



BUDDHIST PEACE FELLOWSHIP NEWSLETTER

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Action & Compassion in the World *By Thich Nhat Hanh*

Editor's Note: During the summer, it was decided to make this issue of the Newsletter a double issue. Within two weeks of making that decision, Thay Nhat Hanh sent me a handwritten copy of his translation of his commentaries on the Tiep Hien Order (The Order of Interbeing) and the Order's Fourteen Precepts for editing. What a wonderful concurrence of events! Upon reading the commentaries, I was deeply moved and inspired by his words and vision. I found this article to be the clearest and most elaborated expostulation of Thay's vision of engaged Buddhism to become available to English readers up to now. When I saw him this past September on the East Coast, I shared my enthusiasm with him and asked his permission to print it in the next Newsletter. He agreed. It is our hope that you will be challenged and inspired by it.

—Fred Eppsteiner

The Tiep Hien Order was founded in Vietnam in the beginning of 1964. The words *Tiep* and *Hien* have several meanings. *Tiep* means to be in touch with and to continue. *Hien* means to realize and to make it here and now. In order to better understand the spirit of the Tiep Hien Order, let us examine the four expressions: "to be in touch with", "to continue", "to realize", and "to make it here and now."

What are we "to be in touch with"? The answer is reality, the reality of the Mind as well as the reality of the world. To be in touch with Mind means not only to be aware of the processes of our inner life, i.e. feelings, perceptions, mental formations, etc., but also to rediscover our True Mind which is the source of understanding and compassion. Being in touch with True Mind is like digging deep in the soil until we reach a hidden source, and then the well is filled with fresh water. Upon rediscovering our True Mind, we are filled with understanding and compassion, which not only nourishes ourselves, but those around us.

To be in touch with True Mind is also to be in touch with Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, who are enlightened beings doing their best to show us the way of understanding, peace and happiness. To be in touch with the reality of the world means to be in touch with everything that surrounds us, which includes the animal, vegetable and mineral realms. In order to really be in touch, we must strive to get out of our shell, the conceited shell of "I am." We must try to see both the wonderful things in life like snowflakes, moonlight, birdsongs, flower blossoms, etc., as well as the dreadful things like hunger, disease, torture, oppression and other forms of suffering. With understanding and compassion, one can enter into life with the wish to alleviate the suffering around us.

In the past, we may have made the primary mistake in distinguishing between the inner world of our mind and the world outside. These are not two separate worlds, but belong to the same reality. Notions of *inside* and *outside* are helpful in our practical daily lives, but can become an obstacle preventing us from seeing ultimate reality. If we are able to see deeply into our mind, we can simultaneously see deeply into the world. If we truly understand the world, we also will understand our



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mind. Buddhists call this "the unity of mind and world."

In modern Christianity, one finds the ideas of vertical theology and horizontal theology. Spiritual life is the vertical dimension of getting in touch with God, while social life is the horizontal dimension of getting in touch with humans. In Buddhism, there have been persons also who think in these terms. They spoke about the *above* level of practicing the Buddha's Way and the *below* level of helping living beings. However, this understanding does not accord with the true spirit of Buddhism, which teaches that Buddhahood or the nature of enlightenment is innate to every being and not a transcendental identity. Thus, in Buddhism the vertical and horizontal are one. If one penetrates the horizontal, one finds the vertical, and vice-versa. This is the meaning of "to be in touch with."

Next we come to the concept of "to continue" or continuation. *Tiep* means to tie the ends of two strings together in order to make a longer line. "To continue" connotes extending

and perpetuating the career of enlightenment, which was started and nourished by Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that preceded us. It is helpful to remember that the word *Buddha* denotes he/she who is awake or enlightened. The word *Bodhisattva* also signifies an enlightened person. The way of enlightenment that was started by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas should be continued, and this is the responsibility of all who undertake Buddhist practice. Sowing the seeds of enlightenment and taking good care of the tree of enlightenment, this is the meaning of "to continue."

The third concept is "to realize" or realization. *Hien* means not to dwell and be caught in the world of doctrines and ideas, but to transform insights into real life. Understanding and compassions must not become ideas about understanding and compassion, but be real existing entities within life itself. They should be seen, touched and experimented with. The presence of understanding and compassion can concretely alleviate suffering and will cause the birth of joy and the appearance of a smile. Of course, to realize does not only mean to act. First of all, realization connotes transforming oneself. This transformation creates a harmony between oneself and nature, between one's own joy and the joy of others. Once a person gets in touch with the source of understanding and compassion, this transformation is accomplished. When this transformation is present, all one's actions will carry the same nature and effect—protecting and building life with understanding and compassion. If one wishes to share joy and happiness with others, one should have joy and happiness within oneself. If one wishes to transmit serenity, first one should realize it oneself. Without a sane and peaceful mind, one's actions could only create more trouble and destruction in the world.

The last expression for us to examine is "to make it here and now." Within the spirit of Tiep Hien, only the present is real and everlasting. The peace we desire is not in the distant future, but something to be realized in the present. To practice Buddhism does not mean to endure hard things now for the sake of peace and liberation in the future. The purpose of Buddhist practice is not to be reborn in paradise or a Buddhahood after death. The purpose of the practice is to have peace, for ourselves and others, right now while we're breathing. Means and ends should not be different. "Bodhisattvas are careful about causes, while ordinary people care more about effects," because Bodhisattvas see that cause and effect are one and means are ends-in-themselves. An enlightened person never says, "this is only a means," and he/she worries about those that declare, "whatever means will help me attain my goals are good." Based on the insight that means *are* ends, all forms of practice should be entered into mindfully and peacefully. While practicing sitting meditation, walking meditation, cleaning, working, or serving, the one who practices should feel peace within himself or herself. The aim of sitting meditation is to be peaceful during sitting meditation. Working to help hungry or sick people means to be peaceful during the work. The one who practices does not expect that practice will pay large rewards in the future, even if that reward is nirvana,



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the pure land, enlightenment or Buddhahood. The secret of Buddhism is to be awake here and now.

Thus far, we have examined the meanings of the words, Tiep Hien. Western friends, especially those who are Tiep Hien members, have been looking for equivalent English or French words to express Tiep Hien's meaning. They have met with limited success. For the moment, they use the expression, the Order of Interbeing. The term *interbeing* was proposed by the author of the book, *The Sun My Heart*, as a rendering of a Chinese term which is found in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*. This is a recently invented word, but we hope it will be more widely adopted in the near future.

Members of the Tiep Hien Order observe fourteen precepts. The Sanskrit word *sila* connotes a mode of mind and volition which manifests also in speech and bodily action. The Tiep Hien precepts are not a set of prohibitions. Moreso, they are a guidance for life in not only general terms, but also for each moment's practice. The word "precept" should be understood in the context of the Three Practices: *sila*, *samadhi* and *prajna*, or precepts, concentration and insight. The precepts lead to concentration, while concentration leads to insight. Thus, the precepts are fundamentally disciplines of the mind or mindfulness. However, we should try to understand the interbeing of the Three Practices. Although the precepts lead to concentration and insight, the precepts themselves are concentration and insight. The same is concurrently true for concentration and insight. Perhaps the most appropriate definition of *sila* (precepts) is being awake and mindful of and during each bodily, verbal and mental activity. It is only within this broad definition that the precept can embrace and

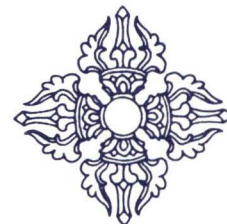
engender concentration and wisdom. Following the traditional commandments not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, not to lie, not to drink alcohol, etc. is not sufficient to produce concentration and insight. In the Tiep Hien context, the word precept fully embraces in itself the meaning of awakening. If one truly observes the Tiep Hien precepts in one's daily life, one can definitely cultivate one's concentration and insight simultaneously.

On Wesak Day, 1964, six persons received the Tiep Hien ordination in Vietnam. They were the first Tiep Hien members. Their ages ran from twenty-two to thirty-two years old, and all of them served on the directive board of the School of Youth for Social Service. The year of 1964 was a turning point in the war. The Tiep Hien Order was one manifestation of a willingness to bring Buddhism into the realm of social action during a period when society required a type of engagement that opposed war, hatred, violence and divisiveness. The Order underwent ten years of experimentation, during which the number of its members, both in the kernal community and the co-practicer community, was consciously limited. This period of experimentation ended in 1974.

According to the Charter of the Tiep Hien Order, "the aim of Tiep Hien is to study, experiment and apply Buddhism in an intelligent and effective way to modern life, both individual and societal." *Experiment* as used in the Charter denotes application of Buddhist principles and methods to one's own life in order to have direct and personal understanding of them. This type of understanding differs from an understanding derived from theoretical study that primarily relies on the intellect. It is only through this direct experimentation that one can know whether these principles and methods are appropriate and effective. The *Kalama Sutra* advises us to neither believe nor act without the spirit of experimentation. The results of our practice should be tangible and verifiable. Methods and practices that do not nourish and develop understanding and compassion should not be considered as truly Buddhist.

The Charter lists four principles as being the foundation of the Order: *non-attachment to views*, *direct practice-realization*, *appropriateness* and *skillful means*. Let us examine these four principles.

1) *The principle of non-attachment to views*. To be attached means to be caught in dogmas, in prejudices, to bad habits and to what we consider Truth. The Sanskrit word for attachment is *upadana* or *graha*. The first aim of our practice is to get rid of attachment, especially attachment to views. This is the most important teaching of Buddhism. The first Tiep Hien precept deals particularly with this issue.



2) *The principle of direct practice-realization.* In Buddhism, the direct experience of reality is stressed and not speculative philosophy. It is direct practice-realization that brings about insight and not intellectual research. Our own life is the instrument by which we experiment with Truth. When we drink a cup of orange juice, we know it is orange juice without the need to reason or speculate. This type of knowledge is called direct realization.

3) *The principle of appropriateness.* If a teaching is not in accordance with the mentality of the people and the realities of society, it is not truly Buddhist. In order for Buddhist teaching to bring about understanding and compassion, it must be appropriate. On one hand, the teaching conforms with the basic tenets of Buddhism. On the other hand, it must truly help people. It is said that there are 84,000 dharma doors to enter Buddhism. In order for Buddhism to continue being a living source of wisdom and peace, even more doors should be opened.

4) *The principle of skillful means.* Skillful means (*upaya*) consists of images and methods created by intelligent teachers to show the Buddha's way and to guide people in their efforts to practice Buddhism in special circumstances. These means are called *dharma-doors*.

Concerning the above four principles, the Charter says, "The spirit of non-attachment to views and the spirit of direct practice-realization bring about tolerance and compassion in our way of looking at and dealing with living beings. The spirit of appropriateness and the spirit of skillful means bring about the power of creativity and the ability to reconcile. Both are necessary in order to realize the vow of helping the world." Guided by these principles, the Tiep Hien Order adopts an open attitude towards all Buddhist schools.

"The Tiep Hien Order does not consider any sutra or any grouping of sutras as its basic text. Inspiration is drawn from the essence of the Buddhadharmas as found in all sutras. The Order does not recognize any systematic arrangement of the Buddhist teaching as proposed by various schools of Buddhism. The Order seeks to realize the Dharma spirit within primitive Buddhism as well as the development of that spirit throughout the sangha's history and the teachings in all Buddhism traditions."

In addition, the Charter expresses its willingness to be open and to progress. "The Order is open to all forms of activity that can revive the true spirit of understanding and compassion in life. It considers the true spirit of Buddhism more important than any Buddhist institution and tradition. Inspired by the Bodhisattva ideal, the members of the Tiep Hien Order seek to transform themselves in order to change society in the direction of more understanding and more compassion."

The Tiep Hien Order consists of two communities, the kernel community and the support community. The kernel community consists of those members who have taken the vows to observe the fourteen precepts of the Tiep Hien Order. The support community consists of members who attempt to live up to the Tiep Hien spirit, but have not taken the vows. Members of the kernel community are called Brothers or

Sisters of the Tiep Hien Order and should be at least twenty-two years of age. Members of the support community cooperate closely with the kernel community members in all activities. They also participate in the recitation of the fourteen precepts. In order to become a member of the kernel community, one should usually undergo a one year apprenticeship, practicing with members of the kernel community. After ordination, one should observe sixty days of retreat and intensive practice yearly.

