in a major way. I wonder if Youth BASE performed a kind of shamanic healing on me.

For our final BASE retreat we rented a house by the ocean. The mornings were spent in silent practice. By day we cooked together, sat, and walked and talked. During the course of the weekend, each person had half an hour to discuss their life, how they had changed over the seven months, what they had learned, and where they were going. We asked each other questions, and each question was grounded in a communal knowing of the individual: *Do you think the job you took will lead you to your goal of more creativity? Remember that time your coworker stole your wallet at the high school you volunteer at? Where is your trust now? What do you want to be when you "grow up"?* Then we took 15 more minutes to appreciate each person. Each of us spoke directly to the deep parts of the others, to their courage and consistency, to watching their isolation break away, to noticing their fear of speaking in groups shifting. I

was amazed by the precise perceptions: *Steve, you're like a set of Chinese boxes, continually unfolding; Hannah, I am overcome by your passion for truth; and so on.*

I have always been a fan of *mudita*, the Pali word for taking joy in the joy of others. In the three-day retreat we entered a collective field of *mudita*, rejoicing in each other's growth. We had flowered.

This last retreat was one of the most integrated I have ever attended anywhere. Although formal sitting practice was minimal, the kindness, compassion, and wisdom were all there. The next morning we bowed our respects to the Buddha and to the ocean where the sea lions kept popping their heads above water to honor our commitments. We sang homemade songs, offered protection cords to each other, and dedicated the massive merit to all beings for their awakening. *For as long as space exists and sentient beings endure, may I stay to dispel the misery of the world...* ❖

Diana Winston, associate director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, is working on developing an expanded education and training program for BPF. She is still busy, but it doesn't seem to be a huge problem.

BPF Chapter News

Precious Steps for Peace

Every 22 minutes, someone is killed or maimed by a landmine.

In December 2000, the Texas Hill Country BPF chapter held a silent walking meditation at the Texas State Capitol to raise awareness about the suffering caused by landmines.

The walk was cosponsored by the Austin Adopt-a-Minefield Campaign.



Inaugural of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Chapter in Bangalore

by Siddhartha

Our BPF chapter had its first meeting in Bangalore, southern India, on February 2, 2001. For many of us, it was a significant and moving occasion. To work on engaged Buddhist reflection and practice is not that obvious in India, the land the Buddha came from. Much of the Buddhism found in South Asia has been either nationalistic or merely ritual. So we were all quite excited and even felt we were playing a small role in renewing Buddhism in the land of its birth and mak-

ing a contribution to engaged Buddhism in South Asia. But quite apart from this, most people felt that they would like to deepen their spiritual practice.

About 20 people attended and we met in my garden. Several of those who came were involved with HIV/AIDS awareness programs, organic farming, journalism, and conflict resolution in the context of religious intolerance. I said a few words on the significance of engaged Buddhism. Rajaram, a teacher of English literature at Bangalore University and an ardent Buddhist, spoke about how he had begun with Sankara and ended with the Buddha. Dunja Lingwood, a Buddhist visiting from Seattle, spoke about her practice. We concluded the evening with Vipassana meditation led by Santakumar, and we decided to meet on the first Friday of every month. ❖

Announcements & Classifieds

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Visit the BPF Web site at www.bpf.org. News, events, and timely information about BPF and the world of socially engaged Buddhism are now easier to find on our reorganized site. Stop by and enjoy!

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.

Sangha for Buddhists of Color meets monthly in the San Francisco Bay Area, for meditation, dharma talks, and mutual support. For information, call 415/789-8359, or e-mail: <boc_caretakers@hotmail.com>.

Diversity and Social Change Sangha, for those interested in blending mindfulness practice in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh with social change work, meets weekly in Oakland. Contact Olga at 510/540-0141.

Prison Dharma Network (PDN) needs your donations of dollars and used dharma books to continue making the dharma available to prisoners. If you are interested in forming local or regional chapters to facilitate contemplative prison ministry, contact: PDN, P.O. Box 4623, Boulder, CO 80306-4623, 303/544-5952, e-mail: <pdn@indra.com>.

Jarvis Masters is a prisoner on San Quentin's death row, a Buddhist, and a frequent contributor to *Turning Wheel*. Please visit the Web site of the Jarvis Masters Support Group to learn about Jarvis's case, his wrongful conviction, his writing, and his practice: www.freejarvis.org.

Help Homeless Women and Children by donating personal care items—toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, hairbrushes, combs—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.

BPF Publications: *Making the Invisible Visible*, a collection of writings by people of color and their white allies about healing racism in Buddhist communities, \$6 a copy. *Safe Harbor*, BPF's booklet on guidelines, process, and resources for ethics in Buddhist communities, \$5 donation. To order these publications, contact the BPF office, 510/655-6169, e-mail: <bpf@bpf.org>.

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, 7:00–9:30 PM. Info: 510/464-3012.

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 available on request. (See BPF Chapters & Affiliates page for address.)

Homeless and housed people meet weekly in Berkeley for meditation and discussion. Volunteers from Berkeley Zen Center and East Bay Insight Meditation facilitate sessions oriented toward stress reduction. Tea and cookies. Mondays, 7:30–9:00 PM, off the courtyard on the west side of Dana between Durant and Channing. For more info, call 510/548-0551.

EVENTS

Meeting for Spanish-speaking Vipassana teachers and community leaders sponsored by Círculo para la Enseñanza de Meditación Vipassana en Español (CEMVE), August 9–10, 2001, at the Barre Center for Buddhist Studies, Barre, MA. Contact CEMVE/José Reissig, 141 Lamoree Rd., Rhinebeck, NY 12572, e-mail: <reissigol@aol.com>.

CLASSIFIEDS

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.

I live for the moment
but it never arrives!

—Larry Rapant

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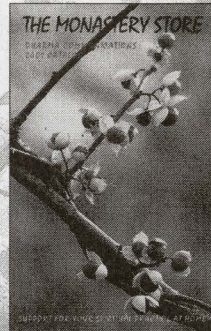
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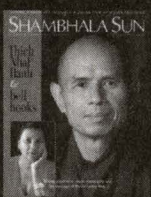
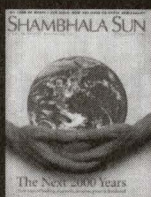
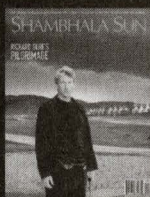
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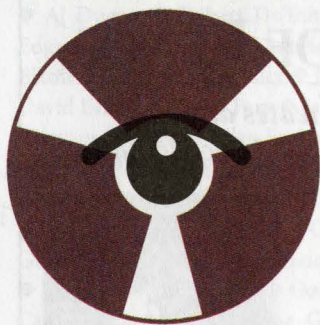
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