As previously mentioned, the Tiep Hien precepts are not a set of rules, but guides for each moment of our daily life. Most religious rules or prohibitions usually begin with the control of bodily actions. Thus, the traditional commandments to not kill, not steal, etc. The Tiep Hien precepts begin with the mind, and the first seven precepts deal with problems associated with it. This does not place the Tiep Hien spirit at variance with Buddhism. "The mind is the King of all Dharmas," say the sutras. "The mind is the painter who paints everything." The Tiep Hien precepts are very close to the Eightfold Path, the basic Buddhist teaching of both the Theravada and Mahayana. The Eightfold Path could be described as the precept-in-essence (Pali: *pakati-sila*), while the more traditional sets of precepts are only the established precepts (Pali: *pannatti-sila*). The Eightfold Path also begins with the mind, i.e. right view and right thought. It may be helpful to arrange the fourteen Tiep Hien precepts into three categories. The first seven deal with the mind, the next two with speech, and the last five with the body. However, this division is arbitrary. Throughout the fourteen precepts, the mind is always present like a lamp of consciousness. Those who regularly recite the Tiep Hien precepts will naturally see this.





The Tiep Hien precepts are recited at least once every two weeks. Usually, a member of the kernel community is asked to chair the recitation. However, members of the support community can also be invited to lead the recitation. The best time for reciting the precepts is early morning, from six to seven a.m. Tea can be served before the recitation, but not breakfast. Each person should have his or her copy of the Precepts with them. All attendees should sit in two rows facing each other, with a copy of the Precepts in front of each person. All copies should be of the same editions, so when the chairperson turns their page, everyone will turn theirs at the same time. This is to avoid disturbances caused by noise.

The person who sits at the beginning of the right row, nearest the Buddha altar is called the "head of the ceremony." He or she takes care of the bell. The person who sits in front of him/her is "the one who pleases the community." He/she takes care of the wooden drum, and regulates the chanting and the recitation. The recitation should be neither too slow nor too quick, as the right speed will make the community happy. He or she should also be seen by everyone, since they are the leaders of the recitation. All attendees should have a sitting cushion. In addition, the Buddha hall or meditation hall in which the recitation takes place should be sufficiently lighted so that people will be able to visually follow the recitation in their own copy.

At the commencement of the recitation, the ceremony head offers incense and reads aloud the incense offering *gatha*. Standing behind in several rows, the community, with joined palms, follows their breathing. After the incense offering, the

ceremony head invokes the names of Shakyamuni, Manjusri, Samantabhadra and Avalokitesvara. After each is invoked, everyone makes a bow. Then the members of the community divide themselves into two rows and sit down. Once everyone is settled and ready, the bell and drum are sounded and the recitation begins with the sutra-opening *gatha*. From the very beginning of the ceremony and recitation, every person has to follow his/her breathing and practice mindfulness with every movement, i.e. joining palms, taking steps, sitting down, correcting body posture, etc. In each of these circumstances, there are appropriate *gathas* to be utilized.

Of course, during the recitation one should concentrate on the precept being recited. The ear follows the sounds, while the eye follows the printed lines. Thus, hearing and seeing cooperate with the mind to receive and examine the content of each precept. The concentration obtained will prevent inappropriate thoughts from invading the mind. The community pleaser should have a clear voice that is able to invoke the spirit of the precept. The community's successful concentration depends greatly upon him or her.

When the community pleaser asks, "Brothers and Sisters, are you ready?" one can silently answer in one's own mind, "yes." After reciting each precept the community pleaser should pause for a moment (three breaths, in and out) before asking the question, "This is the precept of the Tiep Hien Order. Have you studied and observed it during the past week?" This pause allows everyone to dwell on the content of the precept. The best way to obtain concentration on the precept's content is to visually re-read the precept. This time the mind should dwell more on the essence of the precept rather than the words. After asking the question, the reciter should observe a silence of three in and out breaths. This will give everyone a chance to mentally answer the posed question. Usually, the answer will fall somewhere between the extremes of yes or no. Everyone who regularly practices mindfulness and observes the Precepts would be entitled to say, "yes." It would be wrong to say, "no." Yet, our "yes" may not be firm or positive, because during the past week efforts have been made, but "not enough." So our answer may be something like "Yes, but it could have been better if. . . I promise to do better." One should allow the question to go deep into one's mind and heart. Sometimes one is unable to provide a silent answer. The question will have considerable effect if we allow it to act during the silence of the three breathings. While allowing the questions to enter during this period, one should follow one's breath. The ceremony head should deeply observe three breathings before inviting the bell to sound. The community pleaser should be aware of the community's questioning. When the bell is sounded, everyone joins their palms and the community pleaser is ready to pass on to the next precept. During the times of three breathings, one should not touch the corner of the page or get ready to turn the page, before the bell is sounded. For a successful recitation ceremony, newcomers should be briefed prior to its commencement.

Part II: Commentaries on the Precepts

The First Precept. "Do not be idolatrous about or bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology, including Buddhist ones. Buddhist systems of thought must be guiding means and not absolute truth."

In the sutras, one finds the expression, "the roar of the great lion." The first precept is itself that roar. Perhaps Buddhism is the only religion that speaks about its own teachings as a raft to cross the river and not as an absolute truth to be worshipped and safeguarded. This is the most drastic measure that Buddhism utilizes to deal with dogmatism and fanaticism, which are the causes of so much conflict and violence. Many Buddhist scriptures including the *Kalama Sutra* to the *Vajrac-*



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chedika Sutra have dealt with this important subject. According to Buddhism, knowledge itself can be an obstacle to true knowledge, while views are a barrier to insight. Clinging to one's views can cause us to lose the opportunity to come to a higher or more profound understanding of reality. I therefore, Buddhism urges us to transcend our own knowledge in order to advance on the path to enlightenment. All views are

considered to be "obstacles to knowledge." This Precept opens us to the true dimension of Buddhism, which is its attitude of total openness and absolute tolerance. Openness and tolerance are not merely ways of dealing with people in our everyday life, but are gateways for the realization of the Way. According to Buddhist teaching, if we cannot blow-up the frontiers of our knowledge, we will be forever imprisoned by our own views and will never attain the Way.

In the *Sutra of One Hundred Parables*, there is a story about a young merchant and his little son. The merchant is a widower who loves his son dearly. Yet, due to his lack of wisdom, he loses him. One day, while his father was away, the little boy was kidnapped by pirates. Before withdrawing, the pirates burned the village. When the young merchant returned home, he found the charred body of a child close to his burned house. In his suffering and confusion, he mistook the charred body for his own son. After spending the night weeping, he arranged a cremation ceremony for his son. Due to his attachment to the little boy, he carried the bag of ashes resulting from the cremation with him day and night. Several months later, the little boy was able to escape from the pirates and return to his home. Arriving at midnight, he knocked on the door. Thinking that some mischievous boy was making fun of him, the merchant refused to believe that his real son was at the door. So he refused to open the door. The little boy had to go away, and his father lost his son forever. The Buddha said that to embrace a view and consider it as absolute truth is equivalent to ending one's own process of inquiry and enlightenment. Clinging fanatically to a doctrine not only blocks the way of learning, but also can create bloody conflicts. Religious and ideological wars have been the fruits of fanaticism and narrowness. The destruction of lives and moral values during the Vietnam war was also the fruit of fanaticism and narrowness. The Tiep Hien Order was born in this situation of utmost suffering, like a lotus flower arising from a sea of fire. The first Tiep Hien precept is the compassionate voice of the Buddha in an ocean of hatred and violence. To better understand the real value of this precept, we should understand the background situation from which it arose.

There are three types of action or *karma*: body, speech, and mind. The Tiep Hien precepts begin with the actions of the mind. This places the Tiep Hien Order at the source of Buddhist wisdom. The Buddha said that mind is the basic dharma. We tend to think that in order to kill, we must use our body to handle a knife or gun. Yet, a fanatical mind can cause the killing, not only of one human being, but millions of human beings. If we all follow the guidance of the first Tiep Hien precept, all weapons become useless. Thus the first precept includes all other precepts, including the precept of not to kill but to protect all life. Shakyamuni Buddha said that his teaching was like a raft to carry us across the river. Therefore, Buddhist teachings are means of helping people, and not something for people to worship or fight over and cause suffering to each other. Buddhism's worst enemy is fanaticism and narrowness. Holy wars do not have a place in Buddhism, because killing destroys the value of Buddhism itself.



If various kinds of medicine are needed to treat a variety of diseases, Buddhism also needs to propose various dharma doors for people of differing circumstances. While these dharma doors may differ from one another, they are all dharma doors. In the same way, diarrhea and constipation are treated with different medicines, but both treatments utilize medicine. The teachings and practices found in Buddhism may appear quite different, but they all aim at liberating the mind. The Buddha said, "The water in the four oceans has only one taste, the taste of emancipation." Buddhist students need to view the various Buddhist teachings and ideologies in the same light. Attitudes of openness and non-attachment to views should be the basis for all acts of reconciliation and peace. They are also the gateway for entering the world of suchness and utmost freedom.

The Second Precept. "Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice the open way of non-attachment from views in order to be open to receive other's viewpoints. Truth is to be found only in life and not in conceptual knowledge. Be ready to learn throughout one's life and to observe reality in oneself and in the world at all times."

The second precept is born from the first precept, and deals with the mind also. This precept warns us not to get caught in our own knowledge. Knowledge may be necessary to think and judge, and may be helpful in other parts of our daily life, but it is not the highest truth. During the time we contemplate a sunset, for instance, we may think that the sun is still above the skyline and other persons may concur with us. Yet, the scientist tells us that actually the sun sank below the skyline eight minutes ago. Thus, his truth is higher than ours, and we

realize that we only saw the past sun and not the sun of the present. This example teaches us that our perceptions and judgments still contain errors concerning reality. Therefore, by clinging too much to our knowledge, we may lose the opportunity to advance on our way to understanding reality.

Buddhist practice aims at overcoming knowledge. Scientists who are capable of doubting and reexamining their own knowledge have more opportunity to make new discoveries. Every scientific truth of today may become tomorrow's error. Every science needs to be in the process of discovery. A readiness to overcome present views is the attitude of a wise enquirer. Our knowledge depends on our point of view. Our view can always be completed or corrected by other's views. What may be called right on this side of the mountains, may be called wrong on the other side. Being attached to views is similar to refusing to climb higher on a ladder. We think the step we're on must be the highest.

Buddhism teaches us the way to look at things in their nature of co-being and co-arising. By doing so, we can free ourselves from our conceptual world in which each thing appears to have an individual identity. The mind that sees things in their dependent co-being co-arising nature is called non-discriminative understanding. This type transcends all views. In Dhyana Buddhism, there is an expression describing this state of insight, "the road of speech has been blocked, the path of the mind has been cut."

"Truth is to be found only in life and not in conceptual knowledge." How do we practice this? "To observe life in oneself and in the world at all times." This is the Buddhist answer. Continually observing life is to practice according to the method of the *Satipatthana-Sutta*. The *Sutta* recommends that we be aware of what is going on in our body, in our feelings, in our mind, and in the object of our mind, the world. This practice should develop our concentration and our insight, enabling us to better see reality.

The Third Precept. "Do not force others, including children, by any means whatsoever to adopt our view, whether by authority, threat, money, propaganda or even education. However, through compassionate dialogue, help others to renounce fanaticism and narrowness."

The Third Precept deals with the issue of freedom of thought, and therefore with the mind. Many parents break this precept without being aware of it. Respecting other people's differences and their viewpoints is a hallmark feature of Buddhism. In the history of thought, the *Kalama Sutta* has been considered one of the earliest charters for free inquiry. In this sutra, the Buddha discusses with a number of young men the problem of who or what to believe in and which doctrine is the best. The Buddha said, "It is fine to have doubt. Do not believe in something because people talk much about it, or because it has come from tradition, or just because it is found in the scriptures. . . You should consider whether it goes against your judgment, whether it could cause harm, whether it is condemned by wise people, and above all whether put into practice, it will bring about destruction and pain. . . Anything you judge to be beautiful, accords with your judgment, is

appreciated by wise people, and, once put into practice, will bring about joy and happiness, you can accept and put into practice."

Like a shadow follows an object, the third precept follows the second, because the attitude of openness and non-attachment to views creates respect for the freedom of others. Freedom is one of the most basic rights of human beings, of all humans, and not just a number of them. In order to respect other's freedom, we should rid ourselves of attachment and fanaticism, as well as helping others to do the same. How do we help other people? "Through compassionate dialogue," says this precept. Compassionate dialogue is the meaning of non-violent action. In the beginning, dialogue is undertaken through speech. The kind of speech that is gentle, compassionate, intelligent and can move people's hearts. Then, it could be undertaken in the form of action, which aims to create both moral and social pressure for people to change. In both instances, understanding and compassion must be the basis of all actions. Any actions motivated by anger or hatred cannot be described as non-violent (*ahimsa*).

If we are parents, we should train ourselves to respect freedom of thought in our children, even if they are still very young. This practice will help us and enable us to learn much from our children. Human beings differ from one another in their characteristics, their capacities, and their preferences. We should attempt to be open in order to see and to understand our children, and to refrain from imposing our way on them. Although flowers belong to the tree, they differ from roots, leaves and twigs. We should allow flowers to be flowers, leaves to be leaves, and twigs to be twigs. Then each will develop to their highest point of development.

The Fourth Precept. *"Do not avoid contact with suffering or close one's eyes before suffering. Do not lose awareness of the existence of suffering in the life of the world. Find ways to be with those who are suffering by all means, such as personal contact and visits, images, sound. . . By such means, one should awaken oneself and others to the reality of suffering in the world."*

The first dharma talk given by the Buddha was on the Four Noble Truths. This first truth is *dukkha*, or the presence of suffering. This is the starting point of the Buddhist method. If we are unaware that we are sick, we will not seek treatment, nor can we be healed. The second truth is the cause of suffering, the third is the potential for removing it, while the fourth details the way to do it. These truths are liberating truths. If we do not accept the first, then we cannot accept the next three.

Too large an amount of suffering may destroy the capacity of love. Yet, suffering can help to open our eyes and has a therapeutic power. Awareness of suffering makes us search for its cause, and thus we gratefully find the path to liberation. Mindfulness practice creates awareness of what is going on within us and society, both the wonderful and dreadful aspects of life. If the first truth explains the presence of suffering in life, the third truth expounds on the presence of joy and peace. If some persons view Buddhism as being overly pessimistic, it

is due to their stressing the first truth and not the third. Mahayana Buddhism has taken great care to stress the third truth. It speaks of the green willow, the violet bamboo and the full moon as being manifestations of the Dharmakaya.

Between ourselves and other beings, there are intimate interconnections. When we feel peaceful and happy, we do not create suffering for others. Also, when we attempt to alleviate the suffering of others, we feel peaceful and happy. Therefore, practice does not only mean to practice on oneself, but to practice on others and society. This is the meaning of the *Larger Vehicle* or *Mahayana*: help oneself and help others, liberate oneself and liberate others.

Some teachers tell us not to pay attention to the problems of the world like hunger, war, oppression, social injustice, etc. One should only practice. These teachers have not truly understood the real meaning of *Mahayana*. Of course, one should not neglect practices like counting the breath, meditation, and sutra study, but what is the purpose of doing these things? Meditation's purpose is to be aware of what is going on in oneself and in the world. What is going on in the world can be seen within oneself and vice-versa. Once having seen this clearly, we cannot refuse to adopt an attitude and to act. When a village is being bombed and children and adults are suffering from wounds and death, can a Buddhist sit still in his unbombed temple? Truly, if he has wisdom and compassion, he will be able to practice Buddhism while helping other people. To practice Buddhism, it is said, is to see into one's own nature and to become a Buddha. Unable to see what is going on around us, how can we expect to see into our own nature? Is there not any relationship between the self-nature of a Buddhist and the self-nature of suffering, injustice and war? In fact, to see the true nature of nuclear weapons is to see one's own true nature.

Actually, to stay in touch with the reality of suffering is to keep one's own life sane and to nourish the wellsprings of understanding (*prajna*) and compassion (*karuna*). It consolidates the will to practice the Bodhisattva's Way. "Living beings are numberless, I vow to help rowing to the other shore." If we cut ourselves off from the reality of suffering, this vow will have no meaning. Helping children to see and to understand the suffering of human beings and other living beings means to nourish compassion and understanding within them. This must be practiced in our daily life. For example, eating a sandwich or spending a sum of money are occasions for practicing awareness. We must practice in each moment of our daily life and not only in the meditation hall.

The Fifth Precept. *"Do not accumulate wealth while millions are hungry. Do not take as the aim of your life fame, profit, wealth or sensual pleasure. Live simply and share one's time, energy and material resources with those who are in need."*

Like a branch coming out of a tree trunk, the fifth precept develops from the fourth. The aim of Buddhist life is to realize insight (*prajna*) and to help people (*maitrya*), and not to gain fame, power, and wealth. How could one have time to live the Buddhist ideal, if one is constantly pursuing wealth and fame?



If one does not live simply, one must constantly work to pay one's bills. There will be little or no time for practice. *The Eight Realizations of Great Beings Sutra* says, "Running after fame and wealth without recess, one gets caught more and more in the circle of errors. Bodhisattvas go in the opposite direction and follow the principle of sufficiency. They gladly accept simple living in order to progress on the way and consider Insight as their supreme goal in life." In the context of our modern society, simple living also means to remain as free as possible from the destructive social and economic machine, and to avoid modern diseases, life stress, depression, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc. We should be determined to oppose the type of modern life filled with pressure and anxiety that many people now live. There is only one way out, and that is to consume less. We must discuss this way out with persons who have similar concerns. Once we are able to live simply and happily, we will be better able to help others. We will have more time and energy to share with other people. Sharing is difficult for rich people. Bodhisattvas who practice the *paramita* of giving live a simple life. They are able to give both their time and their energy to others.

The Sixth Precept. "Do not hold anger or hatred. As soon as anger and hatred arise, practice the meditation on compassion in order to encompass with love the persons who have caused anger and hatred. Learn to look at other beings with the eyes of compassion."

"Look at other beings with the eyes of compassion," is a quote from *The Lotus Sutra*. The eyes of compassion are also the eyes of understanding. Compassion is the sweet water that springs forth from the source of understanding. Thus, the two include each other. The medicine for hatred is the sixth precept, but one cannot separate the meditation on compassion from the meditation on dependent origination. If I was born in the social conditions of a sea pirate and raised up like a sea pirate, then I would be a sea pirate now. Several interdependent causes have created the existence of a sea pirate.

The responsibility is not solely the sea pirate's and his family, but society's as well. In this early morning, while I am writing these lines, hundreds of babies are being born close to the Gulf of Siam. If politicians, educators, economists, and others do not do something to prevent it, many of these babies could become pirates twenty-five years from now. Each of us share some responsibility for the presence of sea pirates. Meditating on dependent origination and looking with compassionate eyes helps one to see our duty and responsibility to the suffering being who has been created. Due to his capacity of seeing, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is capable of loving and of acting. The purpose of meditation is to see and to hear.

When we grow a lemon tree, we wish it to be vigorous and beautiful. Yet, if it was not vigorous and beautiful, we would not blame it personally. We would observe it in order to understand why it isn't growing well. Perhaps, we have not taken good care of it. We know it would be funny to blame a lemon tree, but we tend to reproach human beings, our brothers, our sisters, our children, etc. We want to think, because they are humans, they should behave in a certain way and be responsible for their actions. In fact, human beings are not very different from lemon trees. If we take good care of them, they will "grow" properly. We should always remember that blaming does not help, and that only love and understanding can help people change. If we take good care of them, we will be rewarded by their pleasantness. Is this much different from the rewards we receive from our lemon tree?

Irritation, anger and hatred arise from lack of understanding. If a child uses vulgar language, it is because he's been exposed to adults and children who use this language. Understanding this, we will not reproach the child, but rearrange his environment so he won't be exposed to bad influences.

Once anger or irritation has arisen within us, it is best to refrain from acting and doing. This will help prevent making more damage around us. We should follow our breathing and begin to meditate on the immediate and distant causes of the words and acts that have now aroused our anger. Sometimes, we will see that the causes lie in our own misunderstanding. "Looking at living beings with compassionate eyes." This phrase alone can become a lifetime's practice. Learn to look, because compassion is understanding itself.

The Seventh Precept. "One should not lose oneself in dispersion and in one's surroundings. Learn to practice breathing in order to regain control of body and mind, to practice mindfulness and to develop concentration and understanding."

Like the kernel of a peach, this precept is the heart of Tiep Hien life. The practice of mindfulness allows us to see the true nature of life, but this practice should not be done only in the meditation hall or Buddha hall or in front of a scripture. This practice should be carried on throughout our daily life. Walking, sitting, standing, lying down, working, resting, etc., are all occasions for us to practice.

Mindfulness practice does not allow us to be carried away in streams of dispersion and by our surroundings. A title of the Buddha was *Purusadamyasrabhi*, or the "person who is the master of himself," because he had sovereignty over his mind

and body throughout the day. To lose oneself means to lose one's mindfulness and to become passive and carried away. Another meaning is to lose one's own *Dharmakaya*.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness Sutra teaches us how to meditate on our body, feelings, mind, and objects of mind, while walking, standing, lying down, sitting, working and resting. Our breathing is considered a wonderful means for maintaining mindfulness. One can either count or follow one's breath. The *Mindfulness on Breathing Sutra (Anapanasati)* shows us the way to cultivate concentration and insight by just breathing. Since the time of the Buddha, these two texts have been important for practitioners.

Mindfulness leads to concentration and wisdom. Once able to see into the nature of reality and life, we are no longer subject to fear, anxiety, and passion. Gradually gaining our freedom, we become more capable of helping others. This is not some far-away goal, but something that we can realize in this lifetime.



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There are those who spend years practicing sitting meditation and studying the sutras or evoking the Buddha's name, but their life and way of looking at the world never changes. They are practicing the form, but not the essence of Buddhism. The purpose of Buddhist practice is to break through in order to see. *The Eight Realizations of Great Beings Sutra* states that "understanding reality" is the only undertaking of Bodhisattvas. This realization transforms our mind and our life, and will have persistent effects in our future lives, the lives of our children and later generations. The purpose of practice is not to earn merits for the future, like putting money in a savings account. Tiep Hien practice brings meditation out of the meditation hall and into our daily life. It is a practice for the entire day. It should bring about the development of con-

centration and understanding and should transform our life. Its effectiveness should manifest in our capacity to understand and to love. Otherwise, we are not practicing correctly.

The meditation on dependent co-production is a wonderful method that reveals to us the nature of reality. It also destroys the net of birth-and-death, which is a solid person created by our own minds. In order to exist, things rely on each other; because of this, that is. The purpose in meditating on dependent co-production is not to see the principle of dependent co-production, but to see the reality of things in their nature of dependent co-production. The object of our meditation is not a theory about reality, but reality itself.

If the fifth precept deals with greed, and the sixth with anger, the seventh precept deals with delusion or *avidya*, the lack of understanding. *Avidya* signifies ignorance, illusion and forgetfulness. The Tiep Hien precepts follow one another and support one another like a chain of pearls.

The Eighth Precept. "Do not utter words that can create discord and cause the community to break. All efforts should be made to reconcile and resolve all conflicts, however small they may be."

The eighth and ninth precepts deal with the activity of speech. The essence of the eighth precept is concord. Community life is only possible with concord. There are six principles of community life prescribed by the Buddha, which are called the Six Concords: living together at one place, sharing the same material resources, observing the same precepts, sharing the understanding of dharma and the experience of practice with each other, reconciling differing viewpoints, and practicing kind speech to avoid all quarrels. These Six Concords have been practiced by Buddhist communities since the Buddha's time and are still relevant today. Even though the eighth Tiep Hien precept deals with speech, it relates directly to these Six Concords. Once the other five concords are practiced, the observance of kind speech will be easy. When there is no conflict concerning ideas and interests, quarrels are unlikely to occur.

Kind speech is born from understanding and patience. In the sixth precept, we found out that blaming does not help. Only understanding and care can bring about change. Reconciliation is a great art which requires us to understand both sides of the conflict. Not only do both sides bear partial responsibility for the conflict, but we who are not in the conflict also bear some responsibility. If we had lived in mindfulness, we could have seen the beginning phases of the conflict, and helped to end or avoid it. The reconciler is not a judge standing outside the conflict, but becomes an insider who will take his or her responsibility for the conflict. The reconciler is able to transcend the conflict by understanding the suffering of both sides. During our contact with each side, we should communicate clearly the suffering endured by the other side. The conflict's resolution should be offered on the basis of an ideal common to both side. Our purpose is not the satisfaction of fame or self-interest, but the realization of understanding and compassion. Therefore, the reconciler should embody understanding and compassion himself. It

happens that we (the reconciler) becomes involved in a conflict, then the reconciler becomes the understanding and awakened aspect of our self. In this case, the work of reconciliation is more difficult, but is more beautiful also. Our awareness of the need to reconcile, and of our duty to work for reconciliation, will empower us to work in that direction. The success of such reconciliation will be the success of understanding and compassion. Our understanding and compassion, in this case, will not only be for the other side, but for ourselves as well.

Each community is a Community of Concord. When there is a meeting in Buddhist monasteries, the chairperson begins by asking the question, "Has the community gathered?" After the dean replies, "Yes, the community has gathered," the chairperson asks, "Is there concord in the community?" "Yes, there is concord in the community," must be the answer. If not, the meeting cannot proceed.



The Ninth Precept. *"Do not say untruthful things for the sake of personal interest or to impress people. Do not utter words that cause division and hatred. Do not spread news that you do not know to be certain. Do not criticize or condemn things that you are unsure of. Always speak truthfully and constructively. Have the courage to speak out about situations of injustice, even when it may threaten your own safety."*

This is the second precept dealing with speech. Its words are simple and clear. The words we speak can create a world of love, trust and happiness around us, or create a hell. Thus, we should be careful about what we speak. If we have a habit of talking too much, we should become aware of it and learn to talk less. We must become aware of our speech and the results of our speaking. Even within the compounds of a Buddhist temple, we are used to making comments on everything. We have all experienced how hell can be created by negative speech.

During practice periods and retreats, we have the opportunity of practicing complete silence or at least reducing talking by nine-tenths. This practice is extremely beneficial. Not only can we learn to master our speech, but we can reflect and more clearly see ourselves, the people around us, and life. Let us take the opportunity that silence provides to look and smile at the flowers, the grass, the bushes, the birds, and our fellow humans. Have you ever observed a period of complete silence, for example, for five days? If you answer yes, then you know the benefits of such practice. With silence, a smile, and right speech, we can develop peace within ourselves and the world around us.

Right Speech is the type of speech that is exempted from the following defects or faults: lying, gossip, harsh language and foolish babble. Right Speech functions also build understanding and reconciliation. The ninth precept not only requires frankness from us, but courage as well. How many of us are brave enough to denounce injustice in a situation wherein right speech could threaten our own safety?

The Tenth Precept. *"One should not use the Buddhist community for personal gain or profit, or transform one's community into a political party. One's religious community, however, should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice and should strive to change the situation without engaging in partisan conflicts."*

Politicians tend to seek support from religious communities, but their aim is political power. The purpose of religious communities is to guide people on the spiritual path. Therefore, to transform a religious community into a political party is to divert its true aim. Often religious leaders are tempted to support their government in exchange for the material well-being of their religious community. Throughout recorded history this has occurred. In order to secure their government's support, religious communities often refrain from speaking out against oppression and injustices committed by their government. Allowing politicians to utilize one's religious community to strengthen their political power is also to surrender the role of spiritual leadership of one's religious community.

"One's religious community should take a clear stand against oppression and injustice." It should be done with a clear voice and based on the principles of the Four Noble Truths. The truth concerning the unjust situation should be fully exposed (the first truth: suffering). The various causes of injustice should be enumerated (the second truth: causes of suffering). The purpose and desire for removing the injustices should be made obvious (the third truth: the removal of suffering). The measures for removing the injustice should be proposed (fourth truth: the way to end suffering). Although religious communities are not political powers, they can use their influence to effect change in society. Speaking out is the first undertaking, while supporting appropriate measures for change is next. The most important thing is to transcend all partisan conflicts. The voice of caring and understanding must be distinct from the voices of the ambitious.



The Eleventh Precept. *"Do not live with a vocation that is harmful to humans and nature. Do not invest in companies that deprive others of their change to life. Select a vocation which helps to realize your ideal of compassion."*

Right Livelihood is one branch of the Eightfold Path. Right livelihood implies practicing a profession that harms neither nature nor humans, either physically or morally. Exercising the practice of mindfulness in our work helps us discover whether our livelihood is right or not. Living in a society where jobs are difficult to find, it is hard to practice right livelihood. If it happens that our work entails harming life, we should try our best to secure new employment. We should not allow ourselves to drown in forgetfulness. Our vocation can nourish our understanding and compassion, or it could also erode them. Therefore, our work has much to do with our practice of the Way.

Many modern industries, including food manufacturing, are often harmful to man and nature. Even current farming practices are distant from right livelihood. The chemical poisons used by modern farmers harm the environment. Practicing right livelihood has become a difficult task for farmers. If they do not use chemical poisons, often they cannot compete with the farmers who utilize them. Not many farmers have the courage to practice organic farming methods. Right livelihood is no longer simply a choice and has ceased to be a purely personal matter. It has become a collective karma. Let us meditate a little on this matter. Suppose I am a school teacher. I believe that nurturing love and understanding in children is a lovely occupation and an example of right livelihood. I would revolt if someone asked me to stop teaching and become a butcher. I detest butchery and believe it is one of the worst professions. However, if I meditate on the natural interconnection of things, I will see that the butcher is not the only person responsible for killing animals for food. He kills the animal for us and for all persons who buy pieces of raw meat, cleanly wrapped and exhibited at our local supermarket. The act of killing is a collective one. In forgetfulness, we detach ourselves from the butcher's job. We think the butcher's livelihood is wrong, while ours is right. However, we know that if we didn't eat meat, the butcher wouldn't kill it or would only kill a small amount for a few people. This is the reason why right livelihood is a collective matter. The livelihood of one person has an effect on many others. The butcher's children can profit from my teaching livelihood, while my children (because they eat meat) share some responsibility for the butcher's livelihood of killing.

Millions of people now make a living off the arms industry, manufacturing "conventional" and nuclear weapons. The so-called "conventional" weapons are sold to Third World countries, most of them underdeveloped. Yet, people in these countries need food, not guns, tanks and bombs. The United States, Soviet Union, France and Great Britain are the primary suppliers of these weapons. They are "developed countries." Manufacturing and selling weapons is certainly not right livelihood, but the responsibility for this situation is not solely the workers in the arms industry. All of us—politicians, economists, and consumers—have to share in the responsibility for the death and destruction caused by these weapons. We do not see, we do not speak out, and we do not organise a national debate on this mammoth problem of conscience. If the best brains of the world got together, a solution could be found. New jobs could be created and we no longer would have to live on the profits from manufacturing weapons.

If we have the opportunity to work in a profession that helps to realize the Buddhist ideal of compassion and understanding, we should be very grateful. On an everyday basis, we should see our responsibility towards the livelihood of other people. We must contribute our part towards creating more opportunities for right livelihood in our society. To awaken oneself and to awaken others, to help oneself and to help others are the meanings of Mahayana Buddhism. Individual *karma* cannot be detached from collective *karma*. If you have

an opportunity with your individual *karma*, then use your energy to improve the collective *karma*. This is the realization of the first of the Four Great Vows.



The Twelfth Precept. "Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and to prevent war."

By every country's laws, homicide is condemned. The Buddhist precept of non-killing applies not only to humans, but to all living beings. No one, not even Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, can observe this precept to perfection. When taking a step or boiling water, we kill tiny living beings. However, the essence of this precept is to respect and protect life, while its method is to do our best to protect life.

This precept is closely linked to the eleventh one. Patterns of livelihood and daily consumption have much to do with the life of humans and other beings. Myriad are the causes of war. It could be fanaticism and narrowness, or the will to gain political influence and economic power, or it could be the exploitation by one society of another that is technologically or politically weaker. We have the habit of opposing wars once they've occurred, but do not strive enough to prevent them. To prevent war is to build peace. To accomplish this in our daily life, we should combat against fanaticism and attachment to views, and to work for more social justice. We should also work against the political and economic ambitions of our own country. If these important issues are not debated on the national level and in the political arenas, how can we prevent war? We can begin by studying and observing this non-killing precept in our daily life. On this basis, we can work to bring out the real issues of war and peace to the nation. Without mindfulness, our daily life makes us responsible to the structure of war to a certain extent. We know that the amount of cereal used in Western countries to make liquor and raise cattle and chicken is enormous. Professor Francois Perroux, director of the Institute of Applied Mathematics and Economics, writes that by reducing meat and alcohol consumption by 50%, the West could change the world. The amount of grains made available would be enough to solve the hunger and malnutrition problems throughout the Third World. Deaths caused by car accidents and cardio-vascular illnesses also would be reduced in the West as the consumption of meat and liquor decreases.

The national defense budgets in Western countries are mammoth. Statistical studies show us that by stopping the arms race, we will have more than enough money to erase poverty, hunger, many diseases, and ignorance from the world. In our very busy daily life, do we have enough time to look deeply into this precept of non-killing? How many among us can honestly say that we're doing enough to observe this precept?

The Thirteenth Precept. *"Possess nothing that should belong to others. Respect the property of others, but prevent others from enriching themselves from human suffering."*

Bringing to our awareness the pain caused by social injustice, the thirteenth precept urges us to work for a more liveable society. This precept is linked with the fourth precept (the awareness of *dukkha*), the fifth precept (lifestyle), the eleventh precept (right livelihood), and the twelfth precept (the protection of life). In order to deeply comprehend this precept, we should meditate on these four precepts.

To develop ways to prevent others from enriching themselves on human suffering is the primary duty of legislators, politicians and revolutionary leaders! However, each of us can also meditate and act in this direction. To some degree, we can be close to oppressed people to help them protect their right to life and defend themselves against oppression and exploitation. The Bodhisattva vows are immense, and each of us can vow to sit on their rescue boats.

The Fourteenth Precept. *"Do not mistreat your body. Learn to handle it with respect. Do not look on your body as only an instrument. Preserve vital energies (sexual, breath, spirit) for the realization of the Way. Sexual expression should not happen without love and commitment. In sexual relationships, be aware of future suffering it may cause others. To preserve the happiness of others, respect the rights and commitments of others. Be fully aware of the responsibility of bringing new lives into the world. Meditate on the world into which you are bringing new beings."*

According to Buddhism, the human being is composed of the five elements or aggregates: form, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness. This five-part categorization is only a means. In reality, the five elements depend on each other to exist and to function. "This is because that is, this is not because that is not." Therefore, we cannot separate a human being into two distinct parts, body and soul. The concept that "body and mind are one" is familiar to Zen Buddhists. After several years of ascetic practice in the forest, the Buddha realized that mistreating his body was a mistake and he discarded the practice. He saw that both indulgence in sensual pleasure and mistreatment of the body were extremes to be avoided, since both lead to the degeneration of mind and body. Thus, he adopted a middle way between the two extremes.

The fourteenth precept reflects not only the spirit of Buddhism, but other spiritual and medical traditions of the Orient. All these traditions teach us to preserve the body and the three sources of energy: sexual energy, vital breath, and spirit. Sexual energy is the type of energy that we expend in

sexual intercourse. Vital breath is the energy expended when we speak more and breathe less. Spirit is the energy used when we are overly worried and anxious. According to Oriental medicine, if these three sources of energy are wasted, the human body will weaken. Then disease will appear, and it becomes quite difficult for a person to practice the Way (*Tao*). Taoists call these the *three sources of energy*, and say that one who practices the Way should "save the seminal fluid, nourish breath and preserve spirit." In Oriental martial arts, there are also practices to preserve these three sources of energy. Anyone having some knowledge of Oriental medicine is aware of this.

Practitioners of Dhyana Buddhism will have an interest in preserving these three sources of energy also. When doing breathing exercising, i.e. counting the breath or following the breath, do not expend vital breath, but accumulate more of it. Concentration and meditation do not expend spirit, but strengthen it. Since monks do not have sexual intercourse, it is easier for them to preserve the third kind of energy, sexual energy, than laypersons. If a monk suffers nocturnal emissions, he will find it difficult to preserve this energy. As well, if he worries too much about running his temple and talks often to parishioners, then all three sources of energy will quickly dry up. It will become impossible for him to practice and realize the Way.

In the Buddha's time, the typical monk was a silent person who practiced walking and sitting meditation both day and night. He carried a bowl into the local villages once daily in the morning to beg his food. To the layperson who donated his food, he would give a short dharma talk. The talk would last only one or two minutes. This way of life enabled him greatly to preserve both vital breath and spirit. As for seminal fluid, the monk observed the monastic code, which forbade all sexual acts for monks. In the time of the Buddha, the main reason for monks abstaining from sexual acts was to preserve energy. This is a point of commonality between Buddhism and all other Eastern spiritual and medical traditions. During the most difficult periods of his non-violent struggles, Mahatma Gandhi also practiced abstinence from sexual intercourse. He advised his colleagues to do the same in order to better cope with tense, urgent and difficult situations. Strength of spirit depends on these three sources of energy. In Vietnamese, the term *tinb than* (spiritual) is formed by the word *tinb* (sexual energy) and *than* (spirit). The material and the spiritual are no longer distinct, and the name of one is used to call the other. Those of us who have fasted know that if the three sources of energy are not preserved, we are unable to fast a long time. If a person engages in sexual acts during a fast, he will die quickly. In 1966, the monk Thich Tri Quang fasted for one hundred days, because he knew how to preserve his three sources of energy.

The second reason that the monk in the Buddha's time refrained from sexuality was that he wanted to go far in his search for enlightenment. If a monk must take care of a family and work to support it, he would have little time left for practice. In present times, many monks are continually busy,

although they have no wife and children. Having to take care of their temples and religious communities, they are no less busy than householders. One day the monk Dai San complained to a friend that he was too busy. The friend replied, "Why don't you become a monk?" A monk is not supposed to be so busy. If he has no time to practice, there isn't any reason for him to remain a monk. Then the precept on celibacy will lose all meaning and function.

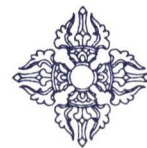
The third reason that the monk in the Buddha's time refrained from sexuality was to "cut off the chain of rebirth (*samsara*)". Firstly, to be reborn implies being reborn in one's offspring, children and grandchildren. In the Buddha's time, much more than in our own time, poverty and diseases were the common lot for the majority of people. This situation is reflected in the first Noble Truth, "life is suffering." Let us visualize a family with too many children, all of them frail and ill. There is a permanent shortage of food, no medicine and no means of contraception. Each year a new child is born. This image is still common in many parts of our world today. Both parents and children suffer. Rebirth must be understood in this context and within this background. For these people, a new birth is not a joy, but a catastrophe. To give birth to a child is to perpetuate the cycle of hunger and disease. It signifies the continuation of *samsara*. Therefore, the celibacy precept aimed also at preventing childbirth and had a birth control function. In our time, people do not practice birth control by abstaining from the sexual act, but use "devices."

Thus, this precept is directly related to issues of population, hunger, and economic development. The existence of Buddhist monks in Buddhist countries like Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Kampuchea, China, Vietnam, Korea, Japan, etc., during more than twenty centuries, has helped greatly to reduce the world's population by thousands of millions. The population explosion problem is one of the most serious issues of our day. Hunger leads to war and, in our times, wars are incredibly destructive. Countries which do not control their populations cannot overcome underdevelopment. Of course, there is also the threat of nuclear holocaust. Parents must be aware of the actual situation of the world. We should know that the future to which we are sending our children is rather dark. This awareness will motivate us to act and to live in a manner that will create a better future for our children.

Therefore, we must be clearly aware of the responsibility we bear in bringing new life into the world. The answer is not to cease having children, but the problem is how to make the world liveable for them. The future of the earth and our children depends on our way of life today. If we continue to exploit and destroy our eco-system, if we let the arms race continue, if we don't attempt to curb the growth of world population, etc., then the earth and mankind will be futureless. Each person's way of living should be a brick for building the

future and peace. This precept's domain is vast and its observance is linked to the other Tiep Hien Precepts. In order to deeply understand and correctly observe this precept, we must be able to see the relationship between this precept and our daily meditation practice, the Four Noble Truths and the correct Buddhist teaching on rebirth.

Editor's Note: While discussing the fourteenth precept with Thay, I asked him to elaborate more on sexuality and the layperson. He said that sexuality should always be an expression of love, and that the expression of love involves body, speech and mind. While saying that Buddhism in no way denies sexual expression for laypeople, it should not be indulged in solely for sensual reasons. "If sexual expression does not involve love and caring, it can become destructive."



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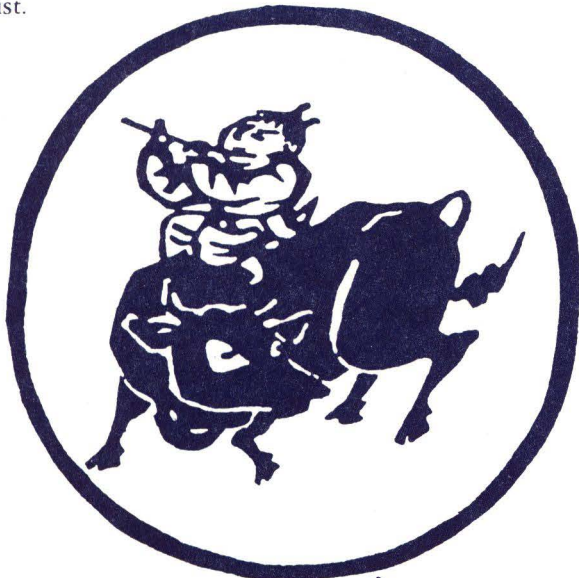
Letters to the Editors

As a peace activist and a very new member of BPF, I attended the retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh at the Providence Zen Center in October. It was the first Buddhist retreat I had ever been to.

My interest in Thich Nhat Hanh's work began several years ago when I read *The Miracle of Mindfulness* and found him recommending a day of mindfulness, and particularly mentioning peace activists as being in need of it. Having been caught up in the "frenzy of peace activities" in the Boston area that year and realizing how burned out and at odds with ourselves and each other many of us were, this call for a day of mindfulness was a most welcome one.

What I found during the four days of the retreat was a growing sense of calm and joy within myself, and an increasing capacity to see the beauty around me. The two silent meals, the gathas for eating and walking, the instructions to reduce our talking by 90% (which proved to be quite difficult), the bowing to each other as we passed on the path, the hour of walking meditation outside every morning with Thich Nhat Hanh, the bell that rang hourly to remind us that the Buddha was calling to us . . . "not the Buddha outside, but the Buddha within", all quieted me and touched me deeply.

In the dharma talks I found much that I will weave into my life, as mother, as wife, as psychotherapist, and as peace activist.



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A few of the most valuable ideas follow:

1. You can't make peace without being peace. Work from a base of peace.

2. The non-action part of social action is to find real peace in your mind and heart.

3. The opportunity for mindfulness is in every moment. To have a mindful cup of tea for hours is non-violent resistance.

4. To remember the half-smile toward myself. If I can't smile it toward myself, how can I smile it to others.

5. Nonviolence is a powerful path for transformation, first to be used to transform ourselves, then the world.

6. The real enemy is not any man or group of people, it is greed, fear, and anger.

7. Out of non-dualism, comes non-violence, comes joy. It is only out of a nondualistic perception that I can begin to see the pirate as myself, and to have compassion for the oppressor.

8. Nonviolence can be practiced not just toward an enemy "out there" but toward our body, toward our anger (seeing it like a dear brother), etc.

9. Meditation is a means to a deep transformation of your self, in order to transform the world. "Not rigid meditation, but life meditation," said Thich Nhat Hanh . . . "with our children, chopping vegetables, as we eat, as we walk . . . Meditation is not to isolate yourself."

10. Not to turn away or close one's eyes before the suffering in the life of the world, (from the 4th precept of the Tiep Hien order).

11. And finally the question, "What is American Buddhism? How will the spirit of Buddhism respond to the strengths and the suffering of American life."

In conclusion, as an activist yearning for quiet, I found real support for trusting my need for contemplative periods, for meditation, for a deeper breath.

But I am not just activist, and as a contemplative deeply troubled by injustice and the enormous suffering of people, both the poor without food and shelter, and the rich, so often, without themselves, I also found renewed strength to return to the world with more courage and compassion.

In short I found support to be with myself *and* with the world more fully . . . and what's more they didn't seem so separated for once. I have been looking for this for a very long time.

Sincerely,
Anne Yeomans

ngs protect all beings protect all beings

Coming Events 1986

Peacemaking: How to Be It/How to Do It

Naropa Summer Institute is pleased to announce a conference, *Peacemaking: How to Be It/How to Do It*. Participants will gather in Boulder, Colorado, at Naropa Institute Saturday, June 14 - Saturday, June 21, 1986.

The Conference will offer a non-political, yet "revolutionary" approach intended to develop the skills required for making peace. Participants will be given hands-on experience with tools and methods designed to bring about inner peace as a necessary ground from which to extend further into their interpersonal, community, and global lives. As such, the Conference will emphasize the inseparability between one's life as a peaceful person and one's social actions and interactions.

Mornings—Participants will have their choice of practicing Zen Meditation, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, Shambhala Meditation, or Kyudo (Japanese Archery). After morning meditations, participants will attend all of the following small workshops, one per day: Personal Violence, Domestic Violence, The War Between the Sexes, Non-Violent Parenting, and Environmental Awareness. Thich Nhat Hanh's walking meditation will precede lunch.

Afternoons—Subjects relating to broader community issues, such as conflict resolution and mediation (demonstrations and simulations), films, martial arts demonstrations, and presentations on the history and theory on non-violence, will be addressed. Thich Nhat Hanh's tea meditation will follow.

Evenings—Evenings will consist of talks, panels, and discussions relating to global issues such as "War and Peace: Beyond Duality", "The Non-Violent Warrior", "Manifesting Peace", "Why War?", and "Peace and War in Literature."

The Faculty Includes: Robert Aitken, Roshi; Kitty Mika, Ph.D.; David Dellinger; Venerable Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche; Allen Ginsberg; Grace Paley (tentative); Abbie Hoffman; Joanna Macy; and other community and national faculty.

This conference will provide participants real tools, techniques, and practices for relating with themselves and their world in a more peaceful, mindful, and skillful manner.

Children, young adults, families, and senior citizens are encouraged to attend.

For further information and to be placed on our mailing list please contact: *Peacemaking: How To Be It/How to Do It*, Naropa Institute, 2130 Arepehoe Avenue, Boulder, Colorado, 80302. Telephone: 303-444-0202.

Pro Peace: The Great Peace March, 1986

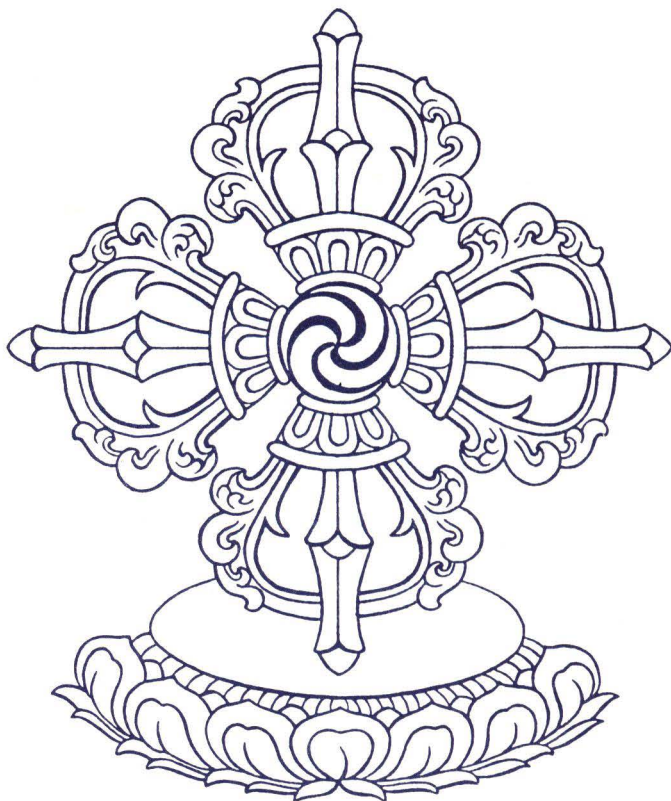
On March 1, 1986, 5,000 people will march from Los Angeles, across the United States, to Washington, D.C. to dramatize the need to dismantle all nuclear weapons in the world.

The organizers of the march are hoping to have at least one representative from each country in the world and from each state in the U.S.

It would be excellent if a member of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship could go on the march and represent us at this important and extraordinary event. It would seem reasonable that if a suitable candidate came forward, possibly BPF could help fundraise to make it feasible. To do the march costs each marcher approximately \$1 a mile or \$3,235.

It is important to move quickly on this; if people are intrigued by the idea, please contact Barbara Meier, 2838 4th St., Boulder, CO 80302.

For more information on the march, contact PRO PEACE/The Great Peace March/8150 Beverly Boulevard/Los Angeles, CA 90048.

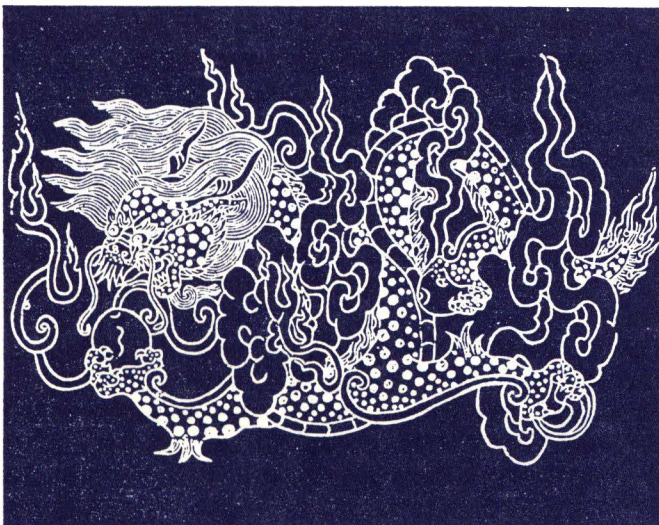


**Buddhist Peace Fellowship
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

- To make clear public witness to the Buddha Way as a way of peace and protection of all beings.
- To raise peace and ecology concerns among American Buddhists and to promote projects through which the Sangha may respond to these concerns.
- To encourage the delineation in English of the Buddhist way of non-violence, building from the rich resources of traditional Buddhist teachings a foundation for new action.
- To offer avenues to realize the kinship among groups and members of the American and world Sangha.
- To serve as liaison to, and enlist support for, existing national and international Buddhist peace and ecology programs.
- To provide a focus for concerns over the persecution of Buddhists, as a particular expression of our intent to protect all beings; and
- To bring the Buddhist perspective to contemporary peace and ecology movements.

*Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world;
it is appeased by love. This is eternal law.*

Dhammapada



**Current Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Chapters and Overseas Affiliates**

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● National Office
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
c/o Judy Gilbert
P.O. Box 4650
Berkeley, CA 94704 | ● Western Mass BPF
c/o Joe Gorin
106 Jackson Hill Rd.
Leverett, MA 01054 |
| ● Denver/Boulder BPF
2838 4th St.
Boulder, CO 80302 | ● Tumamoc BPF
c/o Moss Stone
707 E. First St.
Tucson, AZ 85719 |
| ● Minneapolis/St. Paul BPF
2629 Fremont Ave. St.
Minneapolis, MN 55405 | ● Bay Area BPF
P.O. Box 4650
Berkeley, CA 94704 |
| ● Oahu BPF
2085 Makiki Pl.
Honolulu, HI 96822 | ● Rochester BPF
P.O. Box 10605
Rochester, NY 14610 |
| ● New York City BPF
118 East 93rd. St.
New York, NY 10128 | ● Los Angeles BPF
706 S. Mariposa #206
Los Angeles, CA 9006 |
| ● Australia BPF
P.O. Box 368
Lismore 2480, NSW
Australia | ● British BPF
"Gilletts" Smarden,
Nr. Ashford, Kent
England |



**Buddhist Peace
Fellowship Newsletter**

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Additional copies of this BPF Newsletter issue are available for \$3.00. Please send to: P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley, CA 94704, USA.

*Summary of
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Board of Directors Meeting,
Oct. 13, 1985
Telephone conference call.*

Attended by: Fred Eppsteiner, Jenny Hoang, Ruth Klein, Kenryu Tsuji, and Steve Walker. Also present: Judith Gilbert and Andy Cooper.

Selection of Interim Board President: The Board moved to accept Catherine Parker's resignation from the Board for reasons of health. The Board moved to accept Fred as Interim Board President, a position he has held unofficially since Catherine's resignation on August 6, 1985. The Board extends appreciation and thanks to Catherine for sincere effort and hard work.

Report on Thich Nhat Hanh's Trip: Andy reported on the great enthusiasm with which Thich Nhat Hanh and Sr. Phuong have been greeted, in Montreal, Boston, Northampton, Providence and Boulder. The schedule has included seminar/retreats, public talks, poetry readings, and interviews. The Board expressed their deep appreciation to Thay Nhat Hanh, Sr. Phuong and Arnie Kotler, Thay Nhat Hanh's attendant on this trip. The Board moved unanimously to offer Arnie a stipend of \$300.

Newsletter Report: The Board complimented Fred and Steve on the new format being used. Steve apologized for the long delay in getting out the last newsletter, and is hopeful this will not happen again, now that the new production team is experienced. Board members expressed the importance of including chapter reports, and on the need to encourage BPF members to contribute articles, letters, photos, and ideas. All submissions should be sent to Fred.

Book Report: "Path of Compassion" is in print and is wonderful. Congratulations! BPF has sold, or has on consignment, over 700 copies of "Path of Compassion." Fred hopes to have paid back all loans, and reach the break-even point by January 1, 1986. BPF members are invited and encouraged to write reviews in order to generate publicity.

Non-Profit Status: Steve and Judy offered to stay on the committee to apply for non-profit status. The first step needed is to develop a set of by-laws. It was decided to ask any interested BPF members who would like to help with this to contact Steve (i.e. this means *you.*).

Chapters: Board members shared "reliable rumors" that chapters will soon be starting in Chicago, Washington D.C., Seattle, Grass Valley, CA and Cambridge. The Board moved to accept the dissolution of the chapter in Providence, R.I.

Board Nominations: Ruth presented the list of nominees to the Board for approval. It was decided that nominees must have been members of BPF for at least one year, in order to ensure that board members are familiar with, and supportive of, BPF. Judy will be receiving nominees' statements, and will prepare the ballots, by early in November. Steve "donated" the services of BPF members in Grass Valley, CA to mail out the ballots by mid November. Thank-you!

Board of Directors: The Board moved to accept a proposal that the term of office for Board members be extended to 3 years. The logistics of how to implement this will be decided at the next Board meeting. It was also decided to accept Fred's recommendation that, in the interest of production and establishing a good working relationship, the annual face-to-face meeting of the Board will be the first meeting of the year, to be held in late January or early February.

Pending discussion by the new Board, the current Board president will attend Board meetings for a year following his/her term, in an ex-officio capacity. This was suggested as a means of promoting a sense of continuity.

Fred's motion that all Board members write up a detailed description of their respective jobs on the Board was carried.

Regional Conferences: A regional conference is being planned by the Western Mass. BPF Chapter for February. A "mini-gathering," in the form of several group discussions, was held by BPF members who attended the retreat led by Thich Nhat Hanh at Providence Zen Center in September.

A Big Thank You: to Jenny Hoang, for her energetic and heart-full presence on the Board these past two years.

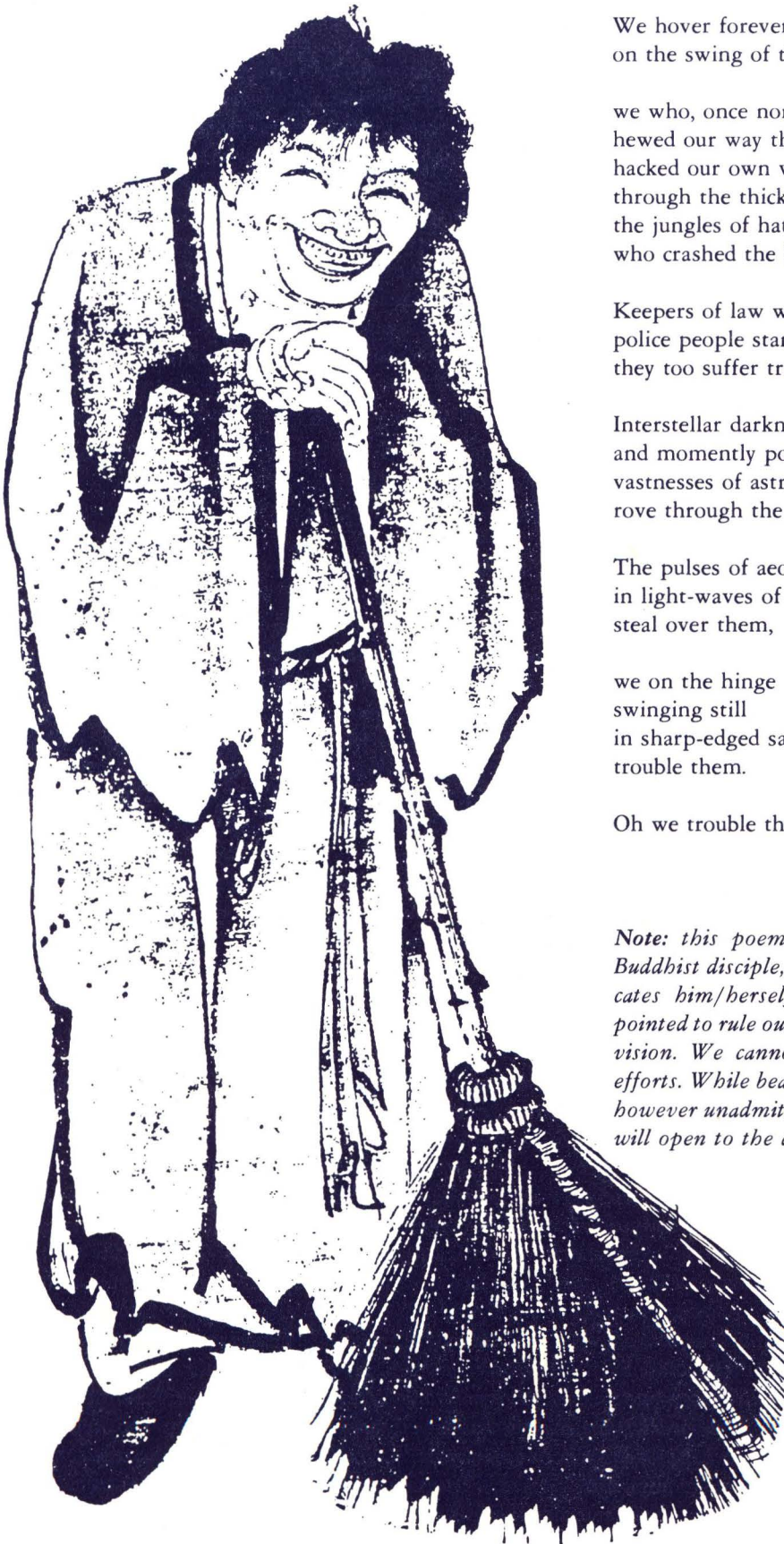
*Respectfully submitted by:
Ruth Klein, Secretary*

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ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

Swinging



We hover forever uncertain
on the swing of the beam:

we who, once nomads,
hewed our way through wilderness,
hacked our own way
through the thickets of me and I am,
the jungles of hate;
who crashed the bastions of hangups.

Keepers of law who witness,
police people standing receptive,
they too suffer transforming events.

Interstellar darkneses invade
and momentarily possess them;
vastnesses of astral regions
rove through the gaping of minds.

The pulses of aeons
in light-waves of healing
steal over them,

we on the hinge
swinging still
in sharp-edged sawhorse torture
trouble them.

Oh we trouble them.

Mariquita Platov

Note: this poem is an exercise in compassion. Here the Buddhist disciple, practised in liberation from ego, communicates him/herself to the "police," those traditionally appointed to rule our thinking, so that they may experience fresh vision. We cannot be sure of results in our peacemaking efforts. While bearing with uncertainty, Buddhists know that, however unadmittedly, ultimately minds touched by suffering will open to the demands of preserving life on this planet.

From the Editor:

Recently, I spent three months in India. Ten years ago, on my first pilgrimage to India, a Japanese Buddhist friend wrote me, "when you travel in India, you'll realize why all bodhisattvas attain Buddhahood in India." Certainly, the suffering of human existence is an ever-present reality there. Unlike the West, little attempt is made to sanitize and disguise human suffering. Daily one encounters the Four Noble Truths in bold relief.

In addition to this poignant and direct encounter with the Buddha's teaching, being again in India afforded me greater insight into his social message. As I travelled through that amazing land of myriad contrasts and contradictions, I encountered some of the same traditions of intolerance and injustice that Shakyamuni faced twenty-five hundred years ago.

One inhuman tradition that one constantly encounters in India is the caste system, which compartmentalizes modern Hindu society into a rigid class/caste structure that assigns some to places near to the Gods, while other toil at the lowest levels and are "untouchables." Upholders of the present-day caste system believe caste is a divine arrangement of the social order, whereby beings move slowly up a spiritually evolving scale over myriad lifetimes. On the other hand, its detractors view caste as a pernicious social arrangement that assures the subservience of one group of people to another, based solely on the accident of birth.

While Shakyamuni Buddha is most remembered and revered as the Teacher of Enlightenment, we tend to lose sight of his daily life humaneness. Yet, it is through his social views and actions that we can begin to glimpse the manner in which his Enlightenment was lived. When the Buddha was alive, the caste system was widespread in northern India and the country was dominated by Brahmanism. His response to the social system that Brahmanism had erected, while applauded in some circles, also brought him verbal abuse, social ostracism and even plots against his life. The Brahmin priests of his time declared that the caste system was sacred, and pointed to statements in the sacred Vedas to uphold their views. The Buddha, as in the *Kalama Sutta*, instructed his followers *not* to accept any statement solely on scriptural basis, but to apply their own powers of reasoning and logic. In various Suttas, Shakyamuni attacked the notion that superiority and inferiority of character was somehow delegated or earned by birthright. Character and conduct were the hallmarks of a noble or base person, he declared, and not birth. Postulating the truth that all beings are spiritually equal, he forcibly attacked the idea that spiritual development was only open to Brahmins. He also pointed out that caste was the product of historical and social developments in India, and was not followed in neighboring countries. So, he asked, how could it be considered a 'divine arrangement?'

Shakyamuni was more than an arm-chair philosopher and social critic. He put his ideas and insights into practice. The Sangha was a caste-free fellowship in a caste-ridden society. Within his community dwelt nobles and slaves, Brahmins and sweepers, merchants and outcasts, all practicing as equals. The Buddha's tradition of begging for his food also can be seen as a social statement. When he and his monks went from house to house, they were forbidden to make any distinctions as to the home they were begging from or the food received. This contradicted the notion that upper caste Hindus would be polluted by touching food prepared by an untouchable. It is noteworthy that his last meal was eaten in the home of Cundra, a member of the lowly black-smith class.

Perhaps, if we move forward 2500 years, we can more readily grasp the social impact the Buddha had so long ago. We can imagine him as a white man travelling in Mississippi in the nineteen twenties. Besides preaching his religious path, he actively speaks out against racism, the institution of segregation, and the inherent superiority of whites over blacks. He even goes beyond preaching, and enjoins his followers to live together and mix freely without giving heed to any racial distinctions. Imagining in this manner, I feel myself drawn closer to the historical Shakyamuni and his Dharma of social action.

Fred Eppsteiner



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Unguarded

Then the clouds parted
To let me in
To be with you, my beloved!

Amazingly, there I found also
Coming to meet me
A very little flower
A young bird
And a very blue sky

I kneel on the grass
The grass is so green
Like the color of wheat leaves
When touched by the rising sun

With love and respect I offer you
The little flower of my heart
Just opened unexpectedly

So changeable is the way of Heaven and Earth

An - Khong

March 4th, 1984

Translated from the Vietnamese by

Jenny Hoang

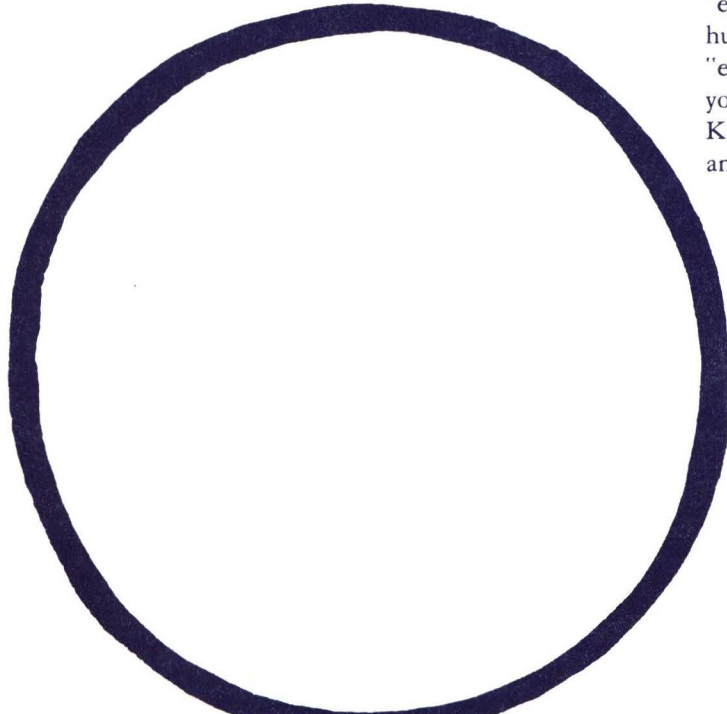
Words from the translator:

Vietnamese monk An-Khong was kind enough to share this poem of his with me. I in turn would like to share it with my American friends. I was transported by the qualities of freshness and newness of the picture.

Soft colors that seemed to sing and dance before my eyes lifted me up and delighted me like a morning breeze. There was a subtle contrast between a timeless moment of attentive waiting that preceded and a happening that was sudden, spontaneous and full of wonder. I tried my best to express this encounter in English by words like "Then the clouds . . ." "There I found also coming to meet me . . ." . . . just open unexpectedly."

The poem touched me as an experience of an insight into Samadhi. It reminded me of the story of a man who, trying to empty the ocean into his cup, finally gave up and threw the cup into the ocean. The second person the poet addressed in the poem as "em" in Vietnamese was translated as "you," but the English "you" can hardly convey all the sweetness, the devotion and the affection in calling someone "em," especially in this tete-a-tete meeting. I thus felt obliged to add an apostrophe ". . . you, my beloved," taking the liberty to assume that in the poet's mind "enlightenment" has long been his very secret lover.

In his early poems, the poet monk Thich Nhat-Hanh often conversed with and talked to another person whom he called "em." Yet one should understand that he was not referring to a human being, or a younger brother or sister or friend since "em" in Vietnamese could be also used to call anybody who is younger and dear. It was just like when the Indian poet-saint Kabir spoke of God as a very special "guest" who would come and knock at his door anytime. . . .



俱忘人牛^八

ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय

Chapter News

Chapter News—Western Massachusetts BPF

Western Mass. BPF was formed in April, 1984 and has been meeting on a regular basis since that time. Our members represent several different lineages within the Zen tradition, the Kagyu and Gelugpa lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, Vipassana and Nipponzan Myohoji.

The early efforts of our chapter were towards finding a balance between contemplativeness and activity. We had many fruitful discussions based on our experiences in peace and justice work, as well as on articles by such people as Thich Nhat Hanh, Gary Snyder and Joanna Macy. Some members felt that there was too much discussion of issues without enough action on those issues. Our earliest activities were participating in a weekly peace vigil and sponsoring a fast to raise money for Oxfam.

As the chapter developed, there was ongoing dialogue between those who were veterans of political action and were wanting a more activist approach to our work and those for whom BPF was one of their first ventures into this kind of work and therefore leaned towards the more contemplative side. This dialogue was and is an important part of our learning and the integration of the two perspectives allows us to increasingly be aware that our activities are based on our Buddhist practices.

One evening, Achen Naha Ghosananda, a Cambodian monk, unexpectedly walked into the middle of one of our meetings. As we began to converse with him, he described the suffering of his homeland and of the plight of Cambodian refugees and reminded us that "it is our duty to treat all human beings as our beloved mothers." Based on our interchange with him, we decided to sponsor a family of Cambodian refugees. This sponsorship has been a major focal point for us and has led to joyful relationships between BPF members and members of the family. Because there is no cultural center for Asian refugees in this largely rural area, the potential exists for us to serve a role in this capacity. We have had one meeting where we met with a number of local Cambodian people and Maha Ghosananda. Such work with refugees and their communities is something that chapters looking for a project might consider.

We have done a number of other projects that are also worth mentioning. We have done letter writing campaigns on behalf of political prisoners in Asian countries. We co-sponsored an event in which survivors of the atomic blasts in Japan gave a public talk. We also co-sponsored a caravan of Salvadoran refugees who were travelling around New England giving testimony about the situation in their country. We publicly endorsed the local Quaker Meeting's giving sanctuary to two undocumented Guatemalan refugees and some of our members have been active in the Sanctuary committee, which has allowed a forum for Christian-Buddhist dialogue. Many of us have also worked in the construction of Nipponzan Myohoji's peace pagoda, which was recently completed. In September, we had the honor of organizing and hosting one of Thich Nhat Hanh's public talks during his tour of the U.S.

On February 22 we will be sponsoring a daylong workshop with Joanna Macy, entitled "The Bodhisattva in the Nuclear Age." If possible, we would like to fill this workshop with BPF members. We are also considering coordinating a regional BPF gathering the day after the workshop. The purpose of the gathering would be to exchange ideas and experiences related to engaged Buddhism and to talk about BPF as an organization. The weekend will start off with Joanna giving a public talk on Friday evening, Feb. 21. If you have thoughts or suggestions about the regional meeting or if you would like to attend any or all of the weekend events, please write to: Western Mass. BPF, 106 Jackson Hill Rd., Leverett, MA 01054.

Boulder/Denver BPF Looks Forward

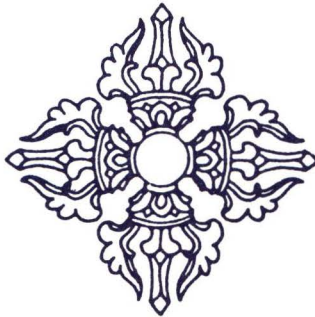
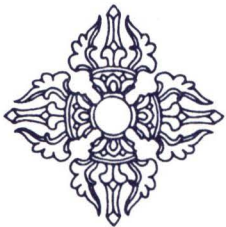
After more than three years in various stages of incubation, the Buddhist Peace Fellowship in Colorado has recently experienced genuine growth. This is noteworthy and exciting because the growth, most of which has taken place in the past ten months, is the result of grassroots organization and includes cooperation between members of the Boulder Vajrayana Sangha, the Denver Zen Center, and other Colorado Buddhists.


Early in 1985 the group planned a public workshop based on the work of Joanna Macy entitled "Peace and Aggression." This successful event, attended by 40 people and led by Dr. David Silver, dancer Christine Caldwell, and poet Allen Ginsberg, was a deliberate expression of an official BPF purpose to "raise peace and ecology concerns among American Buddhists and to promote projects through which the Sangha may respond to these concerns."



A series of events soon followed to raise funds and prepare for the October visit of the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh and Sister Phuong from France. A poetry reading in early summer was followed in September by a successful dance titled "Give Peace a Dance." As the group gathered experience, the prospect of financial self-sufficiency became a reality. This opened up further possibilities that included designing a logo "VISUALIZE World Peace" (calligraphy by Barbara Bash) which incorporated the national BPF logo. The group is now selling tee shirts featuring this attractive logo and a card which can be used for Christmas or other greetings. Proceeds from net sales are to be shared 50/50 with the national BPF. The group also designed and produced a 3 ft. by 6 ft. professionally made banner for display at public events and which may be custom-ordered by other area Chapters.

Funds from these activities allowed the group to host the visit of Thich Nhat Hanh and Sister Phuong Oct. 1—9, while at the same time consolidate strength as a group in the direction of "engaged Buddhism." Further activities now being planned include Days of Mindfulness, scheduled every two months (first one Nov. 24, 10-5 pm) to continue the practice of walking meditation learned with Thich Nhat Hanh, Self-Education Days using video tapes from the series "Human Values in the Nuclear Age," and a conference of national scope in June 1986 entitled "Strategies for Peacemaking: How to be it, How to do it." Naropa Institute will host and sponsor the 10-day conference in Boulder with cooperation from the national Buddhist Peace Fellowship. Local Buddhists are cordially invited to participate in BPF activities. For information, contact Barbara Meier at 303/442-7267.





**VISUALIZE
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T SHIRTS**

- white on royal blue
- 100% cotton crew neck: \$11 pst pd S/M/L/XL
- children's crew: \$9 pst pd S/M/L
- 50/50 French cut: \$12 pst pd S/M/L

**Do your holiday shopping
from the Boulder/Denver
Buddhist Peace Fellowship**

**VISUALIZE
WORLD PEACE
NOTE CARDS**

- royal blue w/ white lettering & logo, white envelopes. Blank: use for holidays, birthdays, thank you.
- package of 10: \$4 pst pd.

— make checks payable to: Boulder/Denver BPF P.O. Box 448, Boulder, CO 80306

Announcements

Buddhism and the Bombs: Inner and Outer Peace Making *A pamphlet by Ken Jones*

Coming four years after Ken Jones's first pioneering 'orange tract' on *Buddhism and social action* ('Wheel' publication 285/286) this is a completely new pamphlet, published by the UK Buddhist Peace Fellowship. It is written for peace, ecology and other social activists, and for people interested in ways of personal and spiritual development, whether Buddhists or not.

The 'Bombs' in the title are the whole family of nuclear, ecological and other time-bombs which threaten our planet. The pamphlet offers a comprehensive survey and discussion of 'Engaged Buddhism', with chapter headings such as 'Planetary crisis and the heartfailure of the imagination', 'New society, New person, New world?', 'Mysticism and militancy', and 'Effective peace work'.

*Copies are available from Buddhist Peace Fellowship (UK),
36 Victoria Parade, Preston, Lancs. PR2 1DT, UK.
Price per copy: £1.10 (UK); £1.50 overseas
(by International Money Order, please)*



Buddhist Delegation to Nicaragua

Plans are currently being started to organize a Buddhist delegation to go to Nicaragua with the Christian-based Witness For Peace group. This group, dedicated to changing U.S. policy in Nicaragua through non-violent spiritually-based witness, travels into the areas of conflict to gather first-hand information about the effects of the war.

Visits are also arranged with religious, government, labor and opposition leaders. This trip would take place 8-12 months from your receiving this newsletter. If you are even potentially interested, it would be very helpful to communicate your interest as soon as possible, so that it can be determined if there is sufficient interest to continue organizing the trip. Please write to: Joe Gorin, 106 Jackson Hill Rd., Leverett, MA 01054. (413) 367-2096



The Western Mass. BPF Chapter will be hosting a North-east regional gathering of BPF members and friends in February, 1986. See Western Mass. Chapter news for more details.



Nichidatsu Fujii

by James Perkins

Nichidatsu Fujii died on Jan. 8, 1985 in his 100th year. He was founder and teacher of the Nipponzan Myohoji, an order of Buddhist monks and nuns whose lives are entirely devoted to the creation of world peace and whose practice is to walk the face of the earth in utter poverty and faith beating on hand drums and chanting, "NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo." They attempt to conform their minds and hearts to peace by an open and trusting appeal to the good in each person they meet, overcoming in themselves all fear and selfishness. They are smiling and gentle. When they encounter suspicion, fear or hatred, they make a practice of looking through it to find and pay respect to the "Buddha nature" which they believe is found at the heart of every living being without exception. "Strife is not the original nature of a human being," Fujii wrote. "His original nature is found where strife ends." Fujii's pacifism is based on this deep faith. "The war-like principle of contention" can be overcome because it is antagonistic to the true nature of people.

My introduction to this remarkable order is chiefly through a nun, Jun Yasuda, who stopped over at my community, Jonah House, during a walk from the Onandaga Nation near Syracuse, New York to Washington D.C. where she planned to fast and vigil on behalf of the Indian leader, her friend, Dennis Banks. We asked Jun-san what was the meaning of "NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo?" She laughed and said that we could best learn to understand that by walking with her. Her style as a guest was to give and give. She played with the children. She offered massage to the tense and weary. She created a Japanese style feast with gifts for all of us, pictures and poems and exquisite creatures folded out of paper. The next day I set off with her through Baltimore and out into the Maryland countryside, walking and chanting in rhythm to her drum, stopping at each church or temple to bow. We stopped for a rest and she told me of her wonderful teacher, Fujii Guruji and how he has sent her to this country advising her to get to know the American Indian people. "They have a very great spirituality." Later she wrote me in prison that NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo is the essence of the Lotus Sutra, one of the sacred Buddhist texts, "teaching that everyone shares the Buddha's spirit so we should respect everyone's mind." Her teacher, Fujii Guruji, had explained to her further that NaMuMyoHoRenGeKyo means "all living things are sacred." "So," Jun-san wrote, "all my life I try to bow to everybody and try to follow the respect way."

Early in his life, Fujii became a disciple of the 13th-century Japanese Buddhist, Nichiren. Nichiren preached against the violence and greed of the rulers of his day and was many times imprisoned or exiled. He taught that a country achieves well-being and tranquility only when it pursues the dharma, "the right law," what Westerners might call "natural law" or

"divine law." Nichiren saw himself living in a time when the forces of evil predominated. He called it a "period of the dharma in decline." He taught that a wise person who wanted to help his brothers and sisters in such times would teach them to resist the evil forces and influences on their lives. Fujii has brought forward this teaching into 20th century Japan and into a contemporary world. The urgency of the struggle to replace "the warlike principle of contention with spiritual civilization" was established in his life by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the present threat of nuclear omnicide.

Fujii had a long and close friendship with Gandhi and shared with him faith in the truth of non-violence. He identified violence as a spiritual problem for which there could only be spiritual solutions. "The ultimate reason for violence," Fujii wrote in 1951, "is one's distrust of others and fear of others. This is because one sees forces of violence before his eyes, but fails to realize Buddhahood inherent in others. The reason for choosing to be unarmed is one's trust of others and love of others. This is because one has his eyes riveted on Buddhahood inherent in others, seeking only its awakening, while overlooking forces of violence before his eyes."

Non-violence is a choice we make requiring faith and courage. "What constitutes its foundation is not the establishment of a judicial system, but religious faith that seeks gentleness, peace, simplicity, and correctness," Fujii wrote. Civilization requires that people recognize and respect the excellence that is the essence of all manifestations of life. From this recognition and respect should flow the vow to do no harm, the willingness to absorb violence rather than inflict it.

On September 8-9, 1984, four months before his death, Fujii gave talks at the Atami Temple of the Nipponzan Myohoji in which he said that "the Japanese pacifists must learn from the Plowshares." In these talks he urges his followers to undertake civil disobedience. "Those with no experience of imprisonment cannot create the anti-nuclear movement." His rejection of law was formed already by 1929, when he wrote, "Legal regulations are bandits, injurious to civilization." In the half century since that time the outrages committed under the protection of the law have grown. The law protects greed, privilege, and atomic weapons. The destruction of all life on earth by the United States would be a *legal* act. We think, Fujii mocks, "as though a nation would be civilized as long as it manufactures laws and regulations. This is the myth of the modern state." In the West we are accustomed to thinking of civilized society as society ruled by law, and it is hard to hear such fundamental criticism. But law is a big part of the problem. We accept nuclear weapons because they are authorized by Congress and protected by law. Law makes them legitimate?!

Against the rule of law Fujii raises up "spiritual civilization," which is a matter of mind and heart, to love and respect the earth and all life thereon. In this dreadfully perilous "period of the dharma in decline" it is necessary to learn to resist the evil forces and influences in our lives. When these forces and influences are embodied in the law, civil disobedience is a required helping and loving act.

The article's author, Jim Perkins, is currently serving a three-year sentence at the Danbury Federal Prison Camp for his involvement in a Plowshares action. In the note accompanying his article, Jim said, "I'm doing fine, deepening my practice." Those wishing to correspond with Jim can write care of: 03825-018, Pembroke Station, Danbury, CT 06810.



Leaf

The leaf swings, it has the right to swing,
as the mind breaks open
and *everything has the right to be here.*

A million French-Russian-Chinese revolutions
do not shake the world
like this fragile leaf.

Put your head on my chest—
All the leaves inside are stirring
soundlessly—I cannot bear it—

this innocence breaking out of my ribs.

Noelle Oxenhandler



Mayumi Oda

Needs

Help Develop BPF Financial Stability

While the cost of maintaining the BPF National Office and underwriting national activities has grown in recent years, the membership base is still not large enough to cover these growing expenses. A significant increase in memberships or Newsletter subscriptions can readily solve this problem and put BPF on a solid financial footing. To accomplish this task, the editor would like to put forward the following proposals:

(1) Most BPF members know of at least one other person who is sympathetic to BPF concerns, but has not joined BPF yet. If every BPF member can get one other person to join, our financial crisis would end. Membership is only \$15 yearly.

(2) Similarly, we all know someone who'd enjoy or be interested in receiving the BPF Newsletter, especially with its new upgraded format. Getting a friend to subscribe to the Newsletter or giving a gift subscription would again contribute significantly to resolving our fiscal crunch. Subscriptions are only \$10, yearly for four issues.

The Path of Compassion: Contemporary Writings on Engaged Buddhism

Recently, BPF passed our break-even point on the *Path of Compassion*. Thus, we've been able to sell enough books to repay the loans secured to underwrite its publishing. To celebrate this event, and in keeping with the holiday season, we are offering the book at a discount to Newsletter readers. The book is being reduced from \$9.95 per copy to \$8.00 per copy or two copies for \$15.00.

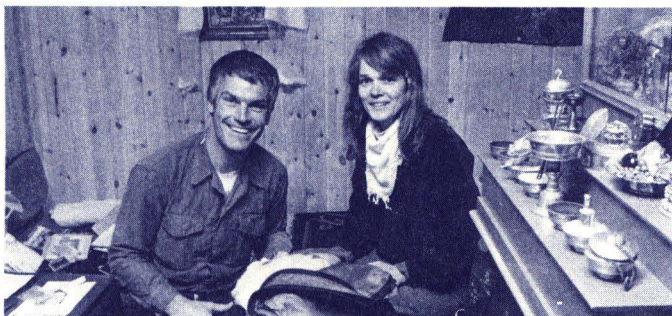
The Path of Compassion is a collection of contemporary writings on the engagement of Buddhism and Buddhists in the social, political, and economic affairs of society. Included are pieces by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on political action and social progress. Thich Nhat Hanh on mindfulness in activity, Robert Aitken Roshi on ecology, and Gary Snyder on planetary culture. Robert Thurmond writes on historical events and contemporary guidelines for Buddhist social action, Joanna

Macy on empowerment in the face of the threat of nuclear war, and Jack Kornfield on compassion and social action. Other selections describe the relevance of the Buddhist Jataka Tales to modern life, a Vietnamese nun's response to the war and conflict in Southeast Asia, and a Buddhist woman's response to rape.

The Path of Compassion is available by mail from the Rochester Chapter of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. The book is approximately 175 pages long. Postage and handling is \$1.05 for one copy, and \$.25 for each additional copy up to 12 copies. On orders for more than 12 copies, please get in touch with the Rochester BPF. Please send check or money order (in U.S. funds) payable to:

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Entering the Diamond Way: My Path Among the Lamas



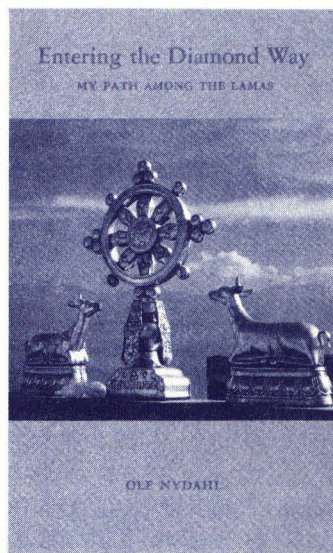
